

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: STRUCTURED LITERACY: TEACHER
UNDERSTANDING AND THE
INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR
READING ACHIEVMENT

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Literacy is a critical life skill which impacts individuals and society. Knowledge to practice gaps in the field of education have existed for many years, specifically while teaching all students to become proficient readers. The intention of this qualitative study is to explore teacher understanding and perspectives about early literacy components used while instructing students to read. In 2021, eight K-3 general education teachers from the focus school LEOES, a Targeted Assistance Title I elementary school in southern Maryland, were interviewed and asked to provide information about the current status of their literacy instruction. Teacher reported information about evidence-based literacy practices implemented were explored to identify and suggest future professional development needed to address low literacy achievement and comprehensive literacy planning. As the literacy coach for this school, teacher input was gathered about current early literacy instructional practices through individual interviews. The self-reported instructional approaches described by the participating teachers were then

considered in relation to the six evidence-based components of Structured Literacy to determine teachers' understanding of these components and the challenges teachers identify which impact foundational reading instruction. Participating teachers mostly named balanced literacy as the literacy approach implemented with an emphasis on the five areas of reading. The Structured Literacy components were not identified or described as critical components of daily literacy instruction implemented at LEOES. Teachers identified challenges related mostly to curricular weaknesses and student factors, rather than the daily instruction provided to students.

Implications for LEOES and District A were developed to build teachers' awareness of the invaluable impact of the classroom teacher to implement a proactive approach to literacy instruction using the evidence-based components and guiding principles of Structured Literacy.

**Structured Literacy: Teacher Understanding and the Instructional Implications
for Reading Achievement**

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my encouraging and patient village which includes my family, friends, and colleagues. To my husband, Mark, for support over the last 5 years by providing me with uninterrupted time on the weekends to write this dissertation. Your continued belief in me, humor, and unending support with the needs of our family allowed me to achieve this goal. To my children, Colin and Caidin, who did not complain about my absence at a game or lost time together. You make me tremendously proud of the loving and smart men you both have become. To my mother, Stassa, I appreciate your loving encouragement to finish this work and understanding when I was not in the mood to talk about the tedious process. Finally, to my fathers, Ron, for always sending positive words and patience to finally take our trip, and Larry, for making this dream of continued learning become a reality with your extreme generosity and reassuring belief in me.

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Introduction

Problem Statement

Graduation from high school and becoming a productive member of society requires a strong literacy background which must be established in the earliest years of childhood development (Fiester & Smith, 2010; Hernandez, 2011; Slavin et al., 2010). There is extensive research on the development of basic literacy skills, accompanied by national attention to the situation, yet students across the nation continue to have significant deficits in one or more foundational reading skill areas which impede their ability to read proficiently (Birsh, 2019; Moats & Tolman, 2019; National Reading Panel (NRP), 2000). Quality foundational reading instruction includes the alphabetic principle, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency which are critical developmental milestones for all students from kindergarten through 3rd grade instruction (Moats, 2020; Snow et al, 1998). A number of researchers have documented that reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade is a predictor of later school achievement and academic outcomes (Fiester & Smith, 2010; Hernandez, 2011; Snow et al., 1998; Torgesen, 2004). Failure to successfully develop early literacy skills can lead to a number of serious societal outcomes. “The inability to read well is associated with lower levels of adult education and lower income levels (McLaughlin, Speirs, & Shenassa, 2014), which in turn are associated with social ills such as dropping out of school, reduced access to health care, and unwanted teen pregnancy” (as cited in Moats & Tolman, 2019, p. 3).

Measures of literacy, such as scores on state and national reading assessments, are among the most consistent measures used by teachers, parents, administrators, and policy makers to determine the effectiveness of schools (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001; Zinskie & Rea, 2016).

Results of students' reading abilities, along with mathematical abilities, are central to the accountability for schools and school districts. Assessments in these areas are also a central requirement of accountability under Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), the most recent reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

For most states, 3rd grade is when the accountability assessments for reading and mathematics begin. However, measuring reading achievement this late in students' schooling means valuable time has been lost for many students. According to Fiester & Smith (2010), too many students reach 3rd grade without the knowledge of alphabetic principle, phonological awareness, phonics, and the word recognition skills required to be efficient readers. For example, reading data located from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed 66% of all 4th graders (the earliest grade that reading is assessed on NAEP) were not proficient. In Maryland, 65% of the 4th grade students were not proficient on the same 2019 NAEP reading assessment. Data for District A, a small school system where the focus school LEOES is located, was not available for the 2019 NAEP 4th grade reading assessment.

Looking more specifically at District A, the 2019 Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) for reading was available. In District A, 43.5 % of 3rd grade students were not scoring at a proficient level on the 2019 state literacy assessment. Additionally, very much like national literacy achievement gaps, similar gaps persist in District A for 3rd grade students who score below proficiency. In comparison to the overall level of reading proficiency of 3rd grade students, 3.8% more white students scored proficient. The level of proficiency on the 2019 MCAP reading assessment exposed specific gaps between student groups and the overall proficiency rate as compared to all students: African American (AA) students (58.9% gap),

students who live in poverty (66.9% gap), and students with disabilities (SWD) (86.4% gap). Learning to read proficiently is a right that all students must be afforded prior to exiting 3rd grade, but this is not occurring consistently across the nation, states, school districts, and individual schools as will be examined later in Section I.

Teaching students to read is a complex process; however, years of research document that mastery of basic foundational skills requires explicit and systematic literacy instruction from highly skilled teachers who are well versed in research and evidence-based early literacy practices (Chall, 1967; Fiester & Smith, 2010; Moats, 2020; Torgesen, 1998). Based on the data presented above, a large percentage of 3rd grade students in District A have not mastered the essential literacy skills necessary to become effective readers. This is a problem of practice that needs to be investigated further to identify which evidence-based literacy practices are used with students in kindergarten to 3rd grade and why. Various causal factors will be considered, but teacher instructional practices will be a focus for this study because research has proven the impact of the classroom teacher have a great influence on student learning (Hattie, 2009).

Specifically, I will be examining low literacy achievement within one elementary school in District A. LEO Elementary School (LEOES) is a pre-kindergarten to 5th grade school, and one of 12 elementary schools in District A. My personal experiences as an elementary teacher, administrator, and literacy coach lead me to perceive that learning to read is a basic human right. Literacy expert Phyllis Hunter (2016) explained on an audio podcast the importance of understanding why learning to read is a civil right for all students. However, the quality of the instruction provided to every student is not always set as a priority. I believe that all children deserve to be taught to read by highly qualified teachers who understand and implement research and evidence-based early literacy practices. As a literacy coach at LEOES, I have questions

about the quality and effectiveness of specific research and evidence-based early literacy instruction currently used and believe this problem of practice needs to be explored. In the following section the data indicating the reading achievement problems in the nation, state and LEOES will be presented to support this claim.

Evidence Supporting the Scope of Early Literacy Problems

National Literacy Achievement

Nationally, too many students leave 3rd grade without the strong foundation required to grow as successful readers. As noted earlier, according to data from the 2019 NAEP (NCES, 2019), 66% of 4th and 73% 8th grade students were not proficient on the reading assessments. These NAEP results also show a decrease of 1% for 4th graders and 3% for 8th graders since 2017. Students' overall reading proficiency levels are low, but the achievement gaps between white students and other student groups are alarming, as well. Reading achievement is of special concern for students with disabilities, African American students, and economically disadvantaged (ED) students.

When comparing the NAEP Grade 4 Reading Assessment between 2009 and 2019 for students with disabilities (SWD) the achievement gap increased from 22% to 27% for the number of students who performed below proficient, as compared to students without disabilities. ED students showed minimal progress for that same period. The percentage of students who scored below proficient decreased from 49% to 46%; however, the gap did not close when compared to non-economically disadvantaged students. When considering race, slight improvements in scores for African American students occurred from 2009 (52% not proficient) to 2017 (49% not proficient); however, in 2019 the percent of AA students scoring

below proficient returned to 52%. Hispanic students improved from 51% scoring below proficient in 2009 to 45% below proficient in 2019. White students (22%) and students of two or more races (27%) remained at approximately the same percentage points below proficient when comparing 2009 to 2019, but this data makes clear the significant gaps between races. In summary, persistent gaps in reading achievement remain an area of concern for AA and Hispanic students, ED, and SWD student groups across the nation.

Maryland Literacy Achievement

There are two sources of data that demonstrate how children in Maryland are performing in reading. The NAEP assessments are available beginning in 4th grade, while state assessment data in reading, called the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP), are available beginning at 3rd grade. Maryland's NAEP 4th grade reading achievement trend data from 2009-2019 show a relatively flat line. For instance, in 2009, 63% of the 4th grade students in Maryland scored below proficient and after ten years of instructional changes prompted by the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), 65% of the Maryland 4th graders still scored below proficient in reading. In 2019, Maryland was one of 17 states that had significant decreases in 4th grade NAEP reading results, both in terms of the percent of students not scoring proficient, and the average scale score.

As indicated in Table 1, the reading achievement gaps between student subgroups that were observed in the national 2019 Grade 4 NAEP are even more alarming in the 2019 Maryland NAEP Reading assessment scores. The 2019 NAEP Reading State Snapshot Report details specific gaps and the lack of progress since 1998. African American (AA) students had an average score that was 27 points lower than white students' average scores and showed minimal change from the 34-point gap in 1998. In 2019, 35% of white students in Maryland scored below

proficient. This compares to 74% of AA students and 73% of Hispanic students that scored below proficient, as did the group of students participating in the free and reduced meals program, 77% of whom scored below proficient.

Table 1

2019 Grade 4 NAEP MD Reading Results for Student Groups

Reporting Groups	% of students	Avg. score	% at or above NAEP		% at NAEP
			Basic	Proficient	Advanced
White	33	234	77	48	17
Black	34	206	51	22	4
Hispanic	20	207	53	22	5
Asian	7	247	89	64	27
2 or more races	5	233	76	45	18
ED	48	205	50	19	4
Not ED	51	235	78	51	18

Note. Adapted from Data retrieved from National Assessments for Educational Progress, [The Nation's Report Card: 2019 Reading Maryland Grade 4 Snapshot Report \(ed.gov\)](#).

Maryland's state English Language Arts assessment has changed over the past decade. The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) became the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) and, in 2019, the assessment was again revised to the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP). As reported on the Maryland Report Card (Maryland Report Card, 2019), the 2017-2018 elementary ELA PARCC results indicated the following percentages of students scoring below proficiency: Grade 3 (61.2%); Grade 4 (56.9%); Grade 5 (57.9%). These results show minimal progress from 2015 when Grade 3 ELA PARCC scores indicated that 61.8% of the students were not proficient. Most recently, 58.8% of Maryland 3rd graders were not proficient on the 2019 ELA MCAP. The data presented displays concerning results for Maryland students according to NAEP and MCAP reading achievement.

Maryland Early Childhood Assessment

Research indicates the need for universal screening for primary grade students that addresses the developmental and instructional needs of students learning to read (Fuchs, Fuchs, McMaster, & Lemons, 2018; Jenkins, Hudson, & Johnson, 2007; Torgesen, 1998). In 2014, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) adopted The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) as the only assessment used across the state for districts to gather data on children in kindergarten for language and literacy basic readiness. The KRA was developed by several states, together with West Ed and the Johns Hopkins Center for Technology in Education, to determine the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that students demonstrate when they enter kindergarten. Teachers use this 50-item observation and assessment tool prior to November of a school year. A portion of the KRA can be administered on a device, but the remaining sections are observation-based and assess students in Social Foundations, Mathematics, Language and Literacy, and Physical Well-being and Motor Development. Originally, in 2014 and 2015, the KRA was administered to all students in kindergarten, but starting in 2016, legislation allows school districts in Maryland the option to assess all students or a random sample.

Results from the KRA are reported to the state, district, and school. However, since not all students are required to be assessed, the state, district and school results are not representative of the entire population. Individual student reports are only available to teachers and parents for those students assessed. For example, in 2018-19 Maryland reported that 47% of children demonstrated readiness but only 65% of the student population was assessed across the state. In 2019-20, District A reported that 51% of its kindergarten students demonstrated readiness, but only 25% of the district's student population was assessed. District A was one of the six of 18

school districts in the state of Maryland that chose to do random sampling administration of the KRA (MSDE, 2018). Therefore, using the District A KRA results to identify struggling readers for instructional purposes is not useful due to the number of students who are not assessed. Districts that assess all students entering kindergarten will have more accurate results and less chance of missing struggling readers as they begin to learn the foundational skills needed for literacy development. District A recognized this concern and the need for a more comprehensive diagnostic assessment of children as they begin school and progress through each grade. In 2019, District A adopted the Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) growth assessments as the universal screener for all students in kindergarten to 12th grades for reading and math.

District A Public Schools Literacy Achievement

District A, a small rural district in Maryland, serves just under 16,000 students in four high schools, six middle schools, and 12 elementary schools. Among the 16,000 students, 69.3% of the students identify as white, 11.6% as AA, 11.1% as Multi-Race, 6.6% as Hispanic, 1.3% as Asian, and .2% as American Indian. Students with disabilities represent 11.2% of the enrollment and students with 504 plans another 4.1%. 21.3% of the enrollment receive free and reduced meals and 2.6% are Title I students. Approximately 7,200 students are enrolled in early childhood programs up to fifth grade for the 2020-2021 school year.

As shown in Table 2 below, slightly more than half of 3rd, 4th and 5th graders in District A scored at or above Proficient on the 2019 MCAP ELA, 56.5%; 52.0%, and 53.8%, respectively. Tables 2, 3 and 4 also show the achievement gaps on the 2019 MCAP between all students and the following student subgroups: students with disabilities, African American students, and Economically Disadvantaged students. The achievement of the various student groups is

recognized by District A as targeted areas for improvement in the district's Strategic Plan and closing the gaps between the achievement of these students and all other students is part of the improvement plan for schools.

According to Table 2 below, the ELA assessment achievement gaps in 3rd, 4th, 5th grades between students with disabilities show that between 2015-2019 the percentage of all students scoring at or above Proficient in 3rd and 5th grades increased between 2015 and 2019 but increased less than 1 percent at 4th grade. The percent of students with disabilities scoring at or above Proficient was inconsistent across grade level and year. Furthermore, the large achievement gaps remained and in 2019 were 42.9%, 39.6%, and 45.1% respectively.

Table 2*District A Grades 3-5 PARCC Trend Achievement Gap for SWD*

Grade 3 ELA Trend Data for SWD		2019 Gap: 42.9%
Year	% Scoring Proficient or Advanced	
	All Students	All Students with Disabilities
2019	56.5%	13.6%
2018	56.3 %	14.9%
2017	54.8%	11.5%
2016	50.8%	8.7%
2015	45.0%	6.2%

Grade 4 ELA Trend Data for SWD		2019 Gap: 39.6%
Year	% Scoring Proficient or Advanced	
	All Students	All Students with Disabilities
2019	52.0%	12.4%
2018	52.8 %	8.3%
2017	52.4%	7.7%
2016	51.8%	9.2%
2015	51.1%	10.5%

Grade 5 ELA Trend Data for SWD		2019 Gap: 45.1%
Year	% Scoring Proficient or Advanced	
	All Students	All Students with Disabilities
2019	53.8%	8.7%
2018	52.0 %	≤ 5.0 %
2017	50.4%	9.4%
2016	48.4%	8.3%
2015	45.8%	≤ 5.0 %

Note. Adapted from data retrieved MSDE Maryland Report Card 2019,

<https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Assessments/ElPerformance>.

Table 3 below shows the District A ELA assessment results from 2015-2019 for AA students and all students in 3rd, 4th, 5th grades. The percent of AA students who scored at or above Proficient increased at all three grade levels with 3rd grade results showing the most

improvement. However, the achievement gaps in 2019 between AA students and all students at grades 3, 4 and 5 remained consistent at: 15.4%, 17.3%, and 16.5% respectively.

Table 3

District A Grades 3-5 PARCC Trend Achievement Gap for AA

Grade 3 ELA Trend Data for AA		2019 Gap: 15.4%
Year	% Scoring Proficient or Advanced	
	All Students	All Students AA
2019	56.5%	41.1%
2018	56.3 %	39.7%
2017	54.8%	34.2%
2016	50.8%	27.3%
2015	45.0%	17.0%

Grade 4 ELA Trend Data for AA		2019 Gap: 17.3%
Year	% Scoring Proficient or Advanced	
	All Students	All Students AA
2019	52.0%	34.7%
2018	52.8 %	28.4%
2017	52.4%	27.9%
2016	51.8%	32.2%
2015	51.1%	32.4%

Grade 5 ELA Trend Data for AA		2019 Gap: 16.5%
Year	% Scoring Proficient or Advanced	
	All Students	All Students AA
2019	53.8%	37.3%
2018	52.0 %	36.2 %
2017	50.4%	26.5%
2016	48.4%	33.3%
2015	45.8%	30.9 %

Note. Adapted from data retrieved from, MSDE Maryland Report Card 2019,

<https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Assessments/ElPerformance> .

Table 4 below shows the District A ELA assessment results from 2015-2019 for ED students and for all students in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. The results show that the percentage of ED students and all students scoring at or above Proficient in these grades increased inconsistently

between 2015 and 2019. However, there was at least a 20% gap for those ED students at each grade level.

Table 4

District A Grades 3-5 PARCC Trend Achievement Gap for ED

Grade 3 ELA Trend Data for ED		2019 Gap: 23.4%
Year	% Scoring Proficient or Advanced	
	All Students	All Students ED
2019	56.5%	33.1%
2018	56.3 %	35.0 %
2017	54.8%	30.7 %
2016	50.8%	29.1 %
2015	45.0%	21.9 %

Grade 4 ELA Trend Data for ED		2019 Gap: 24.0%
Year	% Scoring Proficient or Advanced	
	All Students	All Students ED
2019	52.0%	28.0%
2018	52.8 %	30.1 %
2017	52.4%	27.6 %
2016	51.8%	26.5 %
2015	51.1%	25.3 %

Grade 5 ELA Trend Data for ED		2019 Gap: 21.8%
Year	% Scoring Proficient or Advanced	
	All Students	All Students ED
2019	53.8%	32.0%
2018	52.0 %	28.3 %
2017	50.4%	26.5 %
2016	48.4%	23.3 %
2015	45.8%	22.6 %

Note. Adapted from data retrieved from, MSDE Maryland Report Card 2019,

<https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Assessments/ElPerformance>.

District A 3rd Grade Data by School. Given the importance that research (Armbruster et al., 2001; Hernandez, 2011; Moats & Tolman, 2019) has made evident relative to the establishment of strong reading skills by 3rd grade, it is important to determine the extent of the

reading achievement problem across elementary schools in District A. Trend data for PARCC ELA was available for each school and each grade level as literacy achievement was investigated for the district. There were no other assessment results available for informal literacy skills achievement that were consistently used across the district over multiple years. Tables 5 and 6 below present the 3rd Grade PARCC ELA data by each elementary school. Overall, the percentage of all students scoring at or above Proficient ranged from a low of 34 (School G) to a high of 66 (School C). Next, when analyzing the averages for schools in the two areas of the system, northern and southern, the average percentage of 3rd graders scoring at or above Proficient differed by 10.66% points (northern=55.66%; southern=45%) in 2015-2016 and 12.17% points (northern 61.17%; southern=49%) in 2016-2017.

District A is in a county with a total population of approximately 92,000. Of this number, the racial and ethnic distribution is approximately the following: 78% White, 13% AA, 4% Hispanic, and 3% two or more races. The county has distinct differences between the northern and southern district schools. There are currently three Title I elementary schools in District A, all considered to be the southern end of the county. Two of these schools are Targeted Assistance Title I schools, and one was recently determined to be a School-wide Title I school, as it meets the criteria for having 50% or more of the students eligible for free and reduced meals. Historically, the schools in the northern end of the district have performed higher than the schools in the southern end of the district. See Table 5 and Table 6 for 3rd grade state assessment results which exemplify the differences between the performance of each school and the schools by northern and southern distinctions.

Table 5*District A Grade 3 PARCC ELA Results: 2015-2016 % Proficient*

District A School District	All	AA	IEP/504	ED
Northern Schools				
School A (0302)	52	DS	20	30
School B (0209)	39	DS	0	24
School C (0312)	66	DS	23	17
School D (0215)	65	DS	53	50
School E (0316)	62	17	30	31
School F (0317)	50	10	0	31
Northern Percent Proficient Average	55.66	13.5	21	30.5
Southern Schools				
School G (0208)	34	21	6	23
School H (0207)	52	DS	10	14
School I (0115)	44	DS	7	21
School J (0110)	49	30	30	29
School K (0101)	50	60	14	43
School L (0114)	41	13	22	22
Southern Percent Proficient Average	45	31	14.83	25.33
Northern Percent Proficient Average	55.66	13.5	21	30.5
2015-2016 Performance Difference	10.66	-17.5	6.17	5.17

DS: Not enough students in group

Note. Adapted from data retrieved from, Data Management & Reporting Systems by Pearson

Access Next, [PARCC Comparing Populations Report \(pearsonaccessnext.com\)](http://pearsonaccessnext.com)

Table 6*District A Grade 3 PARCC ELA Results: 2016-2017 % Proficient*

DISTRICT A School District	All	AA	IEP/504	ED
Northern Schools				
School A (0302)	57	DS	DS	31
School B (0209)	46	DS	8	8
School C (0312)	76	DS	40	DS
School D (0215)	50	19	37	14
School E (0316)	66	44	17	DS
School F (0317)	72	DS	26	45
Northern Percent Proficient Average	61.17	31.5	25.6	24.5
Southern Schools				
School G (0208)	47	21	DS	9
School H (0207)	40	30	17	17
School I (0115)	56	DS	25	44
School J (0110)	76	DS	DS	77
School K (0101)	37	20	7	36
School L (0114)	38	25	11	23
Southern Percent Proficient Average	49	24	15	34.33
Northern Percent Proficient Average	61.17	31.5	25.6	24.5
2016-2017 Performance Difference	12.17	*7.5	*10.6	-9.83
2015-2016 Performance Difference	10.66	-17.5	6.17	5.17

DS: Not enough students in group

Note. Adapted from data retrieved from, Data Management & Reporting Systems by

Pearson Access Next, [PARCC Comparing Populations Report \(pearsonaccessnext.com\)](http://pearsonaccessnext.com).

The 3rd grade school level data also show major gaps in achievement between the target student groups. However, due to the number of northern schools that did not have at least 10 AA in that grade students' scores, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the gap. While the overall average percentages for the category of ED students shows a slightly higher percentage for schools, the gaps between this student group and all students are about 20% in 2015-2016 for northern and southern, and 37.67% (northern) and 14.67% (southern). The percentages for the group of students with disabilities are less consistent and show a lot of variability across schools. This may be due to the location of certain types of classes and regional programs that serve

specific groups of students with disabilities. This means that students with various characteristics and needs are “clustered” in specific schools across District A.

As noted earlier in the 2019-2020 school year, District A administered a new assessment, the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth assessment in reading and math for kindergarten to 12th grades. This assessment was added because it could identify students for early intervention to allow consistent progress monitoring to take place for students struggling to read. Scores from the initial MAP Growth administration showed significant weaknesses in the primary grades, especially in 1st and 2nd grades. More specific MAP data will be shared in the section below in Table 11.

In 2018, the state was awarded funding to support the development of comprehensive literacy plans across each district to support struggling readers. Each district completed an application to show specific actions to increase literacy skills for underserved students to address evidence-based practices for preliteracy skills, reading and writing for children from birth through grade 12. The primary and secondary ELA supervisors and a special education supervisor collaborated to identify specific needs to address literacy achievement in District A. The district was awarded the additional funding, The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) program provided funding to develop a district comprehensive literacy plan to address poor reading achievement. When the grant was awarded, the district was able to hire a Data Specialist and three Literacy Coaches to support specific underperforming schools. They designated a literacy coach to work with early childhood to primary levels, intermediate to middle levels, and middle to high school levels. I was assigned as the literacy coach to collaborate with intermediate to middle school grades to support school level administrators and teachers to develop school improvement plans to address literacy achievement for three years. Of

the three elementary schools that were targeted, I was assigned to LEOES and the middle school most of the students from LEOES attended after fifth grade.

LEOES Literacy Achievement. LEO Elementary School (LEOES) is in the southern part of District A. I began my career as a first-grade teacher at LEOES in 1999. At that time, LEOES was a Targeted Assistance Title I school, and the student population was close to 800 students. There were approximately 6 classes for each of the k-5 grades. The school was known for its character education program, dedicated staff, and dynamic leadership. A big focus for the entire school was differentiation of instruction which was stressed during professional development and during faculty meetings. I felt very lucky to be teaching at this school due to the overall school achievement, collaborative environments, and opportunity for professional learning in differentiated instruction.

Now, over 20 years later, in 2020 the student population has decreased to approximately 530 students with four classes in grades K-5, one special education kindergarten class, two half day special education pre-kindergarten classes, and one full day pre-kindergarten class as a pilot program. The school continues to be a Title I School (still designated as Targeted Assistance Title I) with approximately 38-40% students meeting the ED criteria. The student population is 62% white, 17% AA, 10% Multi-Race, and 11% Hispanic. LEOES is a regional English as a Second Language (EL) school site for the district, which means students from across the district who are eligible for EL services are transported to the school. This means the EL population at LEOES is slightly higher as compared to the other schools in District A but the percentage of students for both the school and district are less than 5%. Approximately 15% of the students qualify as a student with a disability which is slightly higher than the district average of 9%.

Additionally, LEOES has a functional skills class and a special kindergarten regional program, which have fewer than 20 students combined.

Academic performance at LEOES became a priority for District A when PARCC assessments were first administered. As shown in Table 7, since 2015, results in reading and math have shown inconsistent but minimal growth and/or declines, across grade levels and student groups. The yearly average school performance for grades 3-5 for ELA PARCC are examples of the inconsistencies. Between 2015 and 2019, more than 60% of all students did not demonstrate proficiency in literacy. The 3rd grade trend data show a significant decrease in the overall student achievement from 2015 (35.9%) to 2019 (29.6%), while 4th and 5th grades showed minimal growth from 2015-2019. See Table 7, Table 8, and Table 9 below for detailed LEOES ELA PARCC Data.

Table 7

LEOES Grades 3-5 PARCC ELA Trend Data 2015-2019 % Proficient

School Year	3 rd Grade	4 th Grade	5 th Grade	LEOES Average for Grades 3-5
15	35.9	41.3	36.6	37.93
16	40.5	35.3	35.5	37.1
17	38.2	51.3	27.5	39
18	22.7	39.8	28.4	30.3
19	29.6	42.5	40.9	37.67

Note. Adapted by data retrieved from, Data Management & Reporting Systems Pearson Access

Next.

The average score for Grade 3 PARCC highlights more problems with the literacy achievement of all students at LEOES. The average scaled scores for 3rd grade students initially increased by 10 points and then decreased by 12 points by 2018. These data support the lack of overall literacy achievement for 3rd grade at LEOES.

Table 8*LEOES Grade 3 PARCC ELA Scaled Score Trend Data 2015-2018*

Grade 3 ELA Average Scaled Score	Changes
2014-2015 (734)	-
2015-2016 (744)	Increased by 10 points
2016-2017 (738)	Decreased by 6 points *Lowest in CCPS
2017-2018 (726)	Decreased by 12 additional points *Lowest in CCPS

Note. Adapted from data retrieved from Data Management & Reporting Systems Pearson Access

Next.

Similar trends are shown in the student group data for 3rd grade ELA PARCC at LEOES. Levels of proficiency for all students, white students, AA students, and ED student groups decreased significantly from 2015 to 2018. There were not enough SWD in grade 3 to count towards this specific student group, but school wide data for SWD will be shared next. Most shockingly, Grade 3 ELA PARCC Trend Data for LEOES by student groups demonstrate significant lack of achievement for all students, white students, AA students and ED students. The following decreases in student proficiency are noted for each student group from 2015 to 2018: All 13.2%, White 19.2%, AA 6.7%, and ED 14.4%. Clearly, there is a lack of literacy achievement for all students at LEOES as well as achievement gaps that exist.

Table 9*LEOES Grade 3 PARCC ELA Trend by Student Groups % Proficient*

School Year	All	White	AA	ED	SWD
2015	35.9	43.2	16.7	23.1	NA
2016	40.5	49	13.3	21.9	NA
2017	38.2	44.3	25	23.1	NA
2018	22.7	24	10	8.7	NA

Note. Adapted from data retrieved from Data Management & Reporting Systems Pearson Access

Next.

Even though individual grades did not have the required 10 students in the SWD student group, the achievement gap at LEOES can be observed when looking across 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades for SWD. Students with disabilities continue to score below proficiency at greater levels than all other student groups. In fact, the achievement gap for SWD at LEOES for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades continued to increase from a 32.9% gap in 2015 to a 35.2% gap in 2018. This gap would have been greater had the overall school literacy proficiency not decreased as well. Additionally, growth in scores for individual students with disabilities was not evident; not one SWD had scored proficient on Grade 3, 4, or 5 ELA PARCC since 2015.

In 2018, LEOES was identified as one of the two Targeted Support & Improvement (TSI) schools in the district. One of the indicators for that designation was the increasing gap in achievement between students with disabilities and all students. The second school identified as TSI, a middle school in the district, was the school where most of LEOES students attended after 5th grade. The state of Maryland identified specific criteria for schools to be determined TSI. TSI is not the most intensive accountability identification for schools, which meant additional funding was not provided to these two schools or the district. Basically, TSI schools were flagged, and the district was expected to provide additional guidance and support to those schools, and this level of support varied greatly across the state. Since District A did not receive additional state funding for TSI school improvement, the ELA supervisors prioritized these two schools when determining where to place literacy coaches funded by the SRCL grant.

In 2018, through the school improvement process and TSI accountability documentation, the school and district leadership began to look for additional causes for the lack of achievement in literacy for all students at LEOES. There were no consistent early literacy assessment results to analyze through this process, except reading fluency. When analyzing the data for fluency in

Table 10, LEOES showed scores below the district average, but not at the same level of discrepancy for the PARCC assessments.

Table 10

District A 2019 Quarter 1 Fluency Assessment Results for Grades 1- 3

Grade 1 District A Fluency	Grade 2 District A Fluency	Grade 3 District A Fluency
District A Average: 71.5%	District A Average: 78.4%	District A Average: 75.7%
LEOES Average: 63.6%	LEOES Average: 72.4%	LEOES Average: 67.3%
7.9% Below District A	6.0% Below District A	8.4% Below District A

Note. Adapted from data retrieved from Performance Matters, District A Data Management System.

In 2019, MAP Growth was administered to all students in kindergarten through 5th grade at three times: Fall Administration, Winter Administration, and Spring Administration. Table 11 shows the percentage of students who scored below the 50% national norms for the Fall Administration. Students in kindergarten and 1st grade were given an assessment that focused more on foundational reading skills but could adapt to a level that required the student to read independently if they answered a certain number of questions correctly. However, students in 2nd through 5th grades were given an assessment that required the students to read the text independently, not providing specific data on foundational skills. Nearly 60% of the students in kindergarten and first grades at LEOES scored below the 50% national norms. The percent of students scoring below the 50% national norm increased for students in 2nd and 3rd grades. Even though 4th and 5th grades showed some improvement, there is a range of discrepancy (5.5%-21.3%) between the district and LEOES performance on the initial administration of MAP Growth.

Table 11*LEOES NWEA Map Reading K-5 Data Fall 2019 Comparison to District A*

Information provided below show the **Percent Below 50% National Norm**

Grade Level	LEOES	District A Average	Difference
K	57.7%	43.5%	14.2%
1	59.7%	51.4%	8.3%
2	62.5%	52.4%	10.1%
3	65.5%	44.2%	21.3%
4	43.8%	33.4%	10.4%
5	38.1%	32.6%	5.5%

Note. Adapted from data retrieved from NWEA Map Growth.

The literacy achievement data for LEOES show specific areas of weakness in literacy for the overall student population on PARCC, Fluency Benchmark Assessments, and NWEA MAP Growth. When comparing the LEOES data to other schools in District A, the district data show severe lack of achievement and specific deficits in areas of literacy. The percentage of students not reaching levels of proficiency in literacy on multiple assessments shows continued achievement gaps for specific student groups relative to overall student achievement at LEOES, LEOES to other schools, and from LEOES achievement to District A achievement.

Summarizing District A and school level achievement data in the area of reading, it is apparent that all students, including SWD, AA students and ED students continue to be a concern within the district and school's improvement plans. Administrators, teachers, and support staff are provided this information and charged with making changes to rectify this problem. Yearly, LEOES staff submits school improvement plans designed to address the overall literacy achievement and literacy achievement gap problems, and as the data indicate, little to no progress has been made. The possible reasons this problem has persisted will be examined through the lens of research that has defined the science of reading and identified the developmental best practices for early literacy. This study will describe in detail the prior

intervention provided by a literacy coach to teachers as they planned to target early literacy instruction as outlined in school improvement plans from 2018-2020. However, this is not an evaluation of the specific actions taken to support the teachers by the literacy coach, but the prior attempts to address low literacy will inform the subsequent change ideas presented. Additionally, the current status of the early literacy instructional practices will be identified to determine how they compare to the evidence-based practices outlined in Structured Literacy. Before exploring those causes, I will discuss the critical importance of addressing the problem of low literacy prior to 3rd grade.

Why is Low Literacy Achievement a Problem?

As noted in the Introduction, the consequences of low literacy are broad. In particular, the downward trajectory for being a struggling reader begins at an early age for many students living in poverty. Researchers (Castles, Rastle & Nation, 2018; Fiester & Smith, 2010; Hernandez, 2011; Moats, 2019; Slavin, 1998) note that young children who may struggle to learn foundational reading skills by 3rd grade continue to struggle in reading and other academic areas as they move through school, and beyond.

The global, social, and economic impacts of low literacy are undeniable. According to the World Literacy Foundation (2015), illiteracy costs the global economy more than one trillion U.S. dollars in direct costs because it impacts the ability of individuals to gain basic knowledge, engage in democracy, and be successful in the workplace (Castles, Rastle & Nation, 2018). As Castles, Rastle & Nation state, "... low literacy is a major contributor to inequality and increases the likelihood of poor physical and mental health, workplace accidents, misuse of medication, participation in crime, and welfare dependency, all of which also have substantial additional social and economic costs" (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018, p.1).

Substantial amounts of research have documented those students who do not gain literacy skills prior to completing 3rd grade will continue to struggle in school and have an even higher likelihood to drop out of high school. As documented by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2014) publication titled *Early Reading Proficiency in the United States*:

There are many paths to success in life, but they all begin with a strong foundation in health, social-emotional skills, and cognitive development. Brain research tells us that the first eight years are critical for building the foundation for future learning and emotional development. Unfortunately, by the time they are 8 years old, many children – especially those living in low-income families – have not met the developmental milestones that are essential for future success in school and life (p. 2).

Literacy is a foundational skill for all other subjects and low reading achievement can lead to a number of academic problems and poor educational outcomes over time. According to one analysis of 3,975 students completed by Hernandez (2011), “One in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers” (Hernandez, 2011, p.3).

Other studies have shown that poor early literacy development can lead to lower grades, higher rates of grade retention, higher rates of referral to special education, higher rates of emotional and behavioral problems and overall lack of progress in school which then leads to higher rates of dropping out of high school, as well as lower rates of participation in post-secondary education and higher rates of being involved with the criminal justice system (Cornwall & Bawden, 1992; Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2018; Jones, Ostoiic, Menard, Picard, & Miller, 2017; McLaughlin, Speirs, & Shenassa, 2014; Slavin, 1998; Torgesen, 2004).

Clearly, given the critical importance of early literacy achievement, it is important for schools and school systems to engage in a serious analysis of all possible causes, as well as to facilitate the best practices demonstrated by research. This analysis must examine the factors in the system itself and those responsible for creating and implementing improvement initiatives need to acknowledge both the potential causes and possible solutions. In the next section, I will present an analysis of major causes of early low literacy achievement which will be followed by a discussion of areas for improvement.

Theory of Action: Causal System Analysis for Low Literacy

Identifying the causes for low literacy achievement has been a priority for stakeholders across the nation for decades. In the 1990's, Congress became involved due to the national crisis that was revealed by student achievement results from National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments. At the request of the United States Congress, The National Reading Panel (NRP) was established in 1997 to investigate and determine the research-based practices that support literacy achievement. The primary purpose of this panel was to assess the different approaches being used to teach children to read while revealing possible causes for low literacy. The Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and Secretary of Education were to collaborate with the panel to provide a report that "should present the panel's conclusions, an indication of the readiness for application in the classroom of the results of this research, and, if appropriate, a strategy for rapidly disseminating this information..." (NRP, 2000, p. 1) The extensive report emphasized the then-current research on effective instructional practices in alphabetics, fluency, comprehension, teacher education and reading instruction, and computer technology and reading instruction in 2000. The research showed that one initial cause for low literacy achievement was the lack of awareness of the

problem and collaboration between different agencies to oversee school systems with accountability.

The panel's 480-page report, *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: an evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NRP, 2000) provided the research base for subsequent federal initiatives. Required under the guidance of the 2001 ESEA reauthorization, "The No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB, 2002), improving student achievement and implementing teaching methods proven to be effective were two goals that President Bush made a priority. So, in 2002, Reading First was promoted as a grant initiative to promote early intervention and prevention efforts to increase literacy development for students prior to leaving 3rd grade. States were permitted to apply for grant funds to supplement Title I and local funds for students living in poverty to build early literacy programs. Another cause for low literacy was a lack of funding and shared knowledge about the most effective ways to teach students to read.

Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read Kindergarten through Grade 3, written in collaboration by Armbruster, Lehr, Osborn, & Adler in 2001, summarized the NRP's findings, explained the analysis of research-based reading instruction, and provided practical advice for teachers to use in the classroom. Specific information about how to explicitly teach the five areas of reading: 1) phonemic awareness instruction, 2) phonics instruction, 3) fluency instruction, 4) vocabulary instruction, and 5) text comprehension were discussed in depth. These five areas of reading are necessary components of "what works" reading instruction to be used by teachers to increase the likelihood of reading success for students, thus addressing another cause of low literacy: the lack of research and

evidenced-based practices and programs that identified the best ways to instruct students to read (Armbruster, Lehr, Osborn, & Adler, 2001).

Nearly two decades after the passing of NCLB and despite extensive and valid reading research findings, large proportions of students, notably those with disabilities, AA, and ED, continue to show achievement deficits in NAEP reading assessments and state and local assessments. The findings and recommendations of the NRP report continue to be accurate and appropriate. So, why are there still so many students with poor literacy skills? Researchers continue their work with teachers, students, and curricular materials to seek more answers. Educators work specifically with students, the curriculum, and families to find solutions for students who struggle to learn to read. But still a large portion of students continue to show reading deficits according to third grade state assessments and fourth grade national assessments which measure proficient reading skills (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014; Moats & Tolman, 2019; Sparks, Patton, & Murdoch, 2013).

Research related to literacy acquisition and achievement has been vast and has shed light on possible causes for the lack of reading achievement. These can include such things as problems at birth leading to a disability, deficiencies in language development, living in a family with low income and low levels of maternal education (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). According to *Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling-LETRS* (2019), reading difficulties in students can be caused by English as a second language, limited experiences with books, dyslexia, or other learning disabilities, cognitive or language deficits, and inadequate instruction (Moats & Tolman, 2019).

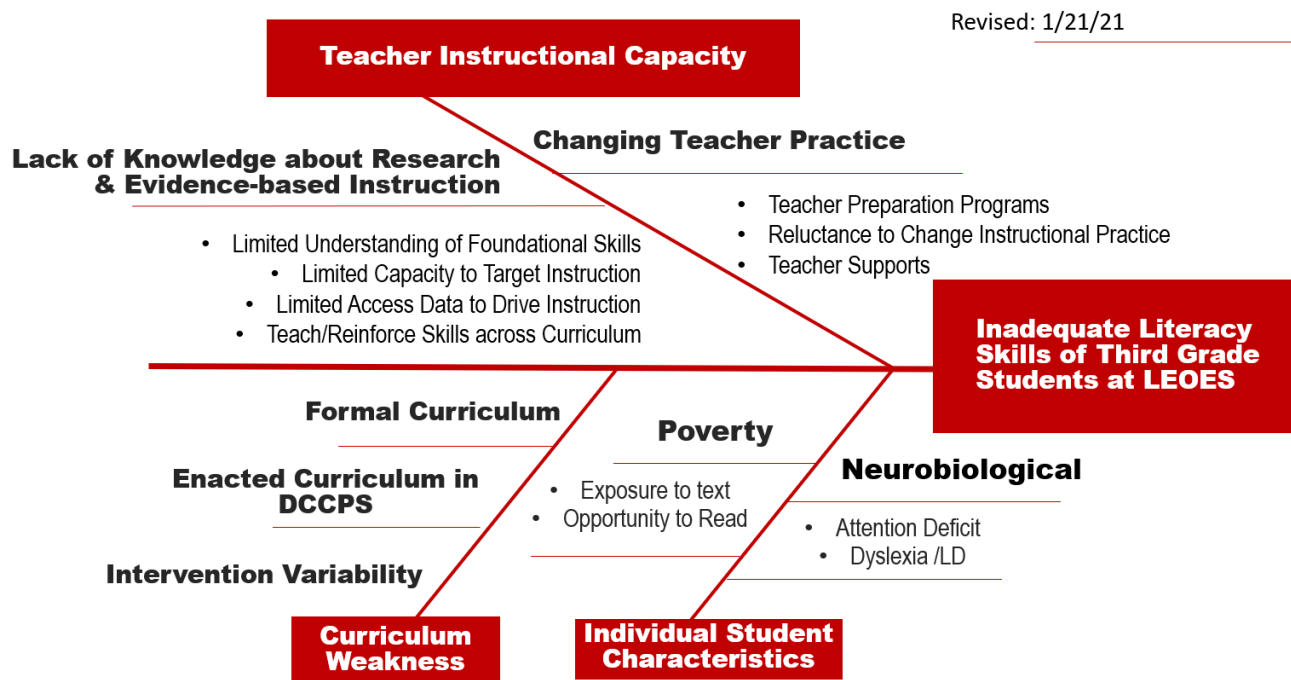
In addition to personal student factors that can contribute to poor literacy achievement, research is also clear that school factors are important to consider. Specifically, inadequate

literacy instruction provided to students in grades K-3 will be investigated as a causal factor for low literacy achievement (Adams, 1990; Armbruster, Lehr, Osborn, & Adler, 2001; Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Torgesen, 2000). The instructional environment provided encompasses the curriculum for early literacy and the implementation of research and evidence-based pedagogical instruction provided by teachers (NICHD, 2000). Based on my 16 years of teaching in the elementary schools, 4 years as an administrator, and 4 years as a literacy coach, I have observed that school factors can mitigate student factors when adequate instruction is provided in foundational reading skills. The knowledge of best literacy practices and the choices made about the implemented curriculum are important areas to consider as relational elements of teacher instructional capacity (Pressley, Duke, & Boling, 2004; Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004).

Figure 1 below illustrates my conceptualization for some of the major causal factors leading to poor 3rd grade reading achievement at LEOES. I contend that several major factors can be categorized into Individual Student Characteristics, Curriculum Weaknesses, and Teacher Instructional Capacity. Several related causes are included within each of these three major causes. Each of the major causal factors will be described in greater detail below.

Figure 1

Causal System Analysis (CSA) for Low Reading Achievement in 3rd Grade at LEOES



I approached the initial identification of causal factors from the broadest perspective based on factors that research has identified. I then considered the scope of my role and responsibilities as a literacy coach in District A to determine specific causal factors that were most likely to impact what I might be able to influence at LEOES. Three major factors that contribute to literacy achievement of young children were selected: Individual Student Characteristics; Curriculum Weaknesses; and Teacher Instructional Capacity. I will review the details of these three major factors but will later explain the factor I can most influence as a literacy coach. These three major areas need to be examined for how they contribute to the reading deficits of primary grade students at LEOES. The review of the research and other

information that follows may be used in decision-making while addressing school improvement in early literacy.

Individual Student Characteristics

Student characteristics are important to consider while investigating initial early literacy instruction and while planning appropriate interventions for those students struggling to master phonological awareness and phonics. According to Nancy Young's Ladder of Reading, 5% of children learn to read without much effort and 35% of children learn to read relatively easy with broad instruction (Young, 2020). There are student factors to consider as causes for literacy weaknesses for the remaining 60%. Several student characteristics have been identified as predictors or correlates of low reading achievement. These include poverty and neurobiological factors that have shown a relationship to poor reading achievement for some students. Other student factors, such as lack of motivation to read and lack of emotional stamina, were considered but were determined to be more related to consequences for the students who struggle to learn to read.

Poverty. Students impacted by poverty is a concern for all educators and policy makers around the world. Poverty impacts student behavior in many ways. According to Eric Jensen, who wrote *Teaching with Poverty in Mind*, children growing up in poverty do not choose to behave differently. However, "...they are faced daily with overwhelming challenges that affluent children never have to confront, and their brains have adapted to suboptimal conditions in ways that undermine good school performance" (Jensen, 2009, chapter 2). Jensen coined the acronym E.A.C.H. which stands for (*Emotional and Social Challenges, Acute and Chronic Stressors, Cognitive Lags, Health, and Safety Issues*) to remind educators what to consider as they instruct students from poverty (Jensen, 2009). Research on the impact of growing up in poverty on

developing literacy points to a variety of factors. These include things such as stress and family support as well as language development.

For example, Ayers (2010) completed a study on the impact of stress, family support and academic confidence on the reading achievement of African American urban students. Ayers found that variables of stress, family support and academic confidence explained 24% of the variance of reading achievement among the sample of students from poverty (Ayers, 2010). “Although this is a small amount, the finding of significance shows that as children’s family support and confidence in their academic abilities rise, so does their reading achievement to some extent” (Ayers, 2010, p.49). Additional research supports the relationship between children’s attitudes toward reading, reading confidence, and early attainment of reading skills that emerged at a very young age (McKenna et al., 1995). It is recommended that early literacy teachers and parents consider this relationship and understand the importance of nurturing cognitive and affective aspects of reading for students (McGeown et al., 2015). The lack of resources available to families coupled with attitudes and confidence in learning to read are student characteristics to consider as a teacher.

Poverty and its impact on language is frequently referred to as one cause for reading deficits since children from poverty typically have less exposure to oral language which is necessary for word recognition skills (Snow et al., 1998). Lyon (2000) found that students with home support and literacy experiences from birth have an advantage over students that do not have similar support. Students with parental support have stronger vocabulary, reading and comprehension to build upon once basic reading skills are developed. Lyon concludes that parental support and socio-economic level impact the child’s language development which directly influences phonological processes and language processing.

However, not all research points to the inevitable failure of children who live in poverty to become competent readers. Rindermann and Baumeister (2015) analyzed the findings of Hart & Risley (1995) and Hoff (2003) and concluded that parental decisions to interact with and educate their children was a stronger factor for academic success than socioeconomic status alone. “Educational behavior of parents is more important than global socioeconomic status for explaining differences in children's cognitive development” (Rindermann & Baumeister, 2015, p. 137). Rindermann and Baumeister state that when parents ensure their children are provided a quality education and spend time reading and developing language skills with their child, they can alter the path or downward spiral toward reading failure. They conclude that environmental considerations, like poverty, are important to consider but have been shown to be secondary if parents provide their children with opportunities to read and develop oral language skills.

Neurobiological. Another causal factor for poor reading achievement can be classified as neurobiological factors. The information in the following section will address students with dyslexia, attention deficits, or the development of sensory organs that cause them to lack foundational skills required to read. It should be noted, some of the characteristics described may be a direct result of poor instruction and the inability to master prerequisite foundational skills; however, those topics will be discussed in detail under the Teacher Instructional Capacity section. Phonological awareness, letter knowledge, rapid automatic naming, working memory and language skills are identified as the skills most associated with reading development (Partanen & Siegel, 2014). Students lacking these skills either were not effectively taught these skills or demonstrate characteristics of a reading disability that require specialized instruction. Dyslexia is sometimes used synonymously with reading disability or specific learning disability.

However, International Dyslexia Association (IDA) provides a very specific and detailed definition on their website:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (IDA Board of Directors, 2012).

The area of dyslexia has been widely researched (Katzir, Kim, Wolf, Morris, & Lovett, 2008; Wolf & Bowers, 1999; Younger & Meisinger, 2020) over the years and many advances can be noted but this factor will not be a primary focus of this research.

Other factors within the neuro-biological realm that have been identified as contributing to reading achievement are attention deficits and attention/hyperactivity. A sample of that research includes Barkley, Grodzinsky, & DuPaul, 1992; Chhabildas, Pennington, & Willcutt, 2001; Ghelani, Sidhu, Jain, & Tannock, 2004; Weiler, Bernstein, Bellinger, & Waber, 2000. Specifically, Dittman (2016) determined inattention was related to the pre-reading skills of 164 pre-school students. Although hyperactivity was not correlated, inattention alone was correlated to phonological processing, alphabetic knowledge, and high frequency word knowledge. The study showed attention problems may compromise reading skills in the early stages of development. While it's important to consider foundational skill weakness and attention, the

need for research and evidence-based practices in phonological processes and word reading for literacy teachers will be reviewed under teacher instructional capacity.

The presence of both a reading disability and attention deficits as a student characteristic is also common. These two characteristics are hard to differentiate due to high rates of comorbidity and the emotional responses children display when they are present. Aaron, Joshi, Palmer, Smith, & Kirby (2002) stated that reading deficits can be attributed to attention problems. Aaron et.al. (2002) noted that listening requires more sustained attention than reading. Therefore, when diagnosing students, consideration of attention problems only, reading deficits only or both attention problems and reading deficits need to be evaluated and taken into consideration. Aaron et al. (2002) proposes the need for more detailed diagnostic tools to be created and evaluated with this information in mind. More research is needed on the impacts of attention on phonological awareness skills since these processes require the ability to listen, hold onto sounds, and then manipulate those sounds for output response.

A final consideration under neurobiological factors related to literacy is “the integrity of a child’s health and sensory organs, since the window for the establishment of such skills as language is relatively brief” (Snow et al., 1998, p.43). Obviously, a child’s vision and hearing are important to a child’s learning. Hearing loss in particular can have a devastating impact on the development of language. Educators must be proactive in instructional approaches and be prepared to intervene quickly if they suspect problems with a child’s hearing or vision (Snow et al., 1998).

Poverty and neurobiological factors that impede reading skill development are important for the literacy teacher to understand and appreciate if they are to build their own capacity to support the learners who exhibit these individual student characteristics. However, some of the

leading reading researchers maintain that through explicit, systematic instruction, most students can learn to read if their intelligence is within the normal range (Moats & Tolman, 2019; Stanovich, 1984; Young, 2020). Individual student characteristics impact reading achievement, but teacher capacity and curricular materials are important factors to consider as well.

Curriculum Weaknesses

As mentioned in the Introduction, in 2000, The National Reading Panel report was published and defined the core skills that needed to be part of literacy instruction. These skills were alphabetic, fluency, and comprehension. The foundational skills were defined as alphabetic, which included phonemic awareness instruction and phonics instruction. Phonemic awareness instruction addressed the ability to focus on and manipulate individual sounds and phonemes, in spoken words. Phonics instruction addressed the systematic and explicit instruction of letter-sound relationships to decode and encode. Fluency instruction was described as a process that needed attention to accuracy and automaticity. For example, when students have mastered phonemic awareness and phonics skills, these processes become automatic; thus, freeing up the student's working memory capacity to process new information. Comprehension instruction included vocabulary and overall text comprehension instruction. The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) report initiated conversations about how reading was being taught and how prepared teachers were to teach foundational skills to all students. The report stressed how teachers implement a reading curriculum and teacher's understanding about the process of learning to read, are both essential. However, while the report highlighted the type of curriculum that included the skills described above, it did not make mention of a specific program or curricular materials.

According to Great Schools Partnerships and the Glossary of Education Reform's website, "The term curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program" (Great Schools Partnership, 2015). This broad definition can include, but is not limited to, learning standards, lesson objectives, materials used for instruction and assessment methods to evaluate the student learning. The purpose of curriculum is to provide teachers with an outline and structure of what needs to be taught in the classroom according to The United States Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). However, it is important to distinguish between a formal curriculum and the enacted curriculum, which refers to how teachers interpret and implement the specified curriculum by daily decisions made for content and learning experiences. It is also important to note that in District A, and specifically at LEOES, the distinction between these two may be fundamental causes of results in reading achievement levels (which will be addressed later in this document in relation to teacher instructional capacity.)

Formal Curriculum. Snow et al. (1998) published their report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, which provided recommendations for reading instruction at a time when concerns about the levels of literacy achievement and the rate of decline were a major national focus. The declining achievement in reading across the nation called for improvements in the teaching of reading. "Excellent instruction may be possible only if schools are organized in optimal ways; if facilities, curriculum materials, and support services function adequately; and if children's home languages are taken into account in designing instruction" (Snow et al., 1998, p.6). Curriculum designs were to include the alphabetic principle, reading sight words, reading words by mapping sounds and developing fluency skills through practice to gain comprehension. Resources and tools should not initially teach students to use pictures to monitor word

identification but emphasize the value of the alphabetic principle and letter-sound correspondences (Snow et al., 1998).

Other experts, including the National Research Council and National Reading Panel, supported the recommendations of Snow et al. (1998). Ehri (1998; 2017) recommended that early reading instruction focus on a sequential order of decoding, analogy, contextual analysis, and sight word recognition and cited the research showing the relationship between phonemic decoding, sight word-reading, and spelling patterns. Bennet (2012) also supported the importance of providing instruction in the five key areas of reading: 1) Phonological Awareness, 2) Phonics, 3) Fluency, 4) Vocabulary and 5) Comprehension. Additionally, differentiated instruction, the use of formative assessments, and the need for evidence-based instructional practices were discussed in Bennet's (2012) Best Practices of Literacy Instruction as essential components to a literacy curriculum.

More recently, the term Structured Literacy (SL), described by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), is used to identify key components of an effective literacy curriculum:

Structured literacy teaching is the most effective approach for students who experience unusual difficulty learning to read and spell printed words. The term refers to both the content and methods or principles of instruction. It means the same kind of instruction as the terms multisensory structured language education and structured language and literacy (IDA Structured Literacy Fact Sheet, 2020).

The critical elements of SL are phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Systematic and cumulative, explicit, and diagnostic principles guide the evidence-based practices for SL. See Table 12 below for more detailed information on Structured Literacy Instruction Elements & Principles.

Table 12*Structured Literacy Instruction Elements & Principles*

Critical Elements of Structured Literacy	Description
Phonology	Study of sound structure of spoken words; Phonological awareness includes rhyming, counting words in spoken sentence, clapping syllables in spoken words. An important part of phonology is phonemic awareness- the ability to segment words into their component sounds (phonemes). Phoneme- the smallest unit of sound in a language; example the word <i>cap</i> has 3 phonemes (/k/, /a/, /p/).
Sound-Symbol Association	Once students develop awareness of phonemes, they must learn how to map the phonemes to symbols/printed letters. Sound-symbol association must be taught and mastered in 2 directions: visual to auditory (reading) and auditory to visual (spelling). Students must master the blending of sounds & letters into words as well as segmenting of whole words into individual sounds. Instruction of sound-symbol association is often referred to as phonics.
Syllable Instruction	Syllable- a unit of oral or written language with one vowel sound. Instruction includes teaching the 6 basic syllable types in the English language: closed, vowel-consonant-e, open, consonant-le, r-controlled, and vowel pair. Knowledge of syllable types is an important organizing idea. By knowing the syllable type, the reader can better determine the sound of the vowel in the syllable. Syllable division rules heighten the reader's awareness of where a long, unfamiliar word may be divided for great accuracy in reading the word.
Morphology	Morpheme- the smallest unit of meaning in the language. Structured literacy includes the study of base words, roots, prefixes, suffixes. Ex. The word <i>instructor</i> contains the root <i>struct</i> , which means <i>to build</i> , the prefix <i>in</i> , which means <i>in</i> or <i>into</i> , and the suffix <i>or</i> , which means <i>one who</i> . An instructor is one who builds knowledge in his/her students.
Syntax	The set of principles that dictate the sequence & function of words in a sentence in order to convey meaning. This includes grammar, sentence variation, and mechanics of language.
Semantics	The aspect of language concerned with meaning. Instruction in the comprehension of written language must be in place from the beginning.
Guiding Principles for Teaching Critical Elements	Description

Systematic & Cumulative	Structured literacy instruction is systematic and cumulative. Systematic- organization of material follows the logical order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest and most basic concepts & elements and progress methodically to more difficult concepts & elements. Cumulative- each step must be based on the concepts previously learned.
Explicit Instruction	Structured literacy instruction requires the deliberate teaching of all concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction. It is not assumed that students will naturally deduce these concepts on their own.
Diagnostic Teaching	Teacher must be adept at individualized instruction, that meets a student's needs. Instruction is based on careful and continuous assessment, informally and formally. The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity. Automaticity is critical to freeing all the student's attention and cognitive resources for comprehension and expression.

