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Investigating the Possibility of a Standard of Care for Professionals Who Teach Reading

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Investigating the Possibility of a Standard of Care for Professionals Who Teach Reading

A Dissertation

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Abstract

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) has consistently shown that approximately 40% of American students cannot read at grade level. In fact, most of these 40% of students read considerably below grade level. Unfortunately, these results have remained consistent in spite of reports such as the Nation at Risk in 1983 that first alerted everyone to the severity of the problem and provided remedies on how it could be remedied. The Nation at Risk Report was the impetus for a plethora of educational reform enactments at the federal level such as George H. Walker Bush’s education summit in 1989, Goals 2000, the No Child Left Behind Act and the latest reform measure Race To The Top. In addition, states have enacted their own proficiency standards for student knowledge in reading. Several reading experts such as Louisa Moats and Louise Spear-Swerling have written reading standards that teachers should know to teach reading. The Common Core Standards have been adopted by at least 41 states that outline best reading practices and the International Reading Association has also developed reading standards.

The reading wars have also been a contributory factor to the poor reading scores. The reading wars pitted the whole language advocates against the phonics adherents. When the National Reading Report (2000) and the National Research Council Report (1998), released their results that reading instruction should include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, the reading wars were thought to be over. However, this has not been the case.
Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether a consensus exists for best reading practices among reading experts. Seven reading experts were interviewed and six of the participants agreed that reading instruction should include the five components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The seventh participant agreed that reading instruction contains the five components, however, the main component to teach reading is comprehension. The results have implications for developing a standard of care for reading (reading standards that can be adopted nationally) and the instruction of new teachers by universities.
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Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

Having worked in the special education field as a Speech-Language Pathologist for the past 16 years, I have witnessed significant changes in the methods used to teach reading. When I started working in 1994, I was amazed by the lack of concern for students in special education who could not read. In one Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting I attended, the team discussed ways of teaching a non-reading student compensatory skills. These compensatory skills included reading all class-work material to the student and having the student respond verbally. A special education teacher would then write the answers on the student’s work-sheet. Another compensatory strategy was having the student record everything using a tape-recorder, which a teacher would then transcribe on to paper. There was no mention during this meeting of actually teaching the student to read.

When the parents expressed concerns about their child’s inability to read, one of the team members told the parents not to worry because computers of the future would probably be able to read to people, thus eliminating the necessity of reading altogether.

This situation, and others that I witnessed, caused me to embark on a quest to determine whether there was a proven method to teach reading. This led me to the Dianne McGuinness book *Why Our Children Can’t Read and What We Can Do About It: A Scientific Revolution in Reading* (1997). McGuinness stated unequivocally that all
children could learn to read and that there was no excuse for this information not to be
common knowledge in our schools. McGuinness (1997) states in her book:

> From research in the classroom and the clinic, we have discovered that when the
sequence of reading and spelling instruction is compatible with the logic of the
alphabet code and with the child’s linguistic and logical development, learning to
read and spell proceeds rapidly and smoothly for all children and is equally
effective for poor readers of all ages. (p. xiii)

Since McGuinness published her book, there has been a plethora of research
suggesting that the correct methods of teaching reading are known and it is only a matter
of implementing them. Reading experts such as Louisa Moats (1999) state, “The
knowledge exists to teach all but a handful of severely disabled children to read well” (p.
5). Likewise, other reading researchers, such as Lyon, Fletcher, Torgesen, Shaywitz and
Chhabra (2004), state that the appropriate classroom instruction combined with intensive
interventions can bring the early skills of 90 to 95 percent of the classroom population to
within the average range (p. 86).

The need to improve reading skills has also been recognized by federal and State
governments. At the federal level, Goals 2000: The Educate America Act was passed into
law in 1994. This Act supported States’ efforts to pass rigorous standards for what every
student was required to know and be able to do (1998). The No Child Left Behind
(NCLB) law took effect in 2002 and mandated requirements for standards and
assessments in all States. One requirement under NCLB is universal proficiency for
students in grades 3-8 in their core subjects, such as reading, by the year 2013-2014
(Hess and Finn, 2007, p. 5). Race to the Top is the current effort to spur on education
reform under President Barack Obama. One of its aims is to have States compete for
education funds by enacting reforms based on criteria, such as measuring teacher and principal effectiveness through student assessment scores (Petrilli, 2009).

At the State level, standards have been implemented to improve reading, writing, math, and science skills. State statutes, such as those in Colorado, have been enacted to tie teacher evaluations to student performance (SB10-191, 2010). Reading associations such as the International Reading Association and the International Dyslexia Association are also on board with the standards movement, posting their own reading standards.

Despite these measures, many students continue to be unable to read adequately, as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) statistics demonstrate. The statistics show that as many as 67% of fourth graders and 74% of eighth graders are reading at or above the basic level, which is defined as reading at the most rudimentary level without abstraction (NAEP, 2009, p. 8). This means that only 33% of fourth-grade and 26% of eighth-grade students have the ability to read proficiently. Likewise, the NAEP statistics show that the gap between minority students and Whites has not significantly changed among fourth or eighth graders. To make matters worse, these reading scores have remained relatively unchanged since 1992, in spite of the abundant educational reforms that have been enacted (NAEP, 2007).

Comparisons in reading scores between the United States and other countries show that the United States is slipping behind, adding to the already negative reports. For example, data from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) that assess the reading performance of fourth graders every five years indicates that the United States had reading scores below ten of the 45 jurisdictions that participated in the
study in 2006 (NCES, 2009). The jurisdictions scoring above the United States in 2006 were the Russian Federation, Hong Kong, Alberta, British Columbia, Singapore, Luxembourg, Ontario, Hungary, Italy, and Sweden; the report lists the Canadian provinces as separate jurisdictions because they have separate education systems (NCES: Special Analysis, 2009). Additionally, of the 28 jurisdictions (see Appendix A) that participated in both the 2001 (PIRLS International Report, 2001, p. 3) and 2006 PIRLS assessments, the number of countries that outperformed the United States increased from three in 2001 (the Netherlands, Sweden, Bulgaria) to seven in 2006 (Russian Federation, Italy, Hong Kong, Canada, Singapore, Sweden, Hungary). The Netherlands and Bulgaria have subsequently not performed as well as their previous assessment scores. The United States showed no measurable change in scores from 2001 to 2006 (NCES, 2009). The positive news was that the average scores (540) for U.S. fourth graders in 2006 were higher than 22 jurisdictions, lower than 10 others, and approximately the same as 12 jurisdictions. Moreover, “the percentage of U.S. students scoring in the low category was 96% versus 94% for the international average of the other participating jurisdictions. The four international benchmarks are advanced, high, intermediate, and low (see Appendix A). In the other categories, the U.S. score was 82% versus 76% for the international average for the intermediate international benchmark, 47% versus 41% for the high international benchmark, and 12% versus 7% for the advanced international benchmark (IES, 2007, p. iii).

The bad news was “average scores for White, non-Hispanic (560); Asian, non-Hispanic (567) were higher than the scores for Black, non-Hispanic (503); Hispanic
The U.S. is able to maintain respectable scores internationally in the fourth grade. However, the scores deteriorate at the higher age levels (15-year-olds) as evidenced by the Program in International Student Assessment (PISA) results for math and science. In 2006, according to assessments performed by PISA, “the United States ranked 21st of 30 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in science, and 25th of 30 in mathematics”; i.e., math dropped from 483 in 2003 to 474 in 2006; science dropped from 491 in 2003 to 489 in 2006; the average for OECD countries for both years and both disciplines was 500 (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 9). In reading, “White and Asian students in the U.S. score above the OECD average in each subject area, but African American and Hispanic students score so much lower that the national average plummets to the bottom tier of the rankings (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 11).

New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman (2005) notes that the data are unsettling because we are losing our competitive economic edge due to our diminishing educational skills. Also, Friedman posits in his book The World is Flat that as a consequence, we could see a reduction in our standard of living (2005).

Moreover, the high school graduation rate in the United States is only 70% and is well below the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007). For example, Italy’s graduation rate is 79%, Japan’s is 93%, Denmark's is 96%, and Poland's is 92% (OECD, 2007). Minority graduation rates in the United States are even more alarming with a graduation rate of approximately 50% (Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto
& Sum, 2007). What is more, the United States ranked below the OECD average of 80% high school graduation rate. Countries with graduation rates higher than the U.S. included Denmark, Japan, Poland, Germany, Finland, Switzerland, Czech Republic, France, Belgium, Ireland, and Slovakia (OECD, High School Graduation Rates, 2007).

Similarly, only one third of United States’ students that graduate from high school have the skills to go to college. “Roughly one third of high school graduates are not ready to succeed in an introductory-level college writing course. At the nation’s four-year colleges, nearly eight percent of all entering students are required to take at least one remedial reading course. Only about one third of them are likely to graduate within eight years.” Likewise, 40% of employers who were surveyed are dissatisfied with high school graduates’ skills. The employers stated that many high school graduates do not have the ability to read and comprehend complicated materials (Alliance for Excellent Education Fact Sheet, 2010).