Note. Source: IDA (2017) *Dyslexia in the Classroom- What every teacher needs to know*.

Reading foundational standards are also defined in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2010). The skills included as foundational standards are print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency. However, according to the CCSS these foundational skills are expected to be mastered by the end of 5th grade since there are no longer foundational skills identified by 6th grade. Moats (2019), a contributor to the development of CCSS, among others, have criticized the CCSS standards for not acknowledging that across the nation students continue to advance to the next grade level without having mastered foundational reading skills necessary to be proficient readers, further dividing literacy levels and access to learning opportunities for all students across the nation.

In the next sections, I will explain the “formal” versus “enacted” curriculum challenges as they exist in District A and LEOES through my personal observations and experience. It is important to understand the historical context of curriculum within districts as they relate directly to teacher instructional choices.

Enacted Curriculum in District A. In 1999, when I began teaching in District A, Open Court, a reading curriculum published by McGraw Hill and based on foundational reading skills, was the reading series used at the elementary level. The program provided a structured scope and sequence and resources for teachers to teach phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. As a new 1st grade teacher, the structures and routines in Open Court provided me with explicit instructions for how to teach and what to use to teach my students to read. The Open Court series was removed as the reading curriculum resource in District A around 2004 and a reading series published by Houghton Mifflin was adopted for use in reading instruction. This series did not include explicit instructional strategies nor resources in the areas of phonological awareness and phonics instruction. As a result, foundational skills were not taught, or taught at individual teachers' discretion, depending on the teacher's instructional capacity and access to resources. Houghton Mifflin did have a robust comprehension component, but students at the earlier grades were lacking instruction in the essential foundational skills of learning to read, phonological awareness and phonics.

Also, during this time, the elementary schools had learning specialists to support teachers in all content areas. Learning specialists supported teachers as student strengths and weaknesses in reading skills were determined. School level common assessments on skills taught were developed by grade level teams during professional learning communities (PLC). Many times, since the Houghton Mifflin reading curriculum emphasized comprehension, the grade level common assessments prioritized comprehension skills, leaving foundational skill weaknesses unclear. Without systematic phonics instruction identified within the Houghton Mifflin program, diagnostic assessments and foundational reading skills were overlooked among some elementary teachers. The support of a learning specialist was a tremendous resource for schools; however, it

added one more layer of inconsistency for schools and even grade levels to overcome depending on the level of expertise the learning specialist with specific content areas or child-development knowledge.

In 2009, states worked together to develop a standard curriculum in reading and math. The CCSS standards represented another attempt on the part of the U.S. to establish consistency in expectations for reading, writing, speaking & listening literacy skills which were required to prepare students to be college and career ready. During the rollout of the CCSS to District A staff in 2010, the funding for learning specialists was no longer considered a priority by the new leadership at District A. Unlike other school districts in Maryland, these teacher supportive positions were removed from all elementary buildings in District A without any specific explanation other than funding. Also, it should be noted that the elementary ELA supervisor was replaced.

The newly hired elementary ELA supervisor convinced the system of the need for primary grade teachers to have a solid understanding of foundational reading skills. Reading consultants, one who volunteered to work with adults who could not read and one who was trained by Louisa Moats, were consultants hired to provide professional development in foundational literacy skills. The one consultant was a National LETRS trainer who worked closely with the other consultant and specialized in explicit instruction in phonological awareness and phonics. Primary grade teachers in District A were provided this required training. The training was based on *The Simple View of Reading* (Hoover & Gough, 1990) and *Scarborough's Rope Model* (Scarborough, 2001) and provided teachers with essential information about the importance of phonological awareness and phonics. However, the training did not provide teachers with a sequential and comprehensive set of materials to use while

instructing their students. Additionally, teachers noted that the consultants were abrasive and accusatory during their presentation of information, making some teachers defensive about their instructional capacity in foundational reading skills.

During this same time period, with the loss of learning specialists in elementary schools and the new CCSS, the District A elementary instructional supervisors encouraged principals to departmentalize staff in order to simplify professional development by the content areas of reading, math, science, or social studies. The intention was for teachers to become the expert in one or two CCSS subject areas. This new departmentalization initiative included 1st through 5th grade teachers but did not consider the developmental or learning trajectories of primary-age students. Additionally, at that time, teachers were no longer encouraged to use the Houghton Mifflin reading series, leaving them with various choices of materials to use and causing more inconsistency within the district.

Since the changes described above occurred approximately 10 years ago, the District A literacy professional development for elementary teachers has focused on increasing teacher understanding of effective ways to teach reading with a heavy emphasis on word recognition skills. Currently the “formal reading curriculum” in District A attempts to address foundational reading skills and CCSS, but a specific series is not provided. The teacher and supervisor-developed curriculum is housed on Schoology, our Learning Management System (LMS), and is organized by the following categories: Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop, and Word Study: Phonics/Spelling depending on the specific grade level. This curriculum is revised annually and now includes some elements of Structured Literacy like phonology, sound-symbol association, and morphology. The current district reading curriculum has many components in place at each grade level. Components supported by research for phonological awareness, phonics, syllable

instruction, language, writing, and comprehension instruction can be found, but the cohesive and sequential elements are dependent upon teacher knowledge, or the level of support provided to each school. Because of this, the curriculum does not align with the guiding principles of SL. District A curriculum is not systematic, cumulative, explicit, and diagnostic across the elementary grades.

The ELA department has shared the phrase, “When we know better, we do better!” frequently over the years, exemplifying their belief that to grow professionally teachers must be constantly learning. However, the necessary support required for teachers to “do better” is dependent on individual decisions made within the district and the school. Based on my own personal experiences and work as a classroom teacher, Title I teacher, administrator, and literacy coach within the district, I have worked closely with a variety of teachers who have shared thoughts and feelings with me which informed the next statement. Over the past decade, many primary grade literacy teachers have felt disrespected by outside consultants, were forced to teach reading to more students without regard to students’ developmental needs, and had their known curriculums discredited as being ineffective. Inconsistency of materials, instructional time provided, and support for the implementation of evidence-based early literacy practices may have contributed to the lack of reading achievement at LEOES.

As noted above, an enacted curriculum refers to how teachers interpret and implement the specified curriculum. Without proper training and support for teachers at the building level, the formal curriculum becomes the enacted curriculum in various contexts. Also as described above, District A literacy curriculum was replaced by teacher and supervisor created components, while primary grade literacy teachers were left without the research and evidence-based materials and resources of a systematic and cumulative literacy curriculum or the support from school-based

literacy specialists. In the past ten years, the system has purchased instructional materials to be used to teach the foundational reading skills needed in pre-kindergarten to 3rd grades. However, the materials are not part of a comprehensive reading program that includes a cumulative scope and sequence. So, even though the materials do provide teachers with resources (such as 95% Group Inc. Phonological Awareness Lessons, Decodable Readers from various companies, Sopris West's Phonics and Spelling through Phoneme- Grapheme Mapping, and Harvey and Goudvis' Comprehension Tool Kit) to explicitly teach phonological awareness, phonics, and comprehension, there is no sequencing. The result is that teachers use the materials inconsistently, each according to the individual's level of knowledge, prior experiences, and varying levels of support from the district. This results in inconsistent instructional practices throughout the district and school levels. An additional problem for teachers is that the organization, availability, and access to these materials varies, depending on schools. Some schools have enough materials for each teacher to have a personal copy while other schools have only enough materials for the grade-level teams to share. All teachers have access to the LMS, Schoology, but the resources described for use in the curricular documents may be online, in the library, in grade level pods, or in specific teacher classrooms. Planning for instruction is not an easy process, and the enacted early literacy curriculum differs from building to building.

As accountability standards increased through PARCC, standards-based instruction became the next District A elementary literacy priority, lasting approximately five years. This included specific training on how to deal with the complexity of the reading and writing standards, but again, the training and resources to teach the standards were not consistently available to all staff at all schools. Most recently, books and lesson seeds were provided to schools for distribution for all elementary grade teachers for standards-based, read-aloud

instruction, but the training and support for effective use of these resources were not consistently available to all teachers. As a school-based literacy coach who worked with teachers at LEOES, I was able to support teachers with backward mapping, planning using data, and finding specific resources for literacy instruction. However, this position began in the 2018-2019 school year and will be funded for only three years through the SRCL grant. As I worked with teachers, information learned about the formal curriculum and its implementation was noted for the district office, but only three elementary schools had access to this support. It should be noted that surrounding districts have at least one additional instructional support position for each elementary school, but this type of instructional support for teachers is not a priority for District A, even though supervisors and principals have requested these supportive positions. Various research and evidence-based practices and some essential elements of SL can be found in District A's curricular documents but not in a manner that is diagnostic, systematic, or sequential for teachers. This means essential components continue to be missing pieces to the actual literacy instructional block.

Intervention Variability. Intervention, whether it is a specific program, or the practices required to intervene when students do not master foundational reading skills, impacts the formal or enacted curriculum. In 2014, the special education department in District A created a document titled Intervention: Quick Facts Approved Reading, Writing, and Math Intervention Programs to identify approved interventions and explain specific details about each of those interventions. This information was compiled because many schools were purchasing different interventions to use with their struggling learners, so an attempt was made to ensure procedures were more consistent. The Quick Facts booklet and several flow charts- "if this, then do this" - were shared with administrative staff and all teachers to use as a guide when students showed

specific signs of literacy deficits. Student Services Teams (SST) and Individual Education Program (IEP) Teams were to use the information to support their action plans and documentation of ways the school and teachers intervened with each student. It was my observation that the intention of these resources was to provide consistent structures for school level teams to intervene with students who struggled in specific areas of learning.

Early identification of reading deficits and the manner in which the intervention takes place are key determinants for many students (Torgesen, 1998; Volkmer, Galuschka, Schulte-Korne, 2019). The use of universal screeners and various assessment options to determine student mastery skill levels in phonological awareness and alphabetic knowledge are all needed for the early identification process and intervention to begin. The assessment options, formal and informal, need to be transparent and accessible to the teacher when using the curricular documents to proactively plan for effective early intervention. Research evidence continues to show phonological awareness skills are a strong predictor of reading abilities. Partanen and Siegel (2014) examined skills along the phonological awareness continuum. Advanced phonological awareness skills, like phoneme manipulation, were described to be too early to assess for kindergartners. So, while intervening, developmental expectations and early identification measures are needed to identify specific reading deficits crucial to the intervention process. This process, of course, requires structures and expectations for progress monitoring that can be sustained by support provided by a knowledgeable designee or literacy specialist. Therefore, consistent, and effective intervention practices have not been available to all students in District A.

Letter knowledge was a significant predictor of literacy skills of 6-year-old students and was a predictor of reading for students between kindergarten and 10th grade (Partanen & Siegel,

2014) and kindergarten and 4th grade (Leppanen, Aunola, Niemi, & Nurmi, 2008). When students do not receive research and evidence-based intervention, reading deficits widen. Explicit instruction for kindergartners in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonemic decoding, letter naming, writing, orthographic awareness, vocabulary, oral reading fluency and spelling have all shown positive results in the reading ability of students in 1st and 3rd grades (Partanen & Siegel, 2014). Using research and evidence-based materials and practices addressing these foundational skills for intervention are needed for students struggling to read. Partanen & Siegel do state that more research is needed to determine if instruction in these skills prior to intervention makes positive impacts for a proactive method. The word intervention was used throughout this article, but I would argue that it could be used interchangeably with targeted, explicit instruction according to early literacy identification measures. All primary grade teachers in District A do not have access to the support needed to coordinate and implement effective intervention techniques for research and evidence-based early literacy instruction.

According to Costa, Edwards, and Hooper (2016), reading problems could be effectively dealt with during the preschool years if students who are predisposed to have reading deficits can be identified and trained accordingly during primary school as preventative measures. Therefore, in order to receive this instruction, teachers must have a clear understanding of all foundational reading skills and access to research and evidence-based resources. In Cohen, Mather, Schneider, and White's 2017 report, kindergarten through 3rd grade teachers were surveyed to determine their knowledge level of reading instructional strategies. They found that teachers who did not have application knowledge and/or code-based concepts were not able to intervene successfully with struggling readers. The study suggested the use of scripted, code-based reading programs but did not guarantee proficiency in reading skills. Primary grade literacy teachers and

interventionists need to be experts in reading instruction and the curriculum to ensure natural connections can be made through deliberate instruction. Furthermore, scripted intervention programs, often taught by an instructional assistant in District A and seen to be the “magic bullet”, are not always the answer for struggling readers. In my experience as an administrator who led SST meetings, teachers not confident in their ability to intervene with a struggling reader default to the option of sending the student out of the classroom for a boxed intervention program without understanding the foundational skills the program emphasizes.

As we consider the foundational reading skill progression for initial instruction and intervention components, early literacy curriculum and instruction need to be implemented in a systematic and cumulative manner. Alphabetic principles, phonological awareness, and print readiness skills must be introduced to students in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten to build the foundation of reading skills (Baker, Santiago, Masser, Nelson, Turtura, 2018). This foundation can be explored through language, print, play, modelling, and practice in an organized and safe environment. Teacher knowledge and perception of the importance of these skills can impact the achievement level of students in these primary grades. In 1st grade, students move to more in-depth phonological awareness and phonics skills which help them to begin to develop automaticity while blending and decoding words and phrases. Sound manipulation and sound/spelling patterns are taught to build confidence while reading and writing (Kilpatrick, 2015). As students transition to second grade and beyond, they begin to delve into the more advanced phonological awareness concepts, phonics skills and fluency. Reading and writing multisyllabic words become an expectation by the end of second grade. Students are expected to be able to fluently read and comprehend basic grade level text (CCSS, 2010). Depending on the teacher and his or her knowledge of early literacy instruction, along with instructional supports at

the school, the initial instruction, materials used, and intervention provided to the student may vary greatly.

Students who are taught using research and evidence-based materials can follow the path of reading acquisition mentioned above with appropriate accuracy, rate, and comprehension. My experience tells me that literacy teachers, in addition to having access to a strong curriculum, need to be able to diagnose and prescribe instruction to all students, even though they arrive to their classroom along various points of this continuum. The curriculum available to teachers as a resource, organized in a logical manner and following a scope and sequence that research supports, is necessary. The process in which intervention is provided to those students struggling to learn to read is just as important as the initial instruction which is dependent on teacher instructional capacity.

Teacher Instructional Capacity

Based on my experiences and research, students can learn to read when their teacher has the capacity to acknowledge curricular weaknesses, determine the student's level of mastery of foundational skill areas, and can supplement with targeted, systematic, and explicit instruction to meet the personal needs of the student. However, not all teachers have these required skills to meet the needs of all students learning to read. "Teachers are using flawed reading practices not because they're ignorant, ill-prepared, or incompetent. They are doing it because...they are being told to use them—usually by deeply trusted sources, like cherished mentors, colleagues, or the popular curriculum sitting in their classrooms" (Sawchuk, 2019, para.7). Even when teachers are not being directed to implement flawed practices, they require training, support, and time to use research and evidence-based practices, like those outlined in the Structured Literacy framework. When considering the success of learning to read in elementary school, teacher capacity to use

research and evidence-based practices have tremendous impacts on all students, not just students who struggle in the primary grades. Just as students come to school along various learning continuums, teachers do as well. Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter (2010) completed a study that showed positive impacts of districts that provided literacy coaches to support teachers with varying skill levels in literacy instruction. Before looking deeper into ways to increase current teacher instructional capacity, the factor of teacher knowledge about research and evidence-based early literacy instruction is important to consider.

Lack of Knowledge about Research & Evidence-based Instruction. Research and evidence-based practices for early literacy instruction have been important to researchers and educators for many years. However, in ESSA evidence-based practices are emphasized over research-based practices. ESSA defines evidence-based according to the type of study conducted, not simply the outcome from the study. When evaluating interventions, practices, or materials, the context and fidelity are important to evidence-based criteria. Federal law provides specific elements of evidence-based instruction and materials but allows for states to have autonomy when serving their specific communities. According to Evidence-Based Practices in School Improvement (2016), evidence-based interventions are defined through one of four levels of evidence: strong evidence, moderate evidence, promising evidence, or demonstration of a rationale which confirm improvement of student outcomes. These levels are important for educators to understand as they approach school improvement planning and programming.

Limited Understanding of Foundational Skills. Research found on the topic of reading acquisition is broad and complex, but points to the importance of mastering foundational reading skills. While considering specific foundational areas of reading development, phonemic awareness and phonics have proven to be vital skills to reading and writing for many years

(Flesch, 1955; Chall, 1967). *Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able To Do*, written by Louisa Moats in 1999, reiterated the need for explicit instruction in basic reading skills like phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and phonics. Moats' research provided a detailed explanation for the problem with properly teaching students to read. Moats concluded that teachers who do not understand the complex process and details of reading acquisition will continue to have non-readers (Moats, 1999). Despite having valid and reliable research on the importance of explicitly teaching foundational reading skills, some teachers continue to lack this knowledge/skill for alphabetic principles, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency.

Even 20 years later, Moats supports the same message that teaching reading is difficult (Moats, 2020). Moats (2019) continues to provide training for new and experienced teachers through various professional development means. She defines phonemic awareness as, "The conscious awareness of individual speech sounds, consonants and vowels in spoken syllables and the ability to consciously manipulate those sounds" (Moats & Tolman, 2019 p. 7). The awareness of the alphabetic system and its most basic intricacies does not come naturally as an innate skill, so teachers must be versed in the basic reading acquisition skills like the alphabetic principle and phonological awareness to explicitly teach reading (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018). According to Moats & Tolman (2019) phonological awareness concepts continue to be misunderstood by some classroom teachers due to their limited understanding of the topic. In District A, primary teachers have access to materials of instruction for phonological awareness skills, but the consistent use of these materials is not transparent. When I have worked with teachers and instructional assistants, they identify reasons that may be attributed to a lack of understanding and/or not valuing the importance of the phonological awareness skill progression.

Phonics instruction research has been essential relative to the development of reading instruction for students with dyslexia and struggling readers (Slavin, Madden, Davis, & Lake, 2010). According to Put Reading First, “Systematic phonics instruction is significantly more effective than non-systematic or no phonics instruction in helping to prevent reading difficulties among at risk students and in helping children overcome reading difficulties” (Armbruster, Lehr, Osborn, & Adler, 2001, p.13). Additionally, phonics instruction supports the understanding and application of our writing system to show the relationships between decoding and encoding. More recently, evidence has shown that an emphasis on explicitly teaching the relationships between reading and spelling aids in learning to read (Ouellette, Martin-Chang, & Rossi, 2017). Systematic phonics instruction will produce the best results for most readers and spellers, not analytical phonics (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018; Moats & Tolman, 2019). Teachers need to understand phonics, decoding and encoding, along with valuing its importance in teaching students to read so they can implement the best practices into their literacy instruction. When teachers understand the importance of phonics skills, they provide the time needed to explicitly teach, provide practice, and progress-monitor decoding and encoding skills for mastery.

Rasinski (2019) research on fluency instruction shows there is a lack of focus on fluency instruction in the primary grade classrooms. Understanding the appropriate time to emphasize fluency instruction while teaching reading plays an important role as well. For example, beginning fluency instruction with oral reading passages skips over the fluency work that builds automaticity of letter naming, sound identification, word fluency, and sentence fluency which are critical skills (Moats & Tolman, 2019). Strong correlations have been confirmed showing students with better fluency skills have improved comprehension, less frequent referrals to special education, and higher graduation rates (Jones, Ostojic, Menard, Picard, & Miller, 2017).

There is a substantial body of historical and current research that indicates the effectiveness of explicit reading instruction in early grades, so teachers of reading must understand those skills and the instructional implications (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018; Foorman et. al., 1998; Moats & Tolman, 2019; Snow et al., 1998). Too often, teachers begin fluency instruction at a level that is too advanced for the students. David Kilpatrick (2020) describes this critical skill as phonemic proficiency, not just phonemic learning, as a precursor to automaticity and accuracy with word reading. Before students can be fluent in reading a passage, they must have automaticity in the pre-requisite foundational skills in phonemic awareness and word recognition.

Limited Capacity to Target Instruction. Understanding the foundational skills for initially teaching students to read is important for primary grade teachers but targeting instruction for struggling readers is vital for all elementary grade teachers. Struggling readers require additional assessments to determine specific skill deficits, more time to practice, multisensory techniques, and progress-monitoring to determine mastery of developmental skills. Teachers need to be provided with ongoing support to be sure student reading deficits are identified and addressed effectively for all students. Once teachers have the solid understanding of how to initially instruct foundational reading skills and intervene with students who struggle, they need to be able to make meaningful instructional decisions using student data to target instruction in phonological awareness and phonics that align with evidence-based early literacy instruction.

Collaboration among educators is a vital evidence-based approach for literacy improvement. Educators working collaboratively to find solutions and planning for evidence-based literacy instruction can increase reading achievement for all students when professional learning focuses on improved classroom instructional approaches (Slavin, Madden, Davis, &

Lake, 2010). Reading interventions cannot be the initial step educators take to improve the skills of struggling readers, however; too often teachers do not have the needed time or resources to intervene with struggling readers. Rasinski (2017) explained the need for teachers to find ways to improve reading instruction during the core instructional time, as just focusing on reading interventions is not enough. There are specific steps teachers must take to teach literacy to all students without having to rely heavily on intervention programs. Snow et al. (1998) found there was little proof that struggling readers needed anything radically different from all learners, just more intensive support. "Childhood environments that support early literacy development and excellent instruction are important for all children. Excellent instruction is the best intervention for children who demonstrate problems learning to read" (Snow et al., 1998, p. 3). The Structured Literacy framework identifies excellent instructional components as phonology, sound-symbol associations, syllable, morphology, syntax, and semantic skills used during the literacy block to address the needs of struggling readers. To ensure all students have access to effective reading instruction, support for teachers in building deep content knowledge and specific reading expertise allows for differentiated student needs to be met (Cowan, 2016). The alphabetic principle, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency must be taught by using multi-sensory techniques and consistent evidence-based practices by the classroom teacher and instructional support staff (Gersten et al., 2008). Schools and districts must afford the necessary supports for the shared responsibility to provide explicit instruction that follows a systematic and cumulative sequence that targets individual student strengths and weaknesses (Cowan, 2016; Moats, 2019, 1998; Treiman, 2018). In order to effectively target early literacy instruction, teachers need to have detailed data about their students' strengths and weaknesses.

Limited Access to Data to Drive Instruction. While considering essential components of instructional decisions made while intervening with struggling readers, using data for identification and progress-monitoring is important. The foundational skills of phonological awareness and phonics encompass very specific and cumulative skills along a continuum for students to master as they learn to read (Chard & Dickson, 1999; Moats & Tolman, 2019). Assessment procedures and data analysis is a vital step to consider as instructional decisions are made during core instruction and intervention (Gersten et al., 2008; Kilpatrick, 2020). Options for informal and formal assessments to determine strengths and weaknesses in early literacy skills are factors to consider while looking at literacy achievement. Deciding which assessments to use, how to administer the assessments and analyze the results can be another challenge for classroom teachers. For many years, District A did not use or have access to adequate literacy assessment tools for all students in kindergarten to 3rd grade. With the lack of assessment options and knowledge, teachers resorted to recommending students for the special education assessment process, which is time consuming and does not align with evidence-based practices detailed for early literacy skills.

In 2004, notes from the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (2004) began to define exact procedures for the identification of students with specific learning disabilities instead of using the discrepancy model. Tiered instructional steps needed to be in place for effective reading intervention to occur, a process that came to be known as Response to Intervention (RtI). As students began to show deficits in foundational skill areas, the level of instruction, intensity in which it occurred, and the how student progress was monitored were all defined through the RtI process. According to RtI, tiered instructional structures are the first step to checking the appropriateness of the screening data for all students (Van Der Heyden, n.d.).

While considering specific factors for low literacy achievement, the lack of assessment options and training for tiered instruction can be considered relevant. According to Edward Shapiro, “Although the assessment components of RTI (universal screening and progress monitoring) are essential elements of implementation, it is the instruction that occurs as a function of the outcomes of the assessments that truly drives the changes, we hope to see in students who are identified as being at some level of risk for not meeting academic expectations” (Shapiro, para. 1). Until the introduction of NWEA Map Growth assessments in District A, primary teachers were not provided specific assessments to determine student mastery levels in targeted foundational reading skills which may have contributed to the continual reading deficits. However, now the MAP Growth assessment data for K-12 teachers to use for planning literacy instruction is available, but the time needed for effective training has not been provided to ensure teachers could administer the test appropriately, interpret the results, and plan for targeted instruction within the literacy learning continuum.

Not all students require the level of assessments as struggling readers. For some students, additional testing is wasted instructional time. According to Valencia and Riddle Buly (2004):

The value of in-depth classroom assessment comes from teachers having a deep understanding of reading processes and instruction, thinking diagnostically, and using the information on an ongoing basis to inform instruction (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Place, 2002; Shepard, 2000). Requiring teachers to administer grade-level classroom assessments to all students regardless of individual student needs would not yield useful information or help teachers make effective instructional decisions (Valencia & Riddle Buly, 2004, p. 528).

These authors emphasized the importance of the continuous professional development and time for teachers to use evidence-based classroom assessment practices for the effective implementation of literacy instruction for struggling readers.

Once teachers have their students' identified strengths and weaknesses in phonological awareness and phonics, planning for explicit, systematic, and targeted early literacy instruction is the next step. Many factors, such as time and resources, need to be considered by the classroom teacher to understand data to drive instruction to meet the needs of all students. Time is an essential part of this decision-making process: how much time will be used for the direct instruction, how much time will be provided for practice with corrective feedback, and how much time for the application of learned skills. Resources are another part of the decision-making process for the teacher, but this is highly dependent on district and school level decisions for curricular materials and the level of support provided to grade level teams. In order to implement evidence-based interventions and approaches for early literacy improvements, the importance of teaching across the curriculum and throughout the day will be discussed next.

Teach/Reinforce Skills across the Curriculum. Elementary teachers typically are generalists. This means they teach all subject areas, which allows them to make connections across the subject areas and curriculum. Proficient teachers of reading are aware of the specific skills individual students are developing as a reader and ensure ample opportunities to apply and practice those skills throughout the day. As stated above, neither the literacy block nor intervention time provide enough time for struggling readers to master skills. Additional time to practice and apply beginning reading skills can be integrated throughout the day in all content areas. Skilled teachers of reading use this time to progress-monitor students' ability to apply skills, providing immediate feedback and error correction that can be integrated across the

curriculum each day. A ‘healthy literacy diet’ is important, according to Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers, developed by National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). The authors state, “the ‘healthy diet’ can be useful as a way for the class or subject teacher, the special education teacher, the parents and the student to identify which areas will be targeted by whom” (NEPS, 2019, p. 7). Elementary teachers must be experts in the progression of literacy development, not just isolated skills, so time can be maximized when students begin to struggle. When instruction is provided by teachers focusing on natural relationships between content information and foundational reading skills, additional time struggling readers require to build their skills to be effective readers can be available (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, & Murphy, 2014). The factor of using evidence-based literacy practices is essential when looking at improving literacy achievement, but building teacher capacity to understand foundational reading skills, target instruction for struggling readers, and use data to drive instruction throughout the school day are critical as we look at changing teacher practices.

Changing Teacher Practice. Teachers enter the workforce with inconsistent preparatory experiences, education, and professional learning goals. As a result, schools and districts are charged with providing support to ensure success for new and experienced teachers. If the appropriate support and training is not provided, teachers may resist professional development that may ask them to change instructional practices.

Teacher Preparation Programs. Researchers like Louisa Moats and Pamela Snow have stressed the importance of teacher preparation programs and teacher knowledge as being a key factor in reading success for students to solve the nation's literacy problems. Harrington (2001) found teacher quality to be the most considerable factor in a student's ability to learn. As teachers begin their career, they need to be provided the most current research for teaching reading, to

have practical experiences using best practices, and to be provided the support to develop into a successful reading teacher that can meet the needs of all students by providing explicit and targeted instruction. Once again, we have known this as essential to teaching reading for over 20 years as documented by Snow et al.:

A critical component in the preparation of pre-service teachers is supervised, relevant, clinical experience providing ongoing guidance and feedback, so they develop the ability to integrate and apply their knowledge in practice. Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the research foundations of reading. Collaborative support by the teacher preparation institution and the field placement is essential. A critical component for novice teachers is the support of mentors who have demonstrated records of success in teaching reading (p. 10).

Not all teacher preparation programs have updated their practices with the evolution of new findings from research or educational practitioners. One example of this is the teaching of the three-cueing systems. It is not clear why colleges and universities continue to teach their prospective teachers about the three-cueing systems, which has been disproven for many years now (Hempenstall, 2012; Seidenberg, 2013).

According to Juel (1991), the main difference between struggling readers and proficient readers is their ability to use letter-sound correspondence effectively and efficiently, a prerequisite skill for reading words. Teacher capacity and the impact on the prevention of reading difficulties is a universal concept that educators, researchers, policymakers, and parents have all agreed upon for many years (, 1998; Seidenberg, 2013). In 1998, Snow et al. reported to the education community that efforts needed to be made to ensure all teachers, not just primary grade teachers, were trained in the research-based essential skills of teaching students to read and

the steps to intervene as needed for building a literate community. Still today, Louisa Moats (2019) supports the same message presented by Snow et al. so many years ago. Teachers must be properly trained to understand reading research that translates into explicit, systematic instruction that emphasizes language, phoneme-awareness, phoneme-grapheme correspondence, and patterns and conventions of print to reach all students.

More recently, according to Jhang (2017), important components to instruction in reading were noted to be school resources, teacher's knowledge, teacher's instruction, and attention to reading activities. The purpose of this research was to focus more attention to reading comprehension and not solely rely on decoding instruction. Reading children's books and actual time to practice reading were explained to be just as important as providing the teachers with reading textbooks. Enriching teacher knowledge was the primary component that impacted reading achievement. Appropriately trained reading teachers and proper teacher preparation coursework were key drivers for ensuring reading achievement. However, another causal factor to consider is teachers' resistance to opportunities for professional learning.

Reluctance to Change Instructional Practice. A common theme among educators is the notion of the pendulum swinging, a result of the constant demand for change and improvements in the education field, which may cause a reluctance to change instructional practices. A negative consequence of this pendulum swinging is teachers' lack of motivation to change instructionally. Contrasting opinions of the Reading Wars, described as phonics-based instruction versus whole language instruction, have persisted as an educational issue that impacts teachers' perceptions of best practices for reading instruction. Castles, Rastle, & Nation (2018) report the beginning of the reading wars goes back more than 200 years to when Horace Mann rallied against the teaching of letters and sounds. They identified the lack of communication between researchers

and educators to be one reason this “Great Debate” (coined by Jean Chall in 1967) persists, “...instead of showing how a foundation of phonic knowledge permits a child to understand and gain experience with text, this imbalance has allowed a characterization of phonics as “barking at print” to continue among educationalists and public figures” (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018, p. 6). Their report *Ending the Reading Wars: Reading Acquisition from Novice to Expert* attempts to clarify this miscommunication and explore the best practices of teaching reading once and for all, but not all teachers have access to or seek current research as a component of their professional learning.

Additionally, teacher perceptions of best practices for teaching reading can be attributed to the minimal amount of time educational stakeholders are able to collaborate to institute change within our current public education structures and within historical contexts (Seidenberg, 2013). Therefore, when considering why teachers did not take heed to the information shared in the National Reading Project (2000) report, Seidenberg notes educators did not value the information provided by the scientific community and concluded, “teaching basic skills to beginning readers was thought to be counterproductive because it stifles children’s natural curiosity about reading and their motivation to learn” (Seidenberg, 2013, p. 14). Additionally, Seidenberg (2013) shared that generations of teachers were taught that basic reading skills will come naturally.

Even in 1998, Snow et al. noted that the different camps, phonics or whole language, have obscured the possible improvements that could have been made for the reading community by further dividing educators. It was a new idea for some teachers that some children just needed a different approach to learning to read by using expert knowledge of how the alphabetic system works to support struggling readers. Teachers had been trained using one approach and then

were asked to shift their practices to a different approach they were not comfortable implementing. Veteran teachers continue to require basic training for best literacy practices since some teachers continue to struggle with basic reading instruction and remain resistant to the application of this knowledge in their classrooms (Klapwijk & Van de Walt, 2011; Mohammed & Amponsah, 2018). Confidence levels of tenured, new, and pre-service teachers impact student progress in literacy development. Ticknor and Cavendish (2015) reported:

As teacher educators, we know that relationships play a role in developing preservice teacher confidence in their own competency. Analysis of the preceding language examples illustrates that bonded relationships provide a supportive context conducive to reflect on their teaching experiences, collaborate with each other to deepen their learning about literacy and share instructional activities with each other (p.11).

Phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and writing were areas where teachers felt less confident due to the explicit structures required to teach skills in these areas. When teachers feel supported in their own learning of concepts and strategies, they will be more productive and less resistant to acquire these skill sets or change instructional practices to increase student learning in their classroom.

Teacher Support. Many primary grade teachers do understand the importance of their ability to teach their students to read. Too often, I have been told by colleagues, they are not comfortable with the assessment procedures, analyzing the results, or understanding where to begin explicit instruction. Because of this, teacher support is critical for students and teachers. Teacher support can be provided in different ways and by different people. Some districts, but not all, have a coach or learning specialist at every school. Support can be provided by building-

based administrators, content supervisors, or by collaboration with peers, but all methods of support require sufficient time to learn and practice strategies and concepts.

According to Moats (2020), teachers are most effective when they are systematic, explicit, and engaging while increasing understanding and mastery of every layer of language instruction. Students do not require the explicit intricacies of language, but it is necessary for the teacher, "...to be an effective teacher—to give students accurate explanations of the English language, including spelling, how spelling is related to meaning, pronunciation, and where the words came from" (Moats, 2020, p. 12). The level of knowledge and skill in evidence-based practices of reading teachers are clearly important, but teacher support is needed to ensure the desired level of expertise that is critical for reading teachers.

Levels of support can be provided to teachers by ensuring the use of research and evidence-based materials, procedures to ensure mastery of foundational literacy skills, and explicit structures and routines that guarantee all students' needs are met with targeted instruction. This can be achieved by ensuring all teachers have access to the support, resources, and time needed to implement research and evidence-based approaches like those defined in Structured Literacy. The framework of Structured Literacy guiding principles and components is not currently being referenced at LEOES for professional learning. Structured Literacy does include evidence-based literacy components and practices to be considered as literacy achievement is reflected on for future support and professional learning for staff.

Some of the many factors to consider for building teacher instructional capacity were mentioned above, but policy impacts were not detailed. Accountability measures and teacher incentives connected to student performance policies will be addressed. According to Rick Hess, author of the book, *The Cage-Busting Teacher*, policy is not necessarily an effective tool for

improving education because policy may require teachers to do something, but often does not enforce the quality criteria to make them do it well. Teacher perceptions about how information is shared with them about early literacy practices, as well as the way expectations are communicated to them, are important to consider as literacy improvement plans are developed moving forward. Teachers' beliefs about incentives to increase reading achievement and the pressures they may feel due to accountability procedures will be considered.

According to *Practical Literacy Matters: Teacher Confidence is Key*, "Teacher confidence and resistance are linked" (Santamaria, Taylor, Park, Keene, van der Mandele, 2010, p.45). The process of teaching reading is complex and interdependent upon the various skills that need to be addressed while considering each individual student's needs. *Child Skills and Teacher Qualifications: Associations with Elementary Classroom Teachers' Reading Instruction for Struggling Readers*, confirmed prior reports that teachers identified working with struggling readers as one of their biggest challenges (Bratsch-Hines, Vernon-Feagans, Varghese, & Garwood, 2017). Teachers' perceptions of themselves as experts in teaching reading, and their belief that teaching struggling readers is difficult, have contributed to teachers' reluctance to change instructional practices. Elementary reading teachers must be experts in identifying reading deficits and the best practices of reading foundational skills and must be willing to change instructional techniques to meet the needs of their students. The lack of communication and understanding from researchers and educators lead to more students becoming struggling readers and to teacher perceptions of best practices remaining unchanged. From my experience as a teacher, literacy coach, and administrator, teachers want to learn new skills and strategies to improve reading instruction, but time and support to learn, practice and implement those newly learned evidence-based strategies is not prioritized at the school or district level.

Drivers for Reading Achievement Improvement at LEOES

As the literacy coach at LEOES, I considered my sphere of influence while contemplating how to address the problem of low reading achievement of 3rd grade students. As discussed in the research reviewed above, to improve 3rd grade literacy achievement, the improvements need to begin as early as possible, at LEOES that means kindergarten. Therefore, while the desired aim is to increase literacy proficiency of 3rd grade students as measured by a 20% increase in the percentage of students scoring above the 50th percentile on the NWEA Map Growth by 2023, the improvement drivers in Figure 2 below specify changes at the K-3 grade levels. Even though a particular focus for early intervention is typically directed to K-2 grade levels, it is essential for struggling readers in 3rd grade to be provided explicit foundational literacy skills, so grades K-3 will be targeted. Figure 2 identifies two primary drivers for improving 3rd grade literacy achievement at LEOES. The primary and secondary drivers are supported by the causal systems analysis and by my personal experience as the Literacy Coach at LEOES since 2018. Teacher instructional practices and availability of materials and resources that support those practices are related. However, in terms of improvements, the focus on teachers' instruction and use of evidence-based practices seemed to be impactful.

Figure 2

*Primary Drivers and Secondary Drivers***Primary Drivers**

*Teachers in k-3 will provide **evidence-based** early literacy instruction based on the **Structured Literacy principles and components**.*

*The k-3 **curricular resources** are **evidence-based** and align with the teaching of **Structured Literacy principles and components**.*

Secondary Drivers

- Teachers have access to and understand how to use student data to identify foundational literacy skill areas for targeted instruction.
- Teachers can identify early literacy curricular materials that are supported by evidence-based practices.
- Teachers provide differentiated literacy instruction and monitor student progress by understanding and applying Structured Literacy principles and components.

- The core literacy curriculum is accessible, clear, and supports the implementation of effective early literacy instructional practices.
- The core literacy curriculum is evidence-based to include guiding principles and components of Structured Literacy.
- The core literacy curriculum identifies a process to intervene with struggling readers that is supported by Structured Literacy framework using intensive and specific materials for identification, explicit and systematic instruction, and effective progress monitoring is used consistently.

To identify specific secondary drivers, I reflected on prior literacy topics highlighted through my work as the literacy coach with the staff at LEOES. Various literacy instructional practices had been discussed through planning, coaching, and other professional learning opportunities (see Appendix A for the Literacy Coaching schedule and topics). Yet, based on my observations and discussions with teachers, there continued to be gaps in the use of explicit and systematic evidence-based literacy instruction among the K-3 teachers at LEOES. For example, the following inconsistencies, which are related to the secondary drivers, were noted through my work as a literacy coach from 2018-2020 before Covid-19 caused schools to shut down on March 13, 2020:

- informal or classroom data were not consistently used to identify student strengths and weaknesses for targeted literacy instruction
- all teachers did not have access to or know which curricular resources were needed for planning foundational literacy instruction and progress monitoring
- instructional strategies used during literacy instruction varied depending on availability of materials, prior experiences, and teachers' knowledge of basic literacy skill progressions
- the level of differentiated literacy instruction varied from teacher to teacher and grade to grade

Research and my own experiences validated the importance of K-3 teachers' skills in accessing and understanding individual student literacy data, ability to identify appropriate and evidence-based curricular materials, and expertise of how to plan for and monitor targeted literacy instruction. Therefore, if teachers can both understand and consistently use these practices, differentiated instruction can be provided so students will be more likely to master critical early literacy skills in primary grades. Figure 3 describes my hypothesis and Theory of Action statement for this investigation in relation to the possible inclusion of Structured Literacy components for increased reading achievement at LEOES.

Figure 3

Theory of Action

If K-3 teachers at LEOES have the knowledge, confidence, and dispositions to target instruction in phonology, sound-symbol associations, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics, which are evidence-based components identified within Structured Literacy,

Then all K-3 students at LEOES will be taught and gain proficiency in critical literacy skills, which will lead to increased literacy achievement as measured by a 20% increase in the percentage of 3rd-grade students scoring at or above the 50th percentile on the 2023 NWEA Map Growth reading assessment.

In order to improve teachers' instructional capacity to plan for and provide targeted instruction in critical reading skills and monitor progress, teachers must be able to differentiate instruction according to student need so that all students can achieve mastery of critical early literacy components. Despite my prior knowledge of the K-3 LEOES teacher instructional practices, there are still unknowns about teacher perceptions about the most effective methods to teach students to read. For instance, while Structured Literacy components and guiding principles were identified in the research as essential for beginning and struggling readers, the framework has not been introduced to the K-3 teachers. Several individual components or basic elements of the framework have been discussed as "best literacy practices" during professional learning with the staff at LEOES, but not the entire framework with common language and practices. Therefore, K-3 foundational literacy instructional components are implemented inconsistently with minimal results. The evidence-based framework of "Structured Literacy" to differentiate and target literacy instruction warrants further exploration with teachers at LEOES. Structured Literacy provides a framework for reading teachers to build instructional capacity to address the needs of all readers, not just struggling readers (Cowan, 2016; Moats, 2019; Spear-Swerling, 2018).

In order to implement the secondary drivers, it is necessary to gain information from K-3 classroom teachers about instructional practices regarding which, if any, components of Structured Literacy are being used and to what extent. Therefore, the Structured Literacy evidence-based components will provide the framework for both obtaining and analyzing

information provided by the teachers through semi-structured individual interviews. The results have the potential for providing a baseline of evidence-based early literacy instruction in K-3 classrooms at LEOES. This can lead to more targeted, user-specific professional learning activities. Information obtained can also inform possible recommendations for instructional improvements that will include teacher understandings and perspectives of evidence-based early literacy instruction, the possible use of the Structured Literacy framework, and barriers that impact the implementation of current teacher practices.

Prior Attempts to Address Low Literacy. There have been prior attempts to increase reading achievement at LEOES. Among the initiatives designed to improve 3rd-grade reading achievement was the addition of a literacy coach. As discussed earlier, I was assigned as the literacy coach for the 2018-2020 school years with funding from The Striving Reader's Grant. The steps taken by me as the literacy coach and specific topics addressed are described briefly below and more specifically in Appendix A and provide a reference point to describe literacy professional learning during the 2018-2021 timeframe.

During the 2018-2019 school year, my first year as a literacy coach, my role and responsibilities included working with four schools, three elementary and one middle school. My focus grades at the elementary schools were 4th and 5th grade teachers and at one elementary school, my work with 4th-grade teachers involved planning small group instruction for struggling readers. I worked with all content area teachers in grades 6-8 at the middle school. This first year was a learning opportunity for everyone since the district never had literacy coaches as a resource. Much of this first year was spent participating in training and preparing my coaching techniques, providing information sessions to the staff about my role and methods of support and relationship-building with staff at each building. The district-identified priorities at LEOES this

first year were focused on the 4th- and 5th- grade teachers and building the capacity of the instructional leadership team for using data for literacy instruction.

During years two and three, the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, the district and school administration recognized that I had minimal time to work on actual coaching cycles (Knight & Knight, 2017) since I traveled to multiple buildings. Therefore, they adjusted my caseload to one elementary school, LEOES, and one middle school. I did work with teachers in grades K-8 but was able to have more time to focus on grade level teams, administrative teams, and specific teachers when requested. Since the Literacy Coach was a supplemental position within the district, the administration was excited to have more instructional support at the school level. I was provided ample time to collaborate with the teachers during staff development days, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and deep planning sessions scheduled monthly with grade level or literacy teachers.

At LEOES, much of my work was focused on the implementation of a universal screener and the use of literacy assessments to drive instruction to meet the students' instructional needs. There was an emphasis on how to plan for basic literacy skill instruction when deficits were identified that included the importance of progress-monitoring, strategies for phonics instruction, and standards-based instructional practices. Additionally, time was available to explore the various resources identified in District A's elementary literacy curriculum, conferring with students to set goals, managing small groups, and writing instruction. Throughout these collaborative experiences, I was informed about the gaps in teachers' understandings of phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in relation to providing differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students. Coaching cycles, using lesson recording with a partnership approach, would be the next focus for my work with the

LEOES staff. While working with teachers through coaching cycles, I would be able to explore my concerns with all students having the opportunity to have highly effective teachers with expert level knowledge in the area of literacy. Too often, in my 24 years as an educator, not all students were provided the quality instruction required to address individual needs when students began to struggle.

Then on March 13, 2020, schools shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic which forced teachers to learn how to teach virtually, hybrid, and rally through traumatic situations. Coaching cycles as described by Jim Knight's Impact Cycle were not utilized during this time. Since staff were in survival mode, I planned with teachers to develop online curriculum, pulled small groups of students who struggled with decoding skills, and remained available for teachers as they requested support, mostly coaching at the surface level as we learned to persevere through these difficult times. The Striving Reader's Grant had expired at the end of the 2020-2021 school year; however, my position as a literacy coach was funded through a different grant in the department of special education in District A. Planning this investigation, awaiting approval from IRB, and conducting procedures occurred during the summer months of 2021, just prior to the new school year beginning with normal school- post pandemic.

I remained a literacy coach at LEOES and one other elementary school in District A for the 2021-2022 school year. A new principal was assigned to LEOES for this school year who requested to utilize the new dean position as a learning coach instead of the traditional position for training future administrators. Several members of high-level district administration described the importance of my remaining at LEOES to "continue the work" from the previous years. LEOES remained in the Targeted Instructional Support (TSI) status according to Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), so my work was to focus on school

improvement in the area of literacy by taking on specific roles to address the following: 1) Identify, monitor, and coach teachers working with students in reading interventions, 2) Collect and maintain data for students identified at risk for reading failure, 3) Plan for and collaborate with classroom teachers as they implement targeted small group reading instruction, 4) Support new administrative team at LEOES, 5) Support new teachers and the special education teachers as they determine focus areas for literacy instruction, and 6) Member of District A's Literacy Team.

In 2019, Maryland's Ready to Read Act passed which set regulations to screen all kindergarten through third grade students who were at risk for reading difficulties. The law included the following: provision of supplemental reading instruction for identified students, annual reporting requirements, and an evaluation of the screening program. The purpose of these requirements emphasized the importance of a preventative approach, early intervention as the key to reading success when caught early, and the difficulty in closing reading opportunity gaps. The Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) assessment in kindergarten only and NWEA Map Growth Reading Assessments for kindergarten through grade 3 were used to identify students at risk to struggle with reading. The implementation of this law began in District A during the 2021-2022 school year which impacted several of my roles and responsibilities at LEOES.

I was named as the Ready to Read Act coordinator for LEOES to collaborate with teachers in K-3 grades to understand and implement the new requirements of the law. Each grade level list is compiled with relevant information about students' strengths and weaknesses to determine specific areas of foundational reading skills to target during small group instruction. The information is located in a central spreadsheet to ensure students are making progress with mastery of basic reading skills and when other strategies need to be explored. In prior years, a

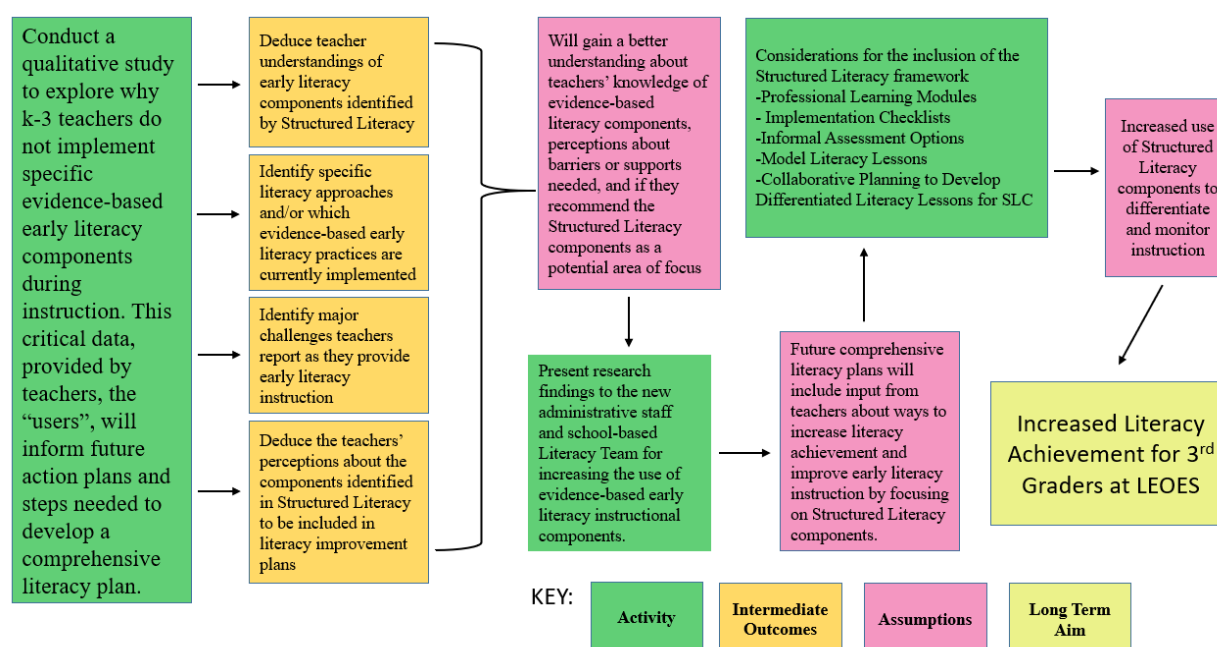
similar student data collection process was implemented but much of the time to review and interpret the data, plan for the instruction needed to address student deficits, and plan for the required progress monitoring was completed during PLCs or deep planning sessions. Although I participated on the LEOES instructional leadership team, varying factors impacted my ability to schedule this needed time with the teachers. First, deep planning was no longer an option due to substitute shortages across District A during the pandemic. Second, math was determined to be the greatest area of need for the teachers and Title 1 staff to target instruction. Third, the school improvement process as a result of being a TSI school, took priority for the work completed during PLCs under the leadership of a coaching consultant from Data Wise collaborating with the administrative and instructional leadership team. Improving teaching and learning in all subject areas was addressed through the revisions of the school improvement plan, identification of a problem of practice, and shifting the culture for learning as a reflective process using evidence to inform the changes needed to move LEOES out of the TSI status. With limited time for literacy professional learning, I had to adjust my focus to working with individual teachers during their planning or outside of school hours which proved to make it more difficult to access the teachers. However, I did see the importance of supporting the work prioritized for the year since changing a culture for professional learning would ultimately impact all instructional practices.

Improvement Process. Despite the work at LEOES to improve early literacy instruction to be more evidence-based, I observed these practices were not occurring consistently across the primary grades. While Structured Literacy was not specifically introduced as a framework, individual skills had been addressed while working with the staff in the previous years. Therefore, I want to investigate more systematically which of the evidence-based components

are or are not being implemented by the K-3 teachers, as well as their perspective about these practices. Figure 4 below presents the proposed improvement process beginning with obtaining information from K-3 teachers as they initially provide early literacy instruction and differentiate for struggling readers. Teacher perspectives about their prior early literacy instruction experiences, understandings about Structured Literacy components, and barriers to implement evidence-based early literacy components were explored through this study. This information gained from the study will lead to the intermediate outcomes, specified below, as well as my assumptions about how the investigation can lead to the long-term aim.

Figure 4

Diagram of Proposed Improvement Chain



Summary

“Reading achievement gaps persist through pedagogical shifts in how to best teach students to read and pass state accountability assessments which typically begin in grade 3. And

that puts them on the dropout track” (Fiester & Smith, 2010, p. 7). Once students enter the dropout track or fall into the downward spiral, they may not recover. Research has demonstrated that proactive early literacy approaches, including explicit and systematic reading instruction, can reduce and prevent reading failure for all but perhaps 2-5% of students (Fiester & Smith, 2010; Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs & Barnes, 2018; Foorman, 2003; Moats & Tolman, 2019; Torgesen, 2004). Just as health care professionals and scientists collaborate to combat disease, educators, researchers, parents, and community members need to prioritize working together to implement a solution to the lack of literacy skills demonstrated by many of our students exiting 3rd-grade (AECF, 2014; Seidenberg, 2013). Teachers in the early grades are critical to improving both early literacy achievement as well as later literacy skills. Therefore, it is important that schools determine if and to what extent proven effective instruction is being provided, specifically to struggling readers. It is then important for schools to provide effective professional learning opportunities to teachers to help them build their own knowledge and instructional practices.

Purpose of the Proposed Investigation

As described in my proposed improvement process, I engaged grades K-3 classroom teachers in a qualitative exploratory study with the aim of identifying which specific evidence-based early literacy components are and are not consistently being used in instruction. I also intended to gain knowledge of how teachers understood and valued the early literacy components in their core instruction with struggling readers. Finally, I explored teachers’ perceptions about the professional learning, resources and supports they felt were needed in order to increase student literacy achievement.

The Structured Literacy framework as described earlier in Section 1 defined the evidence-based components for this investigation. The research was conducted at LEOES, and

procedures are discussed in Section 2. The information obtained through this study has the potential to inform LEOES instructional leadership and the district level ELA department as they plan future literacy initiatives. Hopefully, participating in the study focused teachers on the dimensions of the early literacy achievement problem and the importance of using effective early literacy instruction as well as to consider priorities for next steps and practical solutions.

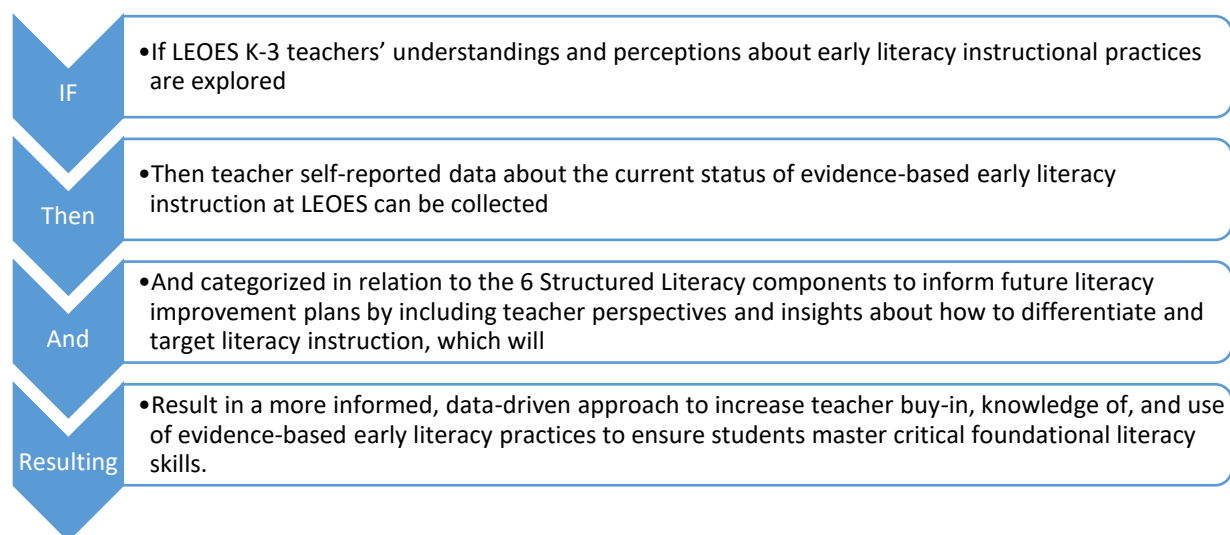
Study Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate the early literacy practices that K-3 classroom teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block. Participating teachers were asked to describe the early literacy instructional approaches they use while teaching students to read. They were also asked questions about barriers they face while intervening with struggling readers and their knowledge of the Structured Literacy Framework. The intent of the study was to gain knowledge from the K-3 general education teachers about critical information needed to plan for school-based comprehensive professional learning activities that could lead to the use of more evidence-based practices during the core literacy block.

The Theory of Action informing this study is described in Section 1 and can be found below in Figure 5. In this section, I present the methodology for the study: the guiding questions, research design, participants, methods, and analysis procedures used for the study.

Figure 5

Theory of Action Chain



Guiding Research Questions

The following questions guided this research study:

1. What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why?
2. Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during literacy instruction?
3. What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers?
4. How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?

The following sections present the research design, methods and procedures used to address these questions.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used as the methodology for the investigation because the data collected from the teachers were personal accounts of their perspectives which informed inferences drawn to answer the identified research questions. Peshkin (1993) described the potential of qualitative research to be a critical method to understand and draw conclusions within the education field. The study was designed to be exploratory in nature to provide information needed to better understand current early literacy practices at LEOES. The descriptive data collected from the teacher interviews could capture personal and honest details about the current literacy practices implemented by the participating teachers. The data were collected using the following instruments: 1) Pre-Interview Questionnaire; 2) Individual Teacher

Interviews and Analytic Memos; and 3) District A's K-3 Literacy Curricular Resources and Guidance Documents located on the Learning Management System, Schoology. These three instruments were used to collect data to examine both teachers' perceptions of foundational literacy instructional practices implemented at LEOES, and the curricular resources provided by District A. A triangulation of the findings, as Patton (2002) suggested, was intended to reduce confirmatory bias by comparing the findings between various data sources.

Individual semi-structured interviews were used to collect information about teacher's knowledge of and perceptions about the six Structured Literacy components (i.e., phonology, sound-symbol associations, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics). Teacher insights about current instructional literacy practices were vital to answer the research questions and because the insights are subjective and personal, individual interviews were determined as the most safe and direct approach to gain the needed information (McNamara, 1999).

Additionally, the interview process provided opportunities for deeper and more specific exploration of current instruction, as well as relevant professional development. The curricular guidance and resources provided to the teachers from District A directly impacts instructional practices so curricular resources were examined as well. It is the intent of this investigation to inform future comprehensive literacy instructional planning and professional learning with the K-3 LEOES teachers to implement the six components of Structured Literacy.

Researcher Positionality

My prior teaching experience at LEOES and my current role as the literacy coach at LEOES enabled me to have specific insights while planning and conducting the investigation. I had developed relationships with the staff at LEOES and members of the district literacy leadership team during my 24 years as an educator with District A. In section 1 and Appendix A,

I provide detailed information to explain the prior attempts to improve literacy achievement within the district and prior work at LEOES. My role as the literacy coach at LEOES offered opportunities that influenced this investigation. Since I had professional interactions with the teachers at LEOES, there was a level of trust that may not have been afforded to an outside researcher conducting a similar study. Also, I had been trained in The Seven Partnership Principles during a weeklong training with Jim Knight which emphasized the value of the following elements of a partnership approach to coaching: 1) Equality, 2) Choice, 3) Voice, 4) Dialogue, 5) Reflection, 6) Praxis, and 7) Reciprocity (Knight & Knight, 2017). I was learning to employ strategies to foster a culture of shared learning between the teachers and myself with various grade level teams over a three-year period which included time during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As Holmes (2020) recommends, new researchers must consider their relationship inside and outside of the context of the research process to ensure, “new researchers should not, therefore, make any assumptions about the other’s perspectives & worldview and pigeonhole someone based on their own (mis)perceptions of them” (Holmes, 2020, pg. 2). As a member of the instructional leadership team at LEOES and District A’s literacy team, I had access to information that pertained to student data, curricular expectations, access to teachers’ classrooms and experience with the teachers during planning and professional learning times. As noted by Cohen et al. (2011), the researcher must consider the concept of reflexivity to acknowledge and disclose themselves in the research as a way to understand their role and influence within the research over time.

When starting this investigation, I knew the staff had not been specifically trained in Structured Literacy; however, I believed the previous trainings on foundational reading skills

would have enabled the teachers to be more descriptive in the responses to the questions on the interview guide. This was an incorrect assumption that may have limited the development of the interview guide questions and prompts and caused a shift during the analysis phase of the study since the responses were not specific enough to the identified terminology used on the Structured Literacy Data Analysis Tool in Appendix P. My impact as a literacy coach attempting to use the Partnership Approach for coaching the LEOES staff was another area for me to reflect on moving forward. As a member of the new leadership team at LEOES, I had to consider ways to effectively support the newly identified school improvement initiatives and strategically include literacy as a priority.

Participants

I used purposive sampling (Patton, 2015) for this study in order to select participants that were able to provide insights specific to the identified research questions. For this study, the pool of possible study participants were the 15 general education teachers at LEOES who taught kindergarten (n=3), first (n=4), second (n=4), and third (n=4) grades during the 2020-2021 school year. I excluded eight specialized teachers that primarily teach students eligible for special education services, English as a Second Language instruction, or students who receive Title 1 services because the intent of this study was targeted to the K-3 general education classroom teachers at LEOES. The specific characteristics of the 15 possible teachers and the 8 participating teachers are presented in Table 13 below.

Table 13*LEOES K-3 2020-2021 Teacher Demographics and Study Participants*

Grades	Total	K-3 LEOES Teacher Demographics			Study Participants Demographics		
		Sex	Race	Tenured Status	Sex	Race	Tenured Status
K	3	3 Female	3 Caucasian	2 Tenured 1 Non-T	2 Female	2 Caucasian	2 Tenured
1	4	3 Female 1 Male	4 Caucasian	3 Tenured 1 Non-T	2 Female 1 Male	3 Caucasian	2 Tenured 1 Non-T
2	4	4 Female	3 Caucasian 1 Hispanic	4 Tenured	1 Female	1 Hispanic	1 Tenured
3	4	4 Female	3 Caucasian 1 AA	2 Tenured 2 Non-T	2 Female	1 Caucasian 1 AA	1 Tenured 1 Non-T

Recruitment. Participation recruitment began following approval of the study by the University of Maryland’s IRB and District A’s research office. I began the recruitment process with an initial email informing the principal of LEOES and District A’s ELA Elementary Supervisor about the proposed research to be conducted with staff. The email described the study’s purpose, methods, and offered the opportunity to ask questions about the proposed teacher interviews (see Appendices B and C). The emails noted the proposed research was approved by the University of Maryland IRB and District A.

Each of the 15 K-3 teachers received an individual recruitment letter through their work email. The letter described the purpose of the study and stated the proposed research was approved by the University of Maryland IRB and District A. The emails also explained the selection process for participants, noted that participation was voluntary, shared that the information collected was for the researcher's dissertation and that the identity of all participants was protected to the maximum extent possible. The email indicated that participants in the study would be compensated with a \$25 Amazon.com gift card.

If teachers chose to participate in the study, I was notified with a response to the initial recruitment email or with a text notification since my cell phone number was listed on the teacher recruitment letter (see Appendix D). Each teacher who agreed to participate was sent a separate confirmation email (see Appendix F) with the directions to access the pre-interview questionnaire, the informed consent, general information, and their preferred dates/times to schedule the interview within specific blocks of time during August 2021. As the interviews were scheduled, record of the specific teachers participating was noted since the goal was to have at least two teachers per grade level. The sampling of two teachers from each grade level allowed for various teacher practices and perspectives to be collected and considered.

Six teachers responded, agreed to participate, and completed the pre-interview questionnaire after the initial recruitment email was sent. After five days, a second email was sent to the nine teachers who did not respond to the initial recruitment email. The second recruitment email highlighted the key points of the study, again requested participation, and asked if further clarifying information was needed (see Appendix E). Five additional teachers agreed to participate in the interview but only two of those five completed the pre-interview questionnaire after receiving the second recruitment email. One second and two third grade teachers who stated they would participate in the study but never completed the pre-interview questionnaire were not further pursued due to personal experiences during this time period. Since three other teachers from second and third grade agreed to participate and completed the pre-interview questionnaire, information could be collected from those participants. Therefore, a total of eight teachers participated in the study. Additionally, no further recruitment emails were sent due to the timing of the recruitment with the beginning of the school year and teacher limited time.

The timing of the study and other variables influenced the overall participation. Although 53% of the targeted teachers from LEOES participated, consideration was noted as related to these impacting variables: last minute changes in teachers due to reassignments and a teacher's personal family loss limited recruitment. Additional recruitment procedures for these staff members were not deemed necessary for the study since each grade level was represented. Although the initial goal was not met, it was determined that sufficient information across the 4 grade levels could be provided from the eight teachers. For each of the 8 teachers who completed the pre-interview questionnaire, an individual interview was scheduled according to the participants' availability during blocks of time in August 2021. Within two days prior to the scheduled interview, a reminder email (see Appendix G) was sent to confirm the interview date/time and provide the link to the Zoom meeting.

Instruments

Three data collection tools were developed for this study and are detailed below: 1) the pre-interview questionnaire, 2) a teacher interview guide, and 3) a literacy curricular document analysis tool.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

The pre-interview questionnaire was developed to capture the participants' background information, such as prior teaching and training experiences, approaches used for literacy instruction, level of knowledge about the five areas of reading, and preferences for scheduling the interview. The questionnaire was also intended to collect information to determine if the interview questions needed to be tailored to align with teachers' specific knowledge and experiences with early literacy instruction. For example, if any of the teachers noted "*Whole*

Language” as the approach used for literacy instruction then the interview questions would have required additional elements or points of clarification. Also, if the teacher identified their level of knowledge in one of the five areas of reading as a “*No Knowledge or Some Knowledge*” indicating a weakness, then further clarifications could have been added to the interview guide. The pre-interview questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics and included the following sections: Consent, Prior Teacher Training and Experience, and Preferences for Scheduling Interview. The Pre-Interview Questionnaire consisted of 10 multiple choice questions or scales (see Appendix H for the complete questionnaire).

Interview Guide

An open-ended and semi-structured guide was developed for the teacher interviews. The Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) framework by Damschroder et al. (2009) was used to develop the organization and structure of the interview guide to focus on the *implementation* of effective literacy instruction. The CFIR framework has five components: Characteristics of Program, Outer Setting, Inner Setting, Characteristics of Individuals, and Implementation Process, that were developed to be used in the health field; however, I used them in this study because critical components of evidence-base early literacy instruction could be aligned to these five areas of the CFIR framework. These five components were relevant to the exploratory purpose of the study and supported the process to identify critical topics that must be considered while planning for, implementing literacy practices, and monitoring student learning. Table 14 below presents alignment of each of the five CFIR components (bold print) as related to essential areas of literacy instruction considered (italic print) and key elements (bulleted items) to inform the identified research questions. Then, this framework was used to develop the questions and prompts for the interview guide.

Table 14*Consolidated Framework for Implementation Interview and Research Questions*

Characteristics of Program		RQ
<i>Core Literacy Instruction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher Description ● Components ● Time ● Priority Components Identified 	1, 2
Outer Setting		RQ
<i>Planning for Core Literacy Instruction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Process ● Curricular Resources ● Priority for Week ● Time Required 	1, 2, 3
Inner Setting		RQ
<i>Instructional Practices for Monitoring Learning, & Teacher Reflection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Methods for Monitoring Student Learning ● Approach for Struggling Readers ● Teacher Reflection 	1, 2, 3
Characteristics of Teachers		RQ
<i>Beliefs about Support & Personal Strengths</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Level of Support Available ● Support Needed ● Personal Strengths 	3, 4
Involving Teachers in Literacy Improvement Process		RQ
<i>Teacher Perceptions of Structured Literacy & Professional Learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Structured Literacy Components ● Confidence in Teaching ● Priority ● Positive Experiences ● Shared Decision-Making ● Teacher Recommendations 	2, 3, 4

The interview guide contained 7 open-ended questions with possible prompts to help elicit specific areas of responses from the participants. The framework of the interview guide was organized to align to specific questions/prompts that informed particular elements needed for implementation and could be related to the research questions and the topics addressed within each section of the interview guide. For example, the CFIR Component, Inner Setting, included complex topics like *instructional practices for monitoring student learning and teacher*

reflection so this portion of the interview guide required 2 main questions with additional prompts to provide the information needed for research questions, 1, 2, and 3.

As recommended by Curry (2019), the interview guide also included several items to ensure the efficiency of the interview. An introduction to include the overview of the study, why the participant was chosen, procedures, and privacy issues were all addressed in the introduction portion of the interview guide. A question sequence and script were developed for the interview guide. The script aimed to present questions in a non-threatening manner and to encourage unguarded dialogue. Table 15 below presents the sequence of questions including the welcome, specific interview questions aligned to important areas of literacy instructional practices, and possible probes on the interview guide (See Appendix I for the complete interview guide). Appendix J provided a visual representation of the Structured Literacy framework which is referenced for use within the interview guide for question 6.

Table 15

Sequence of Interview Questions

I bet it has been nice to be able to relax a little after this extraordinary year. How are you spending your time this summer? Time is priceless for educators so thank you again for participating. I value your thoughts and views as a literacy teacher and hope to gain specific insights from you about early literacy instruction.	
Characteristics of Program: (1,2) Core Literacy Instruction	Probes:
1. As a (X) grade teacher, you teach every subject area which keeps you very busy. I know it is sometimes hard to focus on just one content area, but I am going to ask you to focus on your literacy instruction during this interview. This last year has presented so many challenges with Covid but I am hoping to get specific information from you about a typical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time is usually spent on (identified areas by teacher) each day? • During the (X) grade literacy block, what components of literacy are the most important?

year. Can you describe for me the literacy block in your (X) grade classroom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you explain your thinking? Why?
Outer Setting: (1,2,3) Planning Process for Literacy Block	Probes:
2. Will you walk me through the process you take to plan for your literacy block each week?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me more about the curricular resources you use. • How do you prioritize the specific areas of literacy that you teach within the week? • How much time do you usually spend on planning for your literacy instruction? • What are specific challenges you notice related to planning using the (X) grade curriculum? Strengths?
Inner Setting: (1,2,3) Instructional Practices for Monitoring Learning	Probes:
3. How do you determine if your students are mastering literacy skills you have taught? What do you use to determine if a student is progressing in (specific areas of reading)? -Refer back to what was identified as part of the typical literacy block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to ask you more about when students struggle to learn to read. Can you describe how you approach instruction for your students who struggle with basic reading skills? • What do you see as the biggest cause for students who struggle with learning to read?
Inner Setting: (1,2,3) Teacher Reflection	Probes:
4. If you feel comfortable, close your eyes for a minute. Now, you just take a few seconds to think about a literacy lesson you taught prior to Covid or after we returned to school with students in person. (Wait 20 seconds) What went well?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think (X) went well? • What were some challenges that were presented? • What do you think made the biggest impact on the success of this lesson?
Characteristics of Teachers: (3,4) Beliefs about Support & Personal Strengths	Probes:
5. As a primary grade teacher, you must feel a strong responsibility to teach your students. In what ways do you feel supported as a literacy teacher?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do you not feel supported? • Is there anything you wish for to help your instruction?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all have personal strengths as teachers, can you talk to me about what characteristics you have that make you an effective teacher? • What are you most confident in teaching as a reading teacher?
Involving Teachers in Literacy Improvement Process: (2, 3, 4) Teacher Perceptions of Structured Literacy Framework	Probes:
<p>6. Can you tell me what you know about Structured Literacy?</p> <p>If teacher says, I am not sure or replies minimal, then present visual immediately.</p> <p>If teacher replies with specific details of all components, then explain I have a visual to share with the essential elements for reference. (See Appendix J)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here are the six components of Structured Literacy. Which of these components do you think are most important while teaching students to read? Can you explain why? • Which of these components are you most comfortable teaching? Why do you say that? • Do you think the Structured Literacy components are reflected in our curriculum? Tell me more about why you say that. • Is there one component you think is more important for your struggling readers?
Involving Teacher in Literacy Improvement Process: (4) Teacher Perception of Professional Learning	Probes:
<p>7. As a classroom teacher you understand the importance of building an engaging learning environment. Take a minute to think of a positive professional learning experience. (20 seconds) Can you describe that experience to me?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this a typical experience? • Why do you think this experience was different? • Do you believe teachers are provided the opportunity for shared decision making while looking at ways to improve student learning? • If you were asked to support a colleague or new teacher with literacy instruction, which

	<p>component would you be able to provide the most support?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you believe this Structured Literacy framework could support teachers as they attempt to meet the various early literacy needs of all students? Why? Why not? How?
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Document Analysis Tool

The purpose of the document analysis in this study was to support the triangulation of information obtained through the interviews and pre-interview questionnaire. The process was intended to identify trends or patterns within District A's K-3 literacy curriculum as presented on *Schoology*, the Learning Management System (LMS). The document analysis tool was needed to identify the materials, procedures to access the resources, and district level guidance provided to teachers for implementing early literacy instruction and monitoring student learning. This information was needed to triangulate all data collected and strengthen the findings that align to the identified research questions. For example, the evidence-based guiding principles of Structured Literacy state the need for diagnostic, systematic, and explicit teaching which may or may not be supported by the curriculum teachers are provided. Also, as challenges were identified during the interviews by the participating teachers, the document analysis tool offered contextual information about current early literacy practices and supports offered to teachers. The following categories were used to collect information from the documents: Learning Management Format, District Identified Literacy Topics/Tasks, Resources & Materials (Online Folders/Resources), Scope & Sequence, Explicit Instruction Referenced, and Structured Literacy Components Identified (See Appendix K for the completed K-3 Curriculum Document Analysis).

Procedures

Protection of Human Rights, Investigation Timeline, and Procedures used for the Pre-Interview Questionnaire, Individual Interviews, and Document Analysis are described in the next section.

Protection of Human Subjects/Confidentiality

An expedited IRB was requested for this research due to the minimal risks involving human subjects (K-3 General Education Teachers at LEOES) for the Pre-Interview Questionnaire in Qualtrics and individual teacher interviews. To protect the participants of this study, as well as the University of Maryland, I enacted the following procedures to ensure that no identifiable subject data were used during the course of the research process:

- Participants were provided a letter of consent through the Pre-Interview Questionnaire prior to the interview.
- Teacher names were not disclosed to maintain confidentiality.
- Final documents only report results in anonymous forms.
- Participants were provided access to the results upon request after the completion of the study.
- Data from the pre-interview questionnaire and interview were stored on an encrypted flash drive on a password-protected computer for three years before being erased.

Investigation Timeline

After receiving approval (see Appendices L & M) from the University of Maryland IRB and District A, the following procedures took place and are described in detail within

the following sections. The proposed study timeline was developed to include components as suggested by Maxwell (2009). Below Table 16 describes the timeline for the proposed investigation to include action steps and the goal for each identified action.

Table 16

Timeline for Proposed Investigation

When	Action	Goal
July-August 2021	Inform and request permission from LEOES and District A's administration for K-3 teachers to participate in the study. Inform and request participation from K-3 general education teachers in the study.	Share a thorough description of the purpose of the study with specific details that describe the interview process and requirements with administration and teachers. Gather needed information from the pre-interview questionnaire and consent documentation to schedule interviews.
July-August 2021	Email a confirmation with the date of the interview and the link to the Zoom meeting. Send a reminder email 2 days prior to the interview date. Hold the teacher interviews and collect data.	Using the interview guide, hold virtual interviews with teachers that agreed to this voluntary interview. Zoom was used to hold the interviews so that recording, and transcripts are easily accessible for analysis purposes. Reassure teachers of confidentiality during the interview to gain relevant information to provide insights about strengths, weaknesses, and what is needed to improve early literacy instructional practices.
August 2021	Write Analytic Memos after 2-3 teacher interviews to support data analysis and reflective processes needed for qualitative investigations. Complete data analysis process and findings from study.	Research Questions, Structured Literacy components, and the Reflective Cycle were considered to process the information provided by the teachers. The synthesis of this information provided preliminary data about current early literacy instruction, implementation barriers, and teacher

		recommendations about the six components of Structured Literacy.
August-October 2021	Document Analysis of K-3 Curricular Resources shared on the Schoology, Learning Management System (LMS)	To identify specific trends or patterns that emerge within the K-3 curricular documents provided to teachers within District A. Ensure the interviewer is familiar with the curriculum provided to the teachers. Information gained used during the analysis process to strengthen or confirm specific findings from interviews. Categories identified for the document analysis process relate to the Structured Literacy framework.
September 2021	Transcription, Data review, Analysis & Synthesis	Gather relevant and meaningful data to review thoroughly to determine common themes and categories for the triangulation matrix.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

As noted previously, the study began with the initial recruitment email. Then, a separate participation confirmation email was sent to the teachers who agreed to participate in the study. The participation confirmation email included the Qualtrics link to the pre-interview questionnaire and was sent to each individual teacher's work email. When the link was activated, teachers could print the consent form for participation if they wanted a hard copy, and then were directed to provide consent for participation digitally and proceed to the questions. As the teachers completed the questionnaire, as described during the recruitment procedures, interviews were scheduled according to the identified and preferred days and times noted by each teacher. In addition to identifying the date to schedule the interview, information provided from the pre-interview questionnaire offered contextual information about the teacher's trainings and

experiences with early literacy instruction and allowed for the consideration of adjustments needed to the interview guide.

Individual Interviews

The interviews were conducted during the month of August 2021, prior to the beginning of the school year. Each of the interviews was scheduled for approximately one hour but ranged from 30.08 minutes to 52.11 minutes with 40.50 as the average time for the completion. All interviews were conducted virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions using the digital platform Zoom. Each interview began with an introduction that described the purpose and procedures for the interview. Procedures included confirmation of the consent for participation documents and permission to record the interview using the Zoom software. I explained the recording of the interview allowed full participation during the interview by eliminating the need for handwritten notes. Jamshed (2014) describes handwritten notes may be unreliable since the researcher may miss important key points during the interview. All participants agreed to the recording of the interview.

After confirming consent for participation and recording of the interview, the interview began. Participants were not provided the interview guide in advance but were aware of the focus through the title of the investigation: *Structured Literacy: Teacher Understandings and The Instructional Implications for Reading Achievement*, that appeared in all emails, etc. The interview guide questions were used to focus topics but were asked in a conversational manner. If required, the interviewer would use prompts in the guide to redirect a discussion and to explore an emergent idea presented in a participant's response. The sequence of the questions and wording were revised or reworded as needed to clarify but no question was eliminated unless it had been answered in a prior response. As recommended by Curry (2019), specific non-verbal

and verbal cues as noted in Figure 6 below were used by the interviewer to ensure adequate wait time was provided as well as other cues to clarify or ensure that interviewees' responses were complete, clear, and precise. During the interviews, specific questions were asked to gain information about the current reality of literacy instruction used at LEOES and if teachers were aware of and using critical elements identified in the Structured Literacy framework. When challenges were identified, additional prompts were used to allow for the teacher perspective to be identified. The open-ended questions were designed to allow for the discussions to emphasize teachers' voices to ensure their personal experiences and knowledge of foundational literacy instruction.

Figure 6

Interview Prompts

Silent	Nod slowly, tilt head
Echo	Repeat the last statement and ask respondent to continue
Neutral	Encouraging; "I see" or "uh-huh"
Direct	"Tell me more" (very common)
Phased assertion	Imply you already know something or encourage respondent to speak up
Detail	Who, where, what, when, how
Clarifying	You said "x," please describe what you meant by that

Note: Curry (2019)

At the conclusion of the interview each participant was told they would receive a \$25 Amazon gift card for their time. A handwritten thank you note with the gift card was delivered to the teacher's mailbox the following school day.

Analytic Memos. Analytic memos are used in qualitative research as a tool to increase researchers' awareness of experiences, record the development of ideas and questions, and reflect on the results of the conversation (Gibbs, 1988). The initial plan was to complete an analytic memo after 2-3 interviews to provide time for reflection on the interview process

including challenges with specific questions and to begin making connections to find themes. However, the timing of the interviews occurred much faster than originally anticipated. The first four interviews occurred during a four-day timeframe and the remaining four interviews occurred within the next five days. As a result, only two analytic memos were written, one for the first four interviews and a second memo when the last four interviews were completed. Given that there was no major time between interviews, two memos are considered sufficient to capture the interviewer's reflections.

The memos were guided by the components defined within Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (The University of Edinburgh, 2020). These included: description of the experience, feelings and thoughts about the experience, evaluation of the experience (good and bad), analysis to make sense of the situation, conclusion about what was learned, and action plan for general changes needed. The structure for the analytic memos included the following headings for organization: Personal Thoughts, Descriptions, Evaluations, Questions, Changes Needed, Themes, and Conclusions (See Appendices N and O for Analytic Memos). Analytic memos were used to increase the quality of information collected during the interviews. The reflective process allowed me to consider the research questions, identify patterns from the teacher responses, notate common themes, and support the analysis processes. The relevant findings from the interviews and connections made to the document analysis were notated and then used during the development of the triangulation matrix.

Document Review

The process for identifying and reviewing documents began in August 2021 and continued through October 2021 due to changes made to the curriculum. It should be noted that during this timeframe, District A hired a new Elementary English Language Arts (ELA)

Supervisor who began to work on the organization of the literacy curriculum. However, in order to stay within the timeframe of the study and the experiences of the participating teachers, only the K-3 curricular documents provided within District A's Learning Management System would be included in the review process. By investigating the components of the K-3 literacy curriculum on Schoology, the multitude of resources, organizational structures, district priorities, and accessibility measures were brought to light.

The review process began with examining each grade level folder identified within the literacy curriculum and taking notes to identify literacy approaches for instruction, direction for pacing, and priority literacy components. Following the grade level review, notes were compared across grade levels to determine commonalities and to identify the specific categories for the document analysis tool (see Appendix K). Once the document analysis tool was developed, the review again became focused for each grade level. The folder was opened, and information provided to classroom teachers was located and noted in the Document Analysis Tool. This was time consuming and had to be repeated several times because new curricular resources were being added to the Schoology folders as the new ELA Supervisor made revisions. The process allowed me to become familiar with the specific grade level curricular guidance provided by the district and informed the following areas: Structure of the Literacy Block, Instructional Time, Resources Available, Identification of Structured Literacy Components, and Concepts Illuminated.

Analyses Procedures

Each data collection method provided relevant information to be included during the analysis process which is described below. After analysis from the Pre-Interview Questionnaire,

Individual Interviews, and Document Analysis were completed, a triangulation matrix was developed to draw conclusions and identify relevant findings.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Data collected from the Pre-Interview Questionnaire provided initial background information about the participants and preferred dates/times for the individual interviews to be scheduled. As each participant completed this initial step, responses to the 10 questions were gathered in reports generated in Qualtrics. Respondents provided personal information about prior professional experiences in questions 1-4. Questions 5-7 dealt with the participants beliefs about their level of preparedness for teaching the assigned grade level, at-risk students, and the curricular resources used for literacy instruction. Questions 8 and 9 asked the participants to indicate the highest level of knowledge for the five areas of reading and to identify the literacy approach used for daily instruction. The final question provided the space to identify preferences for scheduling the interviews. The information collected from the Pre-Interview Questionnaire was reviewed to determine if further explanation was necessary for the topics covered on the interview guide. Teachers' experiences and training with teaching early literacy skills were collected to determine if additional guidance or clarifications were needed for the interview guide. Also, teachers identified the literacy curricular materials used on the questionnaire which provided contextual information about the instructional approaches and beliefs about support provided within the curriculum. Although further explanation was not needed for the interview questions, information provided during this step provided contextual information about the participants needed for the interviewer to be responsive to individual replies for a more productive interview.

Individual Interviews

Preparing Transcription Data. Labeling and deidentifying the interview transcripts were the first steps for analysis of the individual interviews. For reporting purposes, the eight participating teachers were identified as Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2), Teacher 3 (T3), etc., but this was not the order in which the interviews occurred. Audio files generated from Zoom recordings were saved to an encrypted flash drive. Then, the recorded interview files were initially transcribed through the artificial intelligence software Otter.ai. and saved as a master file for each individual interview. Next, each master transcription file generated from Otter.ai. was then duplicated for initial transcription revisions and labeling of the speakers. An initial labeling of the transcripts indicated the interviewee (T# with timestamp) and interviewer (timestamp and italicized text). Due to several participants' accents and rate of speech, each audio file was reviewed multiple times to ensure the accuracy of each transcript. When the teacher spoke during the question or prompt, text was identified with the teacher number and changed to bold print to delineate who was speaking. When clarification about the topic needed to be included within the transcripts, that information was marked with brackets. Identifying information was redacted and replaced with XXX to maintain confidentiality. Additionally, when a specific grade level was named within the dialogue, that text was replaced with *K-3* to maintain confidentiality. Also, when the district or school name was used during the interview, that information was adjusted to District A or LEOES accordingly. Finally, a listening tour was used to verify the accuracy of the transcripts and begin to identify common language and literacy practices.

Organizing Transcription Data. The next critical step for the analysis process was the organization of the data provided from the interviews. Each transcribed and labelled interview transcript was read multiple times to consider the most effective way to classify and combine the

data for analysis. The keyword identification through Otter.ai did not delineate the words used by the interviewer or interviewee so this key word identification tool did not support the process to identify key themes or specific phenomena revealed by the teachers during the interviews. The identified words from Otter.ai were considered with caution during the analysis phase as well as informed the decision to revise the preliminary Structured Literacy Data Analysis Tool (see Appendix P).

Originally, the Structured Literacy Data Analysis Tool was developed to determine patterns within the six Structured Literacy components and the identified research questions for each teacher. However, after completing the tool using one interview transcript, the responses provided from the participating teacher did not produce the precise language needed for the Structured Literacy Data Analysis Tool to be effective for analysis. Through reflection of the completed interviews and the completed analytic memos, the language used during the interviews was not specific to concepts highlighted through the Structured Literacy Framework. Also, common themes across all participants could not be tracked using the original tool. Therefore, a different structure was developed to organize the vast narrative and descriptive data provided. The exact teacher quotes in response to the questions from the interview guide were noted and organized to answer the specified research questions.

To align with the research questions and structure of the interview guide, the exact teacher responses were organized into separate documents for each of the 7 questions asked during the interview. The Analysis by Interview Question # documents provided the format to organize the information gained from the eight teachers for each of the seven main interview questions to be used for analysis and synthesis procedures (see Appendices Q-W). The exact relevant quotes provided from each of the 8 teachers for the specified questions were copied and

organized into the separate documents found in Appendices Q-W. Then, while rereading the exact quotes from each of the respondents, key words and patterns were marked with underlines and bold print for consideration to identify specific patterns or common ideas presented. I marked and underlined when specific areas of reading were identified, like phonemic awareness, vocabulary, or comprehension.

The quotes and coding of key words and patterns were then used to summarize key details and emerging themes for each of the individual teacher responses provided for each interview question. Depending on the focus for the specific interview question, I then wrote a brief summary to highlight the information provided as related to early literacy instructional practices. For example, if a teacher's response emphasized a professional development focus from District A, then the specific information was included in the summary. Also, if specific challenges were identified within the teacher's response, then I identified the general categories of concern in the summary (i.e., planning process, instructional time, lack of exposure, etc.). Additionally, all participants' input, and responses were used to answer the identified corresponding research questions. For example, if a teacher's response included one of the five areas of reading or a term that was similar to one of the six components of Structured Literacy, then it was notated as evidence to answer research question 2. Another example of a pattern coded to answer research question 1 was if the teacher used the terms Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop, and Word Study since those are the components of the literacy block identified by the district and within the curriculum resources. By identifying key terms and common language for specific areas of literacy instruction, summaries were developed, and research questions were answered. This was completed for all seven sections of the interview guide.

Analytic Memo Analysis. The use of analytic memos during this exploration provided documentation to consider for data collection, procedural communication, and the thought processes used for analysis (Phillips & Carr, 2007; Birk, Chapman, & Francis, 2008). Analytic Memo 1 and Analytic Memo 2 informed the analysis process of the teacher interviews and the needed revision for data analysis documents. By engaging in the reflective cycle, relevant information for the study was gained as part of the analysis process. Analytic memos were written and revised throughout both the interview and transcription processes which impacted the level of evidence connected to patterns and themes related to planning for literacy instruction, implementing effective literacy instruction, and meeting the instructional needs of struggling readers. For example, personal thoughts about the interview described from the memos addressed the sensitivity to the timing of the interviews being the week of staff development for the beginning of the school year so this was noted as a possible limitation. Also, through the memos it was clear the Structured Literacy Framework, as well as the six specific components were unfamiliar terms to all participants, so the original Structured Literacy Data Analysis Tool was not appropriate.

Analysis by Interview Question Tool. The transcription process, data organization process, and coding process led to another way to organize specific terms used by the teachers to inform the answers about early literacy instructional practices. As the Analysis by Interview Question 1-7 documents were synthesized, relevant data was then placed within a chart to organize and quantify the data to make sense of resulting information and draw conclusions to inform the study. Interview questions 1-4 provided information that pertained to common concepts that provide information about teacher's self-reported understanding of the core literacy instructional block to include required planning, instructional components, monitoring student

learning, and challenges presented as an early literacy teacher. Interview questions 5-7 were relevant to other similar concepts that explained teacher perceptions about support needed in the classrooms, personal instructional strengths, and professional learning needs. Table 17 shows which research questions were informed by each interview question.

Table 17

Implementation Framework & Topic, Interview Question, Corresponding Research Questions

Topic	Interview Question	Research Question
<i>Characteristics of Core Literacy Instruction</i>	1. Can you describe for me the literacy block in your classroom?	RQ 1 RQ 2
<i>Planning Process for Literacy Block</i>	2. Will you walk me through the process you take to plan for your literacy block each week?	RQ 1 RQ 2 RQ 3
<i>Instructional Practices for Monitoring Learning</i>	3. How do you determine if your students are mastering literacy skills you have taught?	RQ 1 RQ 2 RQ 3
<i>Teacher Reflection of Literacy Lesson</i>	4. Think of a literacy lesson you have taught. What went well and why do you think it went well?	RQ 1 RQ 2 RQ 3
<i>Beliefs about Support and Personal Strengths</i>	5. In what ways do you feel supported as a literacy teacher?	RQ 3 RQ 4
<i>Teacher Perceptions of Structured Literacy Framework</i>	6. Can you tell me what you know about Structured Literacy?	RQ 2 RQ 3 RQ 4
<i>Teacher Perceptions of Professional Learning</i>	7. Take a minute to think of a positive professional learning experience and then describe that experience.	RQ 4
1. What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why? 2. Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction? 3. What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers? 4. How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?		

Document Analysis

According to Black & Wiliam (1998), including a document analysis allows for the qualitative data collected through research studies to be a supportive measure while identifying

key themes or patterns during the analysis and synthesis phases of an investigation. The document analysis for the curricular resources provided to teachers on Schoology provided needed context for the analysis and synthesis processes of this investigation. Information offered by the teachers during the interviews were either confirmed or challenged through the curricular document analysis. To help answer the identified research questions and key findings from this study common themes and patterns identified were included in the final synthesis phase. The triangulation approach for data analysis was used to identify common themes and provide insights about the early literacy instructional practices used at LEOES. Data collected from the three methods and during the resulting analysis phases provided what Peshkin (1993) described as textured qualitative investigations needed in the field of education.

Triangulation Matrix for Analysis

A matrix was developed to organize, calculate, identify information sources, and capture the specific evidence provided from the participating teachers to answer the research questions. The critical elements for the triangulation matrix included the following: Research Question Correlation, Data Information Source(s), Key Words, and Supporting Evidence. Further examination of the completed matrix, informed key findings to determine common themes about teacher understandings and perceptions about evidence-based early literacy instructional approaches. Information provided by participating teachers and the findings from this study can inform future comprehensive literacy planning at LEOES and District A's literacy curriculum.

Summary

This section outlined the critical components for this investigation. The purpose for the investigation, design of the study, specific methods, procedures, and analysis were identified. In the next section, the results and discussion will be described.

Results and Discussion

Section 1 highlighted both current literacy instructional practices as well as prior attempts to improve literacy achievement in District A and LEOES specifically. Section 2 described the researcher's positionality, participants, methods, and procedures of this qualitative research study for the purpose of identifying current early literacy instructional approaches including evidence-based instruction as reported by the 8 participating K-3 LEOES teachers. The investigation used the specific components of the Structured Literacy framework to define evidence-based early literacy instruction.

This section will first present the results of the study including the information gained from a pre-interview questionnaire, individual teacher interviews accompanied by analytic memos, and an analysis of curricular resources for literacy instruction available in District A's learning management system, Schoology. The results will be followed by key findings, conclusions and instructional implications that will be shared with LEOES administration and District A's Elementary ELA Supervisor.

Results

An overview of the results from 3 types of data: pre-interview questionnaire, document analysis, and teacher interviews follow. Findings will first be reported for the pre-interview questionnaire that gathered background information about prior literacy training and teaching experiences from the 8 participating teachers. Next, I will report findings from the document analysis of District A's literacy curriculum. Finally, I will provide findings from individual teacher interviews which detail teacher self-reported instructional practices and perspectives on the early literacy components required for students to become proficient readers.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

A web-based pre-interview questionnaire was completed by each of the 8 participating teachers. The questionnaire served two purposes. First, information gathered from the questionnaire was intended to provide background information on the 8 participants. Second, based on self-ratings of knowledge about the five areas of reading, a determination was made about revisions or clarifications to the interview questions if individual teachers indicated “*No Knowledge*” or “*Some Knowledge*” in one of these areas. The questionnaire consisted of 10 multiple choice questions about teachers’ prior teaching experiences, professional training as a literacy instructor, self-ratings indicating their level of knowledge for each of the five areas of reading, instructional materials used for early literacy, and one instructional approach they believed to most align with the literacy practices used in their classroom.

Of the 8 participating teachers, 7 reported having a master’s degree in education and one reported holding a bachelor’s degree in education. In terms of experience: one teacher reported 1-3 years; one reported 3-6 years, and the remaining 6 reported 7+ years. All 8 teachers had taught at LEOES during the 2020-2021 school year in kindergarten (n=2), first (n=3), second (n=1) or third (n=2) grade levels. The 8 teachers all indicated that they, “*used the provided curriculum, but supplemental resources are needed.*”

With respect to their level of preparation, on a 1-5 scale half of the teachers (n=4) rated themselves as “*Somewhat prepared*” and half “*Very prepared*” to teach students in their current grade level. In terms of teaching struggling readers, 5 teachers rated themselves as “*Somewhat prepared*” and 3 as “*Very prepared*”.

Table 18 below presents the ratings of level of knowledge in the five areas of reading for the 8 teachers. The teachers were asked to rate their knowledge on a five-point scale. More

teachers rated their knowledge as a 4 which is “*Above Average*” in all but the area of vocabulary. Half of the teachers rated their knowledge as “*Average*” and half as “*Above Average*” in vocabulary.

Table 18

Pre-interview Questionnaire Results of Self-Reported Knowledge for Five Areas of Reading

	No Knowledge	Some Knowledge	Average Knowledge	Above Average Knowledge	Expert Knowledge	Total Response
Phonological Awareness			3	5		8
Phonics			2	6		8
Fluency			1	7		8
Vocabulary			4	4		8
Comprehension			3	5		8

They were then asked to identify which of four possible literacy instructional approaches they used most often in their classrooms. Only two instructional approaches were identified:

“*Balanced Literacy*” (n=5) and “*Phonics Based Literacy*” (n=3).

Summary. The results showed that the teachers participating in the interview phase of the study all had prior experience teaching literacy in the K-3 grade levels, used District A’s curriculum, reported themselves as prepared to teach early literacy skills, and rated their level of knowledge as “*Above Average*” for four areas of reading. Based on the results of the pre-questionnaire, interview questions were not revised since no teacher reported being unprepared, inexperienced, or lacking knowledge in any of the five areas of reading.

Document Analysis

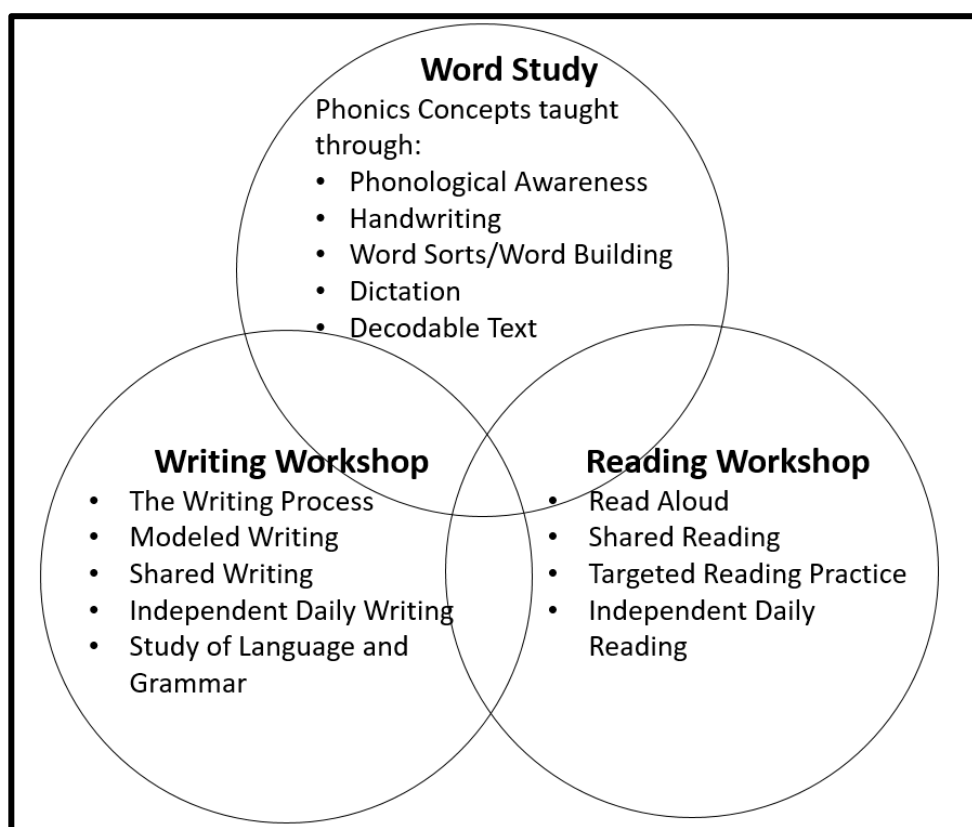
As described in Section 2, documents related to District A’s literacy curriculum which are housed in Schoology, were analyzed to identify District A’s guidance to teachers about

specific expectations for literacy instruction and to identify the specific resources teachers are provided to support early literacy instruction. There were several findings as a result of the document analysis: 1) Integrated Literacy was District A's identified approach for literacy instruction and grade level curriculum and guidance documents were organized by three instructional blocks: Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop, & Word Study, 2) The process to access the required materials for instruction was cumbersome and time consuming, and 3) The six components of Structured Literacy could not be specifically identified in District A's literacy curriculum.

Instructional Approach. Integrated Literacy was the approach identified within the guidance documents titled *Integrated Literacy Philosophy and Overview* located in Schoology, District A's Learning Management System. Within each of the K-3 grade level literacy folders in Schoology, curricular documents and materials were organized into three categories: 1) Reader's Workshop, 2) Writer's Workshop, and 3) Word Study. District A's instructional priorities for literacy are highlighted in Figure 7 which illustrates the specific tasks or skills to be taught during each of these three areas.

Figure 7

District A's Integrated Literacy Approach & 3 Instructional Focus Areas



At the time of this analysis, in addition to the folders containing information for each of the three major categories, supplemental resources were found in a variety of areas: PLC Information, Oral Language Resources, Resources related to MD CCR Standards, Virtual Instructional Materials, and Learning Focused resources. These folders were not reviewed since District A's new ELA supervisor was in the process of rearranging and reorganizing various materials that were outdated or not relevant to the current district guidance or materials needed for daily literacy instruction.

Three areas of instruction were identified as components for literacy instruction with possible activities to complete during each identified time. Materials identified for Reader's

Workshop were typically units or lessons that addressed specific reading standards and language comprehension skills through the use of a read aloud, explanation of the standard, development of an anchor chart, and response to the text through speaking or writing depending on the grade. Writer's Workshop lessons or units identified standards, mentor texts, and various lessons to teach the writing process and language skills. The Word Study curriculum varied greatly from grade to grade, required numerous resources to locate online and within schools, and did not provide a systematic and cumulative scope and sequence from kindergarten to grade 3.

Process to Access Curriculum Materials. The required steps to access literacy materials were identified through the K-3 curriculum review process and allowed me to be more prepared for the interviews since I could relate to teacher comments about accessing materials. The materials are maintained in Schoology, a learning management system teachers and students access online. Teachers utilize various grade level groups to activate lessons, assignments, and other blended learning tasks for digital learning. Only the K-3 curricular resources for Integrated Literacy were reviewed for this study. These resources included guidance documents, scope and sequence for some instructional areas, lesson plans, unit packets, teacher procedural documents for some lessons, student materials to be printed or accessed online, and various additional materials like files with lessons for the Smart Board or optional tasks to assign to students.

Initially, kindergarten documents were reviewed with the intent of identifying district priorities in each category as well as the corresponding documents available for all four grade levels. A chart was developed for kindergarten to illustrate district identified tasks, documents with resources for instruction and guidance for pacing, and explicit instruction referenced within the curriculum. I reviewed over 35 documents within the Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop, and Word Study folders just for kindergarten. The documents ranged from 1 page to

75 pages depending on each topic and instructional area. As I moved on to materials and resources for grades 1, 2 and 3, I recognized that materials were organized in the same instructional subcategories. Therefore, one chart was used to collect information on all materials across grade levels. If there were differences between grade level materials, that difference was noted on the chart within parentheses identifying the grade levels. Below in Table 19 the specific materials and components that were reviewed in the Reader's Workshop folder are displayed. The completed document review for District A's Literacy curriculum is located in Appendix K which includes the three instructional areas identified by the district (RW, WW, & WS).

Table 19

Reader's Workshop Portion of Document Analysis

Learning Management Format	District Identified Literacy Topic/Tasks	Resources & Materials in Folders or Referenced	Scope & Sequence	Explicit Instruction Referenced
Schoology > Integrated Literacy: Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop, Word Study	Reading Workshop> Read Aloud, Shared Reading, Targeted Reading Practice, Independent Daily Reading, Book Clubs (1-3)	Instructional Resources to get started Building A Reading Community: Launch Standards-based Read Aloud Lessons for Literature Standards-based Read Aloud Lessons for Informational Text Ready Reading Lexia Book Club Resources (1-3) Comprehension Toolkit (1-3) Reading Fluency (3)	(K only) Literacy Scope & Sequence by Quarter to include Reading Workshop, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Concept Development, and Writing Workshop Launch & Lessons include Lesson Essential Questions, Minilessons, Additional Resources, Grade Level Standards, Anchor Chart Topics, Writing Prompts, Teaching Tips, Additional Attachments Needed	Gradual Release Model: I do, We do, You do Standards Based Read Aloud Lessons Think Marks Modelled Anchor Charts Procedures from Daily Five

The process to access and prepare materials located within Schoology was time consuming and complex. The organization of the materials in Schoology was cumbersome due to the need to click within multiple folders and files to locate grade level specific materials. There were materials (documents to support instruction, student materials, files for teachers to use for presentations, etc.) that required multiple clicks into at least 5 additional folders to locate a specific document. While locating the curricular documents for this research, I struggled to identify the path (folders within folders), resources were duplicated in some cases, or were simply in a different folder from grade to grade. Materials available within folders in Schoology include many pages that required downloading, printing and preparation for the teachers and students to utilize. Finally, guidance documents referenced additional materials shared by multiple grades within the school but the specific organization and process to access those materials varied.

Lack of Structured Literacy Components. While completing the document analyses, I also noted if any of the six components of Structured Literacy were referenced in the curricular materials. Only one component, *morphology*, was specifically referenced in the third-grade resources for Word Study. Also, the six syllable types were referenced in the same word study document but the explicit procedures required for syllable type instruction was not clearly identified as a critical component of the instruction. The remaining components (phonology, sound-symbol associations, syntax, and semantics) were not specifically named or identified within the teacher materials. Specific guidance about instructional time for literacy and time allotment for each category of literacy instruction was identified for each grade level but there was not precise language identifying specific time allotments for the various elements of the literacy block.

Summary. Curricular documents and materials in Schoology were developed under the guidance of three staff members from District A, with each focusing on a different grade level and instructional area. Therefore, formatting and organization of the documents varied across grades and instructional areas and did not provide a coherent scope and sequence to the curriculum. The curriculum as provided was basically a “home-grown” collection of lessons, guidance documents, and materials that were posted by three individuals in an attempt to create a comprehensive early literacy curriculum. The transition of leadership in the elementary ELA instructional area and Covid-19 requirements created challenges to the process of document analysis. Digital materials were continually being added or removed to folders for teachers to use for virtual or hybrid learning. Also, the process to revise the organization of folders and specific guidance documents began during document analyses so an additional file was added to each grade level that was labeled “*Integrated Literacy: Start Here*” as one way to guide teachers to the most important documents that were needed for the beginning of the year.

Teacher Interviews

The following section provides some context to how the interviews were held and details that provide background information for the actual findings. As noted in Section 2, the eight individual teacher interviews ranged from 30.08 minutes to 52.11 minutes with an average length of 40.50 minutes. Three interviews occurred in one day and the fourth interview occurred the following day and the other four interviews occurred on separate days outside of school hours. Analytic Memo 1 was written to reflect on the information obtained from those four teachers and Analytic Memo 2 reflected information obtained from the remaining four teachers. Four of the teachers participated in the interviews from their homes while the other four participated from their classrooms outside of the school day.

All of the teachers were expressive during the interviews and responded to most questions without hesitation or uncertainty. The teachers appeared to be comfortable during the interviews. Teachers asked clarifying questions when needed, indicated if they were not certain of specific terms, and seemed eager to share evidence about the literacy instruction in their classrooms. At the conclusion of the interviews, all teachers were appreciative of the Amazon gift card and 4 teachers asked specifically if they had provided the needed information.

As described in Section 2, interview responses for each teacher to Interview Questions 1-7 were documented in Appendices R-W initially. Then a spreadsheet was used to capture similarities and differences across the 8 responses by each question, and the four research questions. See Appendix X for an example of the spreadsheet that was developed for T#1's data collection for responses to interview questions 1-4 as they related to the research questions. Findings from the interviews are reported below for Interview Questions 1-4. The spreadsheet evolved throughout the data collection and data organization; it was used ongoing through the analysis process.

Findings by Interview Questions 1-4. The first four questions of the interview guide addressed the literacy block, the planning process, monitoring student learning, and teacher reflection of a positive lesson. Below in Table 20 is a sample of the spreadsheet used to collect all responses provided when teachers were specifically asked to describe the Literacy Block.

Table 20

Data Collection Spreadsheet for Responses to Question 1: Literacy Block

T#	Teacher use of District Guidance for Literacy Instruction			Five Areas of Reading				
	Reader's Workshop	Writer's Workshop	Word Work	Phonological Awareness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension
T1	book clubs		Sp, Morph	x	x	x		x
T2	read aloud w/ standard focus	x		x	x			x
T3		writing piece	x	x	x			X
T4	x	x	x					
T5	on-grade level text		spelling patterns		x		X	
T6	read aloud, prompt	journal writing		x	x		x	x
T7			x	x	x		x	
T8	story	writing piece		x		x	x	x
	Lesson Structures				Types of Instruction			
	Whole Group	Small Group	Individual	Centers/Rotations	Direct/Explicit	Targeted	Differentiated	Self-Guided/Project
T1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
T2	x	x			x	x	x	
T3	x	x		x		x	x	
T4	x	x		x	x	x		
T5	x	x			x	x		
T6	x	x		x	x	X		
T7	x	x	x		x	x		
T8	x	x	x		x	x		

The initial analyses of transcript data in the spreadsheet involved the identification of specific terminology used by the teachers by interview question, five major themes emerged from the responses to questions 1-4. These themes were related to the following ideas: Teacher use of District Guidance on Literacy, Teacher Knowledge of the Five Areas of Reading, Lesson Structures Identified by Teachers, Types of Instruction Used by Teachers, and Instructional Challenges Identified.

In the following sections, I will detail each of the five themes and their significance to answering the identified research questions. Table 21 presents the emerging themes as they relate to the research questions, interview questions 1-4, and topics as described in Section 2.

Table 21*Emerging Themes Identified for Topics & Interview Questions 1-4*

Topics	Interview Question	Research Question	Emerging Themes
<i>Characteristics of Core Literacy Instruction</i>	1. Can you describe for me the literacy block in your classroom?	RQ 1 RQ 2	District Guidance on Literacy Five Areas of Reading Lesson Structures Types of Instruction Challenges Presented
<i>Planning Process for Literacy Block</i>	2. Will you walk me through the process you take to plan for your literacy block each week?	RQ 1 RQ 2 RQ 3	District Guidance on Literacy Five Areas of Reading Lesson Structures Types of Instruction Challenges Presented
<i>Instructional Practices for Monitoring Learning</i>	3. How do you determine if your students are mastering literacy skills you have taught?	RQ 1 RQ 2 RQ 3	District Guidance on Literacy Five Areas of Reading Lesson Structures Types of Instruction Challenges Presented
<i>Teacher Reflection of Literacy Lesson</i>	4. Think of a literacy lesson you have taught. What went well and why do you think it went well?	RQ 1 RQ 2 RQ 3	District Guidance on Literacy Five Areas of Reading Lesson Structures Types of Instruction Challenges Presented
1. What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why? 2. Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction? 3. What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers? 4. How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?			

The next sections summarize each of the emerging themes.

Teacher use of District Guidance on Literacy. As mentioned above, according to the review of curricular documents, District A organizes the early literacy curricular guidance documents and Schoology resources into the following categories: Reader’s Workshop (RW), Writer’s Workshop (WW), and Word Study (WS). Key terms used by the district for organization and structures of the literacy curriculum were identified within each of the interview transcripts. Table 22 below shows the specific terminology used by the teachers when

responding to the first four questions of the interview guide in reference to the literacy block, planning, monitoring student learning, and reflection of a literacy lesson.

Table 22

Terms identified in District Guidance on Literacy

	Reader's Workshop	Writer's Workshop	Word Study	Other Terms Used
T#1	No	No	No	Standards, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Spelling, Morphology, Book Clubs, Anchor Chart
T#2	No	Yes	No	Standards, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Themes, Writing, Vocabulary
T#3	No	No	Yes	Standards, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Anchor Chart
T#4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Standards, Phonics, Spelling, Read Aloud, Writing, Anchor Chart
T#5	No	No	No	Standards, Spelling, Morphology, Read Aloud, Anchor Chart
T#6	No	No	No	Standards, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Read Aloud, Writing, Anchor Chart
T#7	No	No	Yes	Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Writing
T#8	No	No	No	Standards, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Writing, Themes, Integrated (Science/SS)

None of the teachers used the term Integrated Literacy during the interviews, the instructional approach identified by District A within the *Integrated Literacy Philosophy and Overview* guidance document for each grade level. Only one teacher (T#4) specifically referred to all three instructional areas of literacy during the interview: RW, WW, and WS. Another teacher (T#2) identified WW in response to the question and two teachers (T#3, T#7) specifically identified WS as an instructional area. Although the specific terminology associated with RW, WW, or WS were not used by all participating teachers, 7 of the 8 teachers identified activities that are part of the RW instructional area (e.g., *book club*, *standards-based read aloud*, or *grade level text*) and 5 of the 8 teachers identified activities from the WW instructional area

(e.g., *writing piece or journal writing*) and all 8 teachers identified portions of the WS instructional area (e.g., *phonological awareness, phonics, spelling and morphology*).

In general, responses to the first four questions demonstrated a lack of understanding among all interviewees of District A's philosophy for implementing Integrated Literacy as described by District A's *Integrated Literacy Philosophy and Overview* to include the 3 instructional areas: RW, WW, or WS. Specifically, when teachers were asked about the planning process and use of district level curriculum, the teachers did not identify these 3 instructional areas even though all materials in Schoology are organized into these specific folders. However, six participants identified the Word Study scope and sequence template and calendar as critical for planning their literacy instruction. Two teachers referenced the spelling and morphology lessons which are identified as graded components of the Word Study instructional area. The teachers did identify isolated skills, tasks or activities related to District A's curriculum but did not express a comprehensive understanding of how the individual components of this approach fit together and seems to indicate that the teachers may value the identified components of the curriculum that are graded and may favor teaching WS. As noted earlier, the teachers did not identify Integrated Literacy (to include RW, WW, WS) as the instructional approach for early literacy used in District A. This suggests a disconnect between what the District believes they provide and what the teachers believe they use for instruction.

Although questions 1-4 did not specifically ask teachers about prior professional learning, the teacher responses could be associated to District A's prior professional learning areas of focus. Teachers did identify previous priorities for professional learning that 7 of the 8 teachers had participated in for two years that emphasized standards-based read aloud lessons. The strategies teachers gained from this experience included decomposing grade level standards,

understanding how specific reading standards progress from each grade level, the use of anchor charts to make learning visible for students, and vocabulary strategies to emphasize during instruction. Six of the 8 teachers referenced this prior professional learning experience and described how they implement certain elements from the professional learning into their literacy instruction. Another priority for District A has been the implementation of using the Learning Focused Framework while planning. While describing the planning process, three teachers referenced Learning Focused components that support the planning process. Data collected suggests the teachers engage in prior professional learning experiences and impact the participating teachers' instructional practices when the information shared is relevant and presented in a positive manner.

Teacher Knowledge of the Five Areas of Reading. When teachers were asked detailed questions about the literacy block, planning for instruction, and monitoring student learning, they identified and described the five areas of reading. The terms phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension were not part of the questions on the interview guide for questions 1-3. However, when teachers were asked to describe the critical components of literacy instruction or how they prioritize particular areas of literacy while planning and monitoring learning, teachers did identify and describe literacy instructional practices aligned to the five areas of reading. Table 23 below shows the areas of reading mentioned by each teacher during discussions of interview questions 1, 2, and 3. Question 4 is not included in this chart because when the teachers were asked to reflect on a positive lesson most teachers (n=6) chose to discuss a read aloud lesson which includes various components of the 5 areas of reading.