Additionally, a recent study by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (2010) reported:

By race/ethnicity, at two-year institutions the percentage of students assigned to remediation was 60.3% for Asian/Pacific Islanders, 74.9% for Black, non-Hispanics, 64.8% for Hispanics, 63.8% for Native Americans, and 45.9% for White, non-Hispanic students. Compared to the previous year, the percentage of students requiring remediation remained flat for most race/ethnic groups except for an increase in remedial needs for the Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American populations. Remedial education at four-year institutions saw declines for Black, non-Hispanics (from 47.3% to 45.3%), Hispanics (from 38% to 34.0%), Native Americans (from 39.8% to 31.1%), Non-Resident Alien (from 21.6% to 7.8%), and White, non-Hispanics (from 15.8% to 13.9%). Yet a higher percentage of Asian or Pacific Islanders (from 17.7% to 18.4%) and Unknown Ethnicity (from 19.2% to 21.3%) were assigned remediation. (p. 6)
The most disconcerting data of all might be the fact that many U.S. students are not ready for the demands of the workplace. According to the authors of *America’s Perfect Storm* (Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto, & Sum, 2007), one half of the projected job growth will be in occupations that require a college education. This means that students who do not have higher-level skills will be unable to compete for the higher paying jobs. Instead, they will have to compete for low paying jobs with newly-arrived immigrants who are willing to work for less in order to gain entry into the job market. As Thomas Friedman shares in his book *The World is Flat* (2005), Americans can no longer be complacent because there is a job waiting for them upon graduation, especially when there is a person in India or China who is just as educated and willing to work for considerably less than an American worker.

These data are alarming because reading is a fundamental skill. A reading difficulty makes simple tasks, such as reading a want-ad, filling out a job application, or reading the hazards on cleaning products or medicine bottles nearly impossible as this dramatic example from *The Silent Epidemic-The Health Effects of Illiteracy*, from the New England Journal of Medicine (Marcus, 2006) illustrates:

He was 64 years old, with a “history of noncompliance,” according to the resident, and he hadn't taken his diabetes or cardiac medications for weeks. We weren’t quite sure why. He was alert, he appeared to be intelligent and interested in getting well, and he was able to get his prescriptions filled at a reduced cost. Before he went home, we explained why he needed to take his medicines and reviewed the frequency and doses with him several times. He told us he would follow up with his doctor (though he couldn’t remember the doctor’s name or telephone number) and left the hospital with a handwritten discharge summary.

Five months later, he appeared at the community clinic. He said he was taking his medications, but he wasn't sure of their names or how often he took them. A medical student and I reviewed the regimen again. The student typed up
simple instructions in big letters for him to follow, as well as a list of dates and times at which he should record his blood sugar levels. We asked him to come back in two weeks.

When he returned, the student saw him first and made a diagnosis that no one else had considered: illiteracy. The clue lay in the jumbled mess of his glucose log. Many of the sugar values were written next to future dates. We quietly asked him to read his list of medications aloud. Haltingly, he told us he couldn’t do it. Born in the rural South, he had left school in the second grade. He lived alone. He had been able to support himself as a gas-station attendant and handyman, but he had never learned to read. We were stunned. We had tried to avoid jargon and to use simple language in explaining our instructions, and he had seemed to understand everything we had told him. He had seen scores of doctors, nurses, and social workers over the years without anyone’s guessing he had a reading problem. (p. 339)

A more recent example of the schools’ failure to teach reading concerns a student whom I will call Dennis. Dennis was an eighth-grade special education student who came to the researcher’s school from another district in the State of Colorado. Staff working with Dennis realized that he could barely read and, upon further examination, discovered that Dennis was only reading at the kindergarten level based on assessment results. The results were alarming: how could a student have advanced to the eighth grade with such low reading ability? However, what was even more alarming was the lack of urgency to remediate the problem by the special education team members. This is serious because reading experts state that if a student is missing the foundational skills such as phonics, they will be unable to move on to higher level literacy skills that are required to meet the increased demands in advanced grades. Therefore, more intensive remediation is required for the poor adolescent reader due to the huge gap that has developed between these low-level skills and the higher-level literacy skill that is required to read more complex material. “It is very challenging to go back and learn later in life, as the brain is more
receptive to learning concepts of language and literacy more readily before the age of eight” (National Institute for Literacy, 2008). Additionally, poor phonics skills exacerbate reading problems in another way by limiting the vocabulary of poor readers. As a consequence, poor readers cannot build their vocabularies at the same rate as their same-age peers (Stanovich, 2008/2009, p. 26). Furthermore, some reading experts, such as Joseph Torgeson and Louisa Moats, have asserted that reading difficulties must be remediated by the third grade; otherwise, the opportunity of a student ever being able to read becomes remote (Moats, 2007, p. 9; Tough, 2008, p. 209).

Tragically, even though Dennis required intensive remediation, he only received 30 minutes of reading instruction per week. Therefore, it was not surprising that by the end of the school year, Dennis had not improved his reading skills. Today, Dennis is in the ninth grade and shows little improvement in his reading abilities. Recently, the researcher spoke to a colleague at the school Dennis now attends and learned that Dennis spends his days in a regular education classroom, assisted during test-taking times by an aide who reads the exam to him. Dennis receives one-on-one reading assistance, but unfortunately, the tutoring does not include phonics instruction (the sound symbol relationship of the English language), the skill Dennis requires in order to improve. An aide reads his assignments to him and he verbally answers the questions. No reading remediation is taking place.

The reading assessments indicate that Dennis’s reading problems stem from his inability to decode words, which could mean either he did not benefit from proper reading instruction or he was not identified as possibly being dyslexic. According to
recommendations of the National Reading Panel Study, students such as Dennis require phonics instruction in order to read effectively (National Reading Panel, 2000). Dennis’s current teachers cite his refusal to participate in phonics instruction as justification for not teaching him this particular method and the school apparently believes it cannot force him. As a result, Dennis is not receiving the proper reading intervention that he so desperately needs. The No Child Left Behind Act specifically states that only scientifically-based reading interventions must be utilized (NCLB, 2001). According to NCLB, these include phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies that have proven their efficacy by independent research (NCLB Tool Kit for Teachers, 2004). However, NCLB does not apply in Dennis’s case because he does not attend a Title I school (i.e., Title I schools receive federal funds due to the percentage of students who qualify for a free and reduced lunch). The only other remedy available to Dennis is under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) and only if it is found that the school violated the terms and conditions of his Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Schools need to be held accountable for students like Dennis who cannot read. There needs to be national reading standards that hold school districts across the country accountable for teaching students basic reading. The standards that have been enacted thus far by NCLB, Goals 2000, State standards, etc., either have not been explicit enough to define a standard of care for reading instruction or have not been forceful enough to exact penalties for States that are not in compliance with aspects of the Act. The fact that too many students can’t read is the elephant in the room about which no one wants to talk.
but everyone knows is there. Schools either do not want to face this fact or have no idea what to do about it. The premise of this dissertation is that collectively we need to decide if there is enough information for a standard of care for reading to exist; or if there is not, it needs to be created with the expectation of national adoption with the full weight of the federal government behind it. Then, if such a standard for reading is enacted, the federal government can penalize the States that fail to comply by withholding federal funds. This is one of the remedies the federal government currently has at its disposal under No Child Left Behind.

Statement of the Problem

Currently there is no standard of care for reading, at least not according to the courts. This is important because without a standard of care for reading, potential remedy for ineffective teaching is denied to parents whose children are not taught to read. Moreover, an explicit instructional guide is denied to teachers, particularly for those teachers who work in impoverished school districts where illiteracy is an endemic and intractable problem. Many teachers of high poverty students do not know what to do about ameliorating the problem of poor readers and neither do their administrators, which might be due to lower teacher and principal educational achievement levels (NCES, 2010). A standard of care for reading instruction could also provide a common practice for teachers much in the same way that physicians, attorneys, and other professionals use best practices to inform their professional work. It would provide a blueprint for what to do and what not to do when it comes to reading instruction.
Since *A Nation at Risk*, a report on the state of education, was published, there have been several attempts to rectify the poor academic performance of American students. *A Nation at Risk* was released in 1983 and stated:

We recommend that schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards, and higher expectations for academic performance and student conduct, and colleges and universities raise their requirements for admission. This will help students do their best educationally with challenging materials in an environment that supports learning and authentic accomplishment. (NCEE, 1983, p. 27)

There have been several more accountability enactments since the release of *A Nation at Risk*. In 1989, there was the Educational Summit at which President George H.W. Bush assembled the nation's governors in Charlottesville, Virginia. The summit’s net effect was a major power shift from the local (State control) to more federal control for educational issues (Education Summit, 1989). Goals 2000, also known as Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227), was enacted into law in 1994. The Act had laudatory aims of high school graduation rising to at least 90% and the United States leading the world in mathematics and science by the year 2000 (Goals, 2000).

Similarly, NCLB was passed in 2002 as a revision of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in order to set high standards for all students in reading and mathematics. One of NCLB’s goals is for all students to be proficient at the end of third grade by 2013-2014 (NCLB, 2002). Additionally, the NCLB set penalties for schools and school districts not reaching these goals.

There are State statutes enacted that prescribe the reading level a student must achieve in order to graduate from high school. In addition, each State has standards by subject area that a student must meet in order to be considered proficient.
However, in spite of these enactments the (NAEP), also known as the Nation’s Report Card, shows that in 2009 only 28% of eighth-grade students across the United States were proficient in reading. Another 2% were advanced and 69% were at a basic reading level or below. In Colorado, reading scores among White students were 87% basic, 41% proficient, and 3% advanced at the eighth-grade level. On the other hand, Black students scored 62% basic, 15% proficient, with 0% advanced compared to their peers nationally who scored 80% basic, 22% proficient, and 1% advanced. Scores among Hispanic students were similar to those of Blacks. Their scores were 61% basic, 16% proficient, and 1% advanced, compared to their national scores of 84% basic, 35% proficient, and 1% advanced (NAEP, 2009). High school dropout rates as of 2008 were approximately twice as high for low-income students (defined as the bottom 20% of all family incomes) as for middle-income students and four times as high as high-income students. The Hispanic dropout rate in high school is double that of Blacks for 2008 and four times higher than that of Whites. Hispanics had a drop rate of about 20%, Blacks had 10%, and Whites had 5% for 2008 (Chapman & Ramani, p. 23).

Exacerbating this problem is a difference in teacher qualification between teachers working in high-poverty or low-poverty schools. The United States Department of Education statistics show that 38% of teachers working in high-poverty schools had their master’s degree, compared to 52% of teachers in low-poverty schools (NCES, 2007-2008). Likewise, 82% of teachers in high-poverty schools held a regular professional certification, whereas 89% of low-poverty teachers were fully credentialed. Moreover,
teachers in high-poverty schools have less teaching experience than teachers in low-poverty schools (NCES, Special Analysis, 2010).

The literacy rates among American adults are not encouraging either. In 2003, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL, 2003) found that 14% of the population, or 30 million adults, were reading below the basic level (defined as no more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills). Similarly, an additional 29% of the adult population, or 63 million, were reading at the basic skills level (defined as performing simple and every day literacy activities) and 44%, or 95 million adults, read at the intermediate skills level (defined by NAAL as performing moderately challenging literacy activities). Furthermore, only 13%, or 28 million adults, were reading at the proficient level (defined by NAAL as being able to perform complex and challenging literacy activities).

Students continue to fail at reading, and the various attempts at accountability have failed to remediate the problem of illiteracy. There are many reasons for this failure that are beyond the control of the schools. Students from lower socioeconomic environments enter their school careers with as much as one-third the vocabulary as peers from higher socioeconomic situations, and the gap only grows as they advance in grade (Tough, 2008, p. 42).

Additionally, there is the problem of the assimilation of immigrants into the dominant culture. As of 2000, only 33.8% of Hispanics from Mexico graduated from high school. Likewise, “Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans lag behind the rest of the nation and other immigrant groups on a variety of economic indicators, including
managerial and professional occupations, home ownership, and household income” (Huntington, 2004, p. 37). As a consequence, English Language Learners’ (ELL) scores on the NAEP reading assessment have remained flat since 1998. For example, 76% of ELL learners in 1998 were below the basic level of reading, and in 2009, the number had improved to 74% (NCES, ELL, 2009). In 2009, only 26% of ELL students scored at, or above, the basic level, while 3% were at, or above, the proficient level and no students were advanced. Educating these students is a challenge for schools. Likewise, the “minority” population, now one-third of the nation’s population, is expected to be 54% by 2042. By 2050, there will be more Hispanic students in the schools than Whites (CNN, 2010).

Parents who may not care about their child’s education are also out of the school’s control, although this situation represents a small number of students. However, these are issues over which the school has no control and can do little or nothing to change. The focus needs to shift to what can be done about the educational problems facing schools and students such as the most effective teaching practices that will lead to better student outcomes.

The more relevant issue is: how can poor reading scores be improved? For over a decade, the federal government and the States have been embracing standards to improve education. While helpful, the school accountability measures are not getting significantly improving students test scores. School personnel have become so accustomed to the latest craze for school improvement that are quickly replaced by the next attractive school remedy, that when a new one comes along they do not take it seriously. Therefore, many
of my colleagues believe that NCLB will also pass into oblivion like the rest of the school accountability measures, and they simply have to wait it out until the next one comes along.

Additionally, the federal government has not enacted the harshest penalties when it comes to NCLB violations. Frederick M. Hess and Chester E. Finn (2005) in *No Remedy Left Behind* write that schools that are failing can implement the least intrusive measures allowed under NCLB and essentially go on failing indefinitely without repercussion (p. 310). According to Hess and Finn (2007), as long as these schools appear to be complying with the Act, they are “home free” (p. 310). This is a recurring problem with educational reforms. The educational standards enacted thus far appear to be more symbolic than substantive. They look good to the public; however, in reality, the educational reforms are falling far short of expectations due to the vacuity and generality of their provision (Ravitch, 2010, p. 19).-The standards lack any content skills and instead focus on pre-reading strategies, interaction with the text, making predictions, etc. (Ravitch, 2010, pp. 35-36). These skills, while beneficial, are not going to the students who cannot access the text due to low phonics skills or low vocabulary skills. Therefore, as a practical matter, there is no way that the standards can be enforced in any reasonable manner.

To witness another problem with the enforcement of current standards, one needs to look at the NCLB as it tries to enforce its harsher measures with a State that is out of compliance with its proscriptions. For example, if a State decides to close down a failing school and replace the staff, officials may encounter collective bargaining contracts that
prevent them from doing so. Or, if a State law does not allow a certain provision for enforcement under NCLB, the State statute takes precedence, rendering the federal law impotent (Finn & Hess, 2007, p. 326).

A possible solution to these problems is a standard of care that reading professionals need to follow to properly teach reading. A standard of care is defined as:

The failure to exercise the standard of care that a reasonably prudent person would have exercised in a similar situation; any conduct that falls below the legal standard established to protect others against unreasonable risk of harm, except for conduct that is intentionally, wantonly, or will-fully disregardful of others’ rights. (Garner, p. 479)

In the context of reading instruction, a standard of care can also be described as the consensus that exists among teachers as to best reading practices. In other words, is there consensus among reading experts as to what good reading instruction should include? For example, phonics instruction for children in grades K-2? Or, is there consensus among reading experts regarding when reading fluency and comprehension strategies should begin? There needs to be agreement as to the effective methods and practices that teachers have to know and commonly use to teach reading.

The courts presently say that there is not a standard of care for education. The courts have also stated that it is not possible to define a standard of care for educational instruction. The case that set the precedent for the denial of educational malpractice due to a lack of a standard of care was the 1976 Peter W. v. San Francisco Unified School District (see Appendix B). The Peter W. court stated “unlike the activity of the highway or the marketplace, classroom methodology affords no readily acceptable standards of care, or cause, or injury.” (PAGE NUMBER?) Even though classroom methodology has
changed in response to the standards and accountability movement, this case continues to exert a lot of influence as to the denial of educational malpractice as a legal remedy for poor reading instruction. The court further stated that “the Science of pedagogy itself is fraught with different and conflicting theories of how or what a child should be taught, and any layman [sic] might—and commonly does—have his [sic] own emphatic views on the subject” (Peter W., 1976).

Do we have enough consensus among reading experts to enact a standard of care for reading? If so, the potential exists to add that standard to the growing list of federal and State standards that can be used to combat the illiteracy problem in this country. A standard of care will not be a panacea that can eradicate poor reading instruction by removing one of the obstacles to the denial of educational malpractice claims. However, why remove one of the measures that will hold the schools accountable for ineffective instruction? The schools evidently do not fear the penalties under NCLB for poor reading scores because the NAEP reading scores have remained flat since 1992. Nor do the schools fear the other accountability measures enacted thus far. Why not provide reading teachers a blueprint for what is required for good literacy instruction? Similarly, why not provide parents with a clearer picture of what their child should know and when they should know it in regard to reading?

**Purpose of the Study**

Based on the standards and accountability measures that we currently have, a reasonable question to ask is: does a standard of care for reading already exist? If it does, is there a consensus among reading professionals as to what the standard is? There has
been much written about educational standards (such as Goals 2000, NCLB, etc.); however, not much has been written about an explicit standard that would govern the teaching of reading. Is there a consensus exists among reading professionals as to what that standard of care for reading should be? The purpose of this dissertation is to find this out.

This study proposes to find the answers to these questions by investigating the literature and by interviewing reading experts. Two issues will be explored. The first is to determine if a standard of care for reading can be defined by a review of the literature. The second will be to determine if a consensus exists for a standard of care for reading instruction by interviewing reading experts.

If there is agreement among professionals as to the existence of a standard of care, then there are a few possible outcomes that may influence the educational establishment and benefit parents.

1. It can be the impetus for further studies to define a standard of care for reading.

2. The knowledge can help inform the courts that there is consensus and, therefore, the reading profession is not “fraught with competing pedagogies” as the court in Peter W. v. San Francisco Unified School District (1976)

3. It can provide a remedy for parents and students who have not received an adequate education.

4. It can help inform the curricula for professional development and university courses.

5. The study may help to convey professional status on teachers who, at this time, cannot claim that title due to the courts’ view of the profession (i.e., the courts currently do not view teaching as a profession as they do with attorneys, engineers, and physicians because teaching does not have a standard of care while the latter professions do).
The States and the federal government have been moving toward more standardization of education practices ever since *A Nation at Risk* was released in 1983, as can be shown by Goals 2000, State education standards, NCLB, Colorado Senate Bill 10-191, and other policy statements. Proof of a standard of care should add to the collective weight of these accountability measures for educational reform.

*Research Questions*

This study is designed to investigate the possibility that a consensus exists among reading experts as to the best instructional methods to teach reading. This is a relatively unexplored area in education. Therefore, the researcher hopes that the information presented in this study will inform the reading profession of best practices and serve as the impetus for further research. The purpose of this dissertation is to interview reading experts and to find the answers to the following research questions.

1. What is the standard of care for professionals who teach reading?
2. How do experts define the effective methodologies to teach reading?
3. How can the views of experts be translated into practical standards and practice for reading professionals?

*Organization of the Study*

The study consists of five chapters. Chapter One includes the introduction with a brief *description of the problem*, statement of the problem, research questions, definitions, a list of acronyms, procedures, and a summary. Chapter Two includes an historical review of reading instruction from the perspective of the reading wars and a review of the educational standards movement. Chapter Three contains the research
methodology was utilized for the study, the population, the data collection techniques, data analysis procedures, and the study limitations. Chapter Four contains the qualitative data analysis of the interviews. Chapter Five presents the results of the study, outlines conclusions based on the results, and provides recommendations for further study.