Table 23*Areas of Reading Identified by Teachers and Interview Questions (1, 2, 3)*

	Phonological Awareness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension
T1	X, Y, Z	X, Z	X, Z		X, Z
T2	X, Y, Z	X, Y, Z		X	X
T3	X, Z	X, Y			
T4	Y	Y, Z			
T5		Z	Z	X,	Y, Z
T6	X, Z	X, Z	Z	X, Z	X, Y
T7	X, Z	X, Y, Z		X, Z	
T8	X, Y, Z	Z	X, Z	X, Y, Z	X, Y, Z

Note. X- (1) Literacy block, Y- (2) Planning Process, Z-(3) Monitoring Learning

Most of the teachers referred to phonological awareness (n=7) and phonics (n=8) during these portions of the interviews. Six of the 8 participants also identified a prior professional learning opportunity District A had provided focused on the foundational skills of phonological awareness and phonics to be included during early literacy instruction. The responses to interview questions 1-3 indicate that the teachers were more confident when discussing phonological awareness and phonics procedures or vocabulary and listening comprehension using the read aloud lessons. These instructional areas have all been emphasized in recent years during district or school based professional learning. The area of fluency was mentioned the least by the teachers, which may indicate that the teachers were less confident in providing instruction in fluency.

Lesson Structures Identified by Teachers. Another common topic noted by the teachers were the lesson configurations of students identified while describing, planning for, and implementing literacy lessons. Similar to the process described above, the spreadsheet and transcripts by teacher were read and coded to identify the structures teachers named while responding to this portion of the interview guide. Table 24 below identifies the specific terms and concepts described during the first four questions of the interview guide.

Table 24

Lesson Structures Identified by Teachers during Interviews

	Whole Group	Small Group	Individual	Flexible Groups	Targeted	Centers
T#1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
T#2	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
T#3	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
T#4	Yes	Yes				Yes
T#5	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
T#6	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
T#7	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
T#8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		

All teachers identified whole group and small group while describing their current literacy instructional practices, 3 teachers specifically identified individualized instruction while 7 mentioned centers or rotations. When the element of planning and monitoring student learning was the focus of the question, teachers added the importance of flexible (n=6) or targeted (n=5) grouping to meet the needs of the students. While teachers reflected on a positive literacy lesson,

they mostly described whole group lessons with direct teaching elements. However, T#3 included the positive impact from the use of a mini-lesson, T#4 described how the use of collaborative groups improved student to student interactions, and T#5 stressed the importance of the gradual release model of instruction. The findings indicate that the participating teachers appear to understand the importance of structuring the literacy block to support needs of groups of students flexibly and to target instruction. The teachers also expressed the importance of using student need as a primary driver when determining lesson structures and planning for literacy instruction.

Types of Instruction Used by Teachers. The same process described above was repeated for identifying types of instruction. Although most teachers identified whole group and small group routines as the typical lesson structure used in the classroom, the types of instruction used during these portions of the literacy block were not identified as consistently during the interviews. Specific lessons or tasks were described as part of the literacy block. However, the type of instruction used to deliver the content was not named or identified through key word identification searches. Table 25 below displays the type of instruction teachers specifically identified while responding to questions 1-4. Most teachers remained very general in their explanations of how the content was delivered to the students and were not able to identify teaching techniques, strategies, or other methods of instruction which may indicate the need for future professional learning focusing on the use of explicit and systematic instruction.

Table 25*Types of Instruction Identified by Teachers during Interviews*

	Explicit	Direct	Differentiated	Independent
T#1		Yes		Yes
T#2				
T#3			Yes	Yes
T#4				Yes
T#5			Yes	Yes
T#6				
T#7				Yes
T#8			Yes	Yes

However, 7 of 8 teachers did describe instructional practices similar to direct instruction without specifically naming it. The general practices mentioned by the teachers were using a different approach using manipulatives (n=3) and providing modified work and/or additional time (n=2). Additional types of instruction identified were blended learning, multi-sensory, scaffolding instruction, providing anchor charts for student reference, and student collaboration. Only 1 teacher (T#5) identified the gradual release method of instruction. Integration with other subject areas was also identified as a desired approach for literacy instruction by 3 of the teachers.

While specifically discussing planning as part of Question 2, 4 of the 8 teachers identified the need for more assessments to target instruction to student need. However, after reviewing the transcript responses to Question 3 (monitoring student learning), the teachers did identify the

need for more options to support diagnostic teaching practices, including more formal or detailed assessment procedures as well as instructional options for when students struggle with learning to read which may be another area for growth for consideration.

Summary of Findings from Interview Questions 1-4. Based on the analysis of teachers' responses to interview questions 1-4, the following strengths in teacher practice include: 1) confidence teaching phonological awareness and phonics, 2) understanding the importance of small group and targeted instruction, 3) flexibility in planning for various student need within the class, and 4) using the Word Study curricular materials. The following practice areas are identified as possible areas for growth: 1) fluency instructional strategies, 2) explicit and multisensory instructional techniques, 3) using assessments to diagnose and respond to individual student needs during literacy instruction, and 4) comprehensive understanding of District A's literacy philosophy.

Findings from Interview Questions 5-7. The last three questions of the interview guide addressed these topics: *Teacher Beliefs about Support and Personal Strengths*, *Teacher Perceptions of Structured Literacy Framework*, and *Teacher Perceptions of Professional Learning*. Table 26 presents the themes emerging in each of the three areas from responses to specific interview questions. Corresponding research questions are also shown.

Table 26*Emerging Themes Identified for Topics & Interview Questions 5-7*

Topic	Interview Question	Research Question	Emerging Themes
<i>Beliefs about Support and Personal Strengths</i>	5. In what ways do you feel supported as a literacy teacher?	RQ 3 RQ 4	Support Provided/Needed Personal Strengths/ Confidence Teacher Perceptions of PD Teacher Perceptions of SL
<i>Teacher Perceptions of Structured Literacy Framework</i>	6. Can you tell me what you know about Structured Literacy?	RQ 2 RQ 3 RQ 4	Support Provided/Needed Personal Strengths/ Confidence Teacher Perceptions of PD Teacher Perceptions of SL
<i>Teacher Perceptions of Professional Learning</i>	7. Take a minute to think of a positive professional learning experience and then describe that experience.	RQ 4	Support Provided/Needed Personal Strengths/ Confidence Teacher Perceptions of PD Teacher Perceptions of SL
1. What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why? 2. Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction? 3. What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers? 4. How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?			

Table 27 below summarizes responses by individual teacher to interview questions 5 and 6. Information about individual responses identify similarities and differences among the teachers' beliefs about instructional support provided to them, self-reported personal strengths, and areas of struggle as a literacy teacher.

Table 27*Responses to Questions 5 & 6 by Teacher*

Category	T#1	T#2	T#3	T#4	T#5	T#6	T#7	T#8
Support Provided	Materials Support Staff Tech.	Materials Support Staff	Materials Support Staff Team	Materials Support Staff Team	Materials District PLC	Support Staff Team PD	Materials PD	Materials Support Staff Team Students
Support Needed	Clear & Concise Curricula Lack of Assess.	Parent Support	Too many meetings Time Realistic Pacing	Time to plan Lack of Assess.	Plan w/ Team, Lack of Assess.	Cohesive Curricula Lack of Assess.	Time Realistic Pacing Lack of Assess.	Schedule Priorities Always have IA Time to plan
Personal Strengths	Holistic Approach Willing to try new ways to teach	Meet students where they are to make needed growth Hold students accountable	Creativity Scaffolds	Found. Skill Knowledge Reach students at their level Use data to meet student needs	Classroom manage. Setting expect.	Found. skills training Students feel safe to try new things and make mistakes	Engage Students Tailor instruct. for all students	Different. Instruction Planning for 4-5 levels
Area of Reading Most Confident Teaching	Phonics Fluency	All areas	Phonics	All areas	All areas	Phon. Aware. Phonics	Phon. Aware.	Phon. Aware. Phonics Fluency
Identified Area of Struggle	Assess.	Parent Support	Assess. Writing	Writing	Assess. Inference	Fluency	Phonics	Technology

Supports that teachers consistently identified as provided from the school or district during literacy instruction were the quantity of materials available (n=7), support staff (e.g., instructional assistants, co-teachers, literacy coach) (n=6), and grade level teammates (n=4). Professional learning opportunities were identified as a support by 3 teachers as well. One teacher identified the available technology as a support and another teacher identified the

students as a support. When asked about supports needed, the following areas were identified: enhanced curriculum (organization, scope & sequence, informal assessments), time to plan, reduced time away from instruction due to schedule changes or meetings and increased parental support such as reading at home and increased communication with the school. When asked what makes them an effective reading teacher, interviewees identified: foundational skill knowledge (n=2), meeting students where they are (n=6) and providing a safe and engaging (n=2) classroom environment. When teachers were asked about the area of reading, they were most confident teaching, the following areas were identified: all areas (n=3), phonological awareness (n=3), phonics (n=4), fluency (n=2). When asked about struggles the teachers have while teaching literacy, teachers responded with the following areas: assessment (n=3), writing (n=2), fluency (n=1), phonics (n=1), inference (n=1), technology (n=1), and parent support (n=1).

Based on the information provided in Table 27, the following findings are revealed. The quantity of materials provided from District A is sufficient; however, barriers identified were access to needed materials, organization of resources and other materials, pacing requirements, and the use of clear and concise procedures for instruction and assessment options to monitor student learning. The teachers believe they have the required knowledge and skills to teach students to read and are able to differentiate literacy instruction when needed. Time (instructional, planning, and pacing) was a needed support identified by the participating teachers. Finally, when asked about supports, none of the teachers identified professional learning on literacy topics or teaching practices. When asked specifically about an area of literacy that they might struggle to teach, the responses were limited and general, indicating

explicit instructional techniques may be an area to explore with teachers during professional learning.

Findings from Final Interview Question. The final question from the interview guide addressed teachers' familiarity with the Structured Literacy framework, critical components of Structured Literacy, and positive professional learning experiences. Table 28 below captures the teacher responses for the following topics addressed during the individual interviews.

Table 28

Responses to Question 7 by teacher

	T#1	T#2	T#3	T#4	T#5	T#6	T#7	T#8
SL Prior to Visual	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
SLC Most Critical to Grade Level	All	Pho-nology Sound Symbol Syllable	Syllable	Sound Symbol Syllable	Sound Symbol Syllable Morph-ology	Pho-nology Syllable Morph-ology	All	All
SLC Most Critical for Struggling Readers	Pho-nology Sound Symbol Syllable	Pho-nology Sound Symbol	Pho-nology	Pho-nology Sound Symbol	Sound Symbol	Pho-nology	Pho-nology	Pho-Nology
SL Reflected in Curriculum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Spelling Morph-ology	Not All	Not All	Yes
Area of Literacy Most Confident	Phono. Aware. Phonics	Pho-nology Sound Symbol	Phono. Aware. Phonics	Reader's Workshop	All	Phonics	Phono. Aware.	Phono. Aware. Phonics
SL Helpful Support for Teachers	Yes	Yes	Sure, yes.	Yeah	Yes	Abso-lutely!	Depends on how it is shared	Yes

None of the participating teachers could describe Structured Literacy when asked to discuss this topic prior to seeing the visual presented during the interviews. Once the visual was shared, then teachers were able to relate the six components of Structured Literacy to the five areas of reading. When asked which of the six SL components were the most critical to the specific grade level taught by the teacher, the following responses were provided: all (n=3), phonology (n=2), sound symbol associations (n=3), syllable instruction (n=5), and morphology (n=2). Teachers identified the following as most critical for struggling readers: phonology (n=7), sound symbol associations (n=4), and syllable instruction (n=1). Five teachers shared that they believed the Structured Literacy components were reflected through District A's literacy curriculum, but three teachers stated that not all six components were present. When asked which component of literacy they were most confident to support a colleague, only one teacher used the Structured Literacy terminology of phonology and sound symbol. One teacher stated confidence in supporting colleagues with "*whatever question*" they may have due to being an experienced teacher. The remaining teachers identified the following area(s): phonological awareness (n=4), phonics (n=4), and Reader's Workshop (n=1). When the teachers were asked specifically if Structured Literacy could be used as a support for teachers, 7 of the 8 answered in the affirmative: yes (n=4), sure, yes (n=1), yeah (n=1), absolutely (n=1). One teacher said it depends on how it was presented (n=1). Teacher responses indicate that teachers are not familiar with Structured Literacy as an instructional approach. The lack of awareness of the Structured Literacy approach, ability to pronounce or define specific components, and believing SL is reflected in the District's curriculum are clear indications that future professional development on Structured Literacy would be warranted.

In the next section, the findings across all components of the study will be synthesized by research question using a triangulation matrix.

Findings by Research Questions

The triangulation process that was described in Section 2 was used to synthesize the data collected from the pre-interview questionnaire (PIQ), document analysis (DA), and teacher interviews (TI). The findings from the multiple sources provided evidence to address each of the research questions for the study. In the following section, the finding(s) related to each research question are first described. Then, supporting evidence with specific teacher quotes are provided for each finding. Last, conclusions and inferences regarding the research question are described. Below in Table 29 is an example of the organization of the matrix while research question 1 was considered. The completed triangulation matrix is located in Appendix Y.

Table 29

Sample of the Triangulation Matrix for Research Question 1

RQ #1a: What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block?	
Finding # 1: Balanced Literacy is the instructional approach teachers most identified or described with several teachers indicating a strong emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary. No teachers identify "Integrated Literacy" as the instruction approach used but one teacher did identify the three instructional focus areas identified by District A: Word Study, Reader's Workshop, and Writer's Workshop. Teachers' use of district guidance and materials and their understanding of balanced literacy and integrated literacy varied from teacher to teacher.	
Information Source(s): Pre-interview Questionnaire (PIQ) Document Analysis (DA) Analytic Memos Teacher Interview	PIQ: 5 of 8 teachers chose Balanced Literacy DA: Integrated Literacy, with an emphasis on Word Study, Reading Workshop, and Writer's Workshop, is the approach identified within the curricular documents provided by District A.
Key Words & Phrases: Balanced Literacy Foundational Skills 5 areas of Reading Standards-based Read Aloud Word Work Reading Workshop Writing Workshop Whole Group Small group for specific skills Curricular resources (book club, read aloud lessons, reader response, etc.)	Analytic Memo: Balanced Literacy is the approach 1 teacher identified specifically and the other teachers provided responses that can be related to balanced literacy. The specific instruction identified by the teachers were phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing with little emphasis on instructional time required for foundational skills.
Teacher Quotes: T1 "My hope is that this year, it will be a balanced literacy program where I'm going to be doing the phonics piece, phonemic awareness, and then (fingers crossed) some way to include book clubs so I can do that fluency piece and comprehension piece." T2 "So, our literacy block normally begins with a whole group lesson and which I would say usually involves the reading of a book and whatever lesson [standard] we might be teaching that particular day. Which you know, could be focusing on the characters, the setting the main topic, details, text features, and then we have a question answering session. If there's vocabulary in the book, I will pre teach the vocabulary, usually utilizing the smart board with pictures of those words and what I like to do is have the kids try to figure out what the word is."	

Research Question #1

What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why?

Finding 1. All participating LEOES teachers identified or described using Balanced Literacy or practices associated with Balanced Literacy. None of the teachers identified "Integrated Literacy" which District A defines as the integration of literacy skills for reading, writing, speaking & listening, and language within District A's *Integrated Literacy Philosophy and Overview*. Although only one teacher named the three major instructional categories (Word Study, Reader's Workshop, and Writer's Workshop), teachers did indicate using the read aloud lessons, writing units, and phonics lessons that were found in District A's documents across the three major categories. Teachers were not clear on the guidance about the following: early literacy instructional approach, how to structure the literacy block using a workshop approach, or how each of these major instructional areas created a comprehensive literacy program. Instead, teachers radiated toward portions of the curriculum that related to prior professional learning or materials that were grouped as units or sequences of lessons.

Evidence. Based on the PIQ and responses provided by the teachers during the interviews, Balanced Literacy was the most common instructional approach described as being used by the participating teachers. Balanced Literacy was the approach that most teachers believed to be the preferred instructional model. For example, T#1: stated, *"My hope is that this year, it will be a balanced literacy program where I'm going to be doing the phonics piece, phonemic awareness, and then (fingers crossed) some way to include book clubs so I can do that fluency piece and comprehension piece."* Also, shared by T#5, *"I use a balanced literacy approach where students are working with on-grade level text, and then they're also working*

with texts that are developmentally appropriate for them.” T#8 was asked to describe which components of reading were most important to the primary grade students in the class, “With certain kids, obviously, I feel like some of the components are more important than the others because it's based on their needs. But honestly, over the years, I have come to the conclusion that all of the components are important for different reasons, though...not partial to say this one is more important than the other.”

Lack of understanding and/or use of District A’s Integrated Literacy philosophy for literacy instruction is evidenced in the following:

T#2 provides a general description of the instructional approach used for early literacy instruction, *“So, our literacy block normally begins with a whole group lesson and which I would say usually involves the reading of a book and whatever lesson [standard] we might be teaching that particular day. Which you know, could be focusing on the characters, the setting the main topic, details, text features, and then we have a question answering session. If there's vocabulary in the book, I will pre teach the vocabulary, usually utilizing the smart board with pictures of those words and what I like to do is have the kids try to figure out what the word is.*

T#3 also provided this description of the literacy block, *“We get a little bit of everything in the day like phonemic awareness, phonics, guided instruction, and then usually somewhere in there, there's a writing piece. And then there's also centers that has something that relates to the skill that we're focused on that week, or what the child needs...”*

Only (T#4) mentioned the three key instructional categories, *“Sure, it's three components. In a perfect world, I get to my word work, which is the largest chunk of my time, we then progress into a reading workshop. And then we progress into a writing workshop.”* T#2 and

T#8, shared their understandings of Integrated Literacy as thematic units, not as District A defines Integrated Literacy:

“I always like the themes..., you also could bring in science and social studies...around that theme as well... you were able to cover your science and social studies within the literature block.”

“We don't have themes anymore, which I really dislike that component not having themes, because I feel like having a theme was a way for the kids to tie all of the information together.”

The excerpts above suggest that the interviewed teachers are using one approach to literacy instruction while the district documents identify a different approach. However, neither of the approaches are supported by current evidence-based practices like those of Structured Literacy.

Finding 2. Prior professional learning experiences have influenced the 8 LEOES teachers’ approaches to literacy instruction. District A provided foundational reading resources and teacher developed standards-based read aloud lessons both of which were described by the teachers as critical to defining their literacy instructional approaches. Targeted instruction based on student need was also a prior focus of LEOES professional learning and also reported as a critical driver for teachers’ ability to implement small group and differentiated instruction according to varying student needs.

Evidence. Based on the PIQ and teacher interviews, all 8 teachers identified that they used District A’s curriculum but required supplemental resources. T#4 explained using district and personal resources, *“Our reading workshop usually involves a mentor text selected by the county. I also have some of my own personal favorites that sometimes hit the standard better*

than in some of the county selected texts. And then my writing workshop works on a specific writing skill, which I also follow what the county gives me." T#8 shared that while planning for literacy instruction, *"I usually have team planning with my team, and we look at the [district's] scope and sequence and the standards before the lesson [district curriculum] And then we make sure that each of the components [referring to the five areas of reading] are included in [a particular] lesson and if not, then we find a way to supplement something with that."* This description provided by T#8 indicates additional time to locate and prepare supplemental material is a challenge the grade level team addresses collaboratively. T#7 shared this about the need to use supplemental materials to differentiate instruction for students when teaching foundational skills, *"Because what they have for the county doesn't always fit each teacher, each teacher style. And in order for it to be an effective lesson, you can't just be reading off of the scripts, you have to be engaging, you have to allow the kids to explore sounds not just okay, this is it."*

Another teacher described a prior professional learning experience on standards-based read aloud lessons. T#6 noted, *"Okay, so first of all when I begin my literacy block, I usually start with the read aloud with whatever read aloud is in the curriculum. That way, I can give them an assignment during rotations, where they can actually write in their journals. And they have a prompt or something they have to answer, like a question, they have to answer from the book during that time."* T#6's response reflects the information provided from prior professional development which addressed using standards-based read aloud lessons. While describing the approach to instruct struggling readers, T#6 also reflected on prior training on foundational skills needed to read. *"Um, basic reading skills like the phonics lessons, like alphabet and sounds okay. So, I usually use everything that we learned in XXX."* However, the teacher did not provide

any specific strategies or techniques that she might have learned except for pre-reading and decoding assessments that were part of training years ago.

Individual student need was identified as a critical factor in determining the literacy approach described by several teachers. T#3 shared, *“So just recognizing what the kids need is the most important part of it, and then being able to target that skill to really teach them in those small groups.”* T#2 shared, *“And of course, you know, we meet them where they are. And then we have students who may just be working on letter identification and everything in between.”* T#5 explained, *“...And we would also focus on the same standard, but we would do it at their reading level. So that they are able to read independently, they might need a little guidance with certain words and vocabulary, but we would still focus on that same standard, but at their particular level, if that makes sense.”* T#1 shared the importance of using flexible groups during the literacy block, *“Not just what I think a balanced literacy program should have, but it should also be geared to where the students are because my grouping is not going to be the exact same every week...”* T#8 shared this about the literacy block, *“The bulk of the ELA time is definitely spent on small group and even individualized instruction. So, we usually spend about a half, I’d say 30 to 45 minutes during small group time.”* These teachers also expressed confidence in their ability to implement targeted literacy instruction for individual and small groups of students. However, all 8 of the teachers expressed an eagerness to have access to additional assessment options and supplemental materials related to critical foundational skills. Additional information to support the above findings are located in the triangulation matrix in Appendix Y.

Conclusion. Teachers utilize some of the district’s grade level curricular resources while teaching particular areas of literacy instruction. For example, scripted resources or lessons are provided for phonological awareness, phonics, standards-based read aloud lessons, and writing

units so those lessons were referred to in detail during the interviews. However, the teachers expressed a need to improve materials for targeted small group instruction and for centers that require additional planning and supplemental materials depending on students' areas of strengths and weaknesses. Further, the teachers described approaches used with struggling readers that indicated a lack of cohesion and comprehensive approach to literacy instruction. Review of the documents related to the Integrated Literacy philosophy and the organization of curricular materials in each of the three major categories, Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop, and Word Study, further illuminated the lack of a diagnostic, cumulative and comprehensive literacy curriculum. Although teachers did cite prior professional development on teaching foundational reading skills as important to helping them target specific basic reading skills, none of the teachers provided specific examples of how to teach or assess those foundational skills which may suggest limited understanding.

Research Question #2

Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction?

Finding. During the individual interviews, LEOES teachers indicated that they were not aware of the Structured Literacy framework. The teachers also did not report that they implemented or specifically noted the six Structured Literacy components identified and defined as critical for early literacy instruction. However, the 8 teachers did report that they understood how to provide instruction in the five areas of reading when discussing the literacy block, curriculum resources and prior professional learning.

Lack of Evidence for Structured Literacy Terminology. Teachers did not report implementing, nor did they specifically identify the Structured Literacy components while

discussing the literacy block, the planning process, monitoring student learning, or reflecting on a positive lesson. Terms such as phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension were referenced by most teachers while discussing specific literacy instruction. However, the critical components: *phonology, sound symbol associations, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics* were not referenced, nor did teachers discuss the components as part of a cohesive curriculum or instructional sequence. The term *morphology* was referenced multiple times by 2 K-3 level teachers but only in relation to the graded morphology assignments, which are included in the district's Word Study curricular resources for grade XXX. T#1 shared, *"So, I divide them [kids] up... to work with me on reading, spelling, morphology..."*

LEOES teachers identified phonics as an instructional priority and phonological awareness and phonics were identified as important to literacy instruction by 7 of the 8 teachers although not with the exact term *phonology*. T#6 described the literacy block expressly including 3 of the 5 areas of reading, *"After the rotations are done... I work on phonological awareness. I work on phonics, I work on comprehension strategies depending on like, what the what the groups need. And then the phonics activities or whatever I'm teaching during the small group, that's usually where they are, it may be a [below]grade skill because that's where they are...I'll go ahead and have like a [grade-level] phonics lesson..."* T#3 described the literacy block to include, *"We get a little bit of everything in the day like phonemic awareness, phonics guided instruction, and then usually somewhere in there, there's a writing piece."*

Another teacher (T#7) talked about using a phonological awareness resource provided by the district, *"We're going to be working on Heggerty lessons in the book to kind of promote that sound."* T#7 shared the phonics lessons provided by the district needed revisions, *"I have taken bits and pieces from those lessons and kind of created my own schedule that works for me as part*

of the scope and sequence of phonics...” The exact Structured Literacy terminology of *sound-symbol associations* was not used by any teacher while describing the literacy block, planning instruction, or monitoring learning. T#2 and T#8 used the term syllables in reference to instruction aligned to phonological awareness skills, not *syllable type instruction* which Structured Literacy emphasizes. *Semantics* and *syntax* were also not identified by any teachers during the interviews. T#4 described a professional learning experience that improved instruction in comprehension, “*The resources were there, I was shown examples of anchor charts but that allowed me [to] crystallizing what was the expectation of, of me, and getting these students engaged in these read alouds and engaged in the standards that we teach during the reading workshop.*” Teachers were asked to describe what they knew about Structured Literacy, but none could respond, so I provided a visual of the Structured Literacy framework. The six components were referred to in a hierarchical progression of literacy components, not as components to be taught in an integrated manner as described by District A’s philosophy of Integrated Literacy or through the Structured Literacy framework. More specific information to support this finding is located in the triangulation matrix found in Appendix Y.

Conclusion. Although teachers did not report using any of the precise Structured Literacy components during the interview, teachers did make connections between Structured Literacy components to the relationship between the five areas of reading (e.g., phonological awareness and phonology were used interchangeably). Teachers were willing to identify when they were not certain how to pronounce a specific term and asked clarifying questions once the Structured Literacy visual was presented during the interview. Teacher questioning and vulnerability to admit when something was unknown suggest an element of trust with me as the literacy coach and displays the participating teachers’ openness to learn about the Structured Literacy approach.

Research Question #3

What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers?

Finding. Instructional challenges identified by the participating teachers were associated to District A's literacy curriculum and student factors. Significant challenges identified by the LEOES teachers related to lack of time, organization of materials in Schoology, lack of integration with science and social studies, and the lack of explicit instruction and assessment options for struggling readers. Additionally, LEOES teachers identify student factors related to prior experiences before starting school, basic language and literacy exposure, and neurobiological factors as the main causes for why students struggle to learn to read.

Evidence-Curricular Challenges. Due to the organization and the pacing of content for instructional materials provided by the district, teachers noted the following as challenges while teaching all students to read: the multitude of materials needed, the organization of grade level literacy curriculum in Schoology and how to access specific resources located within the school buildings, the need to differentiate instruction and prepare supplemental curricular resources, and the lack of procedures and guidance for assessing and monitoring student literacy learning. All 8 teachers expressed lack of time as a challenge, with respect to planning whole group and small group lessons as well as the actual literacy instruction. One teacher (T#3) shared the challenge of finding time to identify specific student needs, *"What we all need is the time to, you know, look at the data to see exactly what skills they need."* Four of the 8 teachers identified preparation of materials and the pacing of the skills to be taught as challenges. T#2 explained, *"I do a lot of planning on Sundays to get ready."* Another teacher (T#8) shared, *"Um, I'm going to say, I probably spend probably three hours a week planning for literacy instruction. I mean, it's a*

significant chunk of time." A third teacher (T#5) shared, *"Oh, my goodness, I feel like it takes forever. Um, I would say, for a week, it would take at least an hour to an hour and a half.... I feel like the Schoology is a little cluttered."* Setting realistic expectations for instructional pacing was shared as a challenge by T#7, *"Time like, like, oh, in a perfect world, this, this, this, and this should happen in a 10-minute block and you're like, no, that has never once happened in a 10-minute block."*

Additional challenges identified with the curriculum were categorized as organizational challenges (n=5) which teachers identified as needing more examples of how to present the content to the students (*"I don't feel like they give enough examples. And I don't feel like they give enough real-life classroom experience [actual implementation]. -T#7"*), more precise procedures and clear language (*"I don't think that the flow and integration [how the reading and writing lessons relate to one another] is there, like it should be... And it's not clear and precise for teachers. -T#1"*) of how to instruct struggling readers when they come to my classroom lacking the prior grade level skills (*"I need help with teaching Foundational skills, coming into my classroom not having what they would need to progress...-T#4"*).

Other challenges presented by the teachers were the various student needs (n=4) which makes it hard to meet the needs of all students and requires the need for a variety of scaffolding and supports to be added to curricular resources. T#1 explained, *"I think if they are missing a lot of that foundational phonemic awareness, even a basic understanding the phonics... because they're missing certain.... basic skills like that...how are you going to teach them to read? You have to go back and work on those skills."* Integration of concepts and subjects with the literacy curriculum was also identified as a challenge by 5 teachers #1, 2, 3, 6, and 8.

During the pandemic when all teachers were providing virtual instruction, the Ready Reading workbook was purchased by the district to teach reading comprehension skills. The implementation of this resource began during virtual instruction and was used in the transition to, hybrid and face to face learning so there were limited professional learning opportunities for teachers to understand how to utilize the workbook. Therefore, Ready Reading, was identified as a challenge by 4 teachers (#2, 3, 4, and 8). Teachers reported the Ready Reading lessons offer limited access to literature since the lessons revisit the same text multiple times for various skills. Also, teachers shared that the students do not always remember the previously read text or important details required for the new lesson. Teachers indicated they had valued the prior professional learning using standards-based read aloud lessons which in turn benefitted students access to increased literature and language comprehension skills. Since the teachers reported that Ready Reading limited the variety of texts used by students, the teachers expressed that sometimes a different read aloud lesson could address the standard in a more efficient manner. In addition, the writing resources and student expectations as part of Writer's Workshop were noted as additional areas of challenge by all 8 teachers. They commented that the writing lessons took too much time or were not developmentally appropriate for the students in their class. Finally, the need for common assessments for identifying struggling readers and monitoring the progress of those students was an additional challenge also noted by all 8 teachers.

When the teachers were asked specifically about the areas in which they did not feel supported by the school or district, they identified: lack of explicit and comprehensive curriculum (n=3), time needed for meetings or individual assessment (n=1), limited team planning (n=1), schedule changes due to the lack of substitute coverage which impact instructional assistants or classroom support (n=2), implementing Writer's Workshop (n=1), and

gaining parent support (n=1). With additional prompting about specific areas of support related to additional literacy training, teachers identified fluency instruction (n=1), writing instruction (n=2), technology integration (n=1), and teaching inferencing skills (n=1). This indicates the teachers believe to have sufficient knowledge in teaching student literacy skills or may not understand the impact of evidence-based literacy instructional practices used consistently with all students and especially students who struggle.

Evidence-Student Factors. When teachers were asked specifically why they believe most students struggled with learning to read, the following factors were identified: lack of language exposure and literacy experiences (n=4), lack of foundational skills (n=4), and students' lack of attention (n=2). One teacher did identify the lack of time required for the level of targeted instruction struggling students require and two teachers described the difficulty of catching students up to grade level when they require more foundational skill instruction. Additional evidence for this finding is located in the triangulation matrix to include specific quotes from the teacher interviews (See Appendix Y).

Conclusion. Participating teachers at LEOES identified challenges and barriers when attempting to teach all students to read. Curricular challenges identified had to do with the organization, cohesion, and cumulative elements of District A's literacy curriculum and materials. The time required to effectively plan for whole group, small group, and centers was another challenge teachers identified. When teachers were asked specifically why some students struggle to learn to read, all 8 responses referred to student factors; none of the responses related to the instruction provided to the students during the daily literacy block. This suggests that these teachers may believe that they are providing high impact evidence-based literacy instruction but are hampered by school/district or student specific factors. The lack of evidence to reflect on the

specific instruction provided to struggling students as it related to key instructional practices and components of literacy point to a need for learning among LEOES teachers.

Research Question #4

How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?

Finding 1. LEOES teachers interviewed do not recognize the Structured Literacy framework as an early literacy instructional approach nor did they identify the six specific and essential components of Structured Literacy as elements of their early literacy instruction.

Evidence. Prior to showing the Structured Literacy framework visual, none of the 8 teachers were able to respond to this question: *Can you tell me what you know about Structured Literacy?* The participating teachers freely admitted they did not know about the Structured Literacy framework, but all of the teachers felt comfortable admitting they did not know the meaning of Structured Literacy or asked for the term to be defined. They appeared to be interested in the instructional implications and welcomed further discussion on the topic. Examples of responses included: T#1 *“Hm, I don’t know.”*, T#4 *“I’m not quite certain I even know that term.”*, and T#5 *“Um, with the terminology, I’m not familiar. I don’t know.”* Other comments showed a willingness to discuss the topic: T#2 *“So, define Structured Literacy?”*, T#3 *“Oh, my, um... I ‘m assuming you mean like the parts. Like, there’s phonemic awareness, like what it is, is that what you mean...”*, and T#6- *“Structured Literacy? I don’t think I’ve ever heard of Structured Literacy. Unless I’m doing it and don’t know that’s what it’s called.”*

After each teacher was shown the visual and had time to review the Structured Literacy components and guiding principles, many of the teachers were still not familiar with this

approach to literacy instruction. Reactions varied but T#2, T#5, and T#8 struggled to pronounce the term *phonology* and T#3 and T#4 asked for the definition of *phonology* while T#2 and T#7 inquired about the meaning of *morphology*. Using the visual, T#4, T#5, T#7, and T#8 chose to use the assigned number of the component name, instead of the specific component name during the discussion (e.g., 1=phonology, 2=sound symbol associations, etc.). For example, T#4's response to which component they felt most comfortable teaching, *"Number two. Number three. Not quite certain what phonology is?"* and T#5 replied, *"I feel most comfortable with the first three."*

Another indication of the teachers' minimal understanding of Structured Literacy can be found in the responses that highlighted the relative importance of the six components. A fairly new teacher (T#7) shared, *"Okay, one, two and three, specifically in that order. I think that four or five and six are important for understanding and comprehension, which is the goal. But for learning to read, I would say one, two, and three."* An experienced teacher (T#5) shared, *"Um, I think that the goal... is for students to be at like the morphology level by XXX grade, but a lot of times, they're not because they're still stuck on sounding out words."* A veteran teacher (T#8) did appear to have some understanding of how the six components support early literacy when she shared, *"Well, I just feel like they build upon each other, and I think it's good for even a k-3 teacher, even if I'm not teaching some of the other evidence-based elements that, it's still good for me to know where we're headed."* However, overall, the responses highlight the teachers' perception of early literacy instruction as isolated by specific area and not a comprehensive and recursive approach involving the six components.

Conclusion. Teachers related what they knew about the five areas of reading to the six components of Structured Literacy once they were provided the visual which indicated a

minimal level of understanding. One teacher (T#8) stated, “*How do you say number one? [phonology]...I never like use that [term] I always say phonics or phonemic awareness.*”

Another teacher (T#3) shared, “*Syllables...it kind of goes hand in hand with the phonics or the phonemic awareness.*” However, despite the use of specific terminology, the teachers’ descriptions of their literacy block, lesson planning, and monitoring student progress were not specific or detailed regarding instructional practices or strategies and did not indicate a sufficient level of understanding of how to implement the Structured Literacy approach.

When presented with the visual, each of the 8 teachers described individually the six components as isolated skill areas. Teachers never expressed an understanding of the interconnectedness of the Structured Literacy components and guiding principles. Structured Literacy is described in the *Educator Training Initiatives Brief- Structured Literacy An Introductory Guide*, “Integration of explicit instruction for listening, speaking, reading, and writing with an emphasis on the structure of language across speech sounds (phonology), the writing system (orthography), the structure of sentences (syntax), the meaningful parts (morphology), the relationships among words (semantics), and the organization of spoken and written discourse” (IDA, 2019, p.6). This approach to literacy instruction braids the components and guiding principles into one comprehensive literacy program displaying the interconnectedness of the elements and the true complexity of quality early literacy instruction.

Finding 2. When asked specifically about the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to building professional knowledge and improve their instructional practices, the LEOES teachers identified differentiated professional learning, grade-level specific content, and relevant inquiry as criteria to be considered during the planning and implementation of possible professional learning about Structured Literacy.

Evidence. First, participants stressed the importance of differentiated and personalized professional learning that begins with an activity that allows teachers to evaluate their current knowledge of the topic and to reflect on their classroom literacy practices. Also, teachers highlighted the importance of future literacy improvement planning to include relevant professional development at both the school and district level. One suggestion shared by T#1 was, *“Doing first kind of the activating strategy of getting our knowledge of where we are and see what we know... there's nothing as stark as seeing...you think you know it and we think we know it all...[but] Oh, I only knew one. Okay, then I really do need to take the time to understand...”* Another teacher (T#5) shared the recommendation, *“I would probably start with what they already know... I would start with what teachers are familiar with [in terms of phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension] your evidence-based components. And then try to have them learn how [the six Structured Literacy components] fits into those evidence-based teaching principles. So, I feel like if you're presenting something completely new, teachers are not going to be as receptive as if you're kind of making something that you've already been exposed to.”* A third teacher (T#4) specifically addressed the diagnostic teaching principle of Structured Literacy, *“Can you tell me a little bit of what you mean by diagnostic teaching principle? [brief explanation provided] ... how do we assess it? This is sometimes where I struggle? Okay, I would definitely encourage more additional training on how we are going to assess...”*

A second theme that emerged from the interviews was that any professional learning provided on Structured Literacy should be relevant to the teachers and the students at each grade level. Specific training for grade level teams was recommended by T#7 who stated in response to if Structured Literacy should be a topic of professional learning, *“Depends on how it was*

presented... it's another one of those things...like if the people don't necessarily understand or [they] would need examples of how that would look to them. It wouldn't be effective if you just put this out and said, there you are first grade and fifth grade, you guys are the same. Go have at it." T#2 also shared this recommendation, *"I think it would be good if you had the evidence-based elements, and you gave the teachers the technology or books that they would be able to use and come up with different samples for different grade levels."* Varying student need was cited as a consideration by T#3, *"Well, I mean, looking at each component and thinking about teaching each one... there's so much you can do with each one. And then if you need to scaffold or you need to accommodate, you can within the skill."*

Finally, teachers identified using the same expectations for student and adult learning environments. One teacher (T#7) stated, *"I mean... we always say..., the most effective form of teaching is for small groups and individualized instruction, and I think that doesn't stop... once you become an adult."* Also, T#2 recommended, *"... [present the information] in smaller groups and then come back; and share and move. You got to move; you can't sit still."* A response from T#6 reflected that providing professional learning on Structured Literacy in a format that allows for self-guided inquiry-based learning would be more helpful to teachers than the current topics provided by District A *"...even if it's just time for us to do our own research... look for it in the curriculum... what are some things that we can find or that we can gain from some type of training...Which one is it that we feel like we would benefit from the most?"*

Although none of the 8 teachers reacted negatively to the possibility of learning more about the evidence-based practices highlighted in Structured Literacy, there was an element of restraint from a few teachers. For instance, T#8 shared, *"Well, I just think it's important that sometimes you have to remember, you can't always reach a kid by looking at an evidence-based*

component or something like that. Sometimes you need to think outside of the box...it's not with all kids, but I just feel like it's important to remember that in the back of your mind that not all kids are going to be successful and fit kind of into this framework here.” Another teacher (T#4) was reluctant to answer the question directly and asked multiple clarifying questions prior to stating if Structured Literacy would be supportive to early literacy teachers. T#4’s response was, *“Okay, and what are you asking me, if this equation is doable?”*

Conclusion. According to my personal experiences during district wide PLCs, one curriculum specialist described District A’s literacy curriculum as following the Structured Literacy approach. This description surprised me because District A has used the Integrated Literacy approach with RW, WW, and WS for many years. So, while approaching the interviews, I was really uncertain of the expected responses from the participating teachers pertaining to Structured Literacy. However, none of the teachers were able to comment on Structured Literacy prior to seeing the visual during the interview. Most teachers stated the framework could support teachers as they attempt to meet students’ various early literacy needs. When asked specifically how participants would recommend the process to share information about Structured Literacy, they welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback and input for future professional learning. They appreciated the prospect to reflect on personal prior learning as professionals. Reactions varied but several themes emerged while analyzing the transcripts from the interviews to include input from LEOES teachers about future professional learning on the Structured Literacy framework.

This research study was initiated as a means to inform District A and the LEOES staff about the current literacy instructional approaches reported by K-3 teachers, challenges that impact evidence-based early literacy instruction, and consideration of the Structured Literacy

framework as a future professional learning topic for K-3 teachers. The research questions identified informed the qualitative procedures needed to draw conclusions and provide evidence through the triangulation process.

Limitations. Several limitations should be noted for this study. First, COVID-19 school closures and revised programming occurred during the time of the study. In March of 2020, schools were shut down completely for several weeks which was when the initial intentions of this study were being developed. Then virtual and/or hybrid instruction occurred from April 2020 until school resumed in the typical fashion in August of 2021. The disruptions and variability of the school environment due to COVID-19 impacted the procedures, planning and development of this study. Instructional procedures, teacher dispositions, and student variables were considered due to the variations of instructional delivery models resulting from virtual, in-person, hybrid, and concurrent teaching environments.

Also, due to COVID-19 closures the University of Maryland restrictions for research proposals required that all interviews were conducted virtually. There were no technology issues during the interviews, all participants were able to log in and access the virtual meetings without additional support. At the beginning of the interviews, the introduction from the interview guide was used to establish norms, ensure confidentiality, and offer the option for the interview to take place without recording but all participants agreed to the recording. However, boundaries in verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as participants' level of comfort with the format of the interview are limitations to consider as constraints on the findings.

Recall bias and interference theory are both limitations to notate for this qualitative study. Participants were asked to report information about the literacy block, planning process, progress monitoring for student learning, and reflections of a positive literacy lesson after experiencing

the traumas caused from the pandemic and prior to starting a new school year with face-to-face learning resuming. Spencer, Brassey, & Mahtani (2017) define recall bias as an error occurring when study participants do not accurately remember past events/experiences by omitting details. In relation to changes caused by COVID-19 (classroom literacy instruction prior to virtual, hybrid, or concurrent literacy instruction), interference theory describes how memory retrieval during a crisis can impact individuals' ability to accurately recall details about events or experiences (Farmaki, 2021). Attempts to mitigate these limitations included providing extended wait time, clarifying questions when needed, and developing the interview guide with objective statements to encourage and to promote reflection of instructional practices.

The initial goal was achieved since eight teachers agreed to participate (53%) so sample selection bias and validity concerns should be noted since a limited number of participants responded. Nunan, Aronson, & Bankhead (2018) warn sample selection bias occurs when responses from few participants may not be a true representation of the population for the research to be accurately analyzed. The study was not intended to be comprehensive to the district or school but to be exploratory in nature to gain teachers' self-reported early literacy practices and gain initial perceptions about Structured Literacy. The sampling included only K-3 teachers at LEOES with the purpose to understand foundational literacy practices used and identify challenges teachers believe impact the instruction provided during the critical primary grades. A small number of non-diverse teacher voices were represented in the results so this must be viewed as a limitation. Demographic information was not collected to maintain confidentiality but should be considered as a limitation. Finally, researcher bias is a possible limitation in this study since I am a Literacy Coach at LEOES as well as other schools. Attempts to minimize research bias were made through the use of interview protocols with carefully developed

questions and prompts and data collection methods. A triangulation approach for analysis was used to verify key findings identified through various information sources.

Implications for LEOES and District A

In the prior sections, procedures, key findings, conclusions, and limitations were described as a result of this investigation. Implications and considerations at the national, district, and school level are identified next from my perspective as a Literacy Coach, as well as a stakeholder responsible for improving low literacy in the primary grades. In this section, I provide an overview of the implications for consideration.

National Level Implications

Although this study did not specifically investigate teacher preparation programs, several implications can be considered. This study suggests that higher education systems may need to reflect on their role as a contributing factor in low literacy achievement across the nation. Prospective teachers attend programs with the notion of becoming appropriately trained to teach at the elementary school level as experts in all subject areas. The level of coursework and practicum experience required to be an expert teacher of reading may not be currently in place at all higher education institutions. Audits of current syllabi must be completed to ensure the information provided to future teachers aligns with the science of reading. I recommend teacher preparation programs use the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (IDA, 2018) to revise the courses required to become certified as an elementary teacher. Each of the 5 Standards should be one course to explicitly teach the content named in the standards. Teachers at a collaborating school could be trained as well for a practicum that could follow for skill implementation. This would benefit the future teachers by providing real life experiences in the

classroom and ensuring that the coordinating teachers are diligent about remaining expert reading teachers who are certified to train and mentor new teachers. Collaborative efforts between higher education centers and schools will provide a path for the knowledge of the researcher to travel to those who need it the most, the teachers.

Implications for District A

With the Ready to Read Act law requirements as a focus and a priority for the new ELA Elementary Supervisor, District A is currently in a position to capitalize on the changes needed to increase the use of evidence-based early literacy practices. Significant implications for District A are in the areas of the literacy curriculum, building teacher knowledge in the most effective ways to teach students to read, and correlating assessment practices to relevant literacy instruction. I recommend the district move forward with identifying Structured Literacy as the preferred instructional approach for K-3 grades to clarify with staff. Then a process to determine which schools need specific levels of support for implementation and professional development must be determined by the district literacy leadership team. The state of Maryland is currently endorsing professional development in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading & Spelling (LETRS) for teachers. The district may form a partnership with the state to plan for all teachers being fully LETRS trained by a reasonable specified date in order to be certified and teach K-3 grades. This recommendation is dependent on decisions made by policymakers and other stakeholders so District A's ELA leadership team should consider other ways to build teacher knowledge of Structured Literacy components and strategies to support implementation, as well.

Currently, District A identifies Integrated Literacy as the preferred instructional approach within the curricular guidance documents but during professional development sessions, one member of the ELA leadership team identified Structured Literacy as the district's instructional

approach. The construct about how to best teach reading is misunderstood and not clear to all stakeholders. If leadership is identifying two different constructs and teachers believe balanced literacy is the preferred instructional approach for literacy, then the ELA district leadership must take steps to clarify which instructional construct is actually the optimal approach for early literacy development. Also, curricular resources must be aligned to and support the implementation of instructional practices identified within that construct. Then, effective, and consistent professional development must be provided to include ongoing teacher training, coaching cycles within the classroom for actual implementation development and a reflective process for continued professional growth. District A provides a large quantity of curricular resources and materials for teachers to use, but the quality of the resources, specifically the lack of organization of the numerous online documents, required teacher manuals, optional read aloud books, digital software/tools, and endless reproducible student materials required present several barriers to teachers as they attempt to implement effective literacy instructional practices. Additionally, the curriculum lacks specific procedures and guidelines for students who are struggling to master foundational reading skills.

Another implication related to District A's Integrated Literacy curriculum is that the groupings of tasks and materials used and identified as Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop, and Word Study do not align with the Structured Literacy approach. Beginning and struggling readers require evidence-based early literacy instructional approaches that emphasize explicit foundational skills and systematic phonics approaches at the initial phoneme-grapheme level for reading and spelling. With an emphasis on these 3 areas and the workshop approach, students spend more time working independently on isolated reading, writing, and phonics tasks without prompt teacher feedback. According to Structured Literacy expert Louise Spear-Swerling (2019),

the traditional workshop approach to literacy instruction does not allow for sufficient teacher-led explicit instructional time of foundational components of literacy to be implemented in a comprehensive and coherent manner. Therefore, it is recommended for District A to provide a clear progression of evidence-based components with coordinated materials that build upon and relate to the critical literacy skills needed for cohesive instruction addressing the reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards.

Although the workshop approach does allow for teachers to conference with individual students as needed for assessments, the level of specificity needed to pinpoint and target instruction was not evident from the comments provided by the LEOES teachers during the interviews. Teachers were not confident in discussing or describing literacy assessment options for diagnostic or progress monitoring purposes. Specifically, when teachers were asked to describe early literacy techniques to intervene with struggling readers, most participants replied that they taught the skill again individually or in a small group. During the interviews, several teachers did identify the need to teach the concept in a different way or by using different manipulatives, but teachers did not provide a clear process or procedure to intervene. Therefore, a comprehensive and coherent curriculum that aligns with phonology, sound-symbol associations, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics could increase the use of evidence-based early literacy practices.

At present, teachers report using the Balanced Literacy approach, District A's curriculum identifies Integrated Literacy, and throughout the District's materials some elements of Structured Literacy appear but there is no evidence the teachers have a clear understanding of Structured Literacy. Also, Schoology has not been developed with the user in mind. Even if the actual content is improved, the specific structure and design of the curriculum needs to be

considered. The use of a “home-grown” curriculum may have once been appropriate for the district but to ensure all students are provided diagnostic, explicit, and systematic early literacy instruction, teachers need evidence-based curriculum and the professional knowledge about Structured Literacy to reach all students. In addition to evaluating curricular resources to align with the components of Structured Literacy, there are implications to consider around building teachers’ capacity to increase knowledge of the Structured Literacy framework and how evidence-based practices are implemented in grades K-3. Ultimately, there are implications for the district, policymakers, and teacher preparation programs to evaluate the required coursework and content so all newly certified teachers are appropriately trained as early literacy teachers to provide best instructional practices identified in the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (KPS, 2018).

Implications for LEOES

First, several implications for LEOES will be shared for the instructional leadership team to consider moving forward while planning for school wide professional development in evidence-based instruction for all teachers. Participating teachers are aware of and consistently identify the five areas of reading while describing early literacy instruction. However, the information shared during the interviews was broad and not specific to the 6 components and 3 guiding principles of the Structured Literacy framework. This is significant because teaching students to read, especially struggling readers, is complex and requires tremendous knowledge, skill, and strategy. LEOES teachers mentioned the importance of teaching phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as isolated skills during the interviews. Also, the need for consistent tools to use a diagnostic approach for literacy instruction was identified by teachers. The Structured Literacy methods supported by research

which incorporate listening, speaking, reading, and writing with explicit, systematic, and cumulative approaches were not communicated during the interviews. This is important because low literacy achievement has been an on-going problem at LEOES as cited in Section 1, so classroom teachers must be experts in early literacy instruction using evidence-based practices.

Secondly, a critical factor for LEOES teachers to consider while teaching all students to read is building teachers' awareness about the impact of the daily early literacy instruction they provide to students. The teachers' role as a key to prevention of reading problems must be explored further at LEOES since only student factors were identified as causal factors for why students struggle to read, not the daily instructional practices used by the teachers. As the literacy coach at LEOES, this forces me to consider myself as a learner within this context since expected improvements in teacher reflection are not evident. How can I encourage teachers to begin to question their instructional practices and use of evidence to ensure all students are learning to read? Part of my work will align well with the current focus of LEOES' instructional leadership team to promote self-reflection of instructional decisions and a shared responsibility for all students learning to read. But the other part of my work will be to gain teacher buy-in and beliefs about this idea: When teachers understand and implement the guiding principles and components of Structured Literacy, "...all but the most severe reading disabilities can be ameliorated in the early grades, and students can get on track toward academic success" (KPS, 2018, pg.3).

It is important to deepen teachers' knowledge of literacy acquisition and Structured Literacy instruction so more students are taught to read in the primary grades. The large proportion of LEOES students do not have to struggle to gain language, reading or writing skills if teachers are equipped with the knowledge to recognize signs of early risk and provide

multisensory explicit instruction to target foundational reading skills. In order to deepen the LEOES teachers' knowledge of and how to implement the evidence-based practices, professional learning focused on the Structured Literacy framework is warranted and recommended. Several considerations specific to LEOES administration are identified as possible next steps and considerations as the school improvement plan is revised. The organization of this information aligns with a new school goal teachers have been tasked to include during their daily instruction with their students to increase purpose, relevance, and reflection of learning. Information in Table 30 below provides a model for the LEOES staff to describe information needed for implementation considerations: what, why, and how of possible next steps for LEOES administration to consider.

Table 30

What, Why, How Chart for LEOES to Consider

What	Why	How
Share information about Structured Literacy and this study with Instructional Leadership Team (ILT).	Inform leadership team of findings to consider as they plan for increased use of evidence-based instructional practices and make connections to the current work and areas of focus for school improvement.	During ILT, information will be presented and reviewed so the team may consider implications. Then, action steps and procedures to disseminate the findings will be developed to increase teacher knowledge of Structured Literacy components and guiding principles.
Staff survey to determine teacher perspectives and understanding about the impact of the daily explicit instruction they provide consistently.	Teachers did not identify any instructional practices or their role as a teacher when describing why students struggle to learn to read. Determine if Teacher Efficacy is a cultural problem of practice to consider with ILT and the school improvement team.	Provide time at a Faculty Meeting for staff to reflect on their beliefs and perspectives about their role in student literacy achievement and their professional learning responsibilities.

Focus group with grade level teams to share an overview of the Structured Literacy framework with direct connections made to grade level data analysis of student progress on MAP or MCAP.	Set the purpose for professional learning but show willingness to include teacher voice about priorities and most relevant areas to grade level needs and goals to increase literacy achievement.	At PLC, Grade Level SIT member facilitate information with teams and guide discussions about goals for future professional learning needs as related to Structured Literacy.
Structured Literacy Professional Development Modules will be developed to include the six components of Structured Literacy, as well as the guiding principles for instruction.	Information will be available for teams to complete and reference as needed for the overview of the component but the actual implications for continued learning will be directly related to the specific teams and student needs.	Literacy Coach & ELA Leadership Team will develop modules to be used as grade level teams determine appropriate. Teachers may access during PLC, collaborative planning, or other times as needed.

The participating LEOES teachers provided recommendations to be considered for sharing information about Structured Literacy and how to create professional learning opportunities for honest reflection of current literacy practices. First, time for grade level collaboration to ensure professional learning is relevant and related to student needs. Second, critical information about Structured Literacy should be presented and related to the available curricular resources and grade level expectations. Third, the new learning will require time for teachers to process information, plan for the implementation, and practice the techniques so ample time will need to be provided to focus skill development before moving on to other topics. Although teachers shared a willingness to learn and improve literacy instructional practices, the persistent lack of student progress at LEOES was not discussed in relation to classroom instruction but attributed to environmental and student factors. Teachers must understand the power and impact they have by providing the most effective literacy instruction for all students. This notion must be addressed with the teachers at LEOES to encourage reflective practices for

teachers to understand and appreciate their respective impact of teaching students using diagnostic, explicit, and comprehensive early literacy instruction.

As I prepared to make recommendations, I came back to the driving force behind the critical impact of effective literacy instruction in the early grades. This instruction is highly dependent on two vital factors for the district and LEOES to consider. First, teachers must be trained as experts in the science of reading and given appropriate time to learn and collaborate with their colleagues. Second, in order for this to be truly successful, school and district leaders must clearly demonstrate how critical the role of the classroom teacher is in the process of teaching all students to read. When teachers realize how vital they are in the process, this should lead to teacher buy-in. Other ways to gain teacher buy-in include soliciting teacher feedback and input while planning professional learning and future comprehensive literacy development. Teacher led focus groups or committees may provide additional insights to the implications identified above.

Professional learning for teachers at LEOES should model the school wide goal to include the what, the why, and the how of the Structured Literacy components. Appropriate time should be provided for teacher collaboration, as teachers reported time to process new information as important during the interviews. Two common elements shared by the teachers as a positive experience with professional learning included when the topic was relevant to their instruction and sufficient time was provided for the learning, planning, and implementing with support from their colleagues. Finally, support provided by the literacy coach and academic dean to model diagnostic teaching with consideration to progress monitoring as related to the Structured Literacy components should be considered to increase teacher knowledge and model the implementation of instructional practices.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory design study was to understand current early literacy practices and the barriers teachers identify in relation to the Structured Literacy components and guiding principles that are critical for all students learning to read. Teacher interviews provided a space to identify self-reported literacy practices, challenges presented to teachers as they attempt to teach all students to read and begin to understand participating teachers' knowledge and perceptions about Structured Literacy. This research was not designed to identify the cause for the lack of literacy achievement at LEOES but to illuminate if and how the Structured Literacy instructional framework may improve the use of evidence-based practices that are effective for all students and essential for students who have difficulty with learning to read. The data collected from this research was used to develop implications for LEOES and District A to consider while planning for literacy achievement.