*Contextualized Interview*

The researcher used a contextualized interview to provide better insight into the subject matter. The thoughts and ideas of the participants were explored to gain a better conception of the professionals’ thinking on the standardization of reading instruction. More specifically, the interviews provided an in-depth understanding of the current status of pedagogical philosophy as a result of the research, education reforms, and accountability measures that have accumulated since the precedent-setting court case of Peter W. in 1976. After getting approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher send a consent form to each participant in the study, along with a brief description of the study.

*Definitions Used in this Study*

- Alphabetic Principle: The basic idea that written language is a code in which letters represent the sounds in spoken words.

- Code-Emphasis: An approach to reading instruction in which lessons are organized around the systematic teaching of letter-sound correspondences and patterns, and children are taught to sound out words using phonic knowledge (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2000).

- Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP): an assessment given to students grades 3-10 to monitor their progress in subject areas such as reading.

- Definitions of the CSAP scores from the Colorado Department of Education: Reading Proficiency Levels:

  ✓ Advanced-Performance Level 4: A student scoring at the Advanced Level
consistently utilizes sophisticated strategies to comprehend and interpret complex text. Students who score in this level illustrate exceptionally strong academic performance.

✓ Proficient-Performance Level 3: A student scoring at the Proficient Level routinely utilizes a variety of reading strategies to comprehend and interpret grade-level appropriate text. Students who score in this level demonstrate a solid academic performance on subject matter as reflected by the Colorado Model Content Standards for reading.

✓ Partially Proficient-Performance Level 2: A student scoring at the Partially Proficient Level generally utilizes some reading strategies to comprehend grade level text. Students who score in this level show partial understanding of the knowledge and application of the skills that are fundamental for proficient work. Some gaps in knowledge and skills are evident and may require additional instruction and remediation in order to achieve a proficient level of understanding.

✓ Unsatisfactory-Performance Level 1: A student scoring at the Unsatisfactory Level demonstrates competency with below grade-level text only and requires extensive support to comprehend and interpret written information. Students who score in this level may have significant gaps and limited knowledge and skills that are necessary to meet the state’s reading standard. Students will usually require a considerable amount of additional instruction and remediation in order to achieve a proficient level of understanding.

• Educational Malpractice: Also called “educational negligence,” “academic negligence,” “intellectual harm,” “intellectual damage,” or “diminished intellectual development” (Collis, 1990, p. 7).

• Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): “Special education and related services provided in conformity with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); are without charge; and meets standards of the State Department of Education (SEA)” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 426).

• Graphophonic: A whole-language term that refers to the written spellings for individual speech sounds, more properly termed sound-symbol or phoneme-grapheme associations (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2000).

• Highly Qualified Teacher: “Teachers who are certified by the state or pass the state teacher examination, demonstrating competence in the subject area they teach, and hold a license to teach” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 426).

• IDEA: The “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 427).
• IEP: “Individualized Educational Plan” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 427).

• Learning Disability: “Disability category under IDEA: includes disorders that affect the ability to understand or use spoken or written language; may manifest in difficulties with listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, reading fluency, spelling, and doing mathematical calculations; includes minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental dysphasia” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 430).

• Least Restrictive Environment: “Legal requirement to educate children with disabilities in general education classrooms with children who are not disabled to the maximum extent possible” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 427).

• Morphemes: The smallest meaningful units in language, such as the prefix, root, and suffix in observance (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2000).

• National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): “Assessments in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, geography, civics, and the arts; is the only nationally representative, continuing assessment of what American students know and can do in various subjects” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 428).

• Onsets and Rimes: are parts of monosyllabic words in spoken language. These units are smaller than syllables but may be larger than phonemes. An onset is the initial consonant sound of a syllable (the onset of bag is b-; of swim is sw-) (www.ldonline.org/glossary).

• Orthography: The writing system for a language. English is an alphabetic, phonemic, and morphemic orthography; Chinese characters are a logographic orthography (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2000).

• Phonemes: The smallest sound units (consonants and vowels) that combine to make the word of a language, for example /sh/, /e/, /l/ in "shell" (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2000).

• Phonemic Awareness: “The ability to hear and identify individual sounds or phonemes” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 429).


• Phonological: Having to do with the speech sound system of a language,
including the production and interpretation of the sound patterns of language (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2000).


- Public Law (P.L.) 94-142: “The Education for all Handicapped Children Act that was enacted in 1975” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 429).

- Reading: “A complex system of deriving meaning from print that requires all of the following: The skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes, or speech sounds, are connected to print. The ability to decode unfamiliar words. The ability to read fluently. Sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension. The development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print. The development and maintenance of a motivation to read (20 U.S.C. 6368)” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 429).

- Reading First: is a federal program that focuses on putting proven methods of early reading instruction in classrooms. Through Reading First, states and districts receive support to apply scientifically based reading research and the proven instructional and assessment tools consistent with this research to ensure that all children learn to read well by the end of third grade (www.ldonline.org/glossary).

- Scientifically Based Research: “Research that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable, valid knowledge about education activities and programs. Includes research that employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment, involves rigorous data analyses to test hypotheses and justify conclusion, relies on methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, and studies that are accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through rigorous, objective and scientific review” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 430).

- Tort: 1: “A civil wrong, other than breach of contract, for which a remedy may be obtained, usu. in the form of damages; a breach of a duty that the law imposes on persons who stand in a particular relation to one another” (Blacks Law Dictionary, third pocket edition, 2006, p. 724).

**Acronyms used in this Study**

- CELA: Colorado English Language Acquisition Proficiency Assessment

- CSAP: Colorado Student Assessment Program

- CDE: Colorado Department of Education
Since 1983, when *A Nation at Risk* was released, America has struggled with ways to fix the deteriorating educational conditions in schools. Several solutions have been proposed, such as George H.W. Bush’s Education Summit in 1989, Goals 2000, the NCLB in 2002, State standards that require more rigorous academic requirements for students, common core standards, President Obama’s “Race to the Top,” and State statutes. However, none have ameliorated the problem of students’ low reading scores, which according to the NAEP, have remained essentially flat since 1992.

Educational malpractice has also been attempted as a remedy for students who
have been harmed as a result of receiving an inadequate education. However, this remedy has been unsuccessful. The legal precedent was set in Peter W. v. San Francisco Unified School District (1976). The court in Peter W. case cited one of the reasons for the denial of educational malpractice as due to the absence of a standard of care for the teaching profession. The decision stated that the profession was “fraught with too many competing pedagogies” that prohibited a standard of care (Peter W. v. San Francisco Unified School District, 1976).

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate whether this claim by the courts continues to be true. A consistent methodology for reading instruction would be beneficial to education in two ways. First, an agreed-upon method would provide a blueprint for teachers as to what should be taught. Secondly, deviation from a standard practice of reading instruction would provide parents with a remedy for inadequate or improper instruction. This study utilized interview questions to investigate the consensus of thought for best reading practices. The research questions were devised by the researcher.
Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

According to the National Institute for Literacy:

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 defines literacy as ‘an individual’s ability to read, write, speak in English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual and in society.’ This is a broader view of literacy than just an individual’s ability to read, the more traditional concept of literacy. As information and technology have become increasingly shaped [by] our society [sic], the skills we need to function successfully have gone beyond reading, and literacy has come to include the skills listed in the current definition. (http://novel.nifl.gov/nifl/faqs.html)

There is a history of controversy surrounding proper reading instruction. The two main parties in this debate are the whole language proponents and the phonics adherents. In the 1970s and 1980s, the whole language movement was popular among teachers, administrators, and university professors (Ravitch, 2010). The whole language people believe that learning to read is a natural process akin to learning to speak and, therefore, explicit instruction in phonics is unnecessary. The phonics proponents believe that explicit, systematic instruction in the sound to symbol relationship of words is required to learn to read. It was not until the reports from the National Academy of Sciences and the National Institute of Health in the 1990s that the controversy finally began to abate. Currently, there is apparent consensus that good early reading instruction involves learning the “sounds and symbols of language” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 35).
Coinciding with the development of a new found reading consensus is the educational standards movement such as the State standards and the NCLB. However, in reviewing the professional literature, there has not been a study focused on determining whether or not the advancement of these two developments leads to the creation of a standard of care (i.e., a standard practice that governs, or a least informs, reading instruction). Likewise, the attempt to create a standard of care for reading instruction is a recent phenomenon brought about by reading professionals. There is a need to explore this new phenomenon to determine the extent of a reading instruction consensus and whether or not it appears to be gaining momentum among teachers. The focus of this dissertation was to determine the possibility of a standard of care for reading instruction.

Chapter Two covers the following topics. First, there is a brief description of the reading wars (the dispute in best reading practices between the proponents of whole language and phonics). The reading wars provide a historical context for the development of reading instruction. Next, school accountability measures such as No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the Individuals Education Act of 2004 (IDEA), school standards, and the Race to the Top are discussed as the guide to the best teaching practices. The findings from the National Reading Panel and the National Reading Council are presented, followed by reading experts’ views on best reading practices. Finally, reading standards that have been proposed by reading experts, the International Reading Association and the International Dyslexia Association are discussed.
A Brief History of the Reading Wars

Whole language researchers maintained that student-centered activities, understanding, and figuring out words in the context of a story with the emphasis on the reading experience served as the crux of reading instruction (Ravitch, 2010, p. 34). The method was opposed to explicit instruction in “phonics, spelling, grammar, punctuation, or any other form of linguistic analysis” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 34).

The whole language proponents argued that learning to read is as natural a process as learning to speak, and if teachers put good fun books in front of students and allow them to explore, they will learn to read largely on their own (Finn & Davis, 2007, p. 6). The whole language method actually began in the 1920s; however, its modern version appeared in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the writings of Frank Smith at the University of Victoria in British Columbia and Kenneth Gordon at the University of Northern Arizona (Ravitch, 2000, p. 443). Smith and Goodman were both critical of phonics instruction. They believed that reading should not be difficult and stated that “the effort to read through decoding is largely futile and unnecessary” and most children learn to read “despite exposure to phonics” (Ravitch, 2000, p. 443). Similarly, learning phonics is not required because, according to Goodman, “readers rely on context to guess an upcoming word rather than using the word's spelling” (Collins & Austin, 1997, p. 2). Goodman wrote that if children are surrounded with lots of good literature and provided the opportunity to read, then they would learn to read without any sort of direct instruction (Goodman, 1986; Ravitch, 2000, pp. 443-444).
Other characteristics of whole language involved “student-centered activities, authentic reading experiences (experiences the student can relate to in the real world), the integration of reading and writing, and freeing students from skills instruction” (Goodman, 1986; Ravitch, 2000, p. 444). Whole language was against what many progressive educators termed the “drill and kill” method (phonics instruction) of teaching that implies boring students with drill and practice activities that “kills the interest and joy children have in learning” (Hirsch, 1996, p. 250). As Hirsch (1996) says, it also implies “that learning will occur ‘automatically’ using naturalistic pedagogy like discovery learning, thematic learning, and the project method” (p. 250).

The whole language method received major recognition in California by the then Acting Superintendent of Public Instruction, Bill Honig (Lemann, 1997). In 1987, Honig promised that he would “establish a rigorous, traditional education for all children” (Ravitch, 2000, p.445). Honig adopted the whole language method for the State of California and created the momentum for other States to follow. The impetus for the downfall of whole language came in 1996 when the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) scores showed that California had slipped to the bottom in the nation. In 1992, the NAEP scores showed that California was fourth from the bottom ahead of Mississippi, the District of Columbia, and Guam. By 1994, the State had slipped below Mississippi and by 1996 it had fallen all the way to the bottom (Ravitch, 2000, p. 447). Chester E. Finn Jr. and Martin A. Davis, Jr. (2007) stated that the debate over whole language’s efficacy “should have been lain to rest in 1967, when Jeanne Chall published Learning to Read: The Great Debate” (Finn & Davis, 2007, p. 7). Chall, a Harvard
researcher, concluded in her research that “most children needed to know how to decode, that is, to learn the relationship between letters and their sounds, and they also needed to read good children’s literature in the elementary grades” (Ravitch, 2000, p. 443). Even before Chall, reading expert and writing consultant Rudolph Flesch was sounding the alarm about whole language. In 1955, Flesch published the book Why Johnny Can’t Read that was on the national best-seller list for over 30 weeks (Ravitch, 2000, p. 353). In the book, Flesch lambasted the use of whole language to teach reading saying that the “systematic neglect of phonics had caused a national crisis in reading” (Ravitch, 2000, p. 354).

Another contributing factor to the downfall of whole language nationally, was due to the results of the NAEP testing, which showed that 40% of fourth graders were reading below the basic level (NCES, NAEP Reading Report Card 1994, p. 54). The percentage of students scoring below basic displayed a disturbing trend. Blacks had gone from 68% in 1992 to 70% reading below a basic level in 1994, and Hispanics exhibited an even more precipitous decline going from 58% in 1992 to 67% reading below basic in 1994 (NCES, NAEP Reading Report Card 1994, p. 145).

In the late 1990s, a number of studies funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development confirmed reports, such as Chall’s, that reinforced the importance of both phonemic awareness and reading comprehension (Ravitch, 2000, p. 449). A report issued by the National Research Council featured the findings of a panel of leading and distinguished scientists who stated that explicit instruction in “spelling sound correspondences” was required to teach reading and that reading consisted of teaching
both sound to symbol relationships and reading comprehension (Ravitch, 2000, p. 449).

In the Executive Summary of the National Reading Council Report: Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998), researchers explained the importance of being able to read in a highly complex, technologically advanced society.

Reading is essential to success in our society. The ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement. Of course, most children learn to read fairly well. In this report, we are most concerned with the large numbers of children in America whose educational careers are imperiled because they do not read well enough to ensure understanding and to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive economy. Current difficulties in reading largely originate from rising demands for literacy, not from declining absolute levels of literacy. In a technological society, the demands for higher literacy are ever increasing, creating more grievous consequences for those who fall short. (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998, p. 1)

Into this mix of scientific studies that backed the approaches of phonemic awareness-phonics instruction and comprehension was the National Reading Panel Report in 2000. The report identified the five components required for effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension that should be present if the reading instruction is to be considered scientifically based reading research (SBRR; Finn & Davis, 2007, p. 7). The NCLB instituted a requirement for SBRR when it mandated that schools receiving Reading First funds must use SBRR materials (Finn & Davis, 2007, p. 7). According to a significant number of teachers and administrators, the research findings from the National Reading Council (1998) and the National Reading Panel (2000) settled the issue of best reading practices.

However, according to noted researcher and literacy consultant Louisa C. Moats, the school systems are continuing to use whole language reading approaches, but are calling it balanced literacy. In October 2000, Moats wrote a Fordham University report
whole language programs had adopted the misleading phrase “balanced literacy” as a fig leaf to conceal their true nature (p. 8). Balanced literacy (the practice of using both phonics and whole language instruction) is a practical approach to reading instruction, according to cognitive psychologist Marilyn Jager Adams. She concluded that there is merit in using both approaches. Adams found that children do better at reading if they are given systematic phonics instruction that is followed by good literature (Ravitch, 2000, p. 449). According to Moats (2000), the problem is when the reading program identifies itself as a balanced approach, but then does not teach phonological skills, phonics, or reading fluency. The criticism is that practitioners of whole language who continue using the same methods but do not want to attract attention sometimes use balanced literacy as a Trojan horse, meaning they appear to be utilizing scientifically based reading practices, but in reality, are using the same old methods.

Finn and Davis (2007) said that in 2005 the Denver Public Schools in Colorado were utilizing a “balanced approach.” The district failed to show improvement in reading scores and, therefore, the Reading First funds from the Federal Government were withdrawn (Finn & Davis, 2007, p. 13). Finn and Davis (2007) cite Moats when they say that the reason these so called “balanced literacy” programs survive is because they claim to use SBRR reading approaches, but they are being deceitful (p. 9). A study published by the National Center for Teacher Quality found that only 15% of education schools trained their students in “the basics of SBRR strategies” (Finn & Davis, 2007, p. 10).
Therefore, it is no surprise that correct reading instruction is not being provided to students throughout the country (Finn & Davis, 2007).

The underlying controversy running through all of these examples is the conflict of perception or misperception between teaching philosophies like constructivism and behaviorism. Constructivism is the teaching philosophy that is identified with whole language and behaviorism is identified with phonics instruction. Constructivism “is based on the idea that children learn by connecting new knowledge to previously learned information” (Reyhner, 2008, p. 3). Reyhner (2008) suggests that constructivist theory uses terms such as student-centered, experiential interactive, whole language instruction for reading, and emphasis on meaning (p. 3). Behaviorism, on the other hand, uses terms such as teacher-centered direct instruction, transmission mode of knowledge delivery, an emphasis on phonics instruction with main instruction being the teaching of sounds and skills. The behaviorist model is also associated with rote memory and the drill and skills method of learning, which critics deride as not learning at all because the student is only memorizing the information and not really understanding it.

Constructivist theory suggests that children are not passive recipients for receiving knowledge, but rather are active participants in constructing meaning for themselves (Hirsch, 1996, p. 133). Educator and academic literary critic E.D. Hirsch, Jr., is among learning theorists who are against child-centered, experiential, teacher as facilitator approaches and agree with the learning philosophy of constructivist theory that students construct meaning from information for themselves. As Hirsch (1996) says, “human remembering is rarely a perfect retrieval of something stored in our minds but,
rather, a reconstruction that in some details may be quite different from the original experience” (p. 133). Hirsch believes that constructivist theory is indeed an accurate portrayal of the learning process. However, he also believes that child-centered educators have distorted the idea behind the learning philosophy to mean something quite different. For example, Hirsch (1996) states “it is true …that self-generated student-constructed learning is sometimes better retained and more readily accessible than constructed learning that is teacher induced.” However, student-centered learning also has its drawbacks because students remember all sorts of things from their experiences “some of them irrelevant to the purpose at hand and some of them wrong” (p. 133). He further states that it is incorrect to think that constructing meaning occurs only when children are working independently, but happens equally when students are receiving direct instruction from a teacher. In other words, constructing knowledge is what happens when students learn regardless of the way in which they are learning.

As Hirsch (1996) states,

Educators are too hasty in concluding that constructivism justifies more experiential, inductive hands-on learning with all the attendant noise of students doing, talking, collaborating, and so on. This faulty inference is based on the assumption that other forms of learning involve mere “transmission” and “reception” instead of the active construction of knowledge. But all meaningful learnings, induced by any and all methods, entail such active construction. (p. 133)

The idea that one needs to be a purist phonics educator or a purist whole language teacher is illogical. The purpose of reading is to extract meaning from the text. Therefore, it is logical that if one is able to read the words but unable to understand them, then most people would agree that that is not reading. Research demonstrates that most children
who come from educated households where they are read to and are surrounded by lots of books will learn to read (some 60% of children). However, 40% of children require direct instruction into the sounds and symbols of the language in order to learn to read (Lyon, 1997). With those students, reading to them and surrounding them with good literature, while also important, is not going to teach them to read.