Appendix A: Literacy Coach Areas of Focus (2018-2020)

2018-2019 LEOES Staff & Literacy Coach Collaboration Areas of Focus		
Staff	Topic	Comments
Principal/AP	School Improvement Team and Targeted Support & Improvement (TSI) planning	Meetings were ongoing throughout the year, discussions from these meetings resulted in additional support or focus areas to intervention tracking, progress monitoring, and professional development sessions to use Learning Focused to plan
AP/ Dean	<p>Informal assessments to monitor student progress in interventions</p> <p>Collaboration between general and special education teachers</p> <p>Procedures for monitoring student growth and expected documentation from teachers</p>	Meetings were formal and informal depending on the specific questions or needs the AP or Dean had about specific students, some of these meetings led to me administering informal assessments that were needed and the teachers did not know how to administer or have time to complete, a data tracking system was used to identify specific students at each grade level
Grade 4 & 5 Teachers (General & Special Education Teachers)	<p>PARCC Data analysis for individual students and standards</p> <p>Learning Focused Book 1 Components</p> <p>Literary /Informational Reading Standard Progression analysis</p> <p>FLEX – identifying students, planning for, and implementing targeted instruction across the grade level</p> <p>Intervention overview and how to administer a decoding survey and</p>	PLC, Deep Planning, before school planning, and various PD sessions were used to work with the staff throughout the year. Inclusive education was priority for this year, so some of the work involved training the teachers how to collaborate with each other, identify student barriers, and plan for scaffolded instruction. Once the teams determined focus standards for the year, planning was emphasized on how to instruct the students, allow for practice and modelling, and then determine if the standard was mastered through some type of common assessment across the grade level. Teachers were hyper focused on the low literacy achievement results that had been a trend, but they articulated they would do whatever needed to be done to improve. One result from these sessions between 4 th and 5 th grade teams led to the discussion of students who do not have foundational reading skills that are needed to read and spell in the intermediate

	informal reading inventory	grades. Teacher admitted they needed to work on these skills during class, not just FLEX so small group instruction was identified as a priority by the end of the year.
	Planning for the ELA Literacy Block, while considering writing across contents since the grades were departmentalized	

2019-2021 LEOES Staff & Literacy Coach Collaboration Areas of Focus		
Staff	Topic(s)	Comments
Principal/AP	School Improvement Team and Targeted Support & Improvement (TSI) planning Utilizing additional staff to support students lacking foundational skills School-wide Literacy Team	Meetings were ongoing throughout the year, discussions from these meetings resulted in additional support or focus areas to intervention tracking, progress monitoring, and professional development sessions in Learning Focused planning, using Map Growth data to monitor students, goal setting with teachers and students, and writing instruction
AP/ Dean	Using informal assessments to monitor student progress in interventions for general and special education students. Procedures for monitoring student growth and expected documentation from teachers. The SST process was an area of focus this year as we were able to “screen” more students with MAP data. We coordinated with the kindergarten instructional assistants, grade level teachers in 1, 2, 3 grades to identify specific students that needed additional practice in foundational literacy skills.	Meetings were formal and informal depending on the specific questions or needs the AP or Dean had about specific students, some of these meetings led to me administering or training staff to administer informal assessments. Training and planning with the K IAs were completed so their instruction was targeted to specific phonological awareness or phonics skills. Grades 1, 2, & 3 had approx. 15 students that were targeted for this additional instruction provided by the K IAs or me.
Grade Level PLCs & Deep Planning (K-5)	Administration of NWEA MAP Growth assessments to include administration training, scheduling, support during	Some teachers were not aware of or comfortable giving phonological awareness or decoding assessments, when possible, I modelled for the

	<p>testing, and report options for results. Students with intensive needs according to MAP were identified and provided additional assessments in foundational reading skills. Standard progressions, connected to know and do goals which are required in Learning Focused but not identified within the curriculum was a priority too. Conferring with students about writing, data, and goal setting was a focus area too.</p>	<p>teachers but sometimes there was not time, so I administered the assessments and then I reviewed the results with the teachers. This year the teachers began to identify specific student needs according to MAP learning progressions which led to further questions about teacher knowledge of and resources to teach basic skills. Teachers participated in trainings about standards-based read aloud & writing in response to text.</p>
<p>Then, on March 13, 2020, schools were closed for almost 3 weeks and the priority became teaching students virtually. I continued to support the K IAs with lesson planning and development for the students who engaged in virtual learning. Also, I collaborated with the 5th grade team to develop virtual lessons to provide to their students until the end of the school year. With, the constant transitions from virtual to concurrent teaching this year, I have not been able to work with the staff in the same capacity. Mostly, I provided support by pulling small groups of students, informally assessing students, planning with the Kirwan Tutor and K IAs for their targeted groups in grades k-5, and supporting administration as needed.</p>		

Appendix B: Notification Email to ELA Elementary Supervisor

Insert Date

Dear Mrs. XX,

I would like to share information about the study that I am planning as part of my Doctorate in Education in order to complete my dissertation, “Structured Literacy: Teacher Understandings and the Instructional Implications for Reading Achievement.” As I am sure you know, early evidence-based literacy instruction implemented prior to third grade is critical for providing the necessary foundation for learning to read (Hernandez, 2011; Moats, 2020). The status of early literacy instruction impacts the goal of ensuring students are proficient readers which sets the trajectory for future academic success (Stanovich, 1986).

My focus school, LEOES, is the proposed location for this investigation since I have been working as a Literacy Coach for the last three years. The primary purpose of my study is to determine the status of evidence-based early literacy instruction in K-3 classrooms and gain insights from teachers about their craft. I plan to hold interviews with each participating teacher to identify teacher perceptions about the components of Structured Literacy and the instruction implemented to target foundational literacy skills. The goal is to identify evidence-based literacy elements that align with Structured Literacy, identify specific implementation barriers, and determine if the Structured Literacy framework may be beneficial in planning future school improvement efforts for literacy.

I would like at least two general education literacy teachers who teach kindergarten, first, second, and third grades to participate in the study but all of the teachers will be invited to participate. Teacher interviews will take place via Zoom outside of the school day. The questions asked through the interview will seek teacher perspectives about evidence-based early literacy instruction, implementation barriers, and probe for teacher recommendations for improved use of evidence-based early literacy instruction aligned to Structured Literacy components. The data will be collected and analyzed so future literacy improvement teams may consider the reported information to aide in decision making. Confidentiality of all participants will be protected. Individual teacher/classroom data will not be reported in the study and will not be used as an evaluation of any type of the teacher. This study has been approved in accordance with district policy and procedures.

I look forward to sharing the study results with you once completed. The information gathered from the K-3 teacher interviews may be considered for future literacy planning for the district as well if you feel the information provided is relevant to all schools. As you consider future professional learning and/or curricular changes the information provided will allow the perspective and voice of the classroom teachers to be considered. Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Brandi M. Taeschner, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix C: Notification Email to Principal

Insert Date

Dear Principal XX,

I would like to share information about the study that I am planning as part of my Doctorate in Education in order to complete my dissertation, “Structured Literacy: Teacher Understandings and the Instructional Implications for Reading Achievement.” As I am sure you know, early evidence-based literacy instruction implemented prior to third grade is critical for providing the necessary foundation for learning to read (Hernandez, 2011; Moats, 2020). The status of early literacy instruction impacts the goal of ensuring students are proficient readers which sets the trajectory for future academic success (Stanovich, 1986).

I have chosen your school as the proposed location for this investigation since I have been working as a Literacy Coach for the last three years. The primary purpose of my study is to determine the status of evidence-based early literacy instruction in K-3 classrooms and gain insights from teachers about their craft. I plan to hold interviews with each participating teacher to identify teacher perceptions about the components of Structured Literacy and the instruction implemented to target foundational literacy skills. The goal is to identify evidence-based literacy elements that align with Structured Literacy, identify specific implementation barriers, and determine if the Structured Literacy framework may be beneficial in planning future school improvement efforts for literacy.

I would like at least two general education literacy teachers who teach kindergarten, first, second, and third grades to participate in the study but all of the teachers will be invited to participate. Teacher interviews will take place via Zoom outside of the school day. The questions asked through the interview will seek teacher perspectives about evidence-based early literacy instruction, implementation barriers, and probe for teacher recommendations for improved use of evidence-based early literacy instruction aligned to Structured Literacy components. The data will be collected and analyzed so future literacy improvement teams may consider the reported information to aide in decision making. Confidentiality of all participants will be protected. Individual teacher/classroom data will not be reported in the study and will not be used as an evaluation of any type of the teacher. This study has been approved in accordance with district policy and procedures.

I look forward to sharing the study results with you once completed. The information gathered from the K-3 teacher interviews may be considered for future literacy planning. As you consider future professional learning and/or curricular changes the information provided will allow the perspective and voice of the classroom teachers to be considered. Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Brandi M. Taeschner, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix D: Initial Recruitment Email to K-3 Grade Teachers

Insert Date

Dear (TEACHER NAME),

I am requesting your assistance with participation in a research study to complete my dissertation “Structured Literacy: Teacher Understandings and the Instructional Implications for Reading Achievement” as part of my Doctorate in Education. The study centers on understanding the evidence-based early literacy instruction that occurs in K-3 grade classrooms at LEOES. Additionally, teacher perspectives on factors that may impact the implementation of effective foundational literacy instructional practices will be an area of focus.

The intention of this research is to understand the current status of evidence-based literacy instruction at LEOES in K-3 grades. The primary grades are critical years for students as they begin reading acquisition. Your job is essential for all of our learners but specifically students struggling to learn to read. So, this investigation aims to gather teacher perspectives, comments, and recommendations about early literacy components and instructional practices. The resulting information will be provided to the principal and district administration to consider for future literacy improvement planning purposes.

The study includes a teacher interview to discuss specific foundational literacy components and ask you describe factors that impact your literacy instruction. The information from the participants will be analyzed for patterns and then summarized for the school and district leadership to consider for future literacy improvement plans. The interviews will be conducted virtually via Zoom and will last approximately one hour and will be conducted outside of the contractual school day. You will be compensated with a \$25.00 Amazon gift card for your participation in the study. Confidentiality of students and teachers will be a priority and maintained. No names will be disclosed in the written research. This study has been approved by (Name), following district guidelines and procedures.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please respond to this email within 5 days. I will respond with an additional email to confirm your desire to participate, directions to complete the consent form, and provide the link to the pre-interview questionnaire to schedule the interview. Participation is voluntary but I would really appreciate having at least 2 participants per grade level. An example of the consent form is attached to this email for you to preview. If you have questions, or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at 443-532-0117 or email me at taeschnerb@calvertnet.k12.md.us. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brandi M. Taeschner, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix E: Second Recruitment Email to K-3 Grade Teachers

Insert Date

Dear (TEACHER NAME),

This is a reminder to please consider participation in my study. The interview will support me as I try to gain information needed for the dissertation study “Structured Literacy: Teacher Understandings and the Instructional Implications for Reading Achievement”. Your contribution is greatly valued to understand early literacy instructional practices. I hope to gain a clear understanding of the foundational literacy instruction occurring, implementation barriers, and your recommendations to increase the literacy achievement at LEOES.

The interviews will be conducted virtually via Zoom so the transcripts are easily collected for the analysis process. The interview should take approximately 1 hour and will be conducted outside of the contractual school day. You will be compensated with a \$25.00 Amazon gift card for your participation in the study. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. Data obtained will generate critical information about evidence-based early literacy instruction with teacher perspectives included as we plan for future literacy improvements and may inform future professional development and literacy practices.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please respond to this email within 2 days. I will respond with an additional email to confirm your desire to participate, how to complete the consent form, and the link to the pre-interview questionnaire to schedule the interview. Participation is voluntary but I would really appreciate having at least 2 participants per grade level. An example of the consent form is attached to this email for you to preview. If you have questions, or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at 443-532-0117 or email me at taeschnerb@calvertnet.k12.md.us. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brandi M. Taeschner, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix F: Confirmation Email to Participants of Study

Insert Date

Dear (Teacher Name),

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the individual teacher interview for my study “Structured Literacy: Teacher Understandings and the Instructional Implications for Reading Achievement”. Your contribution is greatly valued to understand early literacy instructional practices. I understand your time is valuable, so I am hoping to ensure the process for participation is clear to you. Please read the information below to access the pre-interview questionnaire for you to provide general information and select three possible dates to schedule the interview.

The letter of consent, general information needed, and how to identify preferred dates/times for the interview can be opened through this link:

(insert link)

Interviews will take approximately one hour and will be completed through Zoom. The interview will be recorded so that transcripts are able to be saved for the analysis process of this investigation. Interviews will take place between August -- and August -- during your preferred time. I will confirm the interview date and time by sending an email with the Zoom link.

Please complete this pre-interview questionnaire within the next 2 days. A reminder email will be sent to you 2 days prior to the interview with the Zoom link and consent letter for you to review again. Thank you for agreeing to participate and contact me at 443-532-0117 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Brandi M. Taeschner, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix G: Reminder Email about the Scheduled Interview

Hello (Teacher Name):

I wanted to remind you of the scheduled interview for (Date /Time) which is in 2 days (or less depending on date scheduled). Please make sure you have a device available during the interview which will last approximately 1 hour. I will be recording the interview, so I do not have to take notes. This will allow me to be responsive to the information you share. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 443-532-0117.

You can access the meeting through this link:
(insert link)

I look forward to our time together to discuss early literacy instructional practices.
Thank you so much again for your time.

Sincerely,

Brandi M. Taeschner, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix H1: Pre-Interview Questionnaire



Letter of Consent

Please use the following link to read the Letter of Consent for participation guidelines: [Consent form for participation](#)

If you agree to participate, choose "Yes" to continue to the Pre-Interview Questionnaire.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Prior Teacher Training & Experiences

Please provide your full name and cell phone number to confirm scheduled interviews.

Which of the following degrees in education do you have (check all that apply):

-
- ☐ Bachelor's degree in education
☐ Master's degree in education
☐ Advanced degree beyond Master's
☐ Other

How many years have you been teaching?

-
- ☐ 1-3 Years
☐ 3-6 Years
☐ 7 or more Years

What grade(s) did you teach during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Kindergarten
- ☐ First Grade
- ☐ Second Grade
- ☐ Third Grade
- ☐ Fourth Grade
- ☐ Fifth Grade

How well prepared do you feel to teach reading to children in your assigned grade level?

- ☐ Very prepared
- ☐ Somewhat prepared
- ☐ Not really prepared
- ☐ Really struggle

How prepared do you feel to teach struggling readers, including students with IEPs and 504 plans, and other low achievers?

- ☐ Very prepared
- ☐ Somewhat prepared
- ☐ Not really prepared
- ☐ Really struggle

About how often do you use the curricular resources provided by the district when teaching literacy?

- ☐ I only use the resources identified in our curriculum.
- ☐ I use the provided curriculum but supplemental resources are needed.
- ☐ I mostly use resources that I have developed, found, or that have been shared by my colleagues.
- ☐ I never or very rarely use the district provided resources and prefer to use other resources when I teach literacy.

Please indicate your highest level of knowledge in each of the five areas of reading.

	No Knowledge	Some Knowledge	Average Knowledge	Above Average Knowledge	Expert Level of Knowledge
Phonological Awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phonics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fluency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vocabulary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Comprehension	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What approach to literacy instruction most aligns to your daily instructional practices?

- ☐ Phonics Based Approach
☐ Whole Language Approach
☐ Balanced Literacy Approach
☐ Other



In the space below please identify up to **three dates** and **the time blocks** between August 16-August 27 when you would be available for the one hour Zoom interview. You will need to mark "Not Available" for the other dates to complete the survey.

I will follow up with a message to confirm a one hour appointment within your preferred time blocks.

August 16 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 17 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 18 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 19 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 20 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 21 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 22 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 23 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 24 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 25 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 26 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>
August 27 2021	9-12 <input type="checkbox"/>	12-3 <input type="checkbox"/>	After 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Available <input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix H2: Consent to Participate (Pre-interview Questionnaire)



Institutional Review Board

1204 Marie Mount Hall • 7814 Regents Drive • College Park, MD 20742 • 301-405-4212 • irb@umd.edu

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Project Title	Structured Literacy: Teacher Understandings and the Instructional Implications for Reading Achievement (Pre-interview Questionnaire)
Purpose of the Study	I, Brandi M. Taeschner , am conducting this study at the University of Maryland, College Park as part of my dissertation under the direction of Dr. Christine Neumerski. This consent form will address the pre-interview questionnaire portion of the study. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a reading teacher for students in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades at the targeted elementary school. The purpose of this research project is to explore the current implementation of evidence-based early literacy practices, gauge teachers' use and knowledge of Structured Literacy components, and explore your perceptions about the barriers presented as you differentiate instruction in early literacy skills.
Procedures	<p>The procedures of this investigation involve the pre-interview questionnaire and individual teacher interviews. The Qualtrics platform will be used for the pre-interview questionnaire to gather information about your prior trainings and teaching experiences, as well as preferences for dates / times for the individual interview. If you agree to participate, then a link will be provided to access the pre-interview questionnaire in an email. The questionnaire may be taken via computer, iPad/tablet or smartphone. If you do not wish to participate in the study, then please do not access the pre-interview questionnaire. The 10 items will take you less than 10 minutes to complete. Below are 3 sample items from the questionnaire.</p> <p><u>Prior Teacher Training & Experiences</u></p> <p>Please provide your full name and cell phone number to confirm scheduled interviews.</p> <p><input type="text"/></p> <p>Which of the following degrees in education do you have (check all that apply):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree in education</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree in education</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced degree beyond Master's</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/></p> <p>How many years have you been teaching?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1-3 Years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 3-6 Years</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 7 or more Years</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There are no known risks for you participating in the study. All information gained during the pre-interview questionnaire will be treated in full confidentiality as discussed below. You will not be able to skip items as there are only 10 items which are all areas centering on your experiences as an elementary teacher in the k-3 grades. Each item must be completed prior to submitting the survey.

Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits to you as the participant, however, the benefits to the school and district are potentially considerable. The information obtained through the investigation will reveal critical information needed to address low literacy achievement through exploring current practices used to teach students foundational literacy skills. Also, this process will elucidate implementation challenges, recommendations for increased evidence-based instructional practices, and your beliefs about the Structured Literacy framework. This information can better inform school and district literacy improvement plans to include insights about resources needed, structures considered and professional development moving forward.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data on a password protected computer on a cloud site (UMD Box). Only the primary investigator will have access to the data collected. You may request a copy of the study once the primary investigator has deemed it complete. If a report or article about this research project is written, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the survey. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide to stop participating, close your internet browser. If you decide not to participate in this study, or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. Your decision to participate, or not participate, in this study will not have a negative or positive impact on your employability or relationships with your respective school. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Brandi M. Taeschner 1305 Dares Beach Rd. Prince Frederick, MD 20678 taeschnerb@calvertnet.k12.md.us 443-550-9776</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Or Dr. Christine Neumerski 3119 Benjamin Building, or cneumers@umd.edu. 202-215-8734</p>
Participant Rights	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p style="text-align: center;">For more information regarding participant rights, please visit: https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>
Statement of Consent	<p>By agreeing to participate, you are indicating that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You may print/download a copy of this consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please select "Yes" below to take the pre-interview questionnaire.</p>
	<div>Yes</div> <div>No</div>

Appendix H3: Consent Form (Interview)



Institutional Review Board

1204 Marie Mount Hall • 7814 Regents Drive • College Park, MD 20742 • 301-405-4212 • irb@umd.edu

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Project Title	Structured Literacy: Teacher Understandings and the Instructional Implications for Reading Achievement (Interview)
Purpose of the Study	I, Brandi M. Taeschner , am conducting this study at the University of Maryland, College Park as part of my dissertation under the direction of Dr. Christine Neumerski. This consent form will address the individual interview procedures for this study. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a reading teacher for students in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades at the targeted elementary school. The purpose of this research project is to explore the current implementation of evidence-based early literacy practices, gauge teachers' use and knowledge of Structured Literacy components, and explore your perceptions about the barriers presented as you differentiate instruction in early literacy skills.
Procedures	<p>The procedures of this investigation involve the pre-interview questionnaire and individual teacher interviews. The interview portion of the study will take approximately one hour which will take place virtually via Zoom. Once the interview is scheduled and confirmed a link to the online meeting will be sent to your email. You will need to have a device that is charged and available for use for the one-hour timeframe. The device will need to have the access to Zoom. The interview will be recorded for several purposes. First, if the interview is recorded, I will be able to be more responsive to your responses and not be required to take notes. Second, the transcription capability will support the analysis phase of the study. Here are few sample questions from the Interview Guide that will be used during the interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will you walk me through the process you take to plan for your literacy block each week? • Tell me more about the curricular resources you use. • How do you prioritize the specific areas of literacy that you teach within the week?

Potential Risks and Discomforts	There are no known risks for you participating in the study. All information gained during the interview will be treated in full confidentiality as discussed below. If there is a particular question that causes you discomfort, you may choose not to respond to the question without explanation.
Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits to you as the participant, however, the benefits to the school and district are potentially considerable. The information obtained through the investigation will reveal critical information needed to address low literacy achievement through exploring current practices used to teach students foundational literacy skills. Also, this process will elucidate implementation challenges, recommendations for increased evidence-based instructional practices, and your beliefs about the Structured Literacy framework. This information can better inform school and district literacy improvement plans to include insights about resources needed, structures considered and professional development moving forward.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing records on a password protected flash drive for 3 years. Only the primary investigator will have access to the data collected. You may request a copy of the study once the primary investigator has deemed it complete. If a report or article about this research project is written, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
Compensation	You will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card once the individual interview is complete. Since you will not earn more than \$100, only your name, will be collected to receive compensation.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. Your decision to participate, or not participate, in this study will not have a negative or positive impact on your employability or relationships with your respective school.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> Brandi M. Taeschner 1305 Dares Beach Rd. Prince Frederick, MD 20678 taeschnerb@calvertnet.k12.md.us 443-550-9776 Or Dr. Christine Neumerski 3119 Benjamin Building, or cneumers@umd.edu. 202-215-8734 </p>
Participant Rights	If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:

	<p>University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p>For more information regarding participant rights, please visit: https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>	
Statement of Consent	<p>By agreeing to participate, you are indicating that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You may print/download a copy of this consent form for your records. If you agree to participate, please select “Yes” below and date and sign the consent. Electronic signatures will be accepted. If you choose to sign electronically, please return the signed consent to taeschnerb@calvertnet.k12.md.us prior to your interview.</p>	
Signature and Date		Yes No
	SIGNATURE:	
	DATE	

Appendix I: Interview Guide

Introduction: *Thank you again for agreeing to participate and help me to investigate the current early literacy practices used by K-3 teachers. I would like to find out what works, what does not work and how you choose what to teach to your students. You are on the frontlines doing this work every day with your students, so I believe your perspective about quality basic reading instruction, insights about why students continue to struggle, and other factors we need to consider moving forward are important. All general education teachers at LEOES in K-3 grades were invited to participate. I hope to gain honest and actionable information about early literacy instruction. There are not “correct” answers during this interview so please feel free to be candid as you respond. All information from our interview will remain anonymous and maintain privacy of you, your classroom, and your students. To ensure the interview is approximately 1 hour, I will be using recording software provided through the Zoom platform. Do you give permission to record this interview? I will be the only person to listen to the recording. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

I bet it has been nice to be able to relax a little after this extraordinary year. How are you spending your time this summer? Time is priceless for educators so thank you again for participating. I value your thoughts and views as a literacy teacher and hope to gain specific insights from you about early literacy instruction.	
Characteristics of Program: (1,2) Core Literacy Instruction	Probes:
As a (X) grade teacher, you teach every subject area which keeps you very busy. I know it is sometimes hard to focus on just one content area, but I am going to ask you to focus on your literacy instruction during this interview. This last year has presented so many challenges with Covid but I am hoping to get specific information from you about a typical year. Can you describe for me the literacy block in your (X) grade classroom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time is usually spent on (identified areas by teacher) each day? • During the (X) grade literacy block, what components of literacy are the most important? • Can you explain your thinking? Why?
Outer Setting: (1,2,3) Planning Process for Literacy Block	Probes:
Will you walk me through the process you take to plan for your literacy block each week?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me more about the curricular resources you use.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you prioritize the specific areas of literacy that you teach within the week? • How much time do you usually spend on planning for your literacy instruction? • What are specific challenges you notice related to planning using the (X) grade curriculum? Strengths?
Inner Setting: (1,2,3) Instructional Practices for Monitoring Learning	Probes:
<p>How do you determine if your students are mastering literacy skills you have taught?</p> <p>What do you use to determine if a student is progressing in (specific areas of reading)?</p> <p>-Refer back to what was identified as part of the typical literacy block</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to ask you more about when students struggle to learn to read. Can you describe how you approach instruction for your students who struggle with basic reading skills? • What do you see as the biggest cause for students who struggle with learning to read?
Inner Setting: (1,2,3) Teacher Reflection	Probes:
<p>If you feel comfortable, close your eyes for a minute. Now, you just take a few seconds to think about a literacy lesson you taught prior to Covid or after we returned to school with students in person. (Wait 20 seconds) What went well?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think (X) went well? • What were some challenges that were presented? • What do you think made the biggest impact on the success of this lesson?
Characteristics of Teachers: (3) Beliefs about Support & Personal Strengths	Probes:
<p>As a primary grade teacher, you must feel a strong responsibility to teach your students. In what ways do you feel supported as a literacy teacher?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do you not feel supported? • Is there anything you wish for to help your instruction? • We all have personal strengths as teachers, can you talk to me about what characteristics you have that

	<p>make you an effective teacher?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you most confident in teaching as a reading teacher?
<p>Involving Teachers in Literacy Improvement Process: (2,4)</p> <p>Teacher Perceptions of Structured Literacy Framework</p>	<p>Probes:</p>
<p>Can you tell me what you know about Structured Literacy?</p> <p>If teacher says, I am not sure or replies minimal, then present visual immediately.</p> <p>If teacher replies with specific details of all components, then explain I have a visual to share with the essential elements for reference. (See Appendix J)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here are the six components of Structured Literacy. Which of these components do you think are most important while teaching students to read? Can you explain why? • Which of these components are you most comfortable teaching? Why do you say that? • Do you think the Structured Literacy components are reflected in our curriculum? Tell me more about why you say that. • Is there one component you think is more important for your struggling readers?
<p>Involving Teacher in Literacy Improvement Process: (4)</p> <p>Teacher Perception of Professional Learning</p>	<p>Probes:</p>
<p>As a classroom teacher you understand the importance of building an engaging learning environment. Take a minute to think of a positive professional learning experience. (20 seconds) Can you describe that experience to me?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this a typical experience? • Why do you think this experience was different? • Do you believe teachers are provided the opportunity for shared decision making while looking at ways to improve student learning? • If you were asked to support a colleague or new teacher with literacy instruction, which component would you

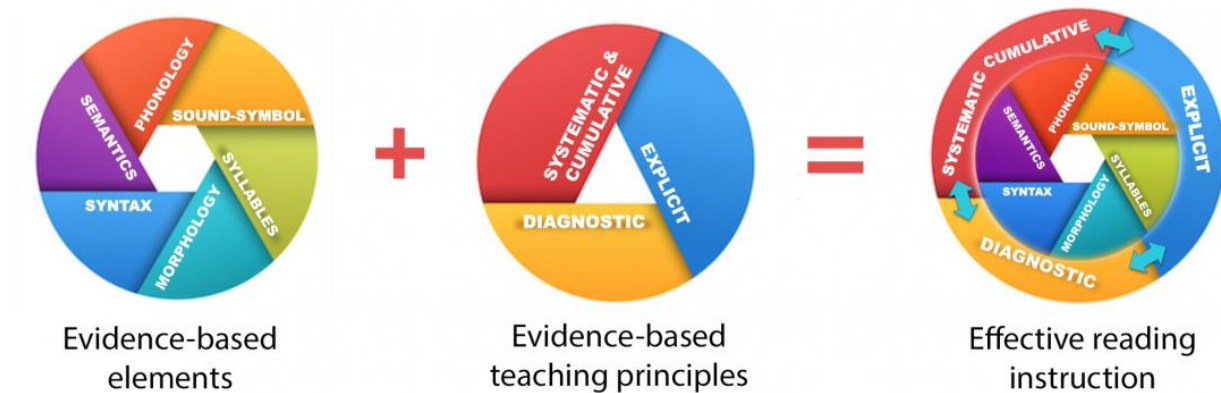
	<p>be able to provide the most support?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you believe this Structured Literacy framework could support teachers as they attempt to meet the various early literacy needs of all students? Why? Why not? How?
--	---

Closing Statement: *Thank you very much for your participation in this study. I greatly appreciate your time and willingness to share your thoughts to help inform early literacy practices moving forward. After synthesizing the responses, I may contact you again for clarification purposes. Would that be, ok? I recognize time is a valuable resource for teachers so to thank you for your time and participation today, you will receive a \$25.00 Amazon gift card as a small token of my appreciation.*

Appendix J: Visual Representation of the Structured Literacy Framework

Structured literacy

Explicit teaching of systematic word identification
and decoding strategies



Source: © 2016 Cowen for International Dyslexia Association
<https://app.box.com/s/2yqu2ke21mxs0hz9l77owdlorgvtesyq>

Evidence-based Components

1. Phonology
2. Sound-Symbol Associations
3. Syllables
4. Morphology
5. Syntax
6. Semantics

Evidence-based Guiding Principles

1. Systematic & Cumulative
2. Explicit
3. Diagnostic

Appendix K: District A's K-3 Literacy Curricular Document Analysis

The following guidelines and resources are located in the grade level literacy curriculum on Schoology, the district's online learning management system. Each grade level has a folder titled Integrated Literacy: Reading, Writing, Word Study in addition to the folders for other subject areas: Health, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. In July 2021, a new supervisor for Elementary English Language Arts was hired after the prior supervisor retired. Significant changes to the organization and management of the folders for Integrated Literacy have occurred and will continue to occur this year after requesting teacher feedback about supports needed. The information identified below was located in the following documents District A's *Integrated Literacy Philosophy and Overview*, ELA Instructional Resources to Get You Started, and Reading Launch Unit, Writing Launch Unit, and Word Study Scope & Sequence specific to each grade level. Some of the materials needed for instruction were developed by the district so teachers are required to find the documents in Schoology, print the materials, prepare the teacher and student materials, determine how to monitor student learning, and require on-going professional learning for new teachers. Ready Reading and Lexia Core 5 were purchased last year which do come with explicit directions for the teacher, student material, and some professional support for implementation.

Kindergarten (135-145 Minutes Daily Instructional Block - Word Study -50%, Reading Workshop-25%, Writing Workshop- 25%)

Grade 1 (135 Minutes Daily Instructional Block- Word Study -50%, Reading Workshop-25%, Writing Workshop- 25%)

Grade 2 (135 Minutes Daily Instructional Block- Equal Time for Word Study, Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop but adjust according to student needs)

Grade 3 (120 Minutes Daily Instructional Block- Equal Time for Word Study, Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop but adjust according to student needs)

Materials Needed for Instruction: Ready Reading, Lexia, Reading & Writing Launch Units, Standards-based Read Aloud Lessons, 95% Group Phonological Awareness Kit (K), Heggerty Phonological Awareness Books (K-1), Handwriting Without Tears Resources, Mentor Texts for Reading and Writing, Kid LIPs (K-1), Tools 4 Reading Sound Spelling Cards, Reading Walks by XXX, Various Manipulatives, 95% Group Phonics Booster Bundle (1-3), Book Club Options (1-3), Notice & Note (3)

Structured Literacy Guiding Principles: Systematic & Cumulative, Explicit, Diagnostic

The organization of the lessons identified for the word work portion of the curriculum can be described as being taught in a sequential order beginning with the more basic concepts and skills by grade level. However, when looking at the organization of the phonics curriculum across the four grade levels, there is not a diagnostic approach for teachers to consider. The scope and sequence are not cumulative in nature either since the lessons do not emphasize recursive skill practices as the students move through the grade level curriculum. There are explicit teacher routines offered within the initial pages of curricular documents but it is assumed the teachers will refer back to those routines with each newly taught word recognition skill or strategy. The gradual release model is identified within the curricular documents as a best practice, but the weekly lesson structures do not model the use of this technique. It is assumed the teachers will implement this practice to provide the ample opportunities for students to have the information modelled and practiced.

Structured Literacy Components: Phonology, Sound-Symbol Association, Syllables, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics

The terms phonology, sound-symbol associations, syntax, and semantics are not directly used in the curricular organization provided to teachers on the Schoology platform. In grade 3, the terms syllables and morphology are identified within the Word Study section of the literacy block. Instructional routines about the six syllable types and morphology lessons are addressed within the third-grade curricular documents. Even though the terms phonology and sound-symbol associations are not used directly within the K-3 curricular documents, similar terms are used for each. For example, phonological awareness and phonemic awareness are utilized in the curriculum as an expectation to explicitly teach the skills related to those terms. Also, the terms phonics, spelling, decoding, encoding, and alphabetic awareness are identified as expectations of instructional practices within grade levels. Syntax skills can be identified within the curricular documents pertaining to language and writing for the grade levels, but the exact term semantics is not clearly identified as an essential component of the curriculum. Comprehension is identified throughout the various materials but deals more with specific comprehension strategies, literary standards, informational standards, and the final goal for reading. There is not a particular connection to the importance of oral and written language, nor how semantics refers to how written language conveys meaning within words, phrases, sentences, passages, and various types of text.

Learning Management Format	District Identified Literacy Topic/Tasks	Resources & Materials in Folders or Referenced	Scope & Sequence	Explicit Instruction Referenced
Schoology > Integrated Literacy: Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop, Word Study	Reading Workshop> Read Aloud, Shared Reading, Targeted Reading Practice, Independent Daily Reading, Book Clubs (1-3)	<p>Instructional Resources to get started</p> <p>Building A Reading Community: Launch</p> <p>Standards-based Read Aloud Lessons for Literature</p> <p>Standards-based Read Aloud Lessons for Informational Text</p> <p>Ready Reading</p> <p>Lexia</p> <p>Book Club Resources (1-3)</p> <p>Comprehension Toolkit (1-3)</p> <p>Reading Fluency (3)</p>	<p>(K) Literacy Scope & Sequence by Quarter (32) to include Reading Workshop, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Concept Development, and Writing Workshop</p> <p>Launch & Lessons include Lesson Essential Questions, Minilessons, Additional Resources, Grade Level Standards, Anchor Chart Topics, Writing Prompts, Teaching Tips, Additional Attachments Needed</p>	<p>Gradual Release Model: I do, We do, You do</p> <p>Standards Based Read Aloud Lessons</p> <p>Think Marks Modelled</p> <p>Anchor Charts</p> <p>Procedures from Daily Five</p>
	Writing Workshop> Modeled Writing, Shared Writing, Study of Language and Grammar,	<p>6 Writing Units & Support Materials for Students and Teachers</p> <p>Language Lessons with Support Materials to include video clips</p>	<p>K-5 Writing Topics Taught by Month w/ Mentor Texts</p> <p>Language Lessons by Quarter</p>	<p>Picture Story/Word Story</p> <p>Lessons include Explicit Instruction for Gradual Release</p> <p>Anchor Charts</p>

	Independent Daily Writing	Language Assessment Options (1-3)	Launch & Lessons include Lesson Essential Questions, Standards, Minilessons with Anchor Charts, Mentor Text, Model Writing, Wrap Up	Grades 1-3 Language Lesson Cycle (Explicit Instruction, Invitation to Notice, Compare and Contrast, Imitate, Invitation to Edit)
	Word Study: Phonological Awareness/ Phonics/ Handwriting/ HFW Word Morphology (3)	K -Rhymes & Diddle, Name of the Day, 95% Group Smart Files, Alphabet Resources, Alphabet Pre-mats, Rhyming Tasks, Initial Sound, Handwriting, Decoding & Encoding, Short Vowel, HF Word, Text by Phonics Patterns, Reading practice: Word Lists and Text 1-2 Alphabet Resources, Word Study Routines & Paper, Dictation Resources, Spelling Test Guide by Quarter, HF Word, Text by Phonics Pattern, Homework Support, Learning Activities, Handwriting, Spelling Inventory Materials 3 Teacher Materials, Student Materials	(K) Quarterly Scope & Sequence to include RW, PA, Phonics, HFW, WW 1 st -Phonics Scope & Sequence (21 Units) with Quarterly Spelling Lists 2 nd -Phonics Scope & Sequence (23 Units) with Quarterly Dictation 3 rd -Spelling & Morphology Scope & Sequence (20 Units)	Alphabet Introduction to include letter shape, letter name, letter sound, and letter formation Name of the Day Cycle 1 Immersion of Foundational Skills for Alphabet Knowledge w/ student names Name of the Day Cycle 2 Phonics- Letter Sound and Letter Name using Kid Lips and Sound Spelling Cards Cycle 3 Targeted Instruction when needed Procedures for phonological awareness instruction Explicit Script for Introducing

				Sound Spelling Cards
<p><i>Researcher's Conclusions /Concepts Illuminated</i></p> <p>The process to access and prepare materials located within Schoology is time consuming and complex. The organization of the materials in Schoology is cumbersome so finding specific materials is a consistent problem shared by teachers. While locating the curricular documents for this research, I struggled to identify the path (folders within folders). The resources were duplicated in some cases or were simply in a different folder from grade to grade. Materials available within folders in Schoology include many pages that require printing and preparation for the teachers and students to utilize. Each school has access to additional supplemental instructional materials, but the specific organization is dependent on school personal preferences. Materials identified for use by multiple grade levels were found in various locations since they needed to be shared by general and special education teachers. In some cases, one teacher was the “keeper” of the materials identified within the curriculum, so team members knew where to find them when needed. The overall knowledge and understanding about the supplemental and professional resources available were not clear or consistently understood by participating teachers.</p> <p>Depending on the specific grade levels, teachers were provided a general scope and sequence by each quarter but there is not guidance on weekly or daily instructional sequences for the various materials available for the three areas of literacy identified as Reader’s Workshop, Writing Workshop, and Word Study. For the second year, K-5 teachers were provided the Teacher’s Edition for the Ready Reading program and students have student workbooks which do not need to be reproduced or shared. This resource supports the instruction during reader’s workshop which used to be taught using theme-based units that consisted of district and teacher developed read aloud lessons for specific grade level reading standards. Guidance from the district this year was to begin with the reading launch unit, then use the Ready Reading program as the main resource. They were told to implement a hybrid approach by supplementing Ready Reading instruction with the read aloud lessons as appropriate. The themed units which were used in prior years to teach grade level standards were removed from the Schoology folders and organized as Literary Read Aloud Lessons and Informational Read Aloud lessons. However, there was little guidance on how to infuse the two very separate instructional approaches to teach the grade level standards in a diagnostic or cumulative manner. Ready Reading does have information about ways to provide scaffolds and determine if students are learning material for language comprehension and responding to text. There are assessments available for use within the program and additional tools online if the teachers are aware of those supplemental materials.</p> <p>Lessons provided on Schoology for the Writing Workshop portion of the literacy block, began with the launch unit for each grade level. K-1 were to continue with the Writing Units and Language lessons used in prior years but grades 2-5 were provided the option to use Ready Writing as a pilot this year. All of the 2-3 teachers at the identified school chose to pilot Ready Writing this year. The following components are included in the district Writing and Language lessons to support the use of evidence-based instruction: essential questions, standards taught, teacher notes to include the purpose of the lesson, lesson</p>				

procedures, suggested materials, explicit directions, anchor chart examples, and strategies for consideration. The writing units do offer checklist for the teacher to use for assessment purposes. At this time, the Ready Writing materials are not available to me since the pilot program is new. I wanted to note the reading and writing launches are separate units in Schoology for each grade level. The main purpose of the launch units is to develop routines and procedures for the class so I was wondering why those two resources could not be taught in tandem as literacy launches instead of completing similar community building lessons that model the routines and expectations for both readers and writers at the same time.

Word Study lessons for all grades are available for grades K-3 in Schoology to provide resources for phonological awareness, phonics & spelling, high frequency words, and handwriting. For grades K-1, the Heggerty phonological awareness lessons are to be used with the whole group, but the amount of time is not identified. In K, the 95% group phonological awareness skills sequence is referenced in the quarterly scope and sequence but there is not guidance about how to determine where each child should start the program. Also, the materials are cumbersome for kindergarten students to manipulate. In grades K-1, sound walls are to be created with the class using the Kid Lips picture cards and Tools 4 Reading Sound Spelling Cards but the training for the use of this approach is not consistently provided to all teachers, nor is time provided for the teachers to find and read the materials within the Schoology files about Sound Walls. Name of the Day is identified in the scope and sequence, but the process and procedures are assumed to be understood by the K teachers. The specific program Handwriting Without Tears was used in prior years but materials revised by the district for student practice packets to be used with the district's Phonics Scope & Sequence were to be provided. However, at the time of this writing, the teachers still had not received the student materials for handwriting.

Grades 1-3 were provided with an additional resource, the 95% Group Phonics Booster Bundle this year. This resource consisted of online teacher demonstration tools, a teacher's guide, and student workbooks. The intention of this resource was to provide an overall review of phonics concepts to be taught the first 25 days of school to review skills from the prior school year, to boost students' phonics skill knowledge due to instructional changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. These lessons are explicit and systematic, but the program assumed the students had been taught some strategies and concepts that were not included in the phonics and spelling scope and sequence the prior year. For this reason, the lessons took much longer than 25 days to complete which has delayed the start of the grade level phonics and spelling lessons provided in Schoology.

Procedures for assessments of basic reading skills are not identified within any of the areas of literacy or materials provided on Schoology but there is an assessment folder with generic assessments for phonological awareness, alphabet awareness, oral language concepts, and phonics concepts depending on grade level expectations. This folder is not clearly marked or referenced in other curricular documents so many of the teachers do not use the materials in this folder. MAP Growth for reading is administered three times a year to students as a screener to identify specific strengths and weaknesses for differentiated instruction. However, the students in grades 2 and 3 do not take the MAP growth

assessment that can clearly identify the specific foundational skills so additional informal assessments are needed to reach the level of specificity for phonological awareness and phonics instruction needed for some students. Flexible small groups are recommended and identified as an expectation in all k-3 classroom but one specific diagnostic tool to determine groups or progress monitor student learning has not been identified. Therefore, teachers use various assessment tools which lead to inconsistent foundational skill instruction. The five areas of reading can be located in the curricular documents, but the Structured Literacy terms for the components or guiding principles are not used within the curricular materials. The use of direct instruction and following a systematic sequence is evident through the materials provided but the cumulative, multisensory, and diagnostic principles of Structured Literacy are not as easily identified. Using read aloud techniques and lessons of grade level text is a practice aligned to Structured Literacy as a means to build and develop vocabulary and comprehension skills for students who may not have sufficient word recognition skills. By using read aloud lessons, more text choices are available for students to develop and strengthen syntax and semantic components of written language if they are still developing decoding skills.

Appendix L: UMD IRB Approval Letter



**UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, MD 20742-5125
TEL 301.405.4212
FAX 301.314.1475
irb@umd.edu
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: August 17, 2021

TO: Brandi Taeschner, EdD

FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1756497-1] Structured Literacy: Teacher Understandings and the Instructional Implications for Reading Achievement

REFERENCE #:

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: August 17, 2021

EXPIRATION DATE: August 16, 2022

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7. Waiver of Written Consent, 45CFR46.117(c) (1).

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of August 16, 2022.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

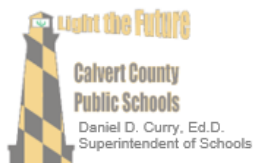
All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of seven years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

Appendix M: District A's Approval Letter



1305 Dares Beach Road
 Prince Frederick, MD 20678
 Telephone: (443) 550-8000
 FAX: (410) 286-1358
www.calvertcounty.education

Dear Researcher:

Thank you for expressing interest in conducting your research study in our schools. We are enclosing the *Application for Conducting Independent Research*, which includes Standards for Conducting Independent Research, as well as an Independent Research Request Form. It is important that you understand the Procedures and Standards and that you respond to all items on the Request Form in order to obtain permission to conduct your research in the Calvert County Public Schools.

The first step in receiving permission to conduct your research in our schools is to submit a completed application to obtain approval from the Department of Information Technology. After our office has received the completed application, we need approximately two weeks to process the request. This period may be longer or shorter depending on the completeness of the information provided and the complexity of the study. Once we have processed your application, you will receive correspondence advising you of the status of your request. If approved, we will communicate next steps to complete your research.

Please recognize that no research or study activity can be initiated without the specific written approval of the Department of Information Technology. Also please recognize that the Calvert County Public School System retains the right to deny any application at our sole discretion.

If you have any questions, please call me at 443-550-8100.

Sincerely,

Jonathan McClellan
 Director of Information Technology

Enclosures

Appendix N: Analytic Memo 1

8/24/21

Personal Feelings and Thoughts about the Interviews

The teacher interviews provided a space for me to explore several topics with the participants. Hopefully, the teachers understand the value in this process, trust the confidentiality agreements, and provide honest and actionable feedback during the interview. Early literacy instruction is critical while considering literacy achievement and access to all other content areas of the education system. Participants were asked to reflect and describe their literacy instruction to include the following: structures of the literacy block, planning for literacy, components of literacy, instructional routines for beginning readers and struggling readers, professional knowledge and supports, and if the Structured Literacy framework could help teachers to meet the varying needs of their students.

I am interested to find out the answers to my research questions, but the quantity and quality of the teacher interviews will be critical to this step of my investigation. So far, of the 15 teachers that were invited to participate, I have heard back from 8 of them after the initial recruitment email was sent out. I am happy with the response to participate from the teachers thus far. Actually, I thought more teachers would respond but since the IRB process took longer than I expected, this is all happening very close to the beginning of a new school year and the end of summer. I do not want to add to the teacher's level of stress while returning to school since time is so vital.

I completed three of the interviews on Friday, prior to preservice days for staff, and another one on Monday. I was pleasantly surprised with the ease in which the technological aspect of the interviews went. The teachers were able to access the Zoom link, agreed to the recording of the interview, seemed genuinely excited about participating in the interview and the interviews were all completed in less than 1 hour. Each time I completed an interview, I felt more comfortable with the flow of the questions from the interview guide.

Description & Analysis of the Interviews

Two of the participants have taught first grade and one participant has taught kindergarten for the three years I have been a literacy coach at the school. Another participant has prior experiences in primary grades but has been teaching third grade during my time as a literacy coach at the school. The participants were open and seemed to feel comfortable with me during the interview. I was not concerned about their willingness to be open during the interview because of our prior work together but tried to reassure them of the confidentiality measures in place were complete. All of the participants answered the questions to the degree of detail I anticipated. General responses referred to the five areas of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) but the responses did not become specific in reference to the Structured Literacy components (phonology, sound-symbol associations, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics). I was surprised to hear the curricular resources and materials were all identified as positive and for the most part teachers believe include Structured Literacy components. For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, the notations from the interviews will be identified as T for teacher and a numerical value for the participants, but this does not identify the specific order in which the interviews occurred.

The following are observations I noted during and right after each of the interviews:

T1- very positive and willing to participate in the interview, made connections to LF throughout the interview (activating strategy, graphic organizers, higher order thinking), responses were

general for the most part- could apply to any content area, identified the need for small group instruction various times, resources and curricular resources are good but there needs to be a different organization or structure to best use the materials, described the need to assess students prior to instruction but the actual assessments used were not identified or specific, professional learning should be individualized to the teacher and could start with an activating strategy to build relevance or purpose with teachers so the understand what they know and do not know, instructional approach related to balanced literacy, described the classroom structure of small group, centers, and independent practice, wholistic approach to integration across content and project based learning since technology is available, was not familiar with Structured Literacy T2- carefully formulated responses and spoke very slowly, resources and materials provided are sufficient, uses self-created assessments for basic reading skills like alphabet knowledge, sound knowledge, and phonological awareness, the whole group and small group instructional approaches were discussed throughout the interview, references the importance of working collaboratively with team, confident in ability to teach students at varying levels, mentions the need for parent involvement to be able to meet all students needs in literacy, uses academic and explicit language with students (syllable types), asked for the definition of Structured Literacy, SL could be used to support teachers with instruction because the skills build upon each other, recommends professional learning that requires movement

T3- seemed nervous at first but eased into the discussion with prompts, may not have known what to say immediately but would go back and make connections to prior questions when it applied, shared personal experiences with their past learning experiences which connected to instruction implemented with students, shared frustration with technology, finding materials, and the time required to gather and create the materials, time was a common subject as challenge/barrier, discussed a prior professional learning that was specific to foundational reading skills- basic understanding and the application to grade level instruction, plenty of materials and resources in curriculum- need more time for planning and preparations though, does not want too much pd because that requires more time away from the classroom and requires teachers to write sub plans which they are not sure if the students will actually get the intended concepts, Structured Literacy was not clear but related it to the 5 areas of reading

T4- carefully formulated responses (apprehensive about saying something that might contradict other comments), resources provided are sufficient, assessment options and how /why to determine which one to use would be helpful, references the importance of working collaboratively with team, confident in ability to teach students at their level, writing workshop is an area for improvement and support, reading workshop and word work are individual strengths, stated the term Structured Literacy was unfamiliar, at the end of the interview asked if I “got what I needed”

Evaluation of the Interviews (Positive & Negative)

While considering the evaluation of the four interviews, the structure provided by the Interview Guide was critical to making sure the teachers were able to provide responses to the overall questions and the discussions remained focused. The prompts under each general question, are not necessarily in the correct order to ask during the interview and do overlap with other questions at times. At first, I was very rigid in asking the questions in the same order but recognized depending on the teachers’ responses, some of the prompts needed to be asked in a different sequence. This was an easy correction for me to make by taking additional short notes while the participant responded. Also, I was able to pause and allow myself to reference the Interview Guide as I became more comfortable with the various aspects of the interview process.

Action Plan/Questions/Changes Needed

I plan to listen to all interviews and read the transcripts from the interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the responses to the questions, make inferences when I am able, document specific literacy approaches, instructional challenges identified, and consider Structured Literacy components in relation to the responses. Originally, I had planned to develop an Analytic Memo after every 2-3 interviews; however, with this being the first week of returning to school, this was not feasible within my schedule. So, I made sure to take brief notes during the interview and directly afterwards so I would be able to capture key details to reflect on once I had time to complete the analytic memo which was completed after 4 interviews took place. I am able to capture specific thoughts during the first listening of the audio and add some details to the original analytic memo for more comprehensive notes.

First, I listened to the audio recording from the interview. Then, I listened to the audio recording while making corrections or revisions to the transcription file created by Otter.ai. This process requires listening to the audio file multiple times to ensure the transcript is accurate. During this process, I began to think about ways to organize the data from the teachers, but I am not sure how to best capture the specific information from each interview to document the data needed to answer my research questions. Originally, I developed a template for data organization but there may be a better way to do this with each individual transcription file. I need to go back and review the data collection chart I created prior to starting to ensure all of the critical elements are present within the structure of the chart. The following are specific areas I plan to highlight in the analysis document and procedure:

- Answers to the RQs
- Identification / Associations to Structured Literacy Components and specific subskills
- Identify specific quotes from the interview to summarize that support answering the RQs
- Determine what inferences can be made

Record of Prejudices & Assumptions

These interviews did take place the week prior, or the day teachers returned after summer break. This may have impacted their willingness to participate in the study and how responses were shared. I determined to turn my camera off during the interviews in hopes to eliminate any influence from seeing facial expressions or body language during the interviews. Participants were told they could turn their cameras off as well. This may have made the interview less personable, but I believe the participants were able to respond without being influenced by my facial expressions or body language. I do not believe the interview taking place online impacted the quality of the interview but there were a few times during the interviews when there was a brief interruption which only caused less than 30 second delays. One of the participants has an accent which impacted the quality of the audio recording and transcription process.

Themes or Patterns

Balanced Literacy is the approach 1 teacher identified specifically and the other teachers provided responses that can be related to balanced literacy. The specific instruction identified by the teachers were phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing with little emphasis instructional time required for foundational skills. Whole group, small group, direct and targeted instruction were lesson structures identified by the teachers according to student needs. Teacher's identified professional learning as positive and productive if it is differentiated to teachers' specific needs and does not require too much time away from the classroom. Curricular materials provide sufficient or more than sufficient resources but a

more detailed scope and sequence, explicit directions for struggling readers, and more assessment options were identified as challenges for consideration.

Conclusion-What was learned from the interviews

Teachers are willing to share information about literacy instructional practices, but they do want to be sure they are providing the exact information needed for the research. I had to reassure participants that their responses were appropriate and restate there were “no correct” answers for these questions. Time is a major concern for the participants which is not surprising.

Phonological awareness and phonics are components of reading the teachers are most comfortable teaching and referred to more frequently during the interviews. None of the participants were able to respond to the final question about Structured Literacy until the visual was presented. Then, they were aware of certain terminology but did not respond with any specific information to show they understand and/or implement Structured Literacy in their classrooms. The discussion around Structured Literacy components seemed to show the teachers believed the components were more of a progression of skills versus needing to integrate daily explicit instruction in those components for all areas of language and literacy, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Appendix O: Analytic Memo 2

8/29/21

Personal Feelings and Thoughts about the Interviews

The next 4 teacher interviews were completed after the workday, and one was on the weekend. Staff were just returning to the buildings, so I was happy to have these teachers agree to the interview. However, I was hyper-sensitive to the fact that they had just returned for pre-service sessions. These days are very heavy with meetings where the staff are required to sit and receive information, so I believe this made me try to move things along faster during the interviews. All of the questions were asked to the teachers, but the “wait time” was not as long during these interviews. Three interviews were held in the teachers’ classrooms, and I believe this was more related to the fact that these teachers could have a quieter space for the interview to occur because they have young children at home.

Description & Analysis of the Interviews

Participants were asked to reflect and describe their literacy instruction to include the following: structures of the literacy block, planning for literacy, components of literacy, instructional routines for beginning readers and struggling readers, professional knowledge and supports, and if they believed the Structured Literacy framework could be helpful while teaching all students to read. Each participant taught one of the grades; kindergarten, first, second, and third. The participant teaching 3rd grade is teaching at a new school this year due to a reduction in staffing. The participants were willing to answer all questions to a detailed level of specificity and even asked if their responses were complete or enough information at the end of the interview. They seemed to be comfortable with me during the interview to share positive and negative comments about their literacy instruction, curricular materials, and professional needs. General responses referred to specific areas of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) but did not become specific in reference to the Structured Literacy components (phonology, sound-symbol association, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics). To maintain confidentiality, the information will be identified as T for teacher and a numerical value for the participants, but this does not identify the specific order in which the interviews occurred. The following are observations to be noted from each of the interviews:

T5- balanced literacy approach is identified, describes the need for whole group and small group lessons, describes the progression of the lesson over the week, standards-based instruction is priority, decoding is emphasized too much once the students get to higher grades they need other strategies, curriculum provides plenty of tools but the organization is not helpful to teachers, too much time is spent of planning and creating materials, describes gradual release and the importance of modelling for students, team collaboration can be so powerful but this was lacking for participant, not familiar with the Structured Literacy terminology, most confident teaching 1-3 but did not give specific examples of these during the lesson discussion

T6- literacy block includes whole group and small group, read aloud lesson is standards-based, small groups are targeted to foundational and writing skills specific to the student needs, too much time is needed for planning, most of the resources are there but the teachers have to find them, create them, supplement them, and the organization is not good, assessments for individual skill areas is not provided so teachers create their own assessments after instruction occurs, never heard of Structured Literacy before, referenced morphology, syntax, and semantics components not being appropriate for grade level, phonics is strength and would share with peers, SL needs

to be shared with teachers, allow for self-guided exploration of the components and time to research and find out more of what students need during PLC, asked, “How did I do?”

T7- basic skills of phonological awareness and phonics were frequently discussed, small group and individual instruction were identified as critical structures within the instructional routines, whole group instruction was necessary but needed to be highly motivating for the students, curricular materials provide a general sequence but changes in specific routines and procedures were needed depending on the student and teacher needs, guidance from district is not realistic to classroom application, identified specific phonics terms, referred to the value of the Foundations of Literacy class provided by district, articulated the fact that college training did not provide enough knowledge or understanding of the elements of literacy, unable to talk about SL, consider small groups and grade level teams while sharing information about SL

T8- basic vocabulary and phonemic awareness were frequently discussed, the need for small group differentiated instruction which is monitored with data was critical, flexible grouping critical for struggling readers to have exposure to vocabulary, multiple exposures to skills by meeting with the students several times throughout the day, language and experiences are critical to reading success, curricular materials provide some guidance and support but supplemental materials are required especially for the basic skills, I-Ready is explicit but does not allow the entire reading of the book- must go back multiple times to finish so kids are frustrated sometimes, integration of concepts, skills, and subjects is important but we this does not occur because of lack of time and materials do not support integration, technology is an area where support is needed, Structured Literacy block?, all components of SL are needed- not one more important than another but must consider the individual student, what works for one will not work for all, sharing information must be relevant to the teacher so they understand the sequential order the children typically need to learn

Evaluation of the Interviews/ Action Plan

The interviews provided some of the specific information I had hoped to be clear through discussions with the teachers. Using Zoom was an effective means to complete the interviews because there were no issues with the internet or technology aspects. The teachers all agreed to have the recording which allowed for the easy transcription process. All interviews were scheduled and occurred as planned. As I begin to listen to the audio and read the transcripts from the interviews, there are times when my voice or response does reveal my personal opinion or thoughts on a topic. I do not believe this impacted the manner in which the teachers responded though because we do have positive working relationships that have fostered trust and an element of willingness to debate or discuss topics respectfully even when our thoughts do not align. The transcription process from the first four interviews took much longer than I had anticipated due to accents and fast rates of discussion. Also, I was disappointed in how the key words were identified within Otterai. So, the analysis chart or table I created will need to be revised and organized in a manner to visually recognize and track commonalities. While organizing the data, I considered by teacher (8) and by section of the interview guide (7). After asking for several thoughts from professors, I decided the organization chart required multiple steps: analysis by interview question to include a summary for each teacher, then the key words or themes could be determined in relation to the specific research questions.