The two sides may not be as far apart as they think because most phonics people agree that the object of literacy instruction is reading for meaning. In 1967, Jeanne Chall stated “…that phonics instruction should not consist of mindless drills, should not be done to the exclusion of reading stories, and should not extend beyond the first half of first grade” (Collins & Austin 1997, p. 2). Chall also warned that if phonics instruction is taken too far,

We will be confronted in 10 or 20 years with another best-seller: Why Robert Can't Read. The culprit in this angry book will be the 'prevailing' [phonics] approach... The suggested cure will be a 'natural' approach—one that teaches whole words and emphasizes reading for meaning and appreciation at the very beginning. The rise of whole language perfectly corresponds to this scenario. (Collins & Austin 1997, p. 2)

Unfortunately, however, the reading wars have become enmeshed in the culture wars that are at their foundation a political issue. The political left has tended to think of phonics as a right-wing issue and the political right has tended to think of whole language as a left-wing issue. Kenneth Goodman referred to the report by the National Academy of Education who had endorsed the teaching of phonics as advancing the agenda of the far right (Ravitch, 2000, p. 445). This may explain the intransigence of both sides when it comes to reading instruction and why the issue has appeared to be irresolvable.
However, due to the high percentage of failing students in reading, as well as in other subjects as math and science, it was only a matter of time before the government became concerned and the standards movement was born.

*The Standards Movement*

The idea of educational standards developed as a result of *A Nation at Risk* findings in 1983. The results indicated that Americans were losing ground in many educational areas, which would impede our ability to compete in the future on the global economic stage. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) report stated:

> The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people… If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today we might well have viewed it as an act of war. (NCEE, 1983)

America was not doing as well academically as it had in the past. Student scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) were significantly lower on the verbal and math portions in the 1970s than what they had been in the 1960s (The College Entrance Examination Board, 1976). Another concern was the educational standards that had fallen as evidenced by the lack of verbal difficulty in high school textbooks. Similarly, a rising number of students entering college required remedial classes to catch up. The NCEE commissioners report cited four areas on which schools needed to focus in order to succeed and provide a good education for students. The report identified content, expectations, time, and teaching as areas in need of improvement and listed several suggestions in each area for future accomplishments (Ravitch, 2000, p. 413).
Under content, the commissioners stated that most schools’ curricula had been “homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer had a central purpose…[they said that we now have a] cafeteria style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for main courses” (NCEE, 1983). The expectations section of the report stated that students were taking easier courses such as cooking and drivers’ education but receiving the same number of credits as courses in algebra or chemistry. Grade inflation was also occurring as was minimum high school graduation requirements, and college entrance requirements had also been weakened (NCEE, findings, 1983). The NCEE commissioners reported that:

We offer intermediate algebra, but only 31 percent of our recent high school graduates complete it; we offer French I, but only 13 percent complete it; and we offer geography, but only 16 percent complete it. Calculus is available in schools enrolling about 60 percent of all students, but only 6 percent of all students complete it.

Twenty-five percent of the credits earned by general track high school students are in physical and health education, work experience outside the school, remedial English and mathematics, and personal service and development courses, such as training for adulthood and marriage. (NCEE, findings, 1983)

In the time area, the commissioners said that school districts and legislatures should strongly consider seven hour school days as well as a 200 to 220 day school year. They also recommended that students be assigned far more homework than what was currently being assigned. Under teaching, the commissioners recommended that teachers should be held to high educational standards, have their salaries increased, and receive additional compensation based on performance. Likewise, the report said that school boards should adopt an eleven-month contract for teachers (NCEE, findings, 1983).
The NCEE report was responsible for the educational standards movement that followed its publication in 1983. *A Nation at Risk* was the incentive for President George H. Bush’s Educational Summit in 1989, which sought to ameliorate education’s weakened condition by setting up a national system of standards and assessments. The belief was that without higher expectations for students and “higher stakes,” schools would not have the incentive to reform themselves (Shanker, 1994, pp. 14-19). Shanker said it would be “significant” if fixed performance goals were established for reading and mathematics and, then, those skills were assessed at certain age levels (Johnson, 1989). The aim was to have the States adopt educational standards on a voluntary basis for the main subject areas.

President Clinton then took up the banner for educational standards by signing Goals 2000 into law in 1994. One of Clinton’s aims was to have a voluntary national standard for education; however, that idea was soon abandoned due to the Republicans taking control of Congress later that year. The problem was that neither side of the political aisle could agree on what should be taught. A case in point was the history standards. The goal was to re-establish historical content into the social studies curriculum (Ravitch, 2000, p. 433). However, people on the right believed the history standards portrayed the country in a negative light, magnifying America’s misdeeds rather than accomplishments. People on the left believed the content was appropriate and gave voice to sectors of the population that had been previously neglected in history due to their being oppressed minorities (Nash, 2004). Rhoads, Sieber, and Slayton (1992) displayed an example of the acrimony in an article:
Robert Dole, in a speech designed to appeal to the Republican party's conservative wing, harshly denounced the history standards. In a Labor Day speech last year he asserted, "The purpose of the national history standards seems not to be to teach our children certain facts about our history, but to denigrate America's story while sanitizing and glorifying other cultures. This is wrong, and it threatens us surely as any foreign power ever has.... After years of that, would you love America?" (Pitsch, 1995) Secretary of Education, Richard Riley also jumped on this political bandwagon saying, "They portray American history in a bad light, and that is a mistake.... Those aren't our standards. We had nothing to do with them" (Pitsch, 1995). The use of federal monies and election year dramas have helped turn national standards into federal ones which will be manipulated by partisan politics (Education Week, Direction and Prospects, 1992).

The English standards also caused a stir for different reasons. The Department of Education actually cut off funding for the development of the English standards due to their lack of content (Ravitch, 2000, p. 437). The standards were the product of the tandem effort of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Councils of Teachers of English (NCTE). As Ravitch (2000) stated, the standards did not include “accurate language usage, correct spelling and grammar, great contemporary or classic literature, or what students at any grade level should actually know and be able to do” (p. 437).

The mathematics standards, that many thought would be the easiest to develop, also ran into trouble. Released by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the mathematics standards of 1989 were going to correct the old math standards that were termed “new math,” that stressed the conceptual nature of mathematics rather than computation (Ravitch, 2000, p. 438). The difficulty with the methods endorsed by the NCTM was that the process of a student working on a math problem became more important than finding a solution to the problem. In other words, the methods urged
student-centered activities that sought the answers using creative means; the actual correct answer to the problem was secondary to the process of searching for a solution. The method received the name “fuzzy math.” The downfall of NCTM’s mathematics standards came when the math test scores (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills) showed a decline in student achievement (Cheney, 1997).

In 1994, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized. The ESEA was also called “Improving America’s Schools Act.” “The law required states to establish content and performance standards in reading and math by the 1997-1998 school year, with final assessments aligned with those standards three years later” (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003, p. 240). However, due to the difficulty of determining what children from impoverished backgrounds should know and be able to do by a certain grade level, many States were granted waivers because their legislatures could not meet the deadline (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). The closing of the educational gap that existed between students from impoverished backgrounds and their more privileged peers became the focus of new standards.

The federal government’s standards had been gradually evolving with stricter enforcement penalties that culminated with the passage of NCLB. Under the Act, the federal government had the right to withhold funds from States that were not in compliance with NCLB provisions. However, only schools that received Title I funds (i.e., at least 40% of the students receive a free and reduced lunch) from the federal government had to fear losing the funds for non-compliance. The primary aim of the Act
was to close the achievement gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged and to bring every student up to proficiency by 2013-2014 (Thernstrom & Thenstrom 2003, p. 241).

Schools were required to make the results of State assessments publicly available and to display the results by category. For example, test results had to be shown based on ethnicity, special education, and free and reduced lunch categories to name a few. The NCLB created more educational accountability for schools that were not educating children. However, given that this dissertation is written in 2011, it does not appear to be a realistic expectation that all students will be proficient by the 2013-2014 school year.

One of the problems is the question: What does proficient mean? As Thernstrom & Thernstrom (2003) note, proficiency has a clear definition by way of NAEP (p. 242). Yet, the definition at the State level may mean something different. For example, the Thernstroms cite North Carolina’s test results in 2000 showing “84% of fourth graders scoring proficient on the State mathematics test; however, according to the NAEP assessment in North Carolina, in the same year only 28% of those students were proficient” (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003, p. 242).

Standards

Diane Ravitch (1996) says “education means to lead forth, but it is impossible to lead anyone anywhere without knowing where you want to go” (p. 1). Standards have become a common part of the educational lexicon. Some educators believe that standards are absolutely essential to a good educational system. Others, such as Richard Allington, a professor of education at the University of Tennessee, and former IRA President, think
they are unnecessary. Nonetheless, standards for educational goals have become a permanent fixture in education.

Businesses measure their success by their profit margin, and failure to compete means that the business will not survive. For schools, failure has not been associated with such a draconian outcome until now. Schools must now measure their success by how well their students are able to perform on standardized tests. Therefore, standards must be in place in order to determine what a student has learned and whether or not the learning is deemed acceptable. Likewise, schools must have a clear set of priorities in the curriculum and the instructional strategies that will be used to teach in order to be effective. Ravitch (1996) says, “When educators fail to agree on what children should learn, it means that they have failed to identify their most fundamental goals” (p. 1).

Standards are a way in which to set goals and priorities for learning and assessments are the method to gauge either success or failure in reaching those goals.

Standards can be placed into two categories: content and student performance. Content standards are the ideas, skills, and knowledge in each discipline that are important for every student to know (Improving America’s Schools, 1996). Performance standards are the values, sometimes called indicators, which define excellence and describe how good is good enough. Ravitch (1996) states:

Content standards make it possible to coordinate the various parts of the educational system to promote student learning. Teachers can use content standards to prepare their lessons. Textbook writers can use them to write materials for the schools. Colleges and universities can use them to prepare teachers so that they will know what they are expected to teach… Seen this way, explicit content standards clearly can become an organizing force for education, in which all the different pieces of the system are focused on the same goal: helping children learn at high levels of achievement. (p. 2)
E.D. Hirsch, Jr., is a strong proponent of a national curriculum as a way to ameliorate “mediocrity” in education. He believes that if the United States adopted a national curriculum with strong content at each grade level, the country would have better educated students. Additionally, a national curriculum would be more equitable for students who come from impoverished circumstances, due to their tendencies to move often, as they would not be faced with a new curriculum with each move.

Hirsch is also critical of the multi-year grade standards (K-4, 5-8, 9-12 grade levels). He believes the “readiness to learn principle” applies to one grade only and encompasses the knowledge and skills that a student should be required to know for that particular grade (Hirsch, 1996). Hirsch states,

…without clear and specific definitions of what, for example, readiness for second grade means, it is not possible to monitor and rectify deficits in a timely way. Under our current arrangements and under those now implied by multi-year standards, there is never a specific point when a child, a teacher, or any other participant is responsible for a shortcoming. Only a school system which specifically defines the knowledge and skill required to participate in each successive grade can be excellent and fair for all students. (pp. 228-229)

Clearly, Hirsch has not been a fan of standards as they were configured until recently with the common core standards (to be discussed later). He believes that standards are all about teaching test taking skills and are bereft of content. He believes what is required is to teach specific content (a knowledge base) that a child should know for each grade and build on the content from the grade below it. In that way, knowledge builds upon knowledge, thus, creating the accumulation of knowledge that has as its end point an educated citizen.
Diane Ravitch has been a strong supporter and prolific writer on the subject of standards. She states:

National standards provide a valuable coordinating function: in the absence of explicit standards, the pieces of the educational system operate without coherence and often at odds with each other. Teacher education proceeds without sure knowledge of what is to be taught, giving rise to the frequent complaint that schools of education stress pedagogy and ignore content... Standards can improve achievement by clearly defining what is to be taught and what kind of performance is expected. They define what teachers and schools should be trying to accomplish. They can raise the quality of education by establishing clear expectations about what students must learn if they are to succeed. If the goals of teaching and learning are spelled out, students understand that their teachers are trying to help them meet externally defined standards, and parents know what is expected of their children in school. (1996, p. 2)

The federal government at first flirted with standards by making them voluntary. It was not until NCLB was enacted in 2002 that the federal government put more teeth into standards and made them mandatory.

**No Child Left Behind**

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was enacted in 2002. The purpose of the Act was to “ensure that all children, have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (20 U.S.C. Section 6301, as cited by Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 16).

NCLB is a reauthorization of the earlier Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and represents a major expansion of the federal government's role in public education. NCLB is a departure from the previous standards such as Goals 2000—that were voluntary—because the new legislation provides sanctions for States and schools that fail to meet the specified standards designed to improve the educational performance
of all students (Rosenberg, Westling & Mclesky, 2008). Rather than providing only financial assistance to States in their efforts to set standards and improve student achievement, the Act explicitly mandates compliance to high standards and sanctions States and schools that fail to meet set criteria” (Hardman & Muldur, 2004; Yell & Drasgow, 2005). Previous proclamations such as *A Nation at Risk* and Goals 2000 were voluntary and did not offer penalties against States that failed to meet their prescriptions. Furthermore, States that fail to comply run the risk of having federal funds withheld. The Act is a message that the federal government is serious about improving education.

The goals of NCLB can be summarized as:

1. All students will achieve high academic standards by attaining proficiency or better in reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 school year.
2. Highly qualified teachers will teach all students.
3. All students will be educated in schools and classrooms that are safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning.
4. All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English.
5. All students will graduate from high school (Yell, 2006, p. 181).

However, the goals of the Act are far from being realized. The graduation rates fall short of the 100% graduation rate. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education’s fact sheet “Who Is Dropping Out? (2009),

- Overall, far too many students are not graduating on time with a regular diploma; low-income and minority students fare the worst in the dropout epidemic.
- Each year, approximately 1.2 million students fail to graduate from high school, more than half of whom are from minority groups.
- Nationally, about 71 percent of all students graduate from high school on time with a regular diploma, but barely half of African American and Hispanic
students earn diplomas with their peers. In many States, the difference between White and minority graduation rates is stunning; in several cases there is a gap of as many as 40 or 50 percentage points.

- A sixteen to twenty-four year old coming from the highest quartile of family income is about seven times as likely to have completed high school as a sixteen to twenty-four year old coming from the lowest quartile.

Reading is another important area singled out by NCLB. Wrights Law is an advocacy group for special education students and is very aware of the reading problems many students exhibit. They state, “Many schools use reading programs that are not effective in teaching children to read” (Wrights Law, 2007, p. 301).

NCLB defines the term *reading* as “a complex system of deriving meaning from print that requires all of the following: (a) the skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes (or speech sounds) are connected to print; (b) the ability to decode unfamiliar words; (c) the ability to read fluently; (d) sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension; (e) the development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print; and, (f) the development and maintenance of a motivation to read” (No Child Left Behind, 20 U.S.C. § 6368 (5)). Furthermore, NCLB defines the essential components of reading instruction as “containing explicit and systematic instruction in (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) vocabulary development, (d) reading fluency, including oral reading skills, and (e) reading comprehension strategies” (No Child Left Behind, 20 U.S.C. § 6368 (3)).

The federal government also instructs how reading programs are to be evaluated (see Appendix D). However, the nation’s reading results are not all that encouraging. According to the NAEP (National Assessment for Education Performance, also known as
The Nation’s Report Card), in 2009, the reading results for fourth graders nationally showed only 31% of the students as proficient (competency) or advanced (superior performance (see Table 1). The percentage of fourth graders scoring at the basic or below basic reading level was 68%. A large percentage of those students who scored at the basic level were Blacks (47%), and Hispanics (48%), while only 15% and 16% respectively scored at the proficiency level. Likewise, African American and Hispanic students’ scores were on average 25 points lower than White students’ scores. Students who were eligible for free and reduced lunch on average had scores that were 26 points lower than students who were not eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Table 1. Description of Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Achievement</th>
<th>Level of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills fundamental for proficient work at each grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>Solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Superior performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NAEP: Reading Achievement Levels, 2007.

Moreover, eighth graders’ national reading scores in 2009 were not any better. According to NAEP, 30% of students were proficient and/or advanced, while 69% scored basic and/or below basic. Reading scores among Black students, on average, were 26 points below those of their White peers while Hispanics had reading scores 24 points below those of White students. Students who qualified for free or reduced price lunch
scored on average 24 points lower than students who were eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Colorado’s reading scores on the 2009 NAEP fourth-grade assessment were higher than the national average. The scores indicate that 60% of students in Colorado scored at the basic to below-basic level. Nationally, 68% of the fourth-grade students scored at the basic to below basic-skill level. Conversely, 41% of the fourth graders in Colorado scored in the proficient and advanced category (30% proficient, 11% advanced), compared to 31% (24% proficient, 7% advanced) nationally. On average, Black students had scores 24 points lower than their White peers on the fourth-grade reading scores. Hispanic students’ scores were 32 points lower than their White peers’ reading scores. The scores of students in the fourth grade who qualified for free and reduced lunch were 32 points lower than their peers who did not receive free and reduced lunch (NAEP, 2009). The scores indicate that the reading gap between Whites and students of color (e.g., Blacks and Hispanics) is significant. One of the NCLB’s chief aims is to close the gap between Whites and minorities.

In 2009, the Colorado State Assessment Program Test (CSAP) showed that 66% of the students in grades three through ten were proficient and 7% were advanced. The student performance levels on the CSAP appear in Table 2. The breakdown of scores across racial categories indicates the following: White students: 73% proficient, 7% advanced; Black students: 58% proficient, 3% advanced; and, Hispanic students: 52% proficient, 2 % advanced. Scores in other categories indicate Whites students: 13% partially proficient, 4% unsatisfactory; Black students: 23% partially proficient, 15%
unsatisfactory; and, Hispanic students: 29% partially proficient, 17% unsatisfactory (CDE: Unit of Assessment Grades 3-10, 2009).

These scores indicate that the NCLB goal for all students in third and fourth grades to be proficient in reading by the 2013-2014 school year is not on a trajectory that will reach this goal. Similarly, the graduation rates will need to significantly rise in order to achieve the goal of a 100% graduation rate.

Table 2. CSAP Performance Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Consistently utilizes sophisticated strategies to comprehend and interpret complex text. Exceptionally strong academic performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Utilizes a variety of reading strategies to comprehend and interpret grade-level appropriate text. Demonstrates solid academic performance on subject matter as reflected by the Colorado Model Content Standards for reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Proficient</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Utilizes some reading strategies to comprehend grade-level text. Shows partial understanding of the knowledge and application of fundamental skills. Some gaps in knowledge and skills may require additional instruction and remediation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Demonstrates competency with below grade-level text only, requires extensive support to comprehend and interpret written information. May have significant gaps, limited knowledge and skills. Requires considerable additional instruction and remediation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Another problem with NCLB is one of interpretation between the NAEP and the State assessments. The Thernstroms pointed out in 2003 that the problem with the terms used to describe test results, is how to define proficiency. There is a disparity between what the NAEP defines as proficiency on its assessment and how the States define
proficiency on their exams. As the Thernstroms discovered, North Carolina’s statewide test results in 2000 showed that “84% of fourth graders scored proficient on the state mathematics test; however, according to the NAEP assessment in North Carolina the same year, only 28% of those students were proficient” (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003, p. 242).