Record of Prejudices & Assumptions

I am not able to identify any specific prejudices I may have shown during the interviews. However, with one of the teachers, I knew their prior experience was in a different county that used leveled texts for instruction. We had prior discussions last year about the difference

between guided reading and targeted instruction so this may have come to mind during the interview. Reflecting on the prompts I provided will be an area of focus as the analysis process occurs for all participants but especially this one teacher to consider if I led with too much information in any way.

Themes or Patterns

Several prior professional development opportunities were referenced during the interviews. The XXX training which was provided about 8-10 years ago was referenced by several teachers. XXX which was offered several years ago and focused on the importance of teachers understanding the grade level standards and using a read aloud for that instruction was mentioned. Also, the Foundational Literacy course that was offered by a former staff member was mentioned as being positive and providing critical information to the teacher's level of understanding about teaching students to read. Curricular materials provided some guidance and resources but the organization and amount of time that is required to find, gather, and assemble takes too much time. Team planning was mentioned as a critical support from most participants. The need for small group differentiated instruction was an area identified by most participants, but the actual assessments (observational/anecdotal) used or instructional techniques to determine and teach those specific needs were not described in detail.

Conclusion-What was learned from the interviews

For the most part, teachers believe they use the "preferred", balanced literacy approach. Several teachers seemed to align more with the phonics-based approach, but this may be due to the grade level taught. Structured Literacy is not a familiar term or approach to any of the teachers even though the specific "terms" used to identify the 6 components may be understood. Many teachers did not know how to pronounce the word phonology and even asked for words to be defined or explained. The teachers did not seem embarrassed or unwilling to show they did not know or understand an approach or term identified within the Structured Literacy visual. All participants believed the Structured Literacy framework would be beneficial for k-3 teachers to know and understand but there were various suggestions on how that should look with the staff.

Appendix P: Structured Literacy Data Analysis Tool

Interview transcripts will be analyzed to identify specific language used by the teachers to determine which components are mentioned as critical to early literacy instruction. The information will be considered as a strength or weakness depending on how the term is used within the context of the interview. This information will show specific areas teachers understand and are confident implementing during literacy instruction.

Word Recognition	
Phonology: Sound System of Language	
Phonological Awareness	Notes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Word Awareness (Counting) ○ Rhyming (Identification, Production) ○ Alliteration (Discrimination, Production) ○ Syllables (Blend, Segment, Deletion, Substitution) ○ Onset/Rime (Blend, Segment, Deletion, Substitution) 	Knowledge-Practice-
Phonemic Awareness	Notes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Isolation ○ Blending ○ Segmenting ○ Deletion ○ Addition ○ Substitution 	Knowledge-Practice-
Sound Symbol Associations	
Decoding	Notes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Letter / Sound Correspondence ○ Sound Blending ○ Word Reading ○ Word Recognition / Fluency / Sort ○ Sentence Reading ○ Text Reading 	Knowledge-Practice-
Encoding	Notes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Letter / Sound Correspondence ○ Sound Dictation ○ Word Dictation ○ Sentence Dictation 	Knowledge-Practice-
Syllables / Word Parts	
Syllable Type Instruction	Notes:
Closed Open V-e vR VT Cle Schwa	Knowledge-Practice-
Morphology: Structural Analysis	Notes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Base Word/Prefix/Suffix ○ Inflectional Endings ○ Latin & Greek Roots 	Knowledge-Practice-
Language Comprehension: Gain Meaning from Language/Texts	

Semantics: Relationships of Words & Phrases	Notes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Function of Words ○ Vocabulary (Shades of Meaning, Figurative Language, etc.) ○ Comprehension Elements (Questioning, Summarize, Compare, Contrast, Infer, etc.) ○ Pragmatics (Rules, Context, Interpretations, etc.) 	Knowledge-Practice-
Syntax: Order, Relationship, and Structures of Words	Notes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parts of Speech ○ Sentence Structures ○ Key Words for Connecting Thoughts 	Knowledge-Practice-

What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why?	
Exact Words Used	Inferences Made
Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction?	
Exact Words Used	Inferences Made
What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers?	
Exact Words Used	Inferences Made
How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?	
Exact Words Used	Inferences Made

Appendix Q: Analysis by Interview Question 1

Characteristics of Program: (1,2) Core Literacy Instruction	Probes:
As a (X) grade teacher, you teach every subject area which keeps you very busy. I know it is sometimes hard to focus on just one content area, but I am going to ask you to focus on your literacy instruction during this interview. This last year has presented so many challenges with Covid but I am hoping to get specific information from you about a typical year. Can you describe for me the literacy block in your (X) grade classroom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time is usually spent on (identified areas by teacher) each day? • During the (X) grade literacy block, what components of literacy are the most important? • Can you explain your thinking? Why?

RQ1. What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why?

The term balanced literacy was used by 2 teachers, 4 teachers did not use the exact term but did use terms that align to balanced literacy. 2 teachers specifically describe approaches that align to phonics-based instruction. While thinking of the structure of the literacy block, all teachers described whole group and small group instruction and 4 teachers identified rotations/centers to include independent work in their description. Also, 3 teachers identified the need for individualized instruction. In the descriptions provided from the teachers all used the term targeted or differentiated instruction, 2 specifically used the term integration, 2 identified the need for groups to be flexible, and one teacher described the need to scaffold and provide multi-sensory teaching. Only, one teacher used the exact terms, Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop, and Word Work which are clearly defined within the district curriculum. Five teachers referred to terms that support the implementation of reader's workshop like book clubs, read aloud, and story with a standard focus. Writer's Workshop was identified by one other teacher specifically while 3 teachers described a writing piece or journal writing. Three teachers used the term Word Work specifically while 2 referenced the spelling and morphology portion of word work. Morphology was identified by two teachers whose curricular document identifies morphology and spelling for weekly instruction.

RQ2. Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction?

	Phonology	Sound-Symbol Associations	Syllables	Morphology	Syntax	Semantics
Exact Terms				1,5		
Similar Terms	1,2,3,4,6,7,8	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	1,	1,5		1, 2, 3,4,5,6,8

Teacher #	Teacher Response	Researcher's Summary
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T1	<p>So, I feel good about it. It will be a balance. My hope is that this year, it will be a <u>balanced literacy program</u> where I'm going to be doing the <u>phonics piece</u>, <u>phonemic awareness</u>, and then (fingers crossed) some way to include book clubs so I can do that <u>fluency piece and comprehension piece</u>.</p> <p>And I had a <u>fluency center</u> going with some activities for my kids that and that's another thing about Not just, I think a <u>balanced literacy program</u> should have, but it should also be geared to where the students are because my <u>grouping is not going to be exact same</u> every week might be for maybe one two weeks, but kids are going to learn in pickup some kids have certain things. So, let's say I have a kid that <u>needs that fluency</u>, and another <u>kid needs comprehension</u>, then one kid is going to hit fluency and the other doesn't need fluency but needs comprehend, you know, then that's what I'm working on. So, so it's <u>very fluid</u>, you know, the flow of it, for the program, at least how I see it in my mind. I really found it difficult to make sure that I was giving <u>enough attention to my spelling and my morphology</u>.</p> <p>And I think <u>I can integrate it really well</u>, that it's [spelling and morphology] going to be in those <u>centers</u>. And it's [spelling and morphology] going to be in that <u>blending learning environment</u>. It's not just going to be [in isolation], oh, this is the time we do <u>spelling</u>, or this is the time we do <u>morphology</u>.</p> <p>The whole ELA block is an <u>hour and 15 minutes</u>.</p>	<p><i>ELA block is 1 hour and fifteen minutes, but more time is needed and integrated throughout the day. Teacher believes balanced literacy is the preferred and most effective approach to literacy instruction. Integration of content and specific components of literacy are critical for best practices. Classroom structure included whole group, small group, centers, and flexible groupings to match student needs. Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension are identified in response. Spelling and morphology are identified in response.</i></p>
T2	<p>So, our literacy block normally begins with a <u>whole group lesson</u> and which I would say usually involves the <u>reading of a book</u> and whatever <u>lesson [standard]</u> we might be teaching that particular day.</p> <p>-we have our <u>literacy groups</u> which usually we have four groups. They are <u>skill based</u> and my assistant usually does a <u>handwriting</u> lesson with each of the four groups. She does <u>scaffold</u> that lesson. Whereas a group that is <u>struggling</u> with handwriting may just be practicing writing the letter, making it with playdough, tracing it with chalk, utilizing shaving cream and practicing the letter on the table <u>[multisensory]</u>. So, it's just <u>scaffold</u> and then in my group, I have the reading lesson in my group, which is also <u>scaffold</u> because generally we have students who are reading already <u>[higher ability]</u>. And of course, you know, we <u>meet them where they are</u>. And then we have students who may just be working on <u>letter identification</u> and everything in between.</p> <p>-we have a <u>phonemic awareness portion</u> that we do as well. We always do <u>whole group</u>, but it's not like we do every single one of them. And then the kids who need extra help they get the <u>phonemic awareness in their small group</u>.</p> <p>-<u>an hour and 30 or an hour and 45</u>. But then we also have a <u>Writers Workshop time that is later in the day</u>.</p> <p>So, when we get to that point, with the <u>different groups</u>, we use the <u>Power Readers</u>, which I, I really like them, because they're very, they <u>build on each other</u>, they start with <u>short a</u>, they go there's <u>two books for each of the short vowels</u>. And then that goes into combining the <u>vowel sounds</u>. And right within the book, they have a <u>comprehension piece</u>.</p>	<p><i>ELA block is 1 hour and 30 to 45 minutes in the morning and then Writer's Workshop is additional time later in the day. Teacher describes the literacy block structure as whole group, small group, and providing differentiated instruction to include multi-sensory learning as needed. Scaffolds are included in the literacy instruction depending on the specific needs of the groups which are ability based. Phonemic awareness, phonics, letter identification, and oral language comprehension are identified in response.</i></p>

T3	<p>Okay, um, we usually start with <u>phonological awareness</u> in <u>whole group</u>, and then I single out those [students] that I notice, need certain skills. If they get it wrong, I'll <u>single someone out and give them another chance</u> on a different word or whatever [skill] that I'm presenting. And then after <u>phonological awareness</u>, we usually move into <u>phonics</u>, and we'll focus on a skill each week. A certain <u>short vowel</u> or a <u>vowel team</u>, or <u>magic e</u> or something like that. Um, after phonics we usually do. We'll do some reading. Maybe <u>reading books independently</u>?</p> <p>So <u>guided instruction</u> first with a <u>skill</u> or reading a story and hitting skills, <u>whole group</u>, and then we break out into <u>centers</u>, <u>focusing on the skill of the week</u>. So, we usually end with a <u>writing piece</u> in the whole big reading block. Like they're <u>responding to a question</u> or somewhere in there, too I forgot to mention we do a lot of <u>word work</u>. Um, and I say I'm a lot sorry. We get a little bit of everything in the day like <u>phonemic awareness</u>, <u>phonics</u>, <u>guided instruction</u>, and then usually somewhere in there, there's a <u>writing piece</u>. And then there's also centers that has something that relates to the skill that we're <u>focused on that week</u>, or <u>what the child needs</u>, like one of the centers, of course, is going to be <u>targeted instruction with the teacher</u>, <u>small group</u>, and <u>rotations</u>. That is pretty much everything I can think of.</p> <p>Our <u>reading block</u>, it's <u>135 minutes</u>. But that doesn't include extra <u>small group time later</u>. So, it's more than that [2hrs and 15 minutes].</p> <p>So just <u>recognizing what the kids need</u> is the most important part of it, and then being able to <u>target that skill to really teach them in those small groups</u>.</p> <p>Oh, <u>phonemic awareness</u> and <u>phonics</u> because these kids don't know, they do not know <u>rhyme</u>. And they do not know their <u>short vowel sounds</u> consistently. A normal year, they come to me, most of them know their <u>letter sounds</u>. But there's always a handful that there's a letter they don't know or <u>sound</u> they don't know. But overall, most of them just need to get consistent with their <u>short vowels</u>.</p>	<p><i>ELA block is 2 hours and 15 minutes with additional time during flex. Teacher describes the literacy block structure as whole group guided instruction, small group targeted instruction, and rotations to focus on specific skills. Teacher needs to figure out what the kids need and provide targeted instruction and time to practice during the literacy block. Phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, letter/sound identification, word work, writing and comprehension are identified in response.</i></p>
T4	<p>Sure, it's three components. In a perfect world, I get to my <u>word work</u>, which is the <u>largest chunk of my time</u>, we then progress into a <u>reading workshop</u>. And then we progress into a <u>writing workshop</u>. What that word work consists of is a particular <u>spelling pattern for the week</u> along with a handful of <u>high frequency words</u> that we work on. Our <u>reading workshop</u> usually involves a <u>mentor text</u> selected by the county. I also have some of my own personal favorites that sometimes hit the <u>standard</u> better than in some of the county selected texts. And then my <u>writing workshop</u> works on a <u>specific writing skill</u>, which I also follow what the county gives me. During that I have about <u>two hours, and 15 minutes a day for this block</u>. Normally what I try and do is hold about <u>45 minutes for small group rotations</u> after I get my <u>word work</u> my reading and my writing done for the day. Then we break up in my room into <u>small groups</u>. I'll have one group over at my <u>teacher table</u> one group will be over into in <u>word work games</u>. One group will be <u>reading at their desk</u> one group will be <u>writing in themed journals</u>. I have <u>various centers and stations</u> I'm sure you're familiar with in various classrooms. I try to, in a perfect world, I have <u>five small</u></p>	<p><i>ELA block is 2 hours and 15 minutes to include word work (largest amount of time for instruction), reading workshop (mentor text and standard focus) and writing workshop. Teacher describes the literacy block structure as whole group instruction, teacher group for specific skills, and rotations to focus on specific skills. Teacher describes 5 groups and 8 minutes at each group during the 45-minute</i></p>

	<p><u>groups</u>, so they each get about <u>eight minutes a day at my teacher table</u>, and then each of <u>my rotations</u>.</p> <p>The most important? Well, certainly the <u>word work and the phonics is the most important</u> because without that we can't get into independent reading and writing.</p>	<p><i>rotation time. Word work and phonics are identified as most important components to get students to be able to read and write independently.</i></p>
T5	<p>I use a <u>balanced literacy approach</u> where students are working with <u>on-grade level text</u>, and then they're also working with texts that they that are <u>developmentally appropriate</u> for them. So, I would start off with a <u>whole group lesson</u> with.</p> <p>So, a lot of the <u>lessons are going to last multiple days</u>.</p> <p>Okay, so I would start off, like, say on a Monday, where I'm <u>introducing words their way</u> and the <u>spelling patterns</u> that they need to focus on. And depending on where each of the students are, it might be done in <u>whole group</u>, or it might be done in <u>small group</u>. It's just based on their needs, really. And during that time, on Monday, students are <u>practicing skills that they would have learned last week based on the standards</u> that we were working on last week. On Tuesday, students would be able to take the information that they learned from that <u>direct instruction during their spelling block to apply it to small groups or independent</u> where I would be working with the students on let's say, the <u>reading standard</u> for the week. So, we would start off with a <u>whole group text that is on-grade level</u>. And we might work with do <u>partner reading</u> or we might do <u>close read</u> where we're doing that <u>whole group</u>, we would talk about the <u>standards</u> and <u>how to use that particular text to understand what each standard is</u>.</p> <p>Um, so we would do that we would ultimately <u>partner read</u> or whatever, but it would be done in like a <u>whole group setting</u>, we would come back together, we would talk about the <u>text</u>, we would use our <u>graphic organizers</u> to help us understand that word. And then we would break up into <u>independent work in small groups</u>. So, I would give the class <u>independent assignment based on that standard</u>. So, they might have to use the <u>same text, but a different section of the text</u> from that we did during the whole group, in order to <u>apply the standard</u> that we're looking for. So, for example, if we're looking at text, then they could use a different part of the book in order to apply what they learned about <u>text features</u>. And then we would do have <u>small groups</u> where I would have a group and I would meet with <u>each group for 15 to 20 minutes</u>. And we would also focus on the <u>same standard, but we would do it at their reading level</u>. So that they are able to <u>read independently</u>, they might need a little <u>guidance with certain words and vocabulary</u>, but we would still <u>focus on that same standard</u>, but at <u>their particular level</u>, if that makes sense. And then of course, all the other student, all the other <u>centers</u> are going to be doing things like <u>Words Their Way with spelling</u>, they might do <u>vocabulary, morphology</u>, they may be working on the <u>computer program</u>, a computer program that has to do with <u>literacy skills</u>.</p> <p>Ideally, at least <u>an hour and a half are ideal</u>. <u>Two hours is the best-case scenario</u>, but that doesn't always happen.</p> <p>So, it's going to depend on the number of small groups I have. I try to do <u>no more than four small groups</u> because after that, it gets a little hard to schedule. That way I can meet three to four groups</p>	<p><i>ELA block is 1 hour and 30 minutes, but 2 hours is ideal. Teacher believes balanced literacy is the preferred and most effective approach to literacy instruction. Lesson structure builds throughout the week and impacts the tasks for independent work and centers. Classroom structure included whole group and small group direct instruction and centers. Four small groups so they are able to meet daily for 15-20 minutes with teacher. Grade level and other leveled texts were referenced in relation to the standard instruction and students' practicing the standard in texts developmentally appropriate for them. Spelling (Words Their Way), graphic organizers, close reading, independent reading, text features, morphology and vocabulary are identified in response.</i></p>

	<p>is ideal, so that I can meet with <u>every group every day</u>. And so that would be approximately <u>15 minutes</u>, if there's three groups, then it would probably get to <u>20 minutes</u>.</p>	
T6	<p>Okay, so first of all when I begin my literacy block, I usually started with the <u>read aloud</u> with whatever <u>read aloud</u> is in the <u>curriculum</u>. That way, I can give them an <u>assignment</u> during <u>rotations</u>, where they can actually <u>write in their journals</u>. And they have a like a <u>prompt</u> or something they have to answer, like a <u>question</u>, they have to <u>answer from the book</u> during that time. So, you know, we'll do all that XXX thing and look at <u>vocabulary words</u> and all that stuff. Okay. I'll explain the assignment for their <u>journal writing</u>, like what they're expected to do. So once that's done, I'll start my <u>rotations</u>. And the rotations are usually like <u>10-15 minutes each</u>, it depends on like, how many groups I'm seeing for that day. After the rotations are done, which during the rotations, I you know, I work on <u>phonological awareness</u>. I work on <u>phonics</u>, I work on <u>comprehension strategies</u> depending on like, what the what the <u>groups need</u>. And then the <u>phonics activities</u> or whatever I'm <u>teaching during the small group</u>, that's usually where they are, it may be a <u>first-grade skill</u> because that's where they are. Um, and then once the rotations are done, I'll go ahead and have like a <u>phonics lesson</u> like the grade, <u>second grade phonics lesson</u> for all the kids. Um, <u>handwriting</u> do I also talk about handwriting since Yeah. So <u>handwriting is always different</u>. I usually try to find at least <u>10 minutes within that block</u>, where, like, it might be a block where I don't have enough time to get much done. I might ask them like another <u>IA or someone</u>, I'll ask them to do some <u>handwriting with the students</u>. And then while the rotations are going on, so there might be handwriting going on, there might be <u>one group is with me</u>, one group may be on the iPads, and then the other one, another group might be doing some <u>word sorts</u>.</p> <p>Oh, goodness. I believe it's <u>120 minutes</u>. Okay. I feel like it's the <u>phonics</u>.</p>	<p><i>ELA block is 2 hours to include a whole group read aloud with standard-based focus and reading response in journal. Small group and rotations to include students' specific areas of weakness like phonological awareness, phonics skills, and comprehension strategies. Teacher group will last 10-15 minutes depending on how many groups are seen each day. Handwriting is taught daily for 10 minutes throughout the day and varies if students need additional instruction by IA. Phonics is identified as most important component to the literacy block for grade level.</i></p>
T7	<p>Okay, so, I literacy block is going to be from <u>10:30 to 11:20</u>. And that is going to be solely based off of <u>phonological awareness</u>, <u>phonics</u>, <u>word work</u>, <u>word study</u>, all of that is going to be during that time. Um, during that time, we're going to do <u>routines</u> such as <u>reading sight words</u>, not I'm sorry, not reading sight words, we're going to be doing <u>vowel work</u>, <u>consonant work</u>, <u>sound work</u>, <u>blending and segmenting</u>. We're going to be doing <u>keyword</u>, <u>letter</u>, <u>sound</u>, like the <u>A apple</u>. We're going to be working on <u>Heggerty lessons</u> in the book to kind of promote that <u>sound</u>. [pause] I slightly changed the schedule, so I could have <u>more time</u> to do it because we did not have that much time to do it [sound work/phonics] and that was supposed to be for like <u>reading</u>, <u>writing and phonics</u>. I need this specific time to do it.</p> <p>So, it'll be <u>whole group and small group</u>. Um, so that'll be we'll <u>take breaks</u>, and we'll do our keywords like "<u>A</u>" <u>apple</u> and <u>Haggerty</u> and then we'll <u>take a break</u> to do some kind of <u>word work</u>. I'll pull the <u>students individually to work with them</u>. If they're not getting something, then we'll come back and we'll do our other morning routines. We're going to <u>do blending and</u></p>	<p><i>ELA block is 1 hour and 10 minutes for foundational reading skills and routines for phonological awareness, phonics, and word work. Teacher describes this time as being structured into whole group, small group, and individual instruction to focus on specific skills. Teacher describes the need for multiple breaks and movement, so students remain focused and engaged. Processing</i></p>

	<p><u>segmenting</u>, and all of that stuff, and then they're going to go back, I'm going to pull kids that don't, they're going to, I'm going to <u>pull kids that don't quite understand</u>. And then we're going to go back to <u>whole group</u>, so it'll be like a <u>mixture of both</u>. For me, personally, I think that is really important because it is the <u>foundation of reading</u>, there's so many things that I expect them to do throughout the day that they will not be able to do if they can't <u>process sounds</u>, if they can't <u>segment</u> if they can't <u>blend</u>, if I give them a sheet of paper, and I say, hey, I need you guys to read this, they're not going to be able to get information. Like, for me, it's like <u>reading and understanding sounds and sound manipulation is the most important thing</u> because with that, they can <u>sound out words</u> they can <u>understand</u> what people are <u>saying they can understand vocabulary</u>, I believe that it's the most <u>foundational skill for learning</u> just in general. Trying to get them to a certain point of eventually reading to reading to learn that <u>learning to read</u> and be able to have that <u>foundational skill</u> so they can <u>learn to read</u> in order for them to <u>learn in the future</u>.</p>	<p><i>sounds, like segmenting and blending, and sound manipulation are identified by the teacher as critical so students can learn to read.</i></p>
T8	<p>It's typically about an <u>hour and a half long</u> and it is <u>integrated with science and social studies</u>. And then within that hour and a half hour and 45 minutes, we typically do a <u>whole group lesson</u>, some type of <u>story</u>, we usually do some <u>phonemic awareness whole group</u>, and then the bulk of the <u>ELA time</u> is definitely spent on <u>small group and even individualized instruction</u>. So, we usually spend about a half, I'd say <u>30 to 45</u>, you said during <u>small group time</u>. So, um, a lot of times it is <u>vocabulary</u> will focus on at least one group is on some type of <u>vocabulary</u>, we always focus on some type of <u>phonemic awareness</u> and that <u>obviously looks different depending on the student's needs</u>. We always have some type of <u>writing</u> included in there. You know whether it's to go along with the <u>story or handwriting</u>, or, you know, just some type of <u>writing piece</u>. And then we usually there, they're our last group is kind of like a <u>catch all group</u>, is what I like to call it, because it that really can be <u>any of the components</u> because it's just based <u>on what the kids need</u>. It may be, you know, a lesson with one kid <u>makeup lesson</u> if he missed the day before, it may be a <u>reteach lesson</u> from the story. It may be, you know, a <u>fluency component</u> or lesson with some kids who <u>need extra practice</u> with that, or it may be, you know, a <u>comprehension question extension lesson</u> with the kids who are farther along. You know, <u>I really don't feel one is more important</u> than the other and looking at it in a broad spectrum. With certain kids, obviously, I feel like some of the components are more important than the others because it's <u>based on their needs</u>. But honestly, over the years, I have come to the conclusion that all of the <u>components are important for different reasons</u>, though, I really, you know, and not partial to say this one is more important than the other.</p>	<p><i>ELA block is 1 hour and 30-45 minutes each day with integrated science and social studies. Literacy block structure includes whole group, small group, individualized instruction depending on the specific needs of the students. Whole group includes a story reading and vocabulary instruction. Small groups and individual instruction focus on vocabulary, phonemic awareness, writing, handwriting, fluency, reteach and extension learning. All components are important for different reasons and depends on the individual needs of the students.</i></p>

Appendix R: Analysis by Interview Question 2

Outer Setting: (1,2,3) Planning Process for Literacy Block	Probes:
Will you walk me through the process you take to plan for your literacy block each week?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me more about the curricular resources you use. • How do you prioritize the specific areas of literacy that you teach within the week? • How much time do you usually spend on planning for your literacy instruction? • What are specific challenges you notice related to planning using the (X) grade curriculum? Strengths?

RQ1. What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why?

While responding to the above questions, teachers 1, 4, and 8 specifically used the term “standards” while planning for literacy instruction. Teachers 3,4,5,7,8 described the scope and sequence or curriculum template while discussing the planning process. Teachers 1,5, and 6 referenced Learning Focused or terms highlighted within the LF planning framework. Using student data or individual needs of students were identified as critical while planning literacy instruction but specific assessments were not identified by any of the teachers. Observations and notes were referenced as informal assessment techniques by several teachers.

RQ2. Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction?

Morphology was the only specific term used by the teachers during the interview, but this needs to be taken into consideration lightly because this term is identified within the district provided curriculum as part of the word work materials. Phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension terms that align with structured literacy were mentioned or referenced by most teachers while discussing the literacy block or the planning process.

RQ3. What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers?

Time: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8; Organization of Materials: 1,3,4,5,8; Quantity of Materials: None; Quality of Materials:1,2,6,7,8; Available Assessments:1,2,6,7,8; Integration of Content and Skills:1,2,6,8; Pacing: 3,5,6,7,8

	Phonology	Sound-Symbol Associations	Syllables	Morphology	Syntax	Semantics	I-Ready
Exact Terms				1,5			2,4,5,8
Similar Terms	1,2,7,8	1,2,3,4,5,7,8			1	4,5,8	

Teacher #	Response	Researcher's Summary
T1	<p>Okay, first, I look at <u>my standards</u>. I look at my <u>standards</u> with what's going to be the <u>big ideas</u> I need to get in take away from, that I want the kids to come in with. And then once I'm <u>comfortable with the standard we have to teach</u>, and this is the way to do it. Then I start looking at my <u>direct teaching activity</u>. And you know I'm big pro <u>Learning Focused</u>. I go straight to how am I going to draw them in with <u>my activating strategy</u>. Again, I constantly say once I've done that <u>activating strategy that draws them in</u>, I find so much that I can learn from it and <u>get information about my students</u> to give me a good idea of where they are.</p> <p>I got my <u>LEQ</u>, whatever that question is going to be to follow throughout the lesson.</p> <p>And I say, okay, I'm thinking these kids would be good here, but I need something quick that tells me. Oh, sometimes it's an <u>exit slip</u>, sometimes it's just looking at me looking like <u>deer in the headlight</u> after the activating strategy would be done.</p> <p>And I then I need to look at where I am at, what I want each <u>grouping</u> or however, because I'm going to work into, hopefully my <u>blended grouping</u>. I'm going to do my <u>direct [instruction]</u> and then go into a new group. So, I divide them up.... <u>phonemic awareness activity</u> with kids, I have to do, you know, work on me <u>reading, spelling, morphology</u>, so it's going to be offered, I will always have in there an activity that is whatever I want to see if <u>they got what I taught</u>. My <u>learning assessment</u> will be in there but they all will do the activity whenever my <u>learning assessment</u> [example of <u>reteach and practice groups</u>]. I am going to deal with a <u>scaffold</u> on that and try to <u>accelerate</u> that so currently, by the way.</p> <p>Last year, I checked out almost <u>every book</u> I could find in there. I checked out all our <u>reading resources</u> to utilize. I forgot what that book is called, <u>PS</u> something I utilized that one a great deal.</p> <p>One of the <u>other resources</u> I use a lot is the <u>alphabet cards</u>. But they have it where it's, it's kind of <u>verbatim</u> what they were looking for us to say. Oh, but there's like a <u>guide that goes with it or information</u>. I don't know what you would call a framework. I don't know, it tells you <u>specifically what to say how to utilize them</u>. [Script]</p> <p>That was big time helpful to me. Yes, I already had the <u>phonics</u> background, but it helped me to structure it for these guys [third grade students- not at such a basic level of sound by sound].</p> <p>To be honest with you, <u>I do not like the setup</u>. With curriculum materials, for us to utilize and to flow and because <u>the flow is not there</u>, and that's my whole</p>	<p><i>Standards based instruction is the priority identified by the teacher who is implementing elements of Learning Focused into the planning process.</i></p> <p><i>Assessment option are teacher developed and informal in nature.</i></p> <p><i>Student needs are identified as a priority during the planning process but there is not a particular assessment that informs this process.</i></p> <p><i>Student groups need to be flexible to allow for direct teaching, practice time for skills taught in relation to areas highlighted in the curriculum.</i></p> <p><i>Acceleration to target instructional needs and scaffold is identified.</i></p> <p><i>Many resources available but the organization and format of the resources are not specific enough for teachers to know what to do when students struggle.</i></p> <p><i>Integration of skills and subjects is not available from the curriculum.</i></p> <p><i>Too much time is needed for literacy planning even with team planning.</i></p> <p><i>Three hours a day is</i></p>

	<p>thing about ELA. I don't think that <u>the flow and integration</u> is there, like it should be... And it's <u>not clear and precise for teachers</u>, especially when teaching <u>language</u> if we're teaching, you know what I mean, that needs to be <u>clear and concise</u>. Yeah [laughs], um too long. I um, let's see, planning with the team, planning on my own. I'd say per day, it is <u>at least three hours per day</u>. Because when I go home, <u>I'm still planning and looking</u> at what I did that day.</p>	<p><i>required because the need to reflect on how the day went at the end of the day is part of the planning.</i></p>
T2	<p>So, we let the kids you know, its student led, whatever <u>needs each particular group needs</u>, M--- and I will work together. And if, you know, our group has not been able to get the <u>phonemes in words</u>, then you know, we will continue to work with that. We, you know, whatever, if you have a group that's <u>not getting the letter identification</u>, and you know, of course, we <u>evaluate</u>, we tried to do that during the <u>developmental centers</u>, you know, where we can do a <u>quick down and dirty assessment</u>, but of course, when she's [M---] <u>pulled for interventions and makes it a little harder</u>. And I use the <u>Haggerty with the small group</u>, we use the... Well, I have to confess <u>the I-Ready</u> was new last year. <u>I don't like it</u>. I don't know if you're familiar with it or not? It's like, you do like the <u>same stories, but you do different skills</u> with those stories. And <u>there's just so many books</u> out there that I feel like, you know, why would I continue to read the same book for <u>four different lessons</u>, when there's lots of other books that, you know, you can <u>expose the children to</u>. So, we have planning <u>45 minutes a day</u>. So, we'll <u>say 30 minutes there</u>. And then, M--- and I try to find at least, I would say, at <u>least two mornings a week</u> to, you know, talk about that's probably 30 minutes total there. So that's <u>30 times six</u>, and then at home, I do a lot of <u>planning on Sundays</u> to get ready. And I would say I would say I do about <u>two hours' worth of planning on Sunday</u>. Well, with the <u>new I-Ready</u>, I just feel like it's <u>limited with literature</u>. That would, that would be my, my biggest issue with the I-Ready. Well, we were doing the <u>themes</u>, and I always liked the themes because I felt like, you know, you could bring in so many <u>skills</u> with <u>different themes</u>, and you know, but now, it's, I've been told it's going be <u>I-Ready again</u>, and so I don't know what's going to happen. I always like the <u>themes</u> because with the themes, you also could bring in <u>science and social studies</u>, you know, around that theme as well. Okay. And that way, you know, you were able to <u>cover your science and social studies within the literature block</u>. Yeah, I like, like being able to do that <u>[integration]</u>. Instead of having science and social studies, like completely separated.</p>	<p><i>Student need drives the instruction and planning for those groups.</i></p> <p><i>Basic skills are identified as phonemes and letter id.</i></p> <p><i>Quick informal assessments are used to evaluate what each student needs but there is not any specific assessments identified.</i></p> <p><i>Working with IA is critical in the planning and instruction of class.</i></p> <p><i>Haggerty is identified as being good for small groups but nothing specific as far as PA progression.</i></p> <p><i>I-Ready is identified as resource for reading but it is not preferred because the lack of various texts being used and the need to take days for one story limits the exposure of books to the students. Also, I-Ready does not lend itself to themes or integration of ss and sc.</i></p> <p><i>Planning requires additional time outside of the workday and</i></p>

		<i>weekend- more than 3 hours a week.</i>
T3	<p>Well, um, I have a <u>good planner</u>, first of all, a <u>good team</u>, and we do it all <u>together</u>. And that's pretty much I mean, <u>whatever the county asks us to do</u> is what we do. But, um, the <u>program</u> that they gave us last year, moves at a <u>very slow pace</u>.</p> <p>Well, we have plenty at our school, like we have the things, we have the <u>resources</u>, we have <u>books we need</u>. I feel, but um, <u>what we all need is the time to, you know, look at the data to see exactly what skills they need kids need</u>, we add that in there, like when we used to do <u>flex groups</u> before [Covid].</p> <p>Oh, a lot of time. <u>I would say 20 minutes a day</u>, um, <u>at least</u>. And our team talks every day about what we're doing that day. And we have our <u>planning time</u>. Yeah, we have the <u>other subjects too</u>. At least 20 minutes a day for reading. I mean, it's <u>probably more than that</u>. I just, I'm just saying, because we know, what we're going to teach them because we're <u>given a template follow of what skill</u>, the target for the <u>week for reading and writing</u>.</p> <p>Yeah, and that time for the, well we always incorporate little <u>video clips</u>, like, you don't show a whole bunch of videos, but the <u>little clips are powerful</u>. And it's a matter of, oh, I found this, I found this really cool video to share. I'm going share with my class. And usually <u>when one of us says that we all are in to share it with [our class]</u>.</p> <p>Well, some challenges are, um, <u>some skills are harder than others</u>, and you have to <u>spend more time than one week</u> on it. And so, we find ourselves like, for example, <u>blends</u>, when we're teaching blends, there are so many blends, <u>beginning blends, and ending blends</u>. We one week is <u>not enough time</u> to do all the blends. So, we're finding ourselves like doing an <u>extra week of blends</u>. <u>Pacing is definitely a concern</u>.</p> <p>Um, [pause] I like the way it <u>starts</u>, like, of course, with the <u>short vowels</u>.</p> <p>They give us <u>stuff to help us</u>. I mean, they recommend websites, and they give us materials. So, I think that's good. And they give us <u>guidance</u> on they give us some <u>lessons for the books that they want us to read</u>.</p>	<p><i>Must have a process or tool for the planning process and a good team to plan with to use the district guidance.</i></p> <p><i>Many resources and books are available, but the time needed to plan is not available. The weekly planning template from district guides the skills taught during reading and writing.</i></p> <p><i>It takes time to determine the specific student needs (data). Informal assessments were not identified.</i></p> <p><i>More than 20 minutes a day because additional items (video clips for motivation) are found by team and then shared.</i></p> <p><i>Pacing does not allow enough time for the more difficult skills.</i></p> <p><i>Positive of curriculum identified as starting with short vowels(scope and sequence). Websites, materials, guidance and lessons provided are all positive.</i></p>
T4	<p>Yeah, I've been fortunate enough to <u>Team plan</u>, we plan as a team, and we take a look at <u>our phonics skill that we're working on</u>, we usually do it for a <u>week at a time</u>. So, we're going to look at a phonics skill for a week and try it try to get our little ones to <u>master that skill</u>. We have <u>three high frequency words</u> that we try to <u>target each week</u>. So, we're going to, and again, this is usually <u>prescribed by the county</u>. Historically, we have a <u>calendar that we that we follow</u>. So, we'll take a look at <u>what the county wants us to work on as far as the spelling pattern</u>.</p>	<p><i>Team planning is critical for literacy instruction.</i></p> <p><i>Phonics skills for each week to include high frequency words, spelling patterns, & Haggerty.</i></p>

	<p>As far as our <u>spelling pattern</u> and our <u>heart words</u> for the week. As far as what I use for <u>phonics</u>, again, most of it is <u>provided by the county</u>, of course, we have <u>Haggerty</u> and I use a <u>whole group</u>, I like to use the <u>virtual soundboards</u>. We do that, um, that has worked really well. I also use <u>smart files</u> that my teammates have put together.</p> <p>[pause, laugh] We can usually <u>carve out an hour</u>, we can carve out <u>an hour to work together</u>. But within that hour, I can usually get a <u>pretty good skeleton</u> of what we're going to do for the week. And then unfortunately, yeah, I do <u>have to use my home time to actually fill in the details</u>. I <u>couldn't tell you how much extra planning time</u>, but <u>skeleton</u> can be put together by our team in that <u>hour</u> that we made each week. So, <u>the extra time is that gathering materials, copying, and getting organized</u>. T4, "Yes, absolutely."</p> <p>I don't have any acute challenges as far as planning other than what we've already talked about some, <u>time</u>. In a typical year, the time was really hard to come by. I don't want to go down this avenue. But this last <u>18 months we actually were afforded additional planning time</u>. And although our in-person teaching wasn't exactly what we would like to see, we were <u>well planned and well prepared like never before because we had we had additional planning time</u>. So, in a typical year, I'm sure that the only challenge we're going to <u>face is time</u>. And my team likes to stay together.</p> <p>I think that the <u>phonics lessons and the calendar</u>, the <u>schedule</u> that we are to go by is <u>very strong</u>. Let's see, yeah, this the <u>scope and sequence</u>. I loved the reading <u>units, Courage, the environment</u>, along with the <u>lesson planners</u> that they sent out to us. Those were always a <u>highlight of my literacy block</u>. I thought those were <u>really strong</u>.</p> <p>No, I think we <u>get great direction and I love the sequencing of the standards</u>. I am <u>not a huge fan</u> of the read alouds offered by the <u>I-Ready program</u>. But like I said before, sometimes I can interchange some.</p>	<p><i>Word Work scope and sequence is used to by team.</i></p> <p><i>Additional resources are required for word work instruction: virtual sound boards and smart files.</i></p> <p><i>Team plans for 1 hour to determine the skeleton of the plan for the week. Then home and additional time is required for gathering and preparing materials.</i></p> <p><i>Additional time provided during Covid allowed them to be prepared like never before.</i></p> <p><i>Phonics scope and sequence, themes with lesson planners are strengths. Good direction is provided by the district.</i></p> <p><i>Not a fan of I-Ready read alouds but does use them flexibly.</i></p>
T5	<p>First of all, I have to <u>read the text ahead of time</u> that the kids will be reading. I have to <u>evaluate the text</u> to see if it's something that they're going to be able to <u>read independently</u> or if it's going to have to be more of a <u>read aloud</u> for them or a <u>partner read</u>. And then, but I use that <u>I-Ready teacher guide</u> to help me plan <u>every step of the way</u>. So that's a very quick, like, <u>scripted program</u>. But I still had to look for things, struggles that student might have or <u>misunderstandings</u>, that kind of thing that way I could <u>front load ahead</u> of time so that they would have a better understanding of what we're talking about. So, I do use the <u>scope and sequencing documents</u> that are given and I kind of base what the <u>scope and sequence</u> is <u>suggesting</u>, on my classes needs. So, if I feel like</p>	<p><i>Reading and evaluating the text is part of the planning process. Consider barriers that may be presented, if the text is too difficult for specific students.</i></p> <p><i>Used I-Ready and the TE to plan every step of the way. Script and directions for teachers allows for frontloading if necessary.</i></p>

	<p>they're, for example, if I feel like they're really good at, I'll just go back to <u>text features</u>, because that's what stuck in my head, then I might only use one or two books that they suggested rather than if I'm trying to <u>teach inferencing</u>, I might need to <u>spend a lot more time on that</u>. So, I might choose to do that for a longer period of time. I kind of just <u>based that on their needs</u> each year. Does that answer your question?</p> <p><u>Oh, my goodness, I feel like it takes forever</u>. Um, I would say, for a week, it would take at least an hour to <u>an hour and a half</u>. Just for literacy I feel.</p> <p>I think it's part of the reason would be trying to make sure we're including the <u>Learning Focused</u>. I don't necessarily <u>use the format of the plan for Learning Focus</u>, but I try to include the <u>lesson essential question</u> and making sure that I'm doing those activities and those assignments at the end to either learning all of that.</p> <p>I feel like <u>most of it is easily accessible</u>. I feel like the <u>Schoology is a little cluttered</u>. I feel like it's a little cluttered. I think that I already took a lot of time though. And there was <u>less time</u> for those things like <u>spelling and morphology</u> and getting to where the, on the <u>kids' level</u>. A lot of the text wasn't always appropriate for them to be able to <u>read on their own</u>. So, I do I love how it's <u>laid out and how the text is right there</u>. It's all in one place. It's just that those <u>lessons take a lot longer</u> than even if you're trying to plan for them to be shorter than what the suggestion is in the book. It was really hard because I felt like they <u>needed all of it</u>. So, I did try to implement the <u>spelling and things like that when I could</u>. But I also feel like their <u>literacy skills outside of just spelling words</u> was really important.</p>	<p><i>Text features and inference require more time.</i></p> <p><i>1.5 hours required for weekly literacy planning.</i></p> <p><i>Identifying the LEQ may add more time to the planning process and trying to incorporate other LF elements.</i></p> <p><i>Schoology is not organized and requires a lot of time to find materials needed.</i></p> <p><i>Not enough time is available for spelling and morphology and getting to the "kids' level".</i></p> <p><i>Text is not always appropriate for students to read independently. Lessons take much more time than what is identified in I-Ready.</i></p>
T6	<p>Okay, so we usually get the <u>curriculum from the board or from those specialists</u>. From the um, what do you call it? Yeah, I think there's so it's the <u>CCPS curriculum, whatever they've created</u>. And sometimes I'll <u>tweak it, depending on like my students are, how high or how low, you know, their comprehension</u>. But I usually <u>do follow it</u>, especially when it comes to the <u>read aloud and the standards</u> obviously that I'm supposed to target.</p> <p><u>Oh, good lord, in the allotted time, like, one or two hours?</u> Um, but after that, <u>once I get into a routine</u>, and I <u>know my students</u> very well, <u>doesn't take as long</u>.</p> <p>Um, but yeah, but then, like, with <u>planning the curriculum</u>, and I use my <u>data</u> and like, I <u>note the notes</u>, like, what I see in the morning with their <u>writing</u>, because obviously, writing is also included in ELA. I have <u>writing twice</u>, like, I'll have writing in the morning. I'm just like, any <u>random question or prompt?</u> And then that's like, where they're coming in,</p>	<p><i>Use curriculum provided from district but it is tweaked depending on student needs.</i></p> <p><i>At first, 1-2 hours a week is needed to plan until the needs of the students can be identified.</i></p> <p><i>Reference to data and student needs as being important, notes and observations are identified as the assessment type.</i></p>

	<p>and then I'll have <u>another writing block that we're given</u> where I, you know, <u>follow the curriculum</u>. Um, um, yes because the <u>curriculum is created by people that are at the board and may not be as knowledgeable</u> and a lot of times, <u>they ask us to do certain things and we don't have the materials</u>. And, and sometimes there's, <u>there's holes</u>, and we don't, we don't have, <u>we're not given everything we need</u>. And it's, then we have to, like, <u>seek for it</u> or, you know, even within the lesson itself, like, if we have to <u>find like assignments</u> or, you know, <u>things to grade</u>, like, <u>we're making that stuff up ourselves</u> from what we're given, which is not ideal, because then <u>everybody's giving different things</u> and <u>giving different grades</u> and, you know, yeah.</p>	<p><i>Read aloud with identified standards is good.</i></p> <p><i>Writing curriculum requires additional materials and time to develop assignments and products for teachers to grade.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers make things up as they go so there is not consistent grading or teaching.</i></p>
T7	<p>Yes. Um, we have <u>lessons that we use</u>. I have taken <u>bits and pieces</u> from those lessons and kind of created my <u>own schedule that works for me as part of the scope and sequence of phonics</u>, which is the <u>word family</u>, or the <u>word that or the sound that we're working on either short vowel, long vowel, blends, digraphs</u>, all of that I've taken those skills and I've... How do I prioritize? Um, it <u>takes me a while</u>, but I think that kids thrive <u>best one routine</u>. So, if we do the same thing <u>over and over and over again, changing the skills</u>, but my priority at the beginning of the year is <u>finding what works for them and what skills they really need</u> to work on either like starting everyday with <u>segmenting</u>, and then moving on, like just keeping it in the same order of skills.</p> <p><u>At the beginning of the year, a really long time</u>. After that, <u>10 minutes, 5-10 minutes a week</u> on just plugging in that <u>those skills</u> into what I already have.</p> <p><u>It's kind of broad</u>. Or like, I don't <u>feel like they give enough examples</u>. And I don't feel like they give <u>enough real-life classroom experience</u>. <u>Time</u> like, like, oh, in a perfect world, this this, this and this should happen and in a 10-minute block and you're like, no, <u>that has never once happened in a 10-minute block</u>. So, <u>the pacing</u>, that's what it is, the pacing.</p> <p><u>We have to prepare the materials</u>, they give us a <u>general outline</u> of what they expect, but <u>not the materials that they would like us to use</u>. They also don't really give us like a <u>they focus more on the scope and sequence of reading, not so much phonological awareness, and phonics</u>.</p> <p>Yeah, I feel like they gave us <u>Haggerty</u>, but they didn't give us a lot of <u>training on the word study</u> and everything to do with it. The reason why I feel like I am strong with Haggerty is because my team <u>purchased a manual of basically how it should be done and how it's expected to be done</u>.</p>	<p><i>Lessons from the district are used but supplemental materials and procedures are needed for the word work portion of the literacy block.</i></p> <p><i>Identified student need as critical driver but does not identify any specific informal assessments or procedures used. Phonics and PA are identified as skill areas.</i></p> <p><i>The BOY requires a really long time to plan in order to find out what works for the students and what skills they really need but once that is identified only 10-15 minutes a week.</i></p> <p><i>Curriculum provided is too broad and does not give enough examples. Also, the time allotment for tasks is not realistic for completion. Pacing does not allow for student needs. Materials have to be prepared but the general outline is provided. Specific</i></p>

		<i>training on how to use the materials was not provided.</i>
T8	<p>Sure. So, um, I usually have <u>team planning</u> with my team, and we look at the <u>scope and sequence</u> and the <u>standards</u> that you know, are supposed to be for the <u>lesson that we're on</u>. And then we make sure that each of the <u>components are included in that lesson and if not, then we find a way to supplement something with that</u>.</p> <p>And then when, after I leave team planning, when I'm looking at just my <u>own individual instruction</u>, I, it usually <u>takes me a month or so to kind of get the pace of my kids down</u>. There's been years where, you know, I've been able to <u>read a book</u> in one day and hit the <u>vocabulary</u>. And by day two, the kids are using that <u>vocabulary</u>. So, I tend to <u>plan for Monday through Thursday</u>, and then Thursday, afternoon and evening, I see what I haven't completed or what the <u>kids need</u> or what we need more of and then I usually plan for that <u>Friday</u>. So, <u>Friday is like my catch all day</u>. Again, it's like my favorite little term has to be <u>flexible</u> with kindergarteners, especially because they're at <u>so many different ranges</u>, they come in all over the place. So that's how I plan like, you know, <u>weekly for my whole group instruction</u>. And then for my <u>individualized instruction</u>, I look at the different <u>components</u>. And, you know, I make sure that we hit <u>each of them every week with the lesson</u>, I also look at the students and <u>where their needs are</u>. You know, like I said, we're always having a <u>phonemic awareness lesson</u>, <u>we're usually having a vocab and comprehension lesson</u>. And one of the <u>groups</u>, we're always having some type of <u>writing</u>, you know, we do <u>phonics</u>, and <u>fluency</u> also. But it really just depends on where my kids are and what they need and my assistant and I are <u>constantly taking data</u>, <u>I feel like we take data as much as we teach</u>. And then I <u>use that data to drive my instruction</u>. And I used to really, you know, years ago, think, okay, I, these kids need to be in these <u>groups, you know, for a couple of weeks</u>, so that they can work with each other and get to know each other. Well, I <u>switch groups all the time</u>, it's nothing for a <u>kid to be in a different group every two days</u>. Because I just feel like that's the best way to reach them. So, I'm <u>constantly switching kids up in groups</u>, we're constantly changing, you know, who's doing what, and it's all based on, you know, the data that we're taking and <u>what their need is in terms of the small group</u>. [laughter] A lot! Um, I'm going to say, I probably spend probably <u>three hours a week planning for literacy instruction</u>. I mean, it's a <u>significant chunk of time</u>.</p> <p>Yes. Okay. So, we switched from doing themes in reading, and <u>we switched to I-Ready instruction</u>. So,</p>	<p><i>Team planning is completed weekly where the scope and sequence is used to map out the overall skills and standards being addressed. Then if components are missing, they find a way to supplement.</i></p> <p><i>Individual planning for class is needed to determine small groups and individual instruction which takes some time at the BOY.</i></p> <p><i>Plans Monday-Thursday and Friday is a catch all day.</i></p> <p><i>So many ranges of student need to consider so flexibility is important.</i></p> <p><i>Whole group consists of a read aloud with focus on vocabulary.</i></p> <p><i>Small group can focus on phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, phonics, and fluency.</i></p> <p><i>Data is used to drive instruction and kids will switch groups all the time. Specific information about the data or informal assessments was not identified.</i></p> <p><i>Time required to plan is significant chunk of time,</i></p>

	<p>it's <u>less books</u>, and you <u>read them for longer is basically the difference</u>. We don't have <u>themes anymore, which I really dislike that component not having themes</u>, because I feel like having a theme was a way for the kids to <u>tie all of the information together</u>. So that's been a challenge for us. The other challenge, I would say is, a lot of the books that are in this I-Ready are <u>very lengthy</u> and it's, you know, but that doesn't surprise me because we do them for three, <u>four or five days with the lessons</u>. But it's hard to <u>read three pages of a book and then tell kindergarteners, oh, we'll read more tomorrow</u>.</p> <p>What's going to happen, you know, and that's kind of how and I enjoy that also, because I enjoy reading the <u>whole book the first day</u>, and then going back and kind of <u>dissecting it</u>. I just find it's easier for the children to understand it also.</p> <p>We sometimes were <u>sharing books amongst our team</u>, there wasn't a book for everybody, which doesn't seem like a big deal, but it really is a big deal when you don't have your <u>own resource to use</u>. One, one plus of this is that we all have our own, you know, there's less books and we all have our own book with that. Another plus that I do like with the I-Ready is <u>that the components are very much broken down</u> with each of these books. And so, you know, in the <u>TE</u>, it gives you the <u>vocabulary you're using</u>, and it's all right there and its <u>very user friendly</u>. I will say that the <u>TE and the materials are very user friendly</u>.</p> <p>Yes, we are <u>supplementing</u> you know, everything for the <u>phonemic awareness, the phonics</u>, it has a little bit of <u>writing in it</u>, but it is 100% the vocabulary, the fluency, the comprehension, and not fluency, the vocabulary, the comprehension piece of it.</p> <p>I have them [foundational skills materials], but I only have them because I've taught for so long. And so, I've <u>organized it in a way</u> and then plus, we also have the <u>Haggerty phonemic awareness</u>, you know, book that we use for that also.</p>	<p><i>3 hours a week for literacy.</i></p> <p><i>I-Ready was identified as being used and themes are no longer included in curriculum.</i></p> <p><i>Positive: TE provided to show components, specific vocabulary, all students have materials,</i></p> <p><i>Negative: Less books read, story is not always read completely the first day, does not include phonemic awareness and phonics components.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers must supplement the phonological awareness and phonics</i></p> <p><i>Haggerty phonemic awareness is identified at the end as a resource.</i></p>
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Appendix S: Analysis by Interview Question 3

Inner Setting: (1,2,3) Instructional Practices for Monitoring Learning	Probes:
How do you determine if your students are mastering literacy skills you have taught? What do you use to determine if a student is progressing in (specific areas of reading)? -Refer back to what was identified as part of the typical literacy block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd like to ask you more about when students struggle to learn to read. Can you describe how you approach instruction for your students who struggle with basic reading skills? • What do you see as the biggest cause for students who struggle with learning to read?

RQ1. What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why?

Small group or individual instruction to reteach or practice needed skills. Multisensory approaches to instruction to try to provide the instruction in a different way to meet the students' needs. Two teachers identified rubrics as a means of checking for mastery but one of those teachers identified using the rubric to pre-teach or model the expectations for the students.

RQ2. Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction?

	Phonology	Sound-Symbol Associations	Syllables	Morphology	Syntax	Semantics
Exact Terms						
Similar Terms	1,2,3,4,6,7,8	1, 2,4,5,6,7,8			4	1,4,5,6,7,8

RQ3. What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers?

Teachers identified several challenges, access to specific assessments in basic skill areas like phonics and fluency. The structure or procedure of how to track observations and narrative data was identified as "not a very good system" or "I have 1000 sticky notes in my planner with the date". Lack of exposure to books, language, and experiences were the primary reasons for why students struggle to learn to read. One teacher identified the lack of individual time with the students as a reason to why students struggle. Most teachers identified the student enter school or the grade level already behind because they do not have specific skills in alphabetic principle, phonics, and vocabulary.

Teacher #	Response	Researcher's Summary
T1	Through <u>my assessments</u> , I have, what I like to do is called assessment Friday. And I do, because that <u>helps me plan for that next week to see how I'm doing</u> . And, again, that's why like <u>Learning Focused</u> , I don't feel pressured, because <u>my planning</u> can be going on and on for that same standard	<i>The Learning Focused planning format is used to determine weekly skills to be targeted. Informal assessments created by the</i>

<p>because I'm planning is a couple of days. On Fridays, I chose that, because I do it in a <u>multitude of ways</u>, that it's not just, oh, here's a little <u>Schoolology assessment</u> or here's a <u>paper pencil assessment</u>. It's through games, so that on Friday, <u>it looks like we just playing a lot of games</u>. So, <u>Nearpod</u> works perfect for that and then that <u>gives me my direction</u> for the following week by now we'll have a <u>formative assessment</u>, of course. You know, then a <u>summative assessment</u>, I love doing with products. <u>Rubrics, learning rubrics</u>. So, I can, and my hope is, to frontload with a rubric.</p> <p>Yes. Well, we used to do that, and I used to love that when we do those <u>quarterly assessments</u>, or at the end of a lesson assessment that was county driven.</p> <p>What I saw, you know, those <u>different surveys</u>. Those seem very, very helpful. We didn't get to use them as much as I'd like till the end. But that gives you nice results. At the end, I get to see, you know, tangibly with those assessments. So, what do they call that, the other was called a <u>fluency one, a comprehension fluency one</u></p> <p>There is somewhat in Schoolology. There is material and does kind of guide us, but again, it's not. <u>It's not, it's not easy to find as explicit as we'd like it.</u></p> <p>Okay, um, my students that are struggling, those are the ones that again, you remember, I said that <u>small group time is going to be very fluid</u>. Yeah, well, those are the kids that I will be working with either <u>individually or in a small group</u>. Those are the ones that I want to <u>identify</u>, or I see during my <u>direct teaching</u>, are the ones I'm pulling and working with. It's always going to <u>look different</u>. So, if I have one that is sort of <u>struggling with phonemic awareness</u> then I'm pulling them and doing phonemic [skills]... it's always going to be changing <u>depending on the need and the resources that are appropriate for one child sometimes will be different for another.</u></p> <p>I think, I think if they are missing a lot of that <u>foundational phonemic awareness, even a basic understanding the phonics</u>, you know, if they miss out on that, or they struggle then and it hasn't been worked on or, you know, or some activities to scaffold to build if <u>they fall behind</u>. If those aren't met, then it's going to be whew.... when we get to third grade. Which we've seen that it does happen, because they're missing certain, you know, foundational basics, basic skills like that. But if they don't have those, how are you going to teach them to read? <u>You have to go back and work on those skills</u>. And, and yes, and I might have made a mistake when I said, how are you going to teach them to read because, you know they still are able to read. You know what I mean? By that level? It's how you can build that if you've got these missing skills.</p>	<p><i>teacher are used to determine if the skills are mastered. Those assessments can be observational, paper pencil, products or games online depending on the skills. The information is used to drive instruction the following week.</i></p> <p><i>Quarterly assessments provided by the district would be helpful. If there was guidance to use decoding surveys or IRI then the teacher would use. When students struggle, phonemic awareness and phonics skills are taught in a small group with the teacher with a different approach depending on student needs. Students struggle if they do not have foundational skills needed prior to reaching third grade which requires the third grade teacher to go back and teach basic skills and slows the progression of grade level content.</i></p>
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T2	<p>So, we have a <u>checklist</u> that we use at the beginning of the year to give us an idea of where everyone is, and it is <u>used every two weeks</u> to check and see where everyone is. And it involves <u>letter identification for upper and lowercase sounds</u> and then later it goes on to <u>some phonemic awareness skills</u>.</p> <p>So, in the past, we've had assessments each quarter. And so, our team, we haven't had those in I think in the past two years, we haven't had the <u>quarterly benchmarks</u>. So, we've <u>come up with our own</u>, you know, but based, you know, the skills are based off of what we did before [quarterly benchmarks]. No, we've looked at that [MAP], and been able to, well, first of all, you know, when the students take the test themselves, um, you know, I, I feel like, it is a good, you know, another picture of what they're capable of doing. <u>Not the end all be all</u>, but I do feel like, you know, when they take the test themselves, it is another good picture. And we use that information to <u>group them skills based</u>, we, you know, you can we look at the scores were like, oh, you know, oh, yes, we are right, you know, Robert, and Lucas, and Mara and Taylor do belong together, you know, in the same group, you know, they're all right here. So, it's like a reassurance that we're, we are, we're on the right path, we have them in the right groups.</p> <p>So, when our students come in and we have students that have not been <u>exposed to letters, numbers, anything</u>. We will, you know, of course, first of all, if, if they, if we do the <u>uppercase letter</u>, and they can't identify any of them, then we, you know, we will set up the tests because there's no sense in frustrating them. And we, basically, with what is the name of that one, <u>the lips</u>, we follow that order, and the lips, and we <u>do the letters, but we do try to focus on one, we find focusing on, you know, four or five letters at a time, versus focusing on 26 at a time is better for the students</u>. That's not to say, you know, that we're not <u>singing the alphabet</u>, we're not showing them the <u>alphabet charts</u> and using the, the <u>rainbow alphabet</u> where they have to, you know, place them and put them in order. You know, we're still using all of those activities. But we <u>focus on the four or five letters</u>, until, you know, they've <u>mastered those</u> and then, you know, say they've mastered three, you know, then we'll add in, you know, a couple more. We also work with their</p>	<p><i>A checklist is used to track progress of student mastery of letter identification, sound identification, and phonemic awareness skills. Informal assessments are developed by teachers since the quarterly assessments have not been provided. When MAP is given at school, it is used to confirm student grouping but does not identify specific details needed for each student, just appropriate grouping to show similar needs. When students struggle they are usually lacking exposure and experiences to build background knowledge and language needed. The multisensory approach to teaching letters and sounds is used in small groups with a smaller number of letters instead of focusing on all 26 letters. Students are taught 5-6 letters, usually the ones in their name, and then other letters are slowly introduced for mastery. The reason students struggle is a lack of exposure to books and experiences and language from birth to 5 which is important for kindergarten skills.</i></p>
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	<p>name, you know, the <u>letters in their name and writing their name</u>. Because, you know, it's important for them to have ownership of their name. And some of the activities that we do, you know, <u>we bring it down a notch</u>. And, you know, we I mentioned earlier, we will bring out <u>shaving cream</u>, we let them you know, <u>do tracing</u>, we have <u>sandpaper letters that they're able to do</u>. We have the chalk; we have the <u>whiteboards</u>. We have the <u>making the letters in the air</u>. And then we have the kit, which I love the <u>A through Z little containers of things that begin with those letters</u>. Um, just lack of just not really, I guess, <u>lack of exposure</u>. From, from, you know, from <u>birth to five</u>. Exposure to <u>books exposure to</u>, you know, just <u>going to the aquarium the museum experiences</u>. Okay, and don't forget <u>being talked to</u>.</p>	
T3	<p>[pause] Assessment? Like skills as in do you mean, like skills, like setting in the story or do you mean? Oh. Oh, okay, for example, <u>rhyme</u>. Like, there's different ways to assess rhyme because maybe you're giving them a word and they are telling you a word that rhymes with that word, or maybe you're asking them to provide a word on their own. So just <u>assessments like that, or one on one instruction and then post assessment to see if they got it or an exit slip</u>. Okay, so did I answer your question? So, if someone's not getting it, I have to try a <u>different approach</u>. Like, maybe they are a <u>visual learner</u>, or they <u>need to move</u> like, movement involve that. And do it [instruction] a <u>different way</u>. So, I mean, some kids just need to move their whole body. Like, I guess if you don't know a letter, you're learning a letter, stand up and make the letter with your body. Or, if you need to try, tracing things on the blacktop to make the letter. Oh, it's definitely <u>Attention. Attention disorders</u>. Definitely. They can't focus and they're missing it. Because <u>instead of listening to me</u>, they're watching somebody else do something in the classroom or out in the hallway.</p>	<p><i>Assessments are informal and are usually observation and notes taken by the teacher or exit slips. If a student struggles then a different approach needs to be provided so that the student is offered visual or movement experiences. Students who struggle to learn to read is mostly due to the lack of attention that causes the student to lose focus and miss the instruction.</i></p>
T4	<p>Again, going back two years, <u>we had weekly assessments</u>; I don't know if we're going to go back to that. Even in this this past hybrid year, I would continue to do <u>weekly assessments</u> that they weren't as, as rigid, graded, or structured or standardized as what</p>	<p><i>Assessments used to be provided from the district but they were rigid and structured to focus on the spelling</i></p>

	<p>the county used to have us do as far as <u>spelling patterns and phonics</u>. Yeah. We, I do weekly assessments to ensure that they have <u>mastered the spelling pattern</u> for the week.</p> <p>Writing wise, we have <u>rubrics, writing rubrics for writing pieces</u>. Now with writing, which is actually one of my favorite parts to teach with this with this grade level because it allows me to realize which kids have the knowledge of how to put writing together versus which ones are struggling with letters, alphabet, and handwriting. In my writing workshop, the struggling writers, <u>I will often allow them to dictate to me that they would like to know</u>. I'm sorry, in the reading workshop, I will often allow them to dictate to me what they are trying to write, and I will write the model for them because in the <u>reading workshop</u>, I just want to know that they are <u>comprehending the standard that that we're targeting</u>. Now, I misspoke earlier in the writing workshop. For this grade level, it is very tough, because a lot of these <u>kids cannot write independently so the writing part is a struggle</u>. So yes, assessing the reading standards is a lot easier for me because I can have them <u>dictate</u> to me what they want to tell me, or what they want to write in, I can write it for them as a <u>model</u>, and then they can produce it. And as far as them, the little ones getting all of the foundations of writing the capitalization, the finger spacing, the punctuation, that is really a struggle and how do I assess it? I use a <u>rubric</u> and lots of them. Lots of them [students] need a lot of work even when they <u>exit first grade with that writing part</u>.</p> <p>Foundational skills, coming into my classroom not having what they would need to progress in the first-grade curriculum. <u>They come to me not ready. Revisiting the alphabet, really revisiting letter names, sometimes, and very much, quite often letter sounds.</u></p>	<p><i>and phonics patterns for each week. In writing, rubrics are used and reading response may be written if the student is able or they may dictate their response to the teacher to show comprehension of the standard. When students struggle, the teacher provides a model for the student to copy for writing. Writing is very difficult to assess at the first grade level. Students struggle mostly because they come without foundational skills like letter id and sound id so they are not ready for the grade level content.</i></p>
T5	<p>I guess I would say that I'm, of course, <u>observing them</u>. And I'm <u>listening to them answer questions and ask questions</u> about what we're doing. I do like to take a <u>look at written work</u> to see if they're able to apply it on paper. Yeah, you are just, I don't know. It's kind of just an <u>innate thing, where you just get a feeling where they're doing well with something and they're ready to move on</u>.</p> <p>With using I-Ready, they did have a lot of resources that we could find on the computer, there, whether it be</p>	<p><i>Informal assessments are used like observing students as they ask questions and complete written work. Teacher gets the feeling when the students are ready to move on. I-Ready provided options for differentiated or tools to</i></p>

	<p>different <u>graphic organizers or webs</u>. And then some of them were even <u>differentiated</u>, so that we didn't have to reinvent the wheel. So, you could pick and <u>choose what was best for your students from those resources online</u>. I thought that was really helpful.</p> <p>Yes. So I think that it is really, really important to <u>teach kids not only decoding with those kids, but using other reading strategies that can help them that way, once they do become a better reader</u>, it's not all about losing your comprehension, because you're busy trying to decode or figure out what spelling pattern that is, um, so using those reading strategies, and using their <u>tools outside of the word on the paper</u>. A lot of times I'm like, well, if they're struggling to decode a word, <u>I'll put my hands over the word and I'll say what makes sense</u>. And then they tell me what makes sense. And I'm like, does that word match what is on the paper and a lot of sentences because it just, it makes sense. So, we're looking at <u>those beginning letters and things</u>. I think it's really important that they're, <u>sounding words out takes away from their fluency</u> I feel like.</p> <p>Yes, in some respects, yes. I think that decoding, <u>teaching decoding is really, really important but especially when you get to that third-grade level the texts become longer, the words become more difficult, and you can't always sound words out</u>. You've got to, you've got to depend on <u>other reading strategies</u>. <u>You've got to have other tools in your pocket</u>.</p> <p>I honestly think that they're <u>not exposed to books enough</u>. I overall, I would say that these are the kids that did not spend <u>time reading at home</u> before bed each night or it's not because their parents didn't raise them wrong. They just maybe didn't know. But I think that it has to start at a young age, and we've got to get <u>books in kid's hands at a young age</u>, even if they're looking at the books themselves and making up a story along with the pictures. That's a step in the right direction anyway.</p>	<p><i>scaffold the work.</i></p> <p><i>Decoding is emphasized too much at third grade level and students need additional strategies in their tool belts because decoding slows them down too much. Guided reading language was used in response to show teacher approach. Students struggle to learn to read the most due to the lack of exposure to books and time reading at home when they are young.</i></p>
T6	<p>With the <u>assessments and the assignments</u>, I give in the classroom.</p> <p>Um, so I sometimes I will have a <u>copy of whatever they're reading</u>, and it would be on their level, whatever I'm doing in small group, and then that's how I'll <u>track their progress</u>. Um, and then obviously, the grade level reading, but obviously, if they're low and I</p>	<p><i>Assessments and assignments are used that are teacher created. The teacher described a running record type of tracking and observations during</i></p>

	<p>have to give them an easier passage or something that's on their level, then they are obviously not the grade level whatever it is, I've used like <u>fluency packet</u>. I've used <u>fluency passages like that we've used in the past in the county because we weren't given one for the past two years</u>, I believe we didn't really, we weren't given the fluency passage, using that in the past. And sometimes even like, just books, like if it's like a decodable book, and that's what they're reading on level. Then I'll type the words in like a Word document. And as they're reading, like, <u>start jotting down my own things and like what skills they have, what they don't have, like a decoding survey, but it's in a book</u>.</p> <p>Um, basic reading skills like the <u>phonics lessons, like alphabet and sounds</u> okay. So, I usually use everything that we learned in <u>Readsters</u>. Okay, we were taught when I was a title one teacher, because that's what we've really learned. I mean, we don't really get as much training with that. And I feel like I'm a fortunate teacher, you know, among others that were able to get that that type of training, and I got it a few times, because, you know, we hired them a few times. That's what I usually know, I have a list. And I'll go down the list. And you know, as a second grade teacher, we're not given an assessment that has the alphabet and all that stuff. It's all just like us, whatever, <u>using kindergarten</u>.</p> <p><u>Lack of exposure</u>, even like, you know, as a toddler infant, to literature, I mean, sometimes, yes, some children will have <u>disabilities</u>, and those are things that are out of our control. But usually, if they're, if they're <u>exposed to literature</u>, you know, <u>parents reading</u> when they're younger, you know, watching, like <u>singing the alphabet and things like that</u>, they usually, it'll come to them a little easier, I believe. And of course, of course, <u>home life</u>, you know, if they, if they're struggling at home and difficult on, they come in with <u>trauma, and they can't focus</u>.</p>	<p><i>their writing which the teacher looks for decoding/encoding errors. The fluency packets are no longer provided to teachers. Easier passages are provided to the students when they struggle, as well as decodable text. Basic reading skills instructional practices provided from Readsters are used with student who struggle. Sometimes going back to other grade level content is required, like alphabet recognition. Some students actually have disabilities but the lack of exposure to literature, parents reading with students, singing the alphabet is a cause for students to struggle. Trauma from home life also causes difficulty in reading and paying attention.</i></p>
T7	<p>Yeah, <u>teacher created [informal assessment]</u>, it's not a very good system. I kind of go and ask them [students] <u>individually certain questions</u> and then if they get it, they get it. If they don't get it, they get a <u>sticky note with their name</u> on it and a revisit at a later time.</p>	<p><i>Teacher created informal assessments are used. Talking to the students, asking them questions, tracking with a sticky note so skills</i></p>

	<p>Um, yes and no. [Do you know where to go to find assessments?] If I do have issues, I go to you, like, you are available for me to use. But, if you're not here, yeah, you're only one person for an entire school. Go <u>back to the basics</u> of finding out what skills they don't have, and <u>what skills</u> and how we can get to where they need to be. <u>In small group, through small group, not really targeting, like, if they are unable to blend a four-letter word figure out why they can't do it.</u> Like what skill is it they're missing? Is it <u>long vowels</u>, is it the <u>beginning sound</u>? Is it the end sound? Is it the <u>vocabulary</u> that they're not understanding, how to just read out? What's not clicking?</p> <p><u>Not enough individual attention to them.</u> Yeah, because, yeah, absolutely <u>not giving enough support due to lack of time and resources.</u></p>	<p><i>can be revisited in small group or individually. When students struggle, go back to basics and target what the students really need. Phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary examples were mentioned. Students struggle because they do not receive enough individual attention and support due to the lack of time and resources.</i></p>
T8	<p>Yeah, so my assistant, and I, M---, we take data <u>nonstop</u> out, I'm <u>taking data while I teach</u>. And it usually just involves, you know, I'll put it on <u>sticky notes</u>. So, let's say when I'm teaching, I'm taking data output, you know, whatever it is, I'm looking for, at the top of a sticky note, it could be <u>vocabulary</u>, it could be <u>words</u>, it could be <u>letter recognition</u>. And then, you know, I typically just put the <u>kids' names</u> that I'm <u>looking for, for that component</u>. And I do <u>checks or minuses</u>. A more formal way that we take data is I have check sheet <u>checklists in all of the subject areas</u>. And then each of them has a different tab. So, like <u>letter ID, sound ID sight, word ID</u>, you know, whatever vocabulary, fluency and comprehension, whatever it is that I'm looking for and so, we will take data that way, sometimes we will <u>pull the kids one on one</u>. A lot of times M--- takes it while I'm doing instruction. You know, sometimes if there's really specific things we're looking for, like, say, for instance, with <u>phonemic awareness</u>, if I want to see if, you know, these three kids can rhyme, <u>I'll give her a sticky</u> and then when I'm doing my whole group phonemic awareness instruction, <u>I'll make sure I call on them so that she can take that data for me</u>. So, you know, it could be in <u>whole group</u>, it could be in <u>small group</u>, and then we constantly <u>pull kids to practice and reteach</u> and while we do that one on one, we're taking data with that also. Like I said, sometimes it's in nice, you know, neat, organized, check sheets, but a lot of times,</p>	<p><i>Taking data was identified as the means to tracking student progress. Informal procedures of using sticky notes and having the IA look for specific skills during the whole group lesson was mentioned. Depending on the needs of the students those skills are addressed during small group or individual instruction to practice or reteach skills. Checklists are used for letter/sound id and sight words too which helps with report card comments and parent communication. During whole group partner work or centers, students are heterogeneously grouped sometimes so they higher level students can provided</i></p>

<p>I just have <u>1000, sticky notes in my planner with the date, the whatever skill I was looking on, and the random kids name</u>, but it's what works for us and then I you know, I guess that's what I look at when I <u>make my groups</u>. And that's what I look at, you know, when I do <u>report cards</u>, and when I'm writing those very <u>detailed comments for parents</u>, but I like doing that because then I know exactly what those children need, don't need, what they have, what they don't have, you know, and can go from there to <u>drive my instruction</u> and for <u>communication with parents</u>.</p> <p>So, I always make sure that they have some opportunity to <u>stay with peers</u> who are above their grade level because I do believe that that is important. A lot of times in whole group, I will <u>partner them up</u>, when we do our, you know, little partners on the floor, I'll partner them up with a <u>higher kid</u>. But then when I'm really looking at their instruction and what they need, that is where we <u>target those skills in small group</u> and <u>in individualized instruction</u>. And we try and keep those <u>groups very low</u>, we typically have four differentiated groups, sometimes five, but within that lowest group, I always break it apart, at least in half, you know, if not more when they're doing group with work with me, so that <u>I'm always only working with one or two kids</u>. And then I switch to one or two other kids within that group. And then I switch to other kids within that group. Because just what I found is that it really, you know, that small group, like two, three kids, that individualized instruction, that <u>repetition over and over</u> and over again, typically, the kids who struggled, that is what they need, a lot of times they need the <u>time for you to make conversation</u> with them about things because they don't have those <u>background experiences</u>. They don't have that <u>oral language</u>. So, it has to be you know, you have to <u>make a connection</u> with them. I always try to <u>really talk to them</u>, if that makes sense. But those low kids, when I'm flashing letters, you know, and we're doing B. Oh, this is a letter B, your name starts with B. What else do you know, that starts with a banana? Oh, I had a banana for breakfast, what did you have for breakfast this morning. So, we just try and make you know those <u>connections</u> with them again, just something to ground them and that they can tie it to. But that is really what they need. They need more than just flashing letters in that moment. And so,</p>	<p><i>model language for struggling readers. During small group students are provided language experiences and skill based instruction with individual and multiple sessions with the teacher or IA. Making connections and relationships with those students is important too. Interventions are used as a guide sometimes but not done to fidelity due to time restraints and student needs. Students struggle to learn to read due to lack of exposure to their peers and language, and experiences from the get-go. Parents do not understand the importance of their impact for literacy development.</i></p>
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	<p>you know, we always try and give that to them. We will you know, do some sort of <u>interventions with those lower kids</u>. M--- typically either does it in the morning, or in the afternoon. Just a quick you know, 15 to 20 it's usually not too full fidelity, but it's you know, the nitty gritty, the components, whether it's <u>Foundations</u>, or you know, we've done very <u>Road to the Code</u> before we've done the <u>95%</u>. So, it's just, you know, whatever those kids need is what we try and give to them. And, you know, <u>constant repetition</u>. You know, I'll meet with my higher kids. You know, once a day, we will meet with those <u>lower kids two to four times a day</u>.</p> <p>I honestly think it's because they <u>lack exposure from the get go</u>, so from the very beginning, they lack exposure to <u>experiences</u>, you know, even when they're little, they lack exposure to <u>language</u>, they lack exposure with <u>conversation</u>, they lack exposure with <u>peers</u>, their age, and just as they grow, and as they develop, you know, they lack exposure to, you know, <u>educational things</u>, you know, <u>flashing letters</u>, and this is prior to school, you know, <u>working on letters</u>, <u>working on their name</u>, <u>going to the grocery store</u>, <u>you know, talking about fruits and vegetables and colors and letters and all of that stuff</u>.</p> <p>You know, obviously, there's some students who just, you know, <u>need the special education services</u>, or they need that <u>speech</u>, or they need, you know, something else. But I would say, you know, in the big scheme of things, that <u>lack of exposure and experiences in all aspects of reading and language has a significant impact</u>, and I don't think <u>parents understand it</u>. I really don't think they do. You know, I think they think that whatever they do with their kids at home is fine. And when they start school, that's when they're going to start learning and that's not the case.</p>	
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Appendix T: Analysis by Interview Question 4

Inner Setting: (1,2,3) Teacher Reflection	Probes:
If you feel comfortable, close your eyes for a minute. Now, you just take a few seconds to think about a literacy lesson you taught prior to Covid or after we returned to school with students in person. (Wait 20 seconds) What went well?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think (X) went well? • What were some challenges that were presented? • What do you think made the biggest impact on the success of this lesson?

RQ1. What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why?

When asked to describe a literacy lesson that went well, five teachers identified a lesson that involved the reading of a book, 1 teacher referenced a language skill, 1 teacher identified the standard, and one identified phonological awareness and phonics routines. Teachers identified various approaches to ensuring a literacy lesson is successful, student engagement to include asking questions, collaboration, and discussions, integration of skills and content, and allowing for multiple readings of the text were noted consistently. Anchor charts that included the focus of the lesson or standard for students to build and reference were noted by several teachers. One teacher emphasized the importance of using gradual release and making sure the students are provided various text options to practice the focus skill.

RQ2. Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction?

	Phonology	Sound-Symbol Associations	Syllables	Morphology	Syntax	Semantics
Exact Terms						
Similar Terms	7	7			1	2,3,4,5,6,8

RQ3. What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers?

Challenges noted were varying levels of students within the class, difficulty providing scaffolds or challenge opportunities, student behavior, teacher confidence in teaching the standard, student motivation, time required for preparing materials and lesson completion, and the availability of instructional assistants and student were mentioned as possible challenges.

Teacher #	Response	Researcher's Summary
T1	Well. Let's say well, I taught a language lesson I really liked. It was the fanboys to my third graders,	<i>The biggest impact on the success of</i>

	<p>which I was shocked with how well it went. They had the, you know, the <u>activating strategy</u> that got them, you know, who's fanboys? Then, the actual teaching of the lesson, you know, about what are fanboys. You know, then the grading which I am big on this, spread the word, I know they call <u>anchor charts</u> which students making their <u>anchor charts</u>, that's taking notes. I tell the kids all time, "Hey, let's make you a cheat sheet, your sloppy a copy of your own notes!" The <u>kids love it</u>. And then once I hung up the <u>graphic organizer</u>, that I made, they made their own in their notebook. Just the pride that I saw with them after and when I had xxxx come to my room in the afternoon and you say, "Oh, you guys got the fanboys too?" And then the <u>students start chiming in</u> with fanboys. You know? Yeah, <u>I know they got it; I know they own it</u>.</p> <p>[Laugh] <u>Behavior, behavior, behavior</u>, no! Oh, my! I see challenges during lessons. Yes, I'd say behavior and <u>classroom management</u>. <u>I have to own it, I have to know it, I have to put my own flair on it and then I think the kids are able to grasp from it</u>. It's just I'm going to do that, I'm going to meet my standards, but it's going to be sometimes I'll <u>tweak it to fit my needs of my students and my needs</u>. So, to me, being comfortable is a biggie, biggie, biggie to the lesson, being able to do the information and <u>produce it for the kids to understand</u>.</p>	<p><i>that lesson was the activating strategy, the explicitness of the instruction, student ownership through the anchor charts and graphic organizers, and then allowing that application and practice. Behavior and classroom management can be a challenge to the success of the lesson. Teacher confidence in standard, instructional routines, and being able to be flexible to meet the needs of the students are critical to the success of lessons.</i></p>
T2	<p>Yeah, I just feel like, you know, if the children are <u>interested in the topic</u>, or interested in the book, I'm using lots of, you know, you just using your <u>voice as you're reading the book</u>, and <u>lots of expression</u> from the teacher, the <u>kids being more involved</u> in the book. So, you know, I know, we've done the Hungry Caterpillar, where the caterpillar, you know, actually is crawling through, you know, and taking turns and being able to do that. The kids who, you know, when you have the <u>children who are in charge of the character</u>, you know, when every time a character's name is said, they hold up, you know, the character sign or, you know, all of them are involved in the <u>vocabulary part</u>. So, I would say just, you know, being able to <u>involve the children in the book</u>.</p>	<p><i>Student engagement is critical for a lesson to be successful.</i></p>

T3	<p>Okay, I got one. So, I am thinking of a story that we did “Chico the Brave” and there was this story we would discuss; we would have <u>little mini lessons</u>. Um, I would have little mini talks like not long, because I didn't want to disrupt the story, we usually <u>listen to the story by itself</u>. And then like, I'll come back to that story the next day. And then we'll go through and come and talk about <u>what happened in this part</u> and in that part. So, like, I already had my <u>own anchor chart ready</u>, because I made it before I did my lesson and put the <u>standard on the top of what their goal</u> was, and what they would have to have to know or give me while we were making our anchor chart together. So, um, this story is, um, it was good that because the kids were involved, like they were <u>motivated and wanted to do it because of some of the questions I was asking</u>. I felt like it [the questions] was pulling the kids and because he's from Peru, and they <u>get so excited</u>, well this group did. Whenever I, whenever I mentioned a place in a story or somewhere I always go to my <u>globe and I actually show them where it is</u>. Just to say okay, this is Peru, this is what it looks like there. These are the animals that live there and so they were all very <u>motivated and involved and interested</u>. So not only did we complete our anchor chart and like, learn our skills of whatever it was, I think it was, um, identifying the setting and the characters in the story or something like that. And I always, when I do my anchor charts, I always <u>prepare ahead of time</u>. So that way I have like things to get them involved. So, I like to <u>print out pictures</u> from the story. And I'll give them to the <u>kids to put in the right place on the anchor chart</u>. So, I thought that lesson just went really well, because it was very well rounded. Because not only were we doing <u>reading</u> and I was doing some <u>writing</u>, and we were <u>doing it together on the anchor chart</u>. I also included some <u>social studies</u> and <u>geography</u> in there. The challenge is definitely the <u>time it takes to prepare the materials</u>. I just have more ideas come and I want to <u>add stuff because I always want to try to give them as much, teach them as much as I can, in the little bit of time that we have</u>. So, the challenge is... How am I, I'm asking myself, how am I going to get these <u>kids motivated</u>? So that they are interested in the topic or whatever we're learning?</p>	<p><i>The teacher mentioned the lesson was successful because there were multiple readings, the anchor chart provided the focus, it was very student centered, there was some discussion and interactions, asking good questions that made them more motivated, and they could make connections to build that background knowledge.</i></p>
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T4	<p>Again, I guess we'll go to the <u>county reading lessons</u>. I think it's in the courage, no, <u>teamwork unit</u>, we do Little Red Hen, as well as Little Red Hen makes a pizza. And I love when we get to this unit because Little Red Hen really allows me to <u>hit the standards of describing characters using key details</u>. It also allows me to do <u>sequencing of events using key details</u>. And when we bring in the Little Red Hen makes a pizza, then we can <u>compare and contrast</u>, the differences between texts. Some of the strategies that I really love to use, and I use this in all areas, but it really lends itself well to <u>reading workshop</u> are a couple <u>SIOP activities</u>. When you have <u>characters in a story, each of the four guys will use a character and they'll come together and put the pieces together</u>. So, we're talking about characters using key details, we're talking about sequencing events and then after we do the <u>second read aloud of the hen making a pizza</u>, we get to <u>compare and contrast the two texts</u>. Well, the <u>differing ability levels</u> across my, my students, of course is, first and foremost, whenever I'm whenever I'm planning these lessons, because some of these guys, if we're talking about this lesson, in particular, if they each have a piece of pizza, one of them is going to be able to write a complete sentence, one of them may just be able to draw a quick stick figure in, that's going to be okay that we're going to, we're going to bring all that together.</p>	<p><i>So, it sounds to me like a big piece of that is that, you know, what made it successful is that you were able to kind of integrate across the standards and build upon them, to be able to get the kids to collaborate, and apply immediately what that skill is you're trying to get them to do. Challenge is the varying ability levels of the students with reading and writing.</i></p>
T5	<p>I'm going to go ahead and go back to text features because that's in my head. Okay. So, for that type of lesson with text features, it went, it goes well, because that lends itself really well to being able to <u>model</u> for the kids. I believe in the approach. <u>I do, we do, you do</u>. And I think that looking at a book with text features, you can pick any kind of <u>text that might excite the kids</u>, a lot they and a lot of times when it comes to nonfiction texts, they like gross stuff, so spiders or snakes, or something. And then you give them an opportunity to <u>explore nonfiction texts</u> on their own and might just put a basket of nonfiction texts at their table. And the <u>kids can talk about the text features</u> that they're seeing and how it was used, how the author used it, why the author by picked that text feature. And then we would go back, and we will <u>work independently</u>, and maybe I would give them I</p>	<p><i>Modeling for the students, making sure that kids have that visible reference from the anchor chart, and really making sure that they're engaged and they're excited in the lesson. Challenge is scaffolding for the students who struggle and address the students' that need</i></p>

	<p>would give <u>an article to them where they had to label the text</u>. And then also <u>anchor charts</u> are a huge part of that lesson as well. And making sure those are posted so that they can refer back if they forget something.</p> <p>Knowing when to <u>scaffold and to differentiate your instruction</u>. I feel like we tend to always lean toward those same kids that we know are super low, because we know that they're going to need help but <u>scaffolding for a challenge</u> for the higher-level kids, I feel like we tend to lean more toward trying to get the kids that are not keeping up rather than <u>challenging those ones that are already understanding the content</u>.</p>	<p><i>to be provided a challenge.</i></p>
T6	<p><u>Participation</u>, like if you can usually tell by participation and watching the kids as they're sitting on the carpet. Um, I'm trying to think of a lesson. I mean, there was a specific lesson like that I taught with the book the Recess Queen, but there were so many because we use <u>Recess Queen all year long</u>. But the kids actually loved that book. And I remember when I started teaching lessons with that book after the XXX training. The kids are so when to it, like using their, their <u>V's for vocabulary</u>, and, and writing about it because like, they would usually <u>write in their journals</u>. And like I said, it's participating, and like, you know, listening for the vocabulary and some of the vocabulary words they, they weren't sure of, or they didn't recognize and, and after that, like, I heard kids <u>using some of those vocabulary words</u>. So, I know I just learned what that training was pretty efficient, and the kids enjoyed it.</p>	<p><i>The student engagement and the student's application of what was taught since it was relevant and builds upon each other so they can make connections.</i></p>
T7	<p>So, I put in <u>a lot of time to my phonics</u> after taking XXX's class that I realized just how important it was prior to the class. I didn't know anything about literacy, or phonics, anything like that. I just I was like, oh, yeah, there's just sounds and that's all that there is. There are 26 sounds in the alphabet, because there's 26 letters. But right after I left her class, I really started <u>focusing on the different parts of phonics and phonological awareness</u>. Um, so I was, I'm really proud of my <u>routine that I have, that I've created</u>. It's taken. Oh, this doesn't work. Oh, this does work. Oh, this doesn't work. Like oh, we're</p>	<p><i>Student participation makes the biggest impact on the success of the lesson. The teacher understanding of literacy components and how to make them flexible to the needs of the students, as well</i></p>

	going to <u>change this but I'm really proud of the routine that I have created for the kids.</u>	<i>as being willing to adjust.</i>
T8	<p>Okay, so one of my favorite lessons, and it's probably one of my favorite lessons, because it always goes well, is when we read a story called, or we used to read a story called Tortillas and Lullabies. And it was a story where it's <u>written in English and Spanish</u>. And I used to have one of the other <u>one of my colleagues who can speak Spanish come in and read it in Spanish, and also read it in English</u>. We talk about the <u>vocabulary words</u>, we talk about the <u>sequence of events and the stories</u> with that, we also talked about <u>recipes, and we would make cheese tortillas</u>. And it just, it really went well, it worked so well, and the kids were so successful with it, I feel because it brought in so many components, that <u>real hands on</u> like making cheese tortillas and <u>writing the recipe</u> and actually making it and then as they're eating it, <u>comparing it to the story</u>, it just really like almost <u>brought it to real life for the kids</u>. It <u>wasn't just me</u> up there reading the story, you know, which typically happens. And they, they wanted to write about it, they wanted to go <u>home and make</u>, you know, share the recipe, and make these two cheese tortillas. And, you know, they were using the <u>vocabulary words</u>. And I just feel like the more when you when you bring a lesson to children, the more hands on it can be with them. And the more <u>real-life experiences</u> you can give them with it they connect better with it. So, one of the challenges, and it's always a challenge is <u>time</u>. I also feel that sometimes one of the other challenges is <u>how other schedules impact ours</u>. So, I would say <u>time and resources</u> [instructional assistant being pulled or students going to other services] are probably two of the biggest challenges.</p>	<p><i>The integration of content and skills and then relevance and really having student a student-centered focus. Time and how schedules are impacted if instructional assistant is pulled.</i></p>

Appendix U: Analysis by Interview Question 5

Characteristics of Teachers: (3,4) Beliefs about Support & Personal Strengths	Probes:
As a primary grade teacher, you must feel a strong responsibility to teach your students. In what ways do you feel supported as a literacy teacher?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do you not feel supported? • We all have personal strengths as teachers, can you talk to me about what makes you an effective reading teacher? • Where do you struggle, and what kinds of support do you wish you had to help you with those struggles around literacy instruction? • What components of reading are you most confident in teaching?

RQ3. What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers?

Challenges identified by the teachers fall into several categories. First, time is identified by most teachers as a challenge. The amount of time required for planning was connected to the challenges identified about the provided curriculum. There are sufficient materials available but the organization, accessibility, and need for preparation were all contributions to the literacy curriculum being a challenge. Most teachers identified the new reading program to be a good resource, especially the explicit directions in the teacher's guide but some teachers identified the lack of and variety of literature offered through the program as a challenge.

RQ4. How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?

All teachers identified one or more of the basic reading skills, phonemic awareness, phonics, or fluency, as being areas, they feel the most confident in teaching. However, parental support, individual assessments, inference skills, fluency, and technology were specifically identified as areas of struggle points when asked specifically by teachers. Therefore, most of the teachers report confidence in 3 of the 6 related components identified within Structured Literacy.

Teacher #	Response	Researcher's Summary
T1	Oh, then there is a lot in place here, you know, in the county, here, you know, because again, we got all the <u>Schoology</u> resource. We have people like you, teachers that that come in and really are very <u>supportive</u> . You know, especially if we did it, like I said, you get a teacher and are comfortable. So, if we're not comfortable, you know, not having someone come in that says, "you got to do it this way and this is done", but <u>making you feel</u>	<i>Teacher identifies the supports of curricular resources and additional support staff but emphasizes the need to feel comfortable with the support staff and the</i>

	<p>comfortable, making you feel comfortable with the <u>information</u>. And also, the <u>library and the resources that we have available, the hands-on tangible resource</u>, we can just pull when you need. Um, I I'm not leaning towards a more formal [curriculum] but I, I do love, I-Ready. I love the fact that they have some text that is really rich, because I like that text and the <u>text supports multicultural</u>.</p> <p>No. So, it's there, it's just like I said, <u>that flow when I'm having a clearer and more concise and organized</u>.</p> <p>I think my approach, that <u>holistic approach</u>, and that I want to incorporate it all in there. You know, I think about those, those <u>higher order with Learning Focused</u>. I'm willing to try and put in, you know, if it doesn't work and <u>try something else</u> with it. So, I think that makes me more effective as a literacy teacher, because I'm <u>going to find what fits with a child or student needs</u>, not a cookie cutter, you know, we are all doing this now.</p> <p>Let's say, I would say, the <u>phonics</u> would be one. But I have to say, in the last year after last year, I would also say that <u>fluency</u>.</p>	<p><i>organization of the curricular resources. Teachers need to have materials provided that are clear and concise and easy to follow the progression of skills. I-Ready materials provide opportunities for multicultural texts in a sequence that supports other content areas. Holistic approach is used to incorporate higher order thinking and willingness to find the best approach for students. Most confident teaching phonics and fluency.</i></p>
T2	<p>Well, here at St. Leonard, I just I really feel like we are given a <u>lot of tools to utilize</u>. Anyone that says they don't have what they need, I just, I would be very surprised, because I mean, we just got those new books from last year.</p> <p>Well, I like to think that with each student as they come in, that <u>we figure out where they are with their literacy skills</u>. And we try to, you know, <u>meet them there and try to teach them from that point and hope that they get at least a year growth</u>, if not more.</p> <p>I feel pretty confident most of the time. I mean, it's, you know, it can be a real struggle with, you know, <u>some of the children that are of lower ability</u>, just trying to get the <u>parent support</u>, I think is the hardest part, you know, trying to get them on board. And, you know, we just like this summer, <u>they did not utilize Lexia</u>. And, I mean, they didn't even do that because like I said, I was checking it.</p> <p>And of course, you know, it would always be nice, if, you know, <u>XXX</u> was in here more so that she</p>	<p><i>Lots of tools provided as support, teacher did not identify any way of not feeling supported but does mention the IA not being available at certain times of the day anymore. The approach described is to meet the kids where they are at and make at least a year's growth and holding students accountable with completion of work. Teacher is confident in all areas of literacy instruction</i></p>

	<p>could, you know, like, back when she was with me, during developmental centers, you know, one of us was constantly in the hallway, doing, you know, <u>working with the lower students</u>, and also the speech kids, you know, doing <u>extra activities</u> with the speech kids to help them. You're teaching them a lot by <u>holding them accountable</u> because hopefully, it'll carry through the rest of the years.</p>	<p><i>but identifies parent support from lower ability students as a challenge.</i></p>
T3	<p>Oh, well, I have <u>my team</u>. Like, luckily, we get along great for us, because we don't have to do it all by ourselves. And we have <u>you, who helps us with anything reading related</u>. We're given the <u>materials like what we're expected to do in advance</u>, which is nice and with the <u>outline and dates</u> and everything. [pause] The library, like, if I need certain books, it's, I have that.</p> <p>I would say, <u>not too many though [PLC]</u>. It's nice to have the extra time. But when you have it too much, it hurts because you <u>have to plan for somebody else</u> to do something. I think too much PLC is not good, because you don't know if your kids are getting what you want them to get.</p> <p>I think my biggest strength. I mean, I think I'm pretty <u>creative</u>. Um, I like because I as a student was definitely, I needed the <u>visual</u>, I needed to <u>hear things more than one time</u>. So, I kind of naturally do that with my kids. And I don't even realize I'm doing it. I think a lot of things like I <u>scaffold</u> a lot of things, and I <u>accommodate</u> a lot of things. And I don't, I don't know any other way.</p> <p>I love to teach the <u>phonics</u>. I don't know why. But I do. I don't, I don't know why I like that [phonics]. But that's my favorite part. I don't know why.</p> <p>Um struggle, um. I can't say <u>time enough</u>. But I think, hmmm, it is time though. Because it's the <u>time to pretest and posttest and pull each kid independently</u>.</p> <p>Those, yeah, those are probably the most time consuming like it takes away from the whole teaching learning process more than anything, those <u>individual assessments that are important</u>. It's [individual assessments] not like a spelling test where you can just do everyone at once. Which that information is valuable, too.</p>	<p><i>Supports noted are team, literacy coach, curricular resources in advance, and time to collaborate during PLC. Too much time out of the class for meetings is not good though since sub plans are required and there is not a guarantee the students are being provided what they need. Teacher strength is creativity to provide scaffolds and accommodations automatically. Individual assessments require a lot of time but do provide good information. Phonics is the area most confident.</i></p>

T4	<p>The <u>resources that that the county supplies me</u>, thumbs up a plus. In the school level, I think well, <u>you're one of the examples</u> I think I've had <u>human resources available</u> to me when needed. I'm trying to think back a couple of years ago, if I had <u>co teachers and I had specialized instructors</u> at the school level that support me when needed. I have literacy coaches; I have the resources that I need. <u>My team</u>, which is the best team in the county supports each other and we share and create items together as a team. I'm well-armed and <u>I couldn't ask for anything more</u> as far as what I have at my disposal.</p> <p>My grasp and understanding of the foundational skills from a phonics-based point of view, my knowledge of phonics, phonemic awareness, phonological awareness. I understand what it is that we're trying to accomplish. Putting these sounds together and pulling them apart. I can convey that to the little ones. I have the persona, of <u>getting down on these little kid's levels</u>, if you come into my room, you'll often find me on the floor with these kids working with them at their level. I have a great grasp of, well, I also have <u>data to support this, but it also anecdotally</u> I'm very good at meeting each one of these kids where they are <u>both using data and my own anecdotal personal experience</u> with as well as my knowledge of the foundational skills.</p> <p>Yes, out of everything that we're talking about here in this literacy block. If I had any recommendations, it would be either to <u>redo or have additional training with executing the writing workshop part of our literacy block with this age group.</u></p>	<p><i>Materials and human support provided are great and could not ask for anything else. Strength is understanding the foundational literacy skills and being able to reach the students at their level. Additional training on writer's workshop would be helpful.</i></p>
T5	<p>I love the opportunity for the <u>content PLCs</u>. And last year, it was virtual. But I think that that worked out fine because we were still able to break up into smaller groups and share what's working and what's not. One of the things that I feel like is really, really important with literacy instruction is the <u>support of your team</u> and being able to sit down and collaborate at a specific time.</p> <p>I mean, last year, I did <u>miss the team support</u>. While everyone on our team got along well, we <u>didn't ever plan together</u>, we didn't ever, like bounce ideas off of each other like in a formal setting. We might in</p>	<p><i>Grade level content PLCs are helpful. Team support is critical but was not available last year. Classroom management and setting expectations is a strength. Would like the opportunity to support the district with</i></p>

	<p>the hallway ask a question, but I really missed out on that. So, I honestly, I feel like that's going to be hit or miss, depending on the personalities of your teammates, and that kind of thing.</p> <p>I, first and foremost, you've got to have your <u>classroom management</u> and you have to make sure you're <u>setting the expectations academically and behaviorally</u> so that they can so that they can receive the information because without your classroom management, they're not going to learn anything as much as you want them to, you're just not going to be able to, to learn. So, I think that that's a strength that I have.</p> <p>I would definitely like to do more workshops or things, just <u>with Calvert County's curriculum and their expectations with the different types of assessments</u>. Because that was definitely something that I was lacking last year, and I feel like I'm lacking it right now because I haven't had a chance yet.</p> <p>Yes, yes. I'm sorry and being <u>able to observe another teacher</u> within, whether it's the same building or the same county, I think that that would be really beneficial.</p> <p>[pause] I don't really feel like there's one that I feel more confident over than another. I would say the hardest thing to try to teach kids is to <u>inference</u> because they're very literal at this age. And if the author wasn't straight to the point, then they're not going to be able to, I don't know, think outside that box.</p>	<p><i>curriculum and assessments and observe other teachers. Confident in teaching all areas of literacy but identified inference as a difficult skill for students.</i></p>
T6	<p>Um, I don't think I'm saying it because I'm talking to you, but like, <u>you are one of the people that I feel supported by</u>, because if I need your support, or I needed to have a question or need help with, like, I feel comfortable going to you and asking you for help. Same with like, XXX, like, <u>I feel comfortable going to her and asking her questions</u>. And when I started teaching second grade, I would usually go to XXX and <u>ask her questions</u> and she, you know, she was very <u>helpful</u>.</p> <p>From the district, yes, yes because <u>the type of curriculum that we're given and all the extra work, we have to do the gaps and the holes, it's a lot of work</u>. So, they're expecting us to <u>teach and plan and</u></p>	<p><i>Knows who to ask questions to when needed, feels comfortable asking colleagues. Curriculum requires the teacher to complete extra work because there are gaps and holes that require the teachers to add to which is time consuming. Strength is students</i></p>

	<p>add to their curriculum when we don't have the time for that.</p> <p>I think the fact that I'm, I'm <u>accepting of mistakes</u>. And when kids make mistakes, <u>they feel safe making the mistakes</u>, and I'll tell them, you know, that's why I'm here, I am here to teach you. So, you it is <u>okay for you to make a mistake because that's how I find out what you need help with</u>. And I think just making them feel comfortable and having the, you know, the <u>training and knowledge</u> that I do have.</p> <p>I think the <u>biggest struggle is most likely fluency</u>. Okay. Um, I just, I feel like I haven't had enough training on fluency as much. Yeah, I guess <u>strategies in my tool belt to help kids with fluency</u>. Yeah, <u>phonemic awareness and phonics</u> like I feel comfortable with that.</p>	<p><i>know they can make mistakes and teacher makes them feel safe. Fluency is an area for additional support since there has not been much training on this. Phonemic awareness and phonics are the components most comfortable teaching.</i></p>
T7	<p><u>Extra PDs</u>. Oh, like that if you're struggling, though, <u>someone will come in and help you</u>. There are <u>classes</u> so you can learn more, that are encouraged. Um, there's <u>help when available</u>. There are <u>documents that you can read</u>.</p> <p>The <u>documents are really long to read</u>. They're really kind of <u>hard to follow</u>. It would really help if there was an example of like, what should be done not on paper example but like <u>in real-life classrooms</u>, someone videotaping of like, this is what works in my classroom. And not only that, but like, this is what I do. And this is what I do. And this is what I do. Because what they have for the county doesn't always fit each teacher, each teacher style. And in order for it to be an effective lesson, <u>you can't just be reading off of the scripts, you can't just be you have to be engaging</u>, you have to allow the kids to explore sounds.</p> <p>My lessons are usually <u>very engaging</u>, and I take that upon myself to because I can't sit and focus for 40 minutes while someone talks to me. It just doesn't, it doesn't work, it doesn't happen. So, one of my strengths is that <u>I make things engaging</u>, and I <u>tailor it to what the kids want</u>. I tailor it to something that feels like a <u>game, but it's learning</u>. <u>More classes</u>, like XXX's, more classes like that because I am still new and like I didn't go to a college that, my college taught whole word or</p>	<p><i>Extra pd through classes and people coming in to help as needed. The curricular documents are long and hard to follow. Teacher suggested providing real classroom examples, and then allowing teachers to be able to kind of sift through and choose the ones that fit best for them and their students. Strength identified as engaging lessons that are tailored to the student needs in a fun way.</i></p>

	whole language. So, I phonics was like, not even something that I was introduced to, and <u>I feel like there's always room for improvement.</u>	
T8	<p>So, I feel supported in multiple ways. I feel like we do have a <u>lot of resources available</u>. You know, so and we have that whole resource closet with the leveled library, and you know, the media center so I do feel we have a ton of resources at our disposal. I also feel you know whether it's with <u>administration or the dean or you know, you the literacy coach</u>, I always feel like If there's ever something I need or a question that I have, I always feel like there's someone I can go to. You know, and I'm not scared to do that, because <u>I don't ever feel judged</u>. Yeah, I have no problem owning that I missed that from a meeting. And, you know, I need to ask about it is what it is. I do also feel very <u>supported with my team</u>, I feel like <u>we work really well together</u>. And then it may sound silly, but one of the biggest ways I feel supported is that, you know, most days, <u>my kids love to be in school, and they love to learn and that to be to me is one of the biggest supports</u>, you know, that I have, because they're there and they're loving it, and they want to learn and they want to do your best, their best and so that drives me to do my best also.</p> <p>Um, again, I think it goes back to those two challenges. You know, <u>sometimes there's not enough time</u>. You know, I have felt at sometimes, you know, our <u>schedule</u> isn't really supportive of kindergarten, you know, and <u>their needs as little learners</u>. And then also just with, you know, with resources, especially with <u>XXX sometimes being pulled so much</u>. But I also know how effectively, you know, she and I work together for those kids. Yeah. And, and how, you know, how much <u>I use her to support me and support those children</u>. No, no, it's hard to teach 20 you know, kids and <u>differentiate, you know, four or five different levels every day</u>, you know, and what's really <u>frustrating is when you plan for that</u>, and like I said, I spend a <u>significant amount of time planning</u>, though, when I spent all these hours planning, you know, and then she's taken, it's like, I have to replan, because none of that is going to work without her in there. So</p>	<p><i>Many resources are available in the school- materials and human support. Teacher feels safe asking questions when needed without being judged. Team is critical to identifying specific ways to support students and students are a support since they are excited to learn. Time and considering the needs of kindergarten students is a challenge when IA is pulled, or schedules are changed. Teacher identified strength is differentiation and planning four to five different levels each day. One area to improve upon is technology integration. Phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency are areas most comfortable teaching.</i></p>

	<p>that, you know, is one thing where I sometimes it was a challenge.</p> <p>So, I feel like I'm really good at <u>dissecting the kids</u> and their <u>academic needs</u>. Um, you know, I feel like because we do it all the time with <u>assessing and reassessing</u> and, you know, taking notes and seeing where the kids are, I feel like I'm really strong at that <u>differentiation piece</u> of it. Just because of how much time and effort you know, I put into it, because I feel that it's so beneficial for those kids. <u>There's no sense in teaching them if you're not teaching them what they need</u>, that's kind of how I look at it.</p> <p>So, I would say one area that I feel like probably is my weakest is definitely <u>technology</u>. And it's not that I don't want to get better at technology. I just feel like I <u>never have enough time to dive</u> into it. I feel like I kind of stick my feet in and, you know, I get what I need to kind of get through but I've never, you know, had the time to really dive in and go full force and learn, you know what I need to learn about it, because I feel like, you know, <u>I could be more effective technologically if I knew more about it</u>.</p> <p>Um, I would probably have to say <u>phonemic awareness</u>, and <u>phonics and fluency</u>.</p>	
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Appendix V: Analysis by Interview Question 6

Involving Teachers in Literacy Improvement Process: (2,4) Teacher Perceptions of Structured Literacy Framework	Probes:
<p>Can you tell me what you know about Structured Literacy?</p> <p>If teacher says, I am not sure or replies minimal, then present visual immediately.</p> <p>If teacher replies with specific details of all components, then explain I have a visual to share with the essential elements for reference.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here are the six components of Structured Literacy. Which of these components do you think are most important while teaching students to read? Can you explain why? • Which of these components are you most comfortable teaching? Why do you say that? • Do you think the Structured Literacy components are reflected in our curriculum? Tell me more about why you say that. • Is there one component you think is more important for your struggling readers?

RQ2. Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction?

	Phonology	Sound-Symbol Associations	Syllables	Morphology	Syntax	Semantics
Exact Terms	1,2,6	1,2	1,2,3,5	1,5		
Similar Terms	3,5,7,8	3,4,5,6,7,8	4,6,7,8			

RQ4. How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?

The teachers were not able to speak of SL prior to seeing a visual or further explanation with the visual. Teachers connected the 5 areas of reading to the SL components while discussing their specific instructional practices. Most teachers were willing to admit they were not familiar with SL as a whole and asked about specific components like phonology, sound symbol associations, syllables, and morphology. None of the terms syntax and semantics were identified by teachers but one did relate the term syntax to comprehension. All but 1 teacher identified these components in a hierarchical context to state some components were not addressed in their specific grade.

Teacher #	Response	Researcher's Summary
T1	<p><u>Hm, I don't know. No.</u></p> <p>I'd say all of them play a very important part if I had to but most important for <u>third grade</u> would be <u>syllables</u>. <u>Phonology</u> but after last year, I have to say <u>morphology</u> too.</p> <p>Yes, because we definitely phonology, we do a lot with it now. You know, especially this is one reason we <u>introduced all the sound cards</u> and paid so much money for and going through all that. <u>Sound symbol association</u>, that is definitely reflected not just in the early grades, which we know is new, but we have to do a lot of it, you know, especially when we do are <u>flex</u> and <u>interventions</u> so that's built in. We know we do a lot of <u>sound work</u>, we will go back to, which that's what I liked, you know, we go back to, you know a way of showing you the <u>duck lips and clapping</u>. We do a lot of that even still in third grade.</p> <p>It <u>depends on where they're struggling</u>. But I will say that <u>phonology and sound symbol association and syllables</u>.</p>	<p><i>Unable to speak about SL prior to visual. Phonology and morphology are critical to grade level. Confident in phonology and sound-symbol associations. Struggling readers need phonology, sound symbol associations, and syllables to learn to read. The continuous use of specific routines and structures within the curriculum do relate to SL components.</i></p>
T2	<p><u>So, define structured literacy.</u></p> <p><u>Sound symbol, phono, phonology, phonology, and syllables</u>, we do syllable work with our students as well. And the morphology, <u>what is the definition of morphology?</u></p> <p>And then we also do <u>syllable work</u>, like, you know, we'll tell the kids which you know, no one ever told me, but, you know, we tell them, you know, there's a <u>vowel in every syllable</u>, and some, you know, sometimes it's "y" pretending to be that. I mean, when they're <u>writing</u>, they'll say, well, I know there has to be a vowel in this because it's a syllable.</p> <p>Well, I think they have to <u>learn the sounds</u> and the <u>identification of the letters</u> before they can move on to anything else. <u>Rhyming</u>, I mean, you know, the sounds and rhyming is really hard for kindergarteners who have not, especially if they haven't been exposed to that.</p>	<p><i>Unable to speak to SL prior to visual and asks for the definition. Sound symbol and phonology were identified as critical to grade level. (unable to pronounce the word phonology) Struggling readers need phonology and sound symbol associations. These components are in the curriculum, but teacher refers to these skills in a hierarchical manner.</i></p>

	<p>Um, I would say, well, it's a tossup between the <u>phonology and the sound symbol association</u>.</p> <p><u>Yes. Yes. Yes, I do. Well, I just feel like they build upon each other, and I think it's good for even a kindergarten teacher, even if I'm not teaching some of the other evidence-based elements that, it's still good for me to know where we're headed.</u> And, and some, you know, some higher skills do come up in the kindergarten classroom, because, you know, you will, you know, you'll <u>have kids that will be ready for higher skills.</u></p>	
T3	<p>Oh, my, um. <u>I'm assuming you mean, like, the parts. Like, there's phonemic awareness, like what it is, is that what you mean, like what each part is?</u></p> <p><u>Syllables</u>, probably because, well, it kind of goes hand in hand though with the <u>phonics</u>, um, or the <u>phonemic awareness. They all go together!</u> I picked syllables because it reminds me of closed syllables and open syllables. And if you can get those, you can sound out words, big words, eventually, if these kids at this level can get what a closed syllable is, or an open syllable, they're able to read the words. And <u>I never realized how important that was, until I took a class on it or the people that used to come a long time ago, um, gosh, there was a man and a woman I learned from them. Yeah, I got training from them on that and that takes me back to my phonics</u> with my, what I like to teach, because it's, <u>I guess it's simple</u>, but it's really like the foundation where you should start, like, at the with that, well, <u>phonemic awareness would be first, but I'm with the whole reading, reading words. And that's where I feel like my kids struggle.</u></p> <p>By the end of the year, by the end of first grade. Um, I think it'll be easier for them because I mean, by third grade, they're expected to read all the words. But it doesn't seem like many are getting there. Before that [Covid], but always start with <u>phonemic</u></p>	<p><i>Asked if SL meant the parts prior to showing the visual. All components go together but chose syllables as critical to students in grade level for word reading because they do not know all of their sounds and mix up the short vowels. Teacher is most confident teaching phonics.</i></p>

	<p>awareness, because you've got to like, if they don't get it, you got to <u>keep teaching</u> it, <u>targeting that skill</u> with them until they get it so that they can move on to the next thing. So, phonology, the study of sounds? Yeah, I do. And most of the kids before COVID would get to that. I mean, they, they <u>knew all their sounds</u>. Like I said before when they start reading, given words, <u>mixing up their short vowels</u>.</p>	
T4	<p><u>I'm not quite certain I even know that term.</u> We're looking at Structured Literacy? Number two. Number three. Not quite certain what phonology is? Well, one. If you're asking me one, two, and three are the most important, I guess, <u>morphology</u> maybe as they get a little bit older. Okay. <u>Syntax</u>, again, we're going more into the <u>comprehension</u>, I guess. But I would say that those are <u>pretty much in order</u>. Is that what you're asking me? Oh, well, most comfortable would be number two. Yeah, my <u>knowledge of sound symbol associations</u> as well as the <u>resources</u> I have available to get in the students' hands. I would say yes, except for number four. I don't think we get much into <u>morphology</u> and maybe a little bit when we're adding inflectional endings, but I don't do much morphology. I think that would probably get it get into <u>second or third grade</u>. Maybe if, I'm thinking of morphology the same way that you're thinking of it. The phonology and the sound symbol association, one and two. I'm getting the evidence-based teaching principles of cumulative and systematic and explicit teaching. Can you tell me a little bit of what you mean by <u>diagnostic teaching principle</u>? Okay, and what are you asking me, if this equation is doable? Yeah, <u>to your point to, something that you just said, how do we assess it?</u> This</p>	<p><i>States they do not know the term SL. When shown the visual, asks if the visual is SL and identifies phonology as an unfamiliar term. Number 1, 2 and 3 are identified as most important components. Number 3 is more important as they get older. Number 2 is the component the teacher is most confident teaching because of knowledge and resources available. Components are included in the curriculum, except number 4. Teacher identified having knowledge of what it is and why it's important. It's just now getting into the how to assess the components of SL.</i></p>

	<p>sometimes, is sometimes where I struggle? Okay, I would definitely encourage any more <u>additional training on how are we going to assess this?</u></p> <p>It is and I know, a lot of what I do, assessing wise, has been or is informal and anecdotal and I know that we're more into the <u>data driven environment</u> now. So yeah, I would like more. Yeah, more training on how to assess. Yes, because I know my students, but sometimes I do <u>struggle relaying what I know about my students to somebody else.</u></p>	
T5	<p><u>Um, with the terminology, I'm not familiar. I don't know.</u></p> <p>Um, I think that the goal I feel like is for students to be at like the <u>morphology level by third grade</u>, but a lot of times, they're not because they're still stuck on <u>sounding out words</u>. So, I think that the first three the <u>phono, phonology, whoa, sounds symbol associations, and syllables are important</u> before they're able to get to <u>morphology</u>. They've got to know their letter sounds, they've got to be able to apply it to words, not just. And that's another thing that I struggle with is with the BDS and the ADS, is they are, well, there is a component where they have to read a sentence, but some kids are able to look at the word and <u>decode the word</u>, but not necessarily apply it to a <u>full sentence or passage</u>.</p> <p>Um, I would say, phonology and syllables. Does sound symbol associations, does that mean using like the Macron?</p> <p>Then, I feel <u>most comfortable with the first three</u>.</p> <p>I would say, oh, I would say the <u>sound symbol associations is probably the most important</u>.</p> <p>I believe that the <u>spelling and morphology</u> that resources that are in Schoology meet this, but I would not necessarily say that, like the I-Ready curriculum meets those.</p>	<p><i>Identifies as not being familiar with the term SL. Identifies morphology as most important to grade level. Struggling readers need to have instruction in phonology, sound symbol associations, and syllables so they can decode. Teacher is most confident in teaching the first three. Once the teacher understood the meaning of sound symbol associations then this component was identified as most important. Spelling morphology resources are available in the curriculum but not I-Ready.</i></p>
T6	<p><u>Structured literacy? I don't think I've ever heard of structured literacy.</u></p>	<p><i>Teacher states not being familiar with SL. Phonology</i></p>

	<p>Unless I'm doing it and I don't know that's what it's called.</p> <p>Um, I think it is <u>phonology</u>. Okay. Because it leads into everything else I mean, it's going help you, um, read <u>multiple syllable words</u>, one syllable words is going to help you with <u>morphology</u> because even though morphology obviously helps with reading and reading the those longer, more complicated words, there's still going to be some <u>phonics</u> in there, there's still going to be certain things that you need to use that you use from it. And as well as all the other things.</p> <p>Oh, yes. I mean, there's <u>certain things we don't do yet</u>. If you're not there yet. Um, but yeah, I think so. I think we're given enough. It's like, like, the curriculum is touching those things, but it's just not given enough.</p>	<p><i>is the most critical component. Curriculum does not provide enough coverage of these components. Teacher refers to these skills in a hierarchical manner.</i></p>
T7	<p><u>Not off the top of my head.</u></p> <p><u>I have heard of all of the words.</u> I have heard of all of the words on this. If you give me an example of them, I will know exactly what to do. But like the terminology is still something that I am <u>attempting to memorize</u> and learn. Right. Sound symbol, similar sounds, sound spelling. Yeah, that's syllables are the different syllables. Morphology?</p> <p>Um one, two and three. Okay, <u>one, two and three, specifically in that order</u>. I think that <u>four or five and six are important for understanding and comprehension</u>, which is the goal. But for learning to read, I would say one, two, and three.</p> <p>No, not all of them. They <u>don't explicitly state when to do syllables</u>. Yeah, we don't have a very good, strong curriculum for that at all, I would say.</p> <p>One. [phonology]</p>	<p><i>Unable to respond prior to looking at the visual. States hearing of all of the words on visual but will need examples to talk about the terms. Numbers 1,2,3 are most important to grade level students reading. Numbers 4,5,6 are more important for comprehension. The components are not all addressed in the curriculum. Most confident teaching phonology.</i></p>
T8	<p>Like the <u>structured literacy block</u>?</p> <p>I have not seen this picture, no.</p> <p>Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. I mean, I know what they are. I just have <u>never seen this graphic thing</u>.</p> <p>Um, I don't really know that one is more important than the other? I mean, I don't know, I would maybe say, you know, I don't</p>	<p><i>Asks if I meant the structured literacy block? States not having seen the visual but knows what the components are. Not one component is more important than another, but it is important to look for strengths and</i></p>

	<p>know, I don't really think one is more important than the other because <u>I think they all have their place</u>. The only time that I really think, you know, one may be more important than the other is, if there's an area that a child is struggling, you know, the kids really struggling with <u>syllables</u>. Now, again, they all kind of go together, it's a <u>domino effect</u>, you know, they all go together. But sometimes, you know, you'll see where a kid, you know, is strong in one, but is really weak in the other. And so, that's the only time where I'd really say, I think one is probably more important than the other.</p> <p>Maybe that <u>phonological one</u></p> <p>I would say probably <u>one, two and three</u>, just because I feel like they're a little more prevalent.</p> <p>Yes, I think two different degrees. But yes, I think they're all reflected.</p>	<p><i>weaknesses with each child.</i></p> <p><i>Phonological one can be more important to struggling readers. Numbers 1,2,3 are areas most confident.</i></p> <p><i>Curriculum does reflect components but to different degrees.</i></p>
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Appendix W: Analysis by Interview Question 7

Involving Teacher in Literacy Improvement Process: (2,4) Teacher Perception of Professional Learning	Probes:
As a classroom teacher you understand the importance of building an engaging learning environment. Take a minute to think of a positive professional learning experience. (20 seconds) Can you describe that experience to me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this a typical experience? • Why do you think this experience was different? • Do you believe teachers are provided the opportunity for shared decision making while looking at ways to improve student learning? • If you were asked to support a colleague or new teacher with literacy instruction, which component would you be able to provide the most support? • Do you believe this Structured Literacy framework could support teachers as they attempt to meet the various early literacy needs of all students? Why? Why not? How?

RQ2. Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction?

	Phonology	Sound-Symbol Associations	Syllables	Morphology	Syntax	Semantics
Exact Terms			7			
Similar Terms	1,3,7,8	1,3,5,6,8	5			

RQ4. How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?

5 of the 8 teachers stated the Structured Literacy framework would support teachers while teaching students to read. The reasons identified included the following: evidence-based so supported by research, six components are vital, components build upon each other and show the primary teachers where the students are headed, each component is so complex so learning how to scaffold or accommodate is important, and not all teachers are properly trained in basic reading instruction. One teacher identified the SL as being helpful but stated these are not the only areas to address because evidence-based components are not always what students need. One teacher stated the information would be beneficial depending on if the information was presented within grade level teams to make it relevant to their students. One teacher did not say if SL would be helpful but stated it was doable and shared that more information is needed about the diagnostic teaching principle. Positive professional learning included specific examples from all but two teachers. Identified reasons for positive professional learning included relevance, immediate application to classroom, when teachers understand their personal knowledge and

want to participate in training, explicit identification of what, why, how for learning, examples provided that are realistic to what is seen in an actual classroom, and allowing for teacher collaboration to plan, teach, and reflect on the implementation. Teachers recommended sharing information about SL during PLC or professional development days in various ways: individual or small group, grade level teams, providing an anticipation guide to gauge teacher knowledge, connecting the SL components and SL guiding principles, self-guided research and time to discuss how the information can be implemented in the classroom, understanding each student has individual needs so thinking outside of the box, and connecting new learning to prior knowledge and curricular resources so teachers do not feel like this is one more thing to learn.

Teacher #	Response	Researcher's Summary
T1	<p>Oh, okay. Um, oh, when I took this summer, a class with XXX. That was a positive learning experience because it was a <u>good atmosphere</u> with teachers that had the <u>same value and views</u> because they <u>wanted to do it right and they wanted to see what's going on</u> with it? Because you would think by now, we got our fill of, we understand phonics, we understand literacy, but no. So that was so <u>positive talking to these teachers</u> to find out more about how to engage with kids that are having <u>difficulty with learning to read</u> and not just putting the blanket. Again, like I said, students with the <u>graphic organizer</u> having that having that <u>little cheat sheet</u> that I have now that I can go back to it and say that is why they're having trouble.</p> <p>No, I think sometimes it's <u>hit and miss</u> with them. You know, they think it's something that we need, and in all actuality, and I know we do surveys, so it shouldn't be like that. But, but I don't I don't think it's it has always been that way and it, you know, sometimes it misses because we're all, you know, just like the students, we <u>all come from different backgrounds</u>.</p> <p>I feel like they're a little <u>better at asking our ideas</u>. I don't know if they're as good, yet, at <u>following through with our ideas</u>.</p> <p>I guess I have got to say, <u>phonics and phonemic awareness</u>, I guess.</p> <p>Yes, because it incorporates all the basic needs that we <u>need to have a nice balance literacy, structured program, and work, you know to work, six elements, six points are vital</u>.</p> <p>Doing first kind of the <u>activating strategy of getting our knowledge of where we are and see what we know</u> about it. And there's nothing as stark as seeing... I was listening to this and then I was missing one, and I couldn't figure out what it was. And, you know,</p>	<p><i>Identified a recent pd experience as including teacher with same values and views to want to learn and improve. Pd included graphic organizers to reference and take notes. This is not a typical experience. District is good at asking for teacher input but does not follow through yet. Structured literacy would be helpful to literacy teachers since it incorporates the six components which are vital. Pd is relevant when you begin with an activating strategy to show teacher understanding so the teachers reflect and realize what they may not know to make it purposeful.</i></p>

	<p>because you think you know it and we think we know <u>it all</u>, but something as basic as that starting out, just let them [teachers] say, okay, this is where I'm at. Oh, I only knew one. Okay, then I <u>really do need to take the time to understand</u>, you know what I mean?</p>	
T2	<p>So, a positive learning experience I have experienced or one in my classroom?</p> <p>Well, I think if you walk away with, you know, something from a professional development that you <u>can take back and use in your classroom</u>. I think that's what makes it a positive. And I liked what XXX said this morning, you know, because she knows, she's been there, you know, <u>look for that gem</u>. You know, it might only be one gem, you know, and that spoke to me this morning when she said that because it's true, you know, and a lot of people go through professional development, you know, with the <u>attitude</u>, like, I'm not going learn anything, you know, I already know everything I need to know, these are so boring, you know, but you shouldn't act like that you. If I walk away with just one thing, you know, that's one thing that I learned today. So just, you know, one skill that I can take back to the classroom or one more activity in my, you know, up my sleeve, or in my bucket that I can use in the classroom.</p> <p>I feel like I have a <u>voice within my classroom</u>. You know, we're sent out questionnaires, you know, about our needs, but I don't know, <u>sometimes I feel like it's already been decided what they're going to do</u>. Was that the wrong answer?</p> <p>Um, I would say, well, it's a tossup between the <u>phonology and the sound symbol association</u>.</p> <p><u>Yes. Yes. Yes, I do. Well, I just feel like they build upon each other</u> and I think it's good for even a kindergarten teacher, even if I'm not teaching some of the other evidence-based elements that, it's still good for me to <u>know where we're headed</u>. And, and some, you know, some higher skills do come up in the kindergarten classroom, because, you know, you will, you know, you'll <u>have kids that will be ready for higher skills</u>.</p> <p>I think it would be good if you had the <u>evidence-based elements</u>, and you gave the teachers the <u>technology or books that they would be able to use and come up with different samples for different grade levels</u>. And, you know, just <u>make sure everyone understands what each</u></p>	<p><i>Unable to identify a specific pd. but stated if you can take what you learned back to your class then it is a positive experience. Teachers need to be willing to look for "that gem", there might only be one but if you are not willing to look you're your attitude matters on that experience. Teacher identified having a voice within classroom but not other places because "things have already been decided".</i></p> <p><i>Structured Literacy would be helpful to teachers to learn more information because they build upon each other and show us where the students are headed. Suggested identifying the what, why it is important, and how to instruct each component in small groups with technology or books. Ask teachers to come up with examples and discuss and share with each other.</i></p>

	<p>of them, you know, the meaning of each one will be able to come up with <u>different examples...</u> do that probably in, you know, smaller groups and then come back and <u>share and move</u>. You got to move; you can't sit still.</p>	
T3	<p>Oh, my gosh. Oh, um, I don't know how specific I can because it was a while ago, but I took a class with XXX. And I can't think of her last name, but you know who I'm talking about. And I think her class really, like <u>she really explained, explained it well and gave us lots of examples</u>. I just think that that class helped me a lot to better understand some things. It touched on everything you just showed me in those in that slide. Yes. It was like a <u>month long, four-week class</u> or something. But yeah, she gave us <u>a lot of information</u>. I have my binder at work. Just examples and it was all, everyone was enjoyed it. Like <u>she's a good teacher</u>. But, um, <u>I felt like I left with a lot of knowledge</u>. I know, but I mean, when we start at the beginning of the year, <u>we're pretty much told this is what you're doing</u>. And we're <u>given our templates and things</u>. And if we wanted to, if we wanted to change something, we could always be part of that. <u>In the summer, where they make stuff, they make the curriculum</u> or whatever, and they view it or change it or tweak it or whatever they do.</p> <p>Oh, yeah, that's um, the school level? Yeah. You can. I can't pick two. [laughs] Which component? The, well, I like both the <u>phonemic and the phonics</u>. <u>Phonemic awareness</u> is good, because the book we have helps and the skills in it, like, for example, rhyme, which the kids don't know. I think I think I would be good with that because like, <u>I have a lot of resources</u> to share and with that person.</p> <p><u>Sure, yes. Well, I mean, looking at each component</u>, and thinking about teaching each one. Um, it's valuable, because I mean, depending on the teacher, but like, <u>there's so much you can do with each one</u>. And then if you need to <u>scaffold</u> or you need to <u>accommodate</u>, you can within the skill.</p> <p>Oh, I need to think about that. Um, well, what does everyone struggle with? It's the <u>writing piece</u>. So, I don't I don't think the beginning of it is hard. Getting them to be able to put it on the paper, that were the kids, all the kids, it seems like if that's if they have any flaws, that's where it is. It's in the writing piece. So, I</p>	<p><i>Teacher identified a foundational literacy class as a positive learning experience that was relevant, and skills could be applied. Stated it was positive because the instructor was a good teacher and gave lots of examples to explain the information. The course included multiple sessions over a month period which allowed them to learn information, try it in the classroom, and then come back to ask clarifying questions as needed. The district allows for some teachers to provide input to curricular documents in the summer but not everyone is invited but the school allows for teacher input and support each other by collaborating. Structured literacy would be helpful for teachers to learn more because each component has so much that can be done to teach and consider scaffolds and accommodations. Teacher identified writing as an area</i></p>

	<p>mean, <u>I don't know how to fix it</u>. But I mean, some kids are just naturally good at it. But overall, out of most of the kids that I've seen, like, writing is where their weakness is.</p> <p>And understanding what to write. Like, if they're answering like a <u>deep question</u>, like, where they really have to think about what the answer could be. <u>I mean getting it on the paper isn't easy for them</u>.</p>	<p><i>needed for professional learning.</i></p>
T4	<p>Now, if I'm understanding you're asking me about maybe a PD I've attended? Is that what you're asking? Okay, um, again, maybe your kind of getting a little bit of a theme here that I'm, I'm a big fan of the <u>reading workshop part of my part of my block</u>. So, this might be three years ago, I don't know what could have been four years ago, um, we, we had the opportunity to attended XXX's training. I got, I guess it was two years ago. Anyway, I got a huge amount of that I, before that, I was never taught how to <u>make an anchor chart</u>. The <u>resources were there</u>, I was <u>shown examples of anchor charts</u> but that that allowed me in <u>crystallized what was the expectation of</u>, of me, and getting these <u>students engaged in these read alouds and engaged in the standards that we teach during the reading workshop</u>. They taught me <u>how</u> to make an anchor chart, <u>what to do</u> with the anchor chart, <u>how the anchor chart is to be used</u>, after we make it and yeah, that that, in the four or five years I've been in the county, that was definitely one of the top learning experiences that I ever had.</p> <p>Oh, yeah. I have been, yes. I've had those opportunities.</p> <p>Again, I often struggle with this because I don't know if this is part of what we do or if this is something that the school should take on, but some sort of <u>encouragement to the families for a little more foundational prep</u> before we get them into our building. I don't know if it is me, over the past couple of years, that students are coming into our buildings, <u>less and less prepared for and to receive this education</u>. Reading workshop, reading standards, reading comprehension.</p> <p>Yeah, I am, I'm looking at them. I'm getting the evidence-based teaching principles of cumulative and systematic and explicit teaching. Can you tell me a little bit of what you mean by <u>diagnostic teaching principle</u>?</p>	<p><i>Teacher identified a pd series where they were provided and all-day training, collaborative planning, and application of the skills learned that was offered throughout the year. The fact that it was very explicit to the teacher of what, why, how and expectations of the technique learned, Materials provided were very clear and student centered throughout the entire process. Information learned was relevant and the immediate application to the classroom provided what was needed. Teacher is provided opportunity to share ideas and would be most comfortable supporting a teacher with reading workshop. Teacher did not state the Structured Literacy framework would be helpful to teachers but did say it was doable. More questions were asked about the guiding principles and specifically the diagnostic teaching.</i></p>

	<p>Okay, and what are you asking me, if this equation is doable?</p> <p>Yeah, to your point to, something that you just said, <u>how do we assess it?</u> This sometimes, is sometimes where I struggle? Okay, <u>I would definitely encourage any more additional training on how are we going to assess this?</u></p> <p>It is and I know, a lot of what I do, assessing wise, has been or is <u>informal and anecdotal</u> and I know that we're more into the <u>data driven environment</u> now. So yeah, <u>I would like more.</u> Yeah, more training on how to assess. Yes, because I know my students, but sometimes <u>I do struggle relaying what I know about my students to somebody else.</u></p>	<p><i>Identifying how to assess skills and communicate to others student strengths and weaknesses.</i></p>
T5	<p>I would say that the <u>visuals, the examples.</u> And then something that was really beneficial to me is <u>like make and takes.</u> So, if we're there, and we're talking about look forward to example, for today, when we were doing the <u>Learning Focus,</u> I feel like it's more beneficial for me to be able to <u>actually make a lesson using components rather than just talking about it.</u> Just <u>a hands-on piece.</u> And making it so many times. I feel like professional developments, are they <u>mean well,</u> but we have so many other things going on in our mind. And if we <u>can actually apply it to what we're doing in the classroom.</u> At that moment, we would probably get more out of it. Right, something that I can leave with and go apply right then.</p> <p>It's really hard for me to say because of my unique experience of being in the county and then switching schools, so I don't feel like I particularly have had a say yet. But in my previous County, yes, I think that was available. Yeah, <u>sometimes it's not appropriate to get too many opinions.</u></p> <p>Honestly, I feel like I could <u>help them in with whatever question</u> that they were to come to me because I feel like because of being an experienced teacher, <u>if I don't know how to help them, right, then I know how to find the help.</u></p> <p>Yes. Yeah, I think that it would be beneficial because it is evidence based. So that means that it had to have been researched and proven to be effective. Um, whether it's those elements or the teaching principles, but I think that it would definitely be helpful.</p> <p>I would probably start with what they already know. And so, I'm not sure I mean, it's very similar, is <u>Words</u></p>	<p><i>Teacher identified how the Learning Focused training that occurred on the day of the interview was lacking visuals, examples, and make and takes to make it a positive experience. Instead of talking about a lesson they needed to plan an actual lesson to reach the application level. trying to make connections to things yeah. People mean well but the timing of the pd matters too if teacher have too much on their mind during the pd. Provide differentiated pd for teacher, so time is not wasted if they already know and use something. Teacher voice is included but sometimes too many opinions is not good. Teacher could support another teacher in any area. Structured Literacy would be helpful because it is</i></p>

	<p><u>Their Way</u> a part or did it used to be a part of Calvert County curriculum? Yeah, the reason I asked is because a lot of the while all of the <u>spelling patterns</u> and things that we that we're teaching to third grade, it looks like it comes from Words Their Way, it's just different. But I believe that I would start with what <u>teachers are familiar with, and that would be your evidence-based components</u>. And then try to have them learn how that that <u>fits into those evidence-based teaching principles</u>. So, I feel like if you're presenting <u>something completely new teachers are not going to be as receptive</u> as if you're kind of making something that you've already been exposed to.</p>	<p><i>evidence-based. Start with what teachers already know or make connections to current practices. Connect components to teaching principles so teachers feel they are not having to learn new things.</i></p>
T6	<p>No, because I was actually surprised, we were actually getting any training and before that training. Before that training, <u>the only valuable training</u> that I remember having was with title one, which was, like, you know, XXX and with XXX, even though there were <u>certain things that didn't agree</u> with XXX. I mean, there were certain things <u>that I did learn from it</u>. I think that they <u>went in depth</u> with, with what it is, that was being learned, you know, like, I feel like sometimes when the county has people from the board coming in to, like, give us the information or training not all the time, but most of the time, it's like, like <u>watered down are not as effective</u>.</p> <p>Yes. And I think the best thing to do with XXX is that she had <u>us plan these lessons</u>. And, you know, we took turns while in the classroom, to teach certain parts of it. And, you know, we were able to <u>see, like our colleagues. And it was just an amazing experience</u>.</p> <p>And I, and I think what made it even more eye opening, and, um, for me is because that <u>they use my classroom</u> when they came to XXX to teach and to have them write, and, and <u>my class did a nice job</u>. And it was almost kind of like <u>reassurance to me that what I was doing was, you know, working</u>, it was doing something because when they saw their <u>writing</u>, when they were because they had a response, they had a <u>reading response</u> to do when they're in their journals.</p> <p>Um, well, one opportunity, they do give teachers here with their beliefs, and what they see in the classroom is when they have <u>those teams that meet in the summer to write a curriculum, until like, no revise curriculum</u>, I feel like that's one thing they do to give teachers an opportunity, but not everybody can make it. So, I</p>	<p><i>Teacher identified a training from years ago that provided specific information on basic reading skills and strategies for instruction even though the teacher did not agree with everything that was shared. The Pd was in depth and not watered down like most of the district pd. Another pd was identified as positive because the teachers were able to learn information and then plan collaboratively and then teach the lesson, so the information was relevant and immediate and confirmed teacher of current practices of building writing stamina being effective. Teacher shared one way of providing teacher voice as, the summer curriculum writing but not all teachers are able to participate due to schedules. Teacher</i></p>

	<p>mean, I have never been able to do that. I would like to one day, but I haven't been able to. Um, but other than that, depending on your principal, and I feel like they don't, and not only the principal, but it's also just CCPS in general.</p> <p>Now, the <u>phonics piece</u>. I was actually telling you to one teacher and I was like, you know, if she felt like she didn't, she wasn't comfortable teaching a phonics piece. I was like, just come to me, you know, like I if I feel comfortable with helping you and making decisions on where to start with the kids, and I would help.</p> <p><u>Absolutely! That's really an important thing. Yeah. It would be helpful to all the teachers because I also feel that some teachers that have been recently hired by CCPS have not received the training that you know that I've had the opportunity to do.</u></p> <p>Well, I would assume like, maybe PLCs. And we have like, the PD days, <u>instead of giving us the garbage, they give you some time</u>, sorry to say that we can have something that we can actually use in the class. Okay, that's useful, maybe like, even if it's just time for us to <u>do our own research</u> or for us to be given. I don't know, a plan with, like, you know, do some research on certain things, or what you can do, <u>what type of centers you can do to help students with like, you know, learn their alphabet or, you know, work with a partner</u>, like, those are things that we're not given time to do. Like, that <u>[fluency]</u> would be something that I would probably want.</p> <p>Yes, yeah, for like, you know, look for it in in the <u>curriculum</u> that you're given and what are some things that, you know, that we can find, or that we can gain, from <u>some type of training</u>, you know, like, what is it that's <u>missing the most</u>? Which one is it that we feel like, you know, we would benefit from the most?</p>	<p><i>identified phonics as the area to support another teacher. Structured literacy would be helpful to provided learning to all teachers because not all teachers have been provided the training, they need to teach students to read. Sharing information at PLC and pd days would be a good time for information to be shared which will be something to actually use in the classroom. Self-guided research to identify specific centers or strategies to use when a student in your class needs something. Then connecting specific learning to the curriculum provided and when supplements are needed.</i></p>
T7	<p>Um, what made it a positive? It was, let's say the experience was we met every day or <u>every week after school at the library for an hour</u>. And I didn't realize how much that I didn't know until I took her class. I didn't realize how much I mean; <u>I didn't even know that there were six types of syllables</u>. I thought there was just that's that is what it is. I was very unaware I didn't. I went in not knowing the sound that “y” makes the proper sound that why makes I mean, <u>I really didn't realize how much that I didn't know and I would like to</u></p>	<p><i>Teacher identified the foundational reading course as positive because they met over a period of time which allowed time for practicing and asking questions which was offered after school for a month. Training</i></p>

	<p>take it two or three more times, just so I can master it because I don't feel like I retained as much as I could, because <u>I was still mind blown</u> about how much that I didn't understand and how much I didn't know.</p> <p>I would like to take it. Do they offer one later because I am taking classes right now? Okay, so I would like to attend. I feel like it would be <u>very beneficial if those were our PDs and not what we have been doing.</u></p> <p><u>Yes, and no. I was part of the scope and sequence literacy team</u> where I got to help, have my input heard about what I thought needed to be changed and what I thought there was about five of us ran by Donna and Leanne. And Leanne reached out to me, she said, hey, I want you on this team as someone who doesn't know anything about what we're doing. And I feel like I had some really great things to say during that meeting. But then again, there was <u>only five of us for the whole county.</u> Yeah, or not enough people had their voices heard because I have a really good relationship with my team, so I messaged them.</p> <p><u>Phonological awareness.</u></p> <p><u>Depends on how it was presented.</u> Okay, I think this is it looks like it would work. And it totally looks super great, but it's another one of those things of like, the people that don't necessarily understand or would need examples of how that would look to them. <u>It wouldn't, it wouldn't be effective, if you just put this out and said, there you are first grade, and fifth grade, you guys are the same. Go have at it.</u></p> <p>Honestly, like just meeting with <u>individual teachers or three to four teachers</u> and say, hey, this is <u>what this is, this is what this means, this is what this needs to look like.</u> I mean, same thing with like, we always say all the time, the <u>most effective form of teaching is for small groups and individualized instruction,</u> and I think that <u>doesn't stop and that doesn't change once you become an adult.</u></p>	<p><i>showed the teacher what she really did not know about teaching students to read. Teacher identified as sharing input with the curriculum writing group but not all teachers are providing input so talking to team members allowed more collaboration. Teacher identified phonological awareness as area to support another teacher.</i></p> <p><i>Structured literacy information could be beneficial to teachers depending on how the information is presented. Information should be grade level specific so applications can be made. Individual or small group meetings with teachers to identify what, why, how, and what it should look like. Teachers learn better in small groups just like students.</i></p>
T8	<p>A positive professional, just like in general...</p> <p>Um, well, I mean, I, I've had <u>plenty of positive professional learning experiences.</u> I think the ones that are most positive are ones that I feel are truly beneficial to me. <u>I think the ones that are most positive are ones that I have kind of felt on a personal level that kind of goes along with, you know, it's, it's valuable to me because it's something that I truly needed.</u> And then another big piece of positive, you know, professional is</p>	<p><i>Teacher did not identify a specific pd. but said there have been plenty. Positive professional learning is when the information is needed by the teacher. The pd allows for learning, reflections, and</i></p>

<p>when I have the time to, like, reflect on it, see how I <u>can use it in my teaching</u>, you know, <u>figure out how I can do it not just when something's kind of thrown at me</u>. Because and honestly, those are, you know, the ones with that I have found most valuable where it's something that's <u>really relevant, you know, to me to my students to our learning</u>, and then I've had the <u>time to go over it again, put it in action, you know, review it, if need be, learn more about it</u>.</p> <p>No. Well, I'd say it's probably 50/50. Yeah, probably half the time I feel it's really positive and beneficial and the other half, I'm just kind of like, okay, either why are we doing this, or I understand why I'm doing this, but I'm <u>never going to have time to do anything with this outside of this meeting</u>.</p> <p>To some extent, yes.</p> <p>Well, because I think we, you know, <u>ultimately, it's up to us how we choose to what resources we choose to use</u>, especially with struggling learners. I mean, we have our <u>scope and sequence, we have our books, but there's lots of ways that we can supplement</u>. So, you know, I think it's just a matter of <u>how far you want to go as a professional to do that</u>. I feel at the school level, much more so than the district level.</p> <p>Probably the funnel. How do you? How do you say number one? "<i>Phonology</i>." Phonology, I never like use that I always say <u>phonics or phonemic awareness</u>.</p> <p>Yeah, I'd say phonology.</p> <p><u>Yes</u>, I think they, you know, there's <u>other things that they need to do in addition to this</u>, but yeah, I think this is definitely you know, a <u>good foundation</u>.</p> <p>So, I think it would be important for them to <u>understand what</u> each of these are and the <u>relevance of them</u>, um, and then <u>how each of them go with the other ones and kind of the sequential order</u>, you know, that children typically need when they're learning these skills to be successful.</p> <p>Well, I just think it's important that sometimes you have to remember, <u>you can't always reach a kid by you know, looking at an evidence-based</u>, you know, component or something like that. Sometimes you need to <u>think outside of the box</u>. Um, and, you know, and again, it's not with all kids, but I just feel like it's important to remember that in the back of your mind, you know, that <u>not all kids are going to be successful and fit kind of into this, you know, framework here</u>.</p>	<p><i>application to the implementation of the topic in the classroom. Information shared needs to be realistic in the specific classrooms and not just discussed during the meetings. Teacher voice is included to some extent but more at the school level than the district. Teacher identified phonology as the area to support another teacher but did ask for the correct pronunciation and stated she used the terms phonics and phonemic awareness. Structured literacy would be helpful to teachers as a foundation but there are other things too. Understand what the components are, relevance of them, and how they go together and progress. Understanding not all kids will need these components but to think outside of the box and individually consider students.</i></p>
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	<u>Yes, individualized for sure.</u>	
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Appendix X: Sample of Data Collection Spreadsheet for T#1 for Questions 1-4

Teacher	Interview Question	Categories	RQ 1: What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and	Why & Quotes	RQ2: Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement	RQ3: Challenges	RQ4: SL
1	1	Literacy Block	Balanced Literacy, Integration of skills and content throughout the day, Flexible Small Groups, Targeted Instruction, Blended Learning Environment	Newly back to teaching all subjects in grade level so teacher confidence about the most effective ways to teach phonics and spelling was one area of concern to the teacher. Support from	Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension are identified in response. Spelling and morphology are identified in response.	Only 1 hour and 15 minutes	
1	2	Planning	Standards-based, Learning Focused Framework, Assessment options are teacher developed and informal in nature, Acceleration to target instructional needs and provide scaffold, Flexible small groups to allow for direct teaching and practice time	"My hope is that this year, it will be a balanced literacy program where I'm going to be doing the phonics piece, phonemic awareness, and then (fingers crossed) some way to include bookclubs so I	Phonemic awareness, reading, spelling, morphology	Options for assessments to monitor student progress are needed, Many resources available but the organization and format of the resources are not specific enough for teachers to know what to do when students	
1	3	Monitoring Learning	Learning Focused reference to planning for the entire week always additional time to target instruction for students. Various informal ssessments are used to determine student learning. When students struggle in PA and phonics the teacher addresses this in small		Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension	District guidance for assessments would be helpful. Students struggle if they do not have foundational skills needed prior to reaching third grade which requires the third grade teacher to go back and	
1	4	Reflection of Lesson	Provided a specific example while teaching a language skill . Lesson included activating stratgey, anchor charts, graphic organizer, student note taking guide for reference, student engagement and application of skills learned . Teacher			Student behavior can impact lessons, teacher knowledge and confidence of the subject and content	

Appendix Y: Triangulation Matrix for Research Question Analysis

RQ #1a: What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block?	
Finding # 1: Balanced Literacy is the instructional approach teachers most identified or described with several teachers indicating a strong emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary. No teachers identify "Integrated Literacy" as the instruction approach used but one teacher did identify the three instructional focus areas identified by District A: Word Study, Reader's Workshop, and Writer's Workshop. Teachers' use of district guidance and materials and their understanding of balanced literacy and integrated literacy varied from teacher to teacher.	
Information Source(s): Pre-interview Questionnaire (PIQ) Document Analysis (DA) Analytic Memos Teacher Interview	PIQ: 5 of 8 teachers chose Balanced Literacy DA: Integrated Literacy, with an emphasis on Word Study, Reading Workshop, and Writer's Workshop, is the approach identified within the curricular documents provided by District A.
Key Words & Phrases: Balanced Literacy Foundational Skills 5 areas of Reading Standards-based Read Aloud Word Work Reading Workshop Writing Workshop Whole Group Small group for specific skills Curricular resources (book club, read aloud lessons, reader response, etc.)	Analytic Memo: Balanced Literacy is the approach 1 teacher identified specifically and the other teachers provided responses that can be related to balanced literacy. The specific instruction identified by the teachers were phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing with little emphasis on instructional time required for foundational skills.
<p>Teacher Quotes:</p> <p>T1 "My hope is that this year, it will be a balanced literacy program where I'm going to be doing the phonics piece, phonemic awareness, and then (fingers crossed) some way to include book clubs so I can do that fluency piece and comprehension piece."</p> <p>T2 "So, our literacy block normally begins with a whole group lesson and which I would say usually involves the reading of a book and whatever lesson [standard] we might be teaching that particular day. Which you know, could be focusing on the characters, the setting the main topic, details, text features, and then we have a question answering session. If there's vocabulary in the book, I will pre teach the vocabulary, usually utilizing the smart board with pictures of those words and what I like to do is have the kids try to figure out what the word is."</p> <p>T3 "We get a little bit of everything in the day like phonemic awareness, phonics, guided instruction, and then usually somewhere in there, there's a writing piece. And then there's also centers that has something that relates to the skill that we're focused on that week, or what the child needs..."</p> <p>T4 "Sure, it's three components. In a perfect world, I get to my word work, which is the largest chunk of my time, we then progress into a reading workshop. And then we progress into a</p>	

writing workshop... I have five small groups, so they each get about eight minutes a day at my teacher table, and then each of my rotations."

T5 "I use a balanced literacy approach where students are working with on-grade level text, and then they're also working with texts that they that are developmentally appropriate for them."

T6 "Um, basic reading skills like the phonics lessons, like alphabet and sounds okay. So, I usually use everything that we learned in XXX."

T7 "There are so many things that I expect them to do throughout the day that they will not be able to do if they can't process sounds if they can't segment if they can't blend. For me, it's like reading and understanding sounds and sound manipulation is the most important thing because with that, they can sound out words they can understand what people are saying they can understand vocabulary. I believe that it's the most foundational skill for learning just in general."

T8 "With certain kids, obviously, I feel like some of the components are more important than the others because it's based on their needs. But honestly, over the years, I have come to the conclusion that all of the components are important for different reasons, though...not partial to say this one is more important than the other."

RQ #1b: What instructional approaches do K-3 teachers at LEOES report implementing during the literacy block and why?

Finding # 2: Curricular resources and prior professional learning influence the literacy approaches used by teachers, as well as varying student needs.

Information Source(s): Pre-interview Questionnaire (PIQ) Document Analysis (DA) Analytic Memos Teacher Interview	PIQ: All teachers report using the curricular resources provided by the district even though supplemental materials are required. DA: Depending on the specific grade levels, teachers were provided a general scope and sequence by each quarter but there is not guidance on weekly or daily instructional sequences for the various materials available for the three areas of literacy identified as Reader's Workshop, Writing Workshop, and Word Study.
Key Words & Phrases: Student needs are different Flexible groups Meet them where they are Whole Group Small Groups	Analytic Memo: Whole group, small group, direct and targeted instruction were lesson structures identified by the teachers according to student needs. For the most part, teachers believe they use the "preferred", balanced literacy approach. Several teachers seemed to align more with the phonics-based approach, but this may be due to the specific grade level taught.

Teacher Quotes:

T1 "Not just what I think a balanced literacy program should have, but it should also be geared to where the students are because my grouping is not going to be exact same..."

T2 "And of course, you know, we meet them where they are. And then we have students who may just be working on letter identification and everything in between."

T3 "So just recognizing what the kids need is the most important part of it, and then being able to target that skill to really teach them in those small groups."

T4 "Our reading workshop usually involves a mentor text selected by the county. I also have some of my own personal favorites that sometimes hit the standard better than in some of the county selected texts. And then my writing workshop works on a specific writing skill, which I also follow what the county gives me."

T5 "I would meet with each group for 15 to 20 minutes. And we would also focus on the same standard, but we would do it at their reading level. So that they are able to read independently, they might need a little guidance with certain words and vocabulary, but we would still focus on that same standard, but at their particular level, if that makes sense."

T6 "Okay, so first of all when I begin my literacy block, I usually started with the read aloud with whatever read aloud is in the curriculum. That way, I can give them an assignment during rotations, where they can actually write in their journals. And they have a like a prompt or something they have to answer, like a question, they have to answer from the book during that time."

T7 "Because what they have for the county doesn't always fit each teacher, each teacher style. And in order for it to be an effective lesson, you can't just be reading off of the scripts, you have to be engaging, you have to allow the kids to explore sounds not just okay, this is it."

T8 "I usually have team planning with my team, and we look at the scope and sequence and the standards that are supposed to be for the lesson [district curriculum] that we're on. And then we make sure that each of the components are included in that lesson and if not, then we find a way to supplement something with that. The bulk of the ELA time is definitely spent on small group and even individualized instruction. So, we usually spend about a half, I'd say 30 to 45 minutes during small group time."

RQ #2: Which Structured Literacy components, if any, do K-3 teachers at LEOES report that they implement during literacy instruction?

Finding #3: Since the LEOES teachers were not aware of the Structured Literacy framework, they do not report implementing the six components identified and defined as critical components for early literacy instruction. Morphology was reported as a critical component since this is a specific component of the Word Study curriculum for grade 3. All of the teachers were aware of and report implementing instructional practices in the five areas of reading.

Information Source(s):
Document Analysis (DA)
Analytic Memos
Teacher Interview

DA: District A identifies the use of an Integrated Literacy Framework as the approach for literacy instruction to link content learning and literacy skills. The K-3 curricular materials are organized into 3 instructional areas: Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop, and Word Study while emphasizing grade level standards in reading, writing, language arts, and listening/speaking. Morphology is identified within the Word Study scope and sequence and lessons for grades 3-5.

Key Words & Phrases:
Phonological Awareness
Phonemic Awareness

Analytic Memo:
None of the participants were able to respond to the final question about Structured Literacy until the visual was presented. Then,

Phonics Spelling Morphology Fluency Vocabulary Comprehension Writing	they were aware of certain terminology but did not respond with any specific information to show they understand and/or implement Structured Literacy in their classrooms. The discussion around Structured Literacy components seemed to show the teachers believed the components were more of a progression of skills versus needing to integrate daily explicit instruction in those components for all areas of language and literacy, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Structured Literacy is not a familiar term or approach to any of the teachers even though the specific “terms” used to identify the 6 components may be partially understood. Many teachers did not know how to pronounce the word phonology and even asked for words to be defined or explained. The teachers did not seem embarrassed or unwilling to show they did not know or understand an approach or term identified within the Structured Literacy visual.
<p>Teacher Quotes:</p> <p><i>T1 “So, I divide them up. I have kids, I have to do a phonemic awareness activity with kids, I have to do, you know, work on me reading, spelling, morphology...”</i></p> <p><i>T2 “So yeah, and the phonemic awareness, we, we always do whole group with everyone. And we like to do that with a lot of movement while we're doing the phonemic awareness. You know, so if it's clapping the sounds or, you know, counting the phonemes, or stomping the phonemes. You know, but lots of movement. I change it up a little bit with the phonemic awareness. I'm using the blue book is what I use the Haggerty, yes.”</i></p> <p><i>T3 “We get a little bit of everything in the day like phonemic awareness, phonics, guided instruction, and then usually somewhere in there, there's a writing piece...I did my lesson and put the standard on the top of what their goal was, and what they would have to have to know or give me while we were making our anchor chart together.”</i></p> <p><i>T4 “The resources were there, I was shown examples of anchor charts but that allowed me in crystallizing what was the expectation of, of me, and getting these students engaged in these read alouds and engaged in the standards that we teach during the reading workshop.”</i></p> <p><i>T5 “So, we would start off with a whole group text that is on-grade level. And we might work with do partner reading or we might do close read where we're doing that whole group, we would talk about the standards and how to use that particular text to understand what each standard is.”</i></p> <p><i>T6 “After the rotations are done... I work on phonological awareness. I work on phonics, I work on comprehension strategies depending on like, what the what the groups need. And then the phonics activities or whatever I'm teaching during the small group, that's usually where they are, it may be a [below] X grade skill because that's where they are...I'll go ahead and have like a [grade-level] phonics lesson...”</i></p> <p><i>T7 “We're going to be working on Heggerty lessons in the book to kind of promote that sound... I have taken bits and pieces from those lessons and kind of created my own schedule that works for me as part of the scope and sequence of phonics...”</i></p> <p><i>T8 “You know, like I said, we're always having a phonemic awareness lesson, we're usually having a vocab and comprehension lesson. And one of the groups, we're always having some</i></p>	

type of writing, you know, we do phonics, and fluency also. But it really just depends on where my kids are and what they need and my assistant and I are constantly taking data, I feel like we take data as much as we teach. And then I use that data to drive my instruction."

RQ #3: What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers?

Finding #4: Instructional and planning time were identified as significant challenges. Curricular challenges identified were related to the organization of materials, lack of integration of content/skills, and available assessment options for determining student needs.

Information Source(s): Document Analysis (DA) Analytic Memos Teacher Interview	DA: The process to access and prepare materials located within Schoology is time consuming and complex. The organization of the materials in Schoology is cumbersome so finding specific materials is a consistent problem shared by teachers. While locating the curricular documents for this research, I struggled to identify the path (folders within folders). The resources were duplicated in some cases or were simply in a different folder from grade to grade. Materials available within folders in Schoology include many pages that require printing and preparation for the teachers and students to utilize.
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Key Words & Phrases: Instructional Time Planning Time Organization of Materials Quality of Materials, Assessments Available Integration of Content/Skills Pacing	Analytic Memo: 1. Curricular materials provide sufficient or more than sufficient resources but a more detailed scope and sequence, explicit directions for struggling readers, and more assessment options were identified as challenges for consideration. Time is a major concern for the participants which is not surprising. 2. Curricular materials provided some guidance and resources but the organization and amount of time that is required to find, gather, and assemble takes too much time. The need for small group differentiated instruction was an area identified by most participants, but the actual assessments used or instructional techniques to determine and teach those specific needs were not described in detail.
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Teacher Quotes:

T1 "To be honest with you, I do not like the setup. With curriculum materials, for us to utilize and to flow and because the flow is not there, and that's my whole thing about ELA. I don't think that the flow and integration is there, like it should be... And it's not clear and precise for teachers. There is material and does kind of guide us, but again, it's not. It's not, it's not easy to find as explicit as we'd like it."

T2 "I do a lot of planning on Sundays to get ready. And I would say I would say I do about two hours' worth of planning on Sunday."

T3 "Well, we have plenty at our school, like we have the things, we have the resources, we have books we need, I feel, but um, what we all need is the time to, you know, look at the data to see exactly what skills they need..."

T4 "But within that hour, I can usually get a pretty good skeleton of what we're going to do for the week. And then unfortunately, yeah, I do have to use my home time to actually fill in the details. I couldn't tell you how much extra planning time, but skeleton can be put together by our team in that hour that we made each week."

T5 "Oh, my goodness, I feel like it takes forever. Um, I would say, for a week, it would take at least an hour to an hour and a half.... I feel like the Schoology is a little cluttered."

T6 "Um, um, yes because the curriculum is created by people that are at the board and may not be as knowledgeable and a lot of times, they ask us to do certain things and we don't have the materials. And, and sometimes there's, there's holes, and we don't, we don't have, we're not given everything we need. And it's, then we have to, like, seek for it or, you know, even within the lesson itself, like, if we have to find like assignments or, you know, things to grade, like, we're making that stuff up ourselves from what we're given, which is not ideal, because then everybody's giving different things and giving different grades..."

T7 "I don't feel like they give enough examples. And I don't feel like they give enough real-life classroom experience. Time like, like, oh, in a perfect world, this, this, this and this should happen and in a 10-minute block and you're like, no, that has never once happened in a 10-minute block. So, the pacing, that's what it is, the pacing. We have to prepare the materials, they give us a general outline of what they expect, but not the materials that they would like us to use."

T8 "Um, I'm going to say, I probably spend probably three hours a week planning for literacy instruction. I mean, it's a significant chunk of time."

RQ #3: What challenges do K-3 literacy teachers at LEOES identify while teaching all students and struggling readers?

Finding #5: Student factors are identified as the main causes for students who struggle with learning to read. Specific references to instruction provided was not mentioned.

Information Source(s): Teacher Interview	Teacher Quotes: <i>T1 "I think, I think if they are missing a lot of that foundational phonemic awareness, even a basic understanding the phonics... because they're missing certain, you know, foundational basics, basic skills like that. But if they don't have those, how are you going to teach them to read? You have to go back and work on those skills."</i>
Key Words & Phrases: Missing Foundational Skills Hard to catch up to grade level Lack of Experiences Lack of Language Lack of Exposure to books Lack of Attention Disability sometimes Trauma from home life	<i>T2 "Um, just lack of just not really, I guess, lack of exposure. From, from, you know, from birth to five. Exposure to books exposure to, you know, just going to the aquarium the museum experiences. Okay, and don't forget being talked to."</i> <i>T3 "Oh, it's definitely Attention. Attention disorders. Definitely. They can't focus and they're missing it. Because instead of listening to me, they're watching somebody else do something in the classroom or out in the hallway."</i> <i>T4 "Foundational skills, coming into my classroom not having what they would need to progress in the XXX grade curriculum. They come to me not ready. Revisiting the alphabet, really revisiting letter names, sometimes, and very much, quite often letter sounds."</i>

	<p><i>T5 "I honestly think that they're not exposed to books enough. I overall, I would say that these are the kids that did not spend time reading at home before bed each night or it's not because their parents didn't raise them wrong. They just maybe didn't know. But I think that it has to start at a young age, and we've got to get books in kid's hands at a young age, even if they're looking at the books themselves and making up a story along with the pictures."</i></p> <p><i>T6 "Lack of exposure, even like, you know, as a toddler infant, to literature, I mean, sometimes, yes, some children will have disabilities, and those are things that are out of our control. But usually, if they're, if they're exposed to literature, you know, parents reading when they're younger, you know, watching, like singing the alphabet and things like that, they usually, it'll come to them a little easier, I believe. And of course, of course, home life, you know, if they, if they're struggling at home and difficult on, they come in with trauma, and they can't focus."</i></p> <p><i>T7 "Not enough individual attention to them. Yeah, because, yeah, absolutely not giving enough support due to lack of time and resources."</i></p> <p><i>T8 "You know, obviously, there's some students who just, you know, need the special education services, or they need that speech, or they need, you know, something else. But I would say, you know, in the big scheme of things, that lack of exposure and experiences in all aspects of reading and language has a significant impact, and I don't think parents understand it."</i></p>
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RQ #4: How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?	
Finding #6: Structured Literacy is not a familiar term to the teachers at LEOES. The six components are not used by the teachers when describing literacy instruction. Once the visual is presented the 6 components are related to the five areas of reading.	
Information Source(s): Pre-interview Questionnaire (PIQ) Document Analysis (DA) Analytic Memos Teacher Interview	PIQ: None of the teachers chose other to indicate an awareness of Structured Literacy as a literacy instructional approach. DA: The terms phonology, sound-symbol associations, syntax, and semantics are not directly used in the curricular organization provided to teachers on the Schoology platform. In grade 3, the terms syllables and morphology are identified within the Word Study section of the literacy block. Instructional routines about the six syllable types and morphology lessons are addressed within the third-grade curricular documents.
Key Words & Phrases:	Analytic Memo:

Phonemic Awareness Phonics Fluency Vocabulary Comprehension	<p>1. General responses referred to the five areas of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) but the responses did not become specific in reference to the Structured Literacy components (phonology, sound-symbol associations, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics). I was surprised to hear the curricular resources and materials were all identified as positive and for the most part teachers believe include Structured Literacy components.</p> <p>2. Structured Literacy is not a familiar term or approach to any of the teachers even though the specific “terms” used to identify the 6 components may be understood. Many teachers did not know how to pronounce the word phonology and even asked for words to be defined or explained. The teachers did not seem embarrassed or unwilling to show they did not know or understand an approach or term identified within the Structured Literacy visual.</p>
<p>Teacher Quotes:</p> <p><i>T1 "Hm, I don't know... Yes, because it incorporates all the basic needs that we need to have a nice balance literacy, structured program, and work, you know to work, six elements, six points are vital."</i></p> <p><i>T2 "So, define structured literacy? Well, I just feel like they build upon each other, and I think it's good for even a k-3 teacher, even if I'm not teaching some of the other evidence-based elements that, it's still good for me to know where we're headed. And, and some, you know, some higher skills do come up in the primary grade classroom, because, you know, you will, you know, you'll have kids that will be ready for higher skills."</i></p> <p><i>T3 "Oh, my, um... I 'm assuming you mean like the parts. Like, there's phonemic awareness, like what it is, is that what you mean, like what part is?... Syllables, probably because, well, it kind of goes hand in hand though with the phonics, um, or the phonemic awareness. They all go together!"</i></p> <p><i>T4 "I'm not quite certain I even know that term."</i></p> <p><i>T5 "Um, with the terminology, I'm not familiar. I don't know... Um, I think that the goal I feel like is for students to be at like the morphology level by k-3 grade, but a lot of times, they're not because they're still stuck on sounding out words."</i></p> <p><i>T6 "Structured Literacy? I don't think I've ever heard of Structured Literacy. Unless I'm doing it and don't know that's what is called...there's certain things (components) we don't do yet. If you're not there yet. Um, but yeah, I think so. I think we're given enough. It's like, like, the curriculum is touching those things, but it's just not given enough."</i></p> <p><i>T7 "Not off the top of my head... But for learning to read, I would say one, two, and three. No, not all of them. They don't explicitly state when to do syllables. Yeah, we don't have a very good, strong curriculum for that at all, I would say."</i></p> <p><i>T8 "Like the structured literacy block?... How do you say number one? "Phonology." Phonology, I never like use that [word] I always say phonics or phonemic awareness."</i></p>	

RQ #4: How do K-3 teachers at LEOES, if at all, perceive the Structured Literacy framework as a potential support to build professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices?	
Finding #7: Teachers agree the Structured Literacy framework could be used to build teacher professional knowledge and improve early literacy instructional practices if certain implementation criteria are considered.	
Information Source(s): Analytic Memos Teacher Interview	<p>Analytic Memo:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None of the participants were able to respond to the final question about Structured Literacy until the visual was presented. Then, they were aware of certain terminology but did not respond with any specific information to show they understand and/or implement Structured Literacy in their classrooms. The discussion around Structured Literacy components seemed to show the teachers believed the components were more of a progression of skills versus needing to integrate daily explicit instruction in those components for all areas of language and literacy, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. 2. All participants believed the Structured Literacy framework would be beneficial for k-3 teachers to know and understand but there were various suggestions on how that should look with the staff.
<p>Teacher Quotes:</p> <p>T1 <i>"Doing first kind of the activating strategy of getting our knowledge of where we are and see what we know about it. And there's nothing as stark as seeing... I was listening to this and then I was missing one, and I couldn't figure out what it was. And, you know, because you think you know it and we think we know it all, but something as basic as that starting out, just let them [teachers] say, okay, this is where I'm at. Oh, I only knew one. Okay, then I really do need to take the time to understand, you know what I mean?"</i></p> <p>T2 <i>"I think it would be good if you had the evidence-based elements, and you gave the teachers the technology or books that they would be able to use and come up with different samples for different grade levels. And, you know, just make sure everyone understands what each of them, you know, the meaning of each one will be able to come up with different examples... do that probably in, you know, smaller groups and then come back and share and move. You got to move; you can't sit still."</i></p> <p>T3 <i>"Sure, yes. Well, I mean, looking at each component, and thinking about teaching each one. Um, it's valuable, because I mean, depending on the teacher, but like, there's so much you can do with each one. And then if you need to scaffold or you need to accommodate, you can within the skill."</i></p> <p>T4 <i>"Yeah, I am, I'm looking at them. I'm getting the evidence-based teaching principles of cumulative and systematic and explicit teaching. Can you tell me a little bit of what you mean by diagnostic teaching principle? [brief explanation provided] Okay, and what are you asking me, if this equation is doable? Yeah, to your point to, something that you just said, how do we assess it? This sometimes, is sometimes where I struggle? Okay, I would definitely encourage any more additional training on how we are going to assess this?"</i></p>	

T5 “Yes. Yeah, I think that it would be beneficial because it is evidence based. So that means that it had to have been researched and proven to be effective. Um, whether it’s those elements or the teaching principles, but I think that it would definitely be helpful. I would probably start with what they already know... But I believe that I would start with what teachers are familiar with, and that would be your evidence-based components. And then try to have them learn how that that fits into those evidence-based teaching principles. So, I feel like if you're presenting something completely new teachers are not going to be as receptive as if you're kind of making something that you've already been exposed to.”

T6 “Absolutely! That's really an important thing. Yeah. It would be helpful to all the teachers because I also feel that some teachers that have been recently hired by CCPS have not received the training that you know that I've had the opportunity to do.... Well, I would assume like, maybe PLCs. And we have like, the PD days, instead of giving us the garbage, they give you some time, sorry to say that we can have something that we can actually use in the class. Okay, that's useful, maybe like, even if it's just time for us to do our own research...”

T7 “Depends on how it was presented. Okay, I think this is it looks like it would work. And it totally looks super great, but it's another one of those things of like, the people that don't necessarily understand or would need examples of how that would look to them. It wouldn't, it wouldn't be effective, if you just put this out and said, there you are first grade, and fifth grade, you guys are the same. Go have at it. Honestly, like just meeting with individual teachers or three to four teachers and say, hey, this is what this is, this is what this means, this is what this needs to look like. I mean, same thing with like, we always say all the time, the most effective form of teaching is for small groups and individualized instruction, and I think that doesn't stop and that doesn't change once you become an adult.”

T8 “Yes, I think they, you know, there's other things that they need to do in addition to this, but yeah, I think this is definitely you know, a good foundation. So, I think it would be important for them to understand what each of these are and the relevance of them, um, and then how each of them go with the other ones and kind of the sequential order, you know, that children typically need when they're learning these skills to be successful. Well, I just think it's important that sometimes you have to remember, you can't always reach a kid by you know, looking at an evidence-based, you know, component or something like that. Sometimes you need to think outside of the box. Um, and, you know, and again, it's not with all kids, but I just feel like it's important to remember that in the back of your mind, you know, that not all kids are going to be successful and fit kind of into this, you know, framework here.”

Glossary

Phonology. Phonology is the study of sound structure of spoken words and is a critical element of Structured Language instruction. Phonological awareness includes rhyming, counting words in spoken sentence, and clapping syllables in spoken words. An important aspect of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness or the ability to segment words into their component sounds, which are called phonemes. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a given language that can be recognized as being distinct from other sounds in the language. For example, the word *cap* has three phonemes (/k/, /ă/, /p/), and the word *clasp* has five phonemes (/k/, /l/, /ă/, /s/, /p/).

Sound-Symbol Association. Once students have developed the awareness of phonemes of spoken language, they must learn how to map the phonemes to symbols or printed letters. Sound-symbol association must be taught and mastered in two directions: visual to auditory (reading) and auditory to visual (spelling). Additionally, students must master the blending of sounds and letters into words as well as the segmenting of whole words into the individual sounds. The instruction of sound-symbol associations is often referred to as phonics. Although phonics is a component of Structured Literacy, it is embedded within a rich and deep language context.

Syllable Instruction. A syllable is a unit of oral or written language with one vowel sound. Instruction includes teaching of the six basic syllable types in the English language: closed, vowel-consonant-*e*, open, consonant-*le*, *r*-controlled, and vowel pair. Knowledge of syllable types is an important organizing idea. By knowing the syllable type, the reader can better determine the sound of the vowel in the syllable. Syllable division rules heighten the reader's awareness of where a long, unfamiliar word may be divided for great accuracy in reading the word.

Morphology. A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in the language. The Structured Literacy curriculum includes the study of base words, roots, prefixes, and suffixes. The word *instructor*, for example, contains the root *struct*, which means *to build*, the prefix *in*, which means *in* or *into*, and the suffix *or*, which means *one who*. An instructor is one who builds knowledge in his or her students.

Syntax. Syntax is the set of principles that dictate the sequence and function of words in a sentence in order to convey meaning. This includes grammar, sentence variation, and the mechanics of language.

Semantics. Semantics is that aspect of language concerned with meaning. The curriculum (from the beginning) must include instruction in the comprehension of written language.

International Dyslexia Association (IDA), 2018

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