There is a discrepancy between Colorado test scores and the test scores nationally. For example, Colorado’s fourth grade CSAP showed that 59% of students were proficient in 2009 compared to 30% proficient on the NAEP assessment (CDE, unit of assessment, 2009). The two measures of proficiency are obviously at odds with one another. A clearer definition between how the NAEP scores compare to each State test based on achievement level is required. In other words, perhaps proficiency on the CSAP compares with the basic level on the NAEP. More guidance is needed, particularly for lay people such as parents in order to make accurate judgments on how well or poorly students are doing on the mandated assessments.

The National Assessment Governing Board’s (NAGB) Ad Hoc Committee, stated that it was incorrect to compare the NAEP with State assessments on a point-by-point basis as many have tried to do (Moore & Waltman, 2008). One reason is that the NAEP has three achievement levels (see Table 1). State assessments have different categories for achievement levels. In Colorado, the achievement levels are completely different (see Table 2). Therefore, it is inaccurate to compare Colorado’s test results with the NAEP’s results because there is not a one-to-one relationship between achievement levels. For example, Moore and Waltman stated in their study:
Unfortunately, linking state assessments to the NAEP is not a simple task. If two assessments differ in the purpose and context of testing, content assessed and/or item characteristics, sampling of students, development of the scale scores and reporting metrics, or in various other ways, then one cannot have much confidence that a score on one test is comparable to a score on another test. (Holland & Dorans, 2006; Moore & Waltman, 2008, p. 5)

Critics of the State assessments like to point to the discrepancies between the State and NAEP to show that many States make their assessments easy so they’ll look good. For example, “Almost every fourth grader in Mississippi knows how to read. In Massachusetts, only half do. So what's Mississippi doing that Massachusetts, the state with the most college graduates, isn't? Setting expectations too low, critics say” (King, 2007).

Another problem with comparing State assessments with NAEP is that State assessments test everyone and the NAEP does not. For example:

NAEP is administered to samples of students. State assessments are taken by nearly all students within a jurisdiction. Subgroup definitions: NAEP and state assessments may differ in how subgroups are defined (e.g., which students are classified as “limited English proficiency”). Exclusion rates: NAEP attempts to include as many students as possible, including those with disabilities and/or limited English proficiency. State assessments vary. (Moore & Waltman, 2008, p. 5)

Another goal of NCLB is to have all English Language Learners (ELL) become proficient in English. However, test results tell another story. The Colorado English Language Acquisition Proficiency Assessment (CELApro) determines the progress being made by ELLs in their English Language development.

The primary purpose of the assessment program is to determine the level at which Colorado NEP [non-English proficient] and LEP [limited English proficient] students meet the Colorado English Language Development Standards in four domains (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing).
The CELApro is collaboratively developed by the Colorado Department of Education, Colorado educators and CTB/McGraw-Hill. The data should be used to keep abreast of individual student, school, and district progress toward attaining English Language Fluency. The fact that CELApro is based on the Colorado English Language Development Standards ensures that all districts are held to the same challenging standards that Coloradans expect for their students regardless of whether they live in urban, suburban, or rural areas. (CDE, 2010)

The results for CELA for 2009 were 33.77% proficient and 5.4% advanced. The results for 2010 showed 37.3% proficient and 7.6% advanced. There has been improvement, but not enough to reach the NCLB goal for all ELLs to be proficient in reading by 2013-14.

NCLB also requires that teachers be highly qualified and that they use scientifically research-based teaching materials (SBRR).

Scientifically based research according to the NCLB means [research that] applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties. It includes research that employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; involves rigorous data analysis that are adequate to test the stated hypothesis and justify the general conclusions drawn; relies on measurement or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and has been accepted by peer-review journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective and scientific review. (No Child Left Behind, 20 U.S.C. § 6368(6)).

The Highly Qualified Teacher requirement of NCLB states that a highly qualified teacher has full state certification (no waivers), holds a license to teach, and meets State requirements. The requirements are somewhat different for elementary, middle school, and high school teachers, for teachers of multiple subjects, and for teachers who teach to alternate standards” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 302). Likewise, special education teachers are expected to be “highly qualified” by 2005-2006 in the subject areas where they teach core academic subjects (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 302).
Studies show that it is essential for teachers to have the proper training in order to boost student learning. For example, “findings show the impact of teacher expertise exceeds that of other variables, including student income level, and that qualified teachers positively influence student achievement” (Riney, Thomas, Williams & Kelley, 2006, p. 2). Ferguson (1991) found:

…that even after controlling for family income and community characteristics, the data show teacher quality often creates significant differences in levels of academic achievement. For example, the achievement gap between low-income students and their more affluent counterparts is primarily attributed to differences in teacher qualifications. Equally important, he found that changes in students’ levels of achievement between the third and seventh grade were contingent on the levels of expertise of their teachers. In this respect, “highly qualified” teachers as mandated by the No Child Left Behind legislation are a key component of educational reform. (Riney, Thomas, Williams & Kelley, 2006, p. 3)

Similar findings were presented in the book *Waiting for Superman*, which was made into a documentary critiquing successful schools across the country that were succeeding in reducing the gap between low income and upper income students. Eric Hanushek, one of the chapter authors, says that “having three to four years of good teachers (teachers at the 85th percentile) in a row would generally overcome the average achievement deficit between low income kids (those qualified for free or reduced price lunch) and others” (Hanushek, 2010, p. 85). Hanushek (2010) describes teachers at the 85th percentile as a teacher that is ranked in the top 15% of teachers in terms of quality. He further states that:

the high ranked teacher’s students can be expected to move up more than 8 percentile rankings during the course of a school year. In other words, an average student who got one of these good teachers would move from the middle of the achievement distribution (the 50th percentile) to the 58th percentile. [In addition]
high quality teachers can make up for the typical deficits that we see in the preparation of kids from disadvantaged backgrounds. (Hanushek, 2010, pp. 84-85)

The requirements for highly qualified teacher under NCLB are listed as follows:

• **Highly Qualified Teachers**: To be deemed highly qualified, teachers must have a bachelor's degree, full State certification or licensure, and proof that they know each subject they teach.

• **State Requirements**: NCLB requires States to measure the extent to which all students have highly qualified teachers, particularly minority and disadvantaged students; adopt goals and plans to ensure all teachers are highly qualified; and, publicly report plans and progress in meeting teacher quality goals.

• **Demonstration of Competency**: Teachers (in middle and high school) must prove that they know the subject they teach with a major in the subject they teach; credits equivalent to a major in the subject; passage of a State-developed test; HOUSSE (for current teachers only, see below); an advanced certification from the State; or a graduate degree.

• **High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE)**: NCLB allows States to develop an additional way for current teachers to demonstrate subject-matter competency and meet highly qualified teacher requirements. Proof may consist of a combination of teaching experience, professional development, and knowledge in the subject garnered over time in the profession.

Additionally, special education teachers do not need to be highly qualified if they are not providing the main instruction but only providing supplemental educational services. Special Education Teachers requirements under NCLB are:

• **The highly qualified teacher requirements apply only to teachers providing direct instruction in core academic subjects.** Special educators who do not directly instruct students in core academic subjects or who provide only consultation to highly qualified teachers in adapting curricula, using behavioral supports, and interventions or selecting appropriate accommodations, do not need to demonstrate subject-matter competency in those subjects.

• **Congress**, in the context of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization, is considering modifying how the highly qualified teacher provisions of NCLB apply to special education teachers. The Department looks forward to working with Congress in addressing this need.
Additional provisions of NCLB are the public school choice and supplemental services (Wrights Law, 2007, p. 303). Public school choice includes the provision that if a Title I school fails to make adequate yearly progress (see Appendix F) for two years in a row, students may transfer to a better performing school. Additionally, if the school fails to make adequately yearly progress for three years in a row, a student from a low income family is eligible to receive supplemental services at the school’s expense. These services include after-school tutoring or other after-school programs designed to help the student (Wrights Law, 2007, p. 303). Transfer options and supplemental services provide alternative educational placements for students who are receiving an inadequate education.

The No Child Left Behind Act mandates accountability for schools and establishes educational benchmarks. If a school fails to reach the benchmark during five consecutive years, then the campus can be closed down, restructured in accordance with a plan that entails how the school will increase academic achievement or turned into a charter school.

The remedies under the NCLB are as follows:

1. If a federally aided (Title I) school fails to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years, its students are supposed to be offered public school choice, enabling them to attend other public schools in their district.

2. If a school falters for a third straight year, its district is supposed to provide pupils with the opportunity to obtain Supplemental Educational Services (SES), essentially, free after school tutoring from diverse providers, including private firms.

3. If a school fails to make AYP for a fourth year running, its district is to take “corrective action.” This can entail replacing school staff, implementing a new
curriculum, reducing the school’s management authority, extending the day or year, appointing an outside expert to advise the school, or reorganizing the school.

4. If [the school] fails to make AYP for a fifth consecutive year, a school’s district must prepare a restructuring plan for it. This may include reopening it as a charter school, replacing its principal and staff, contracting with a private management company to run it, turning it over to the state, or any other major restructuring of school governance. (Hess & Finn, 2007, p. 7)

*Kowal and Hassel study.*

A study by Kowal and Hassel (2006) focused on the effectiveness of NCLB to provide incentives for school improvement and found that:

According to data compiled by the Center on Education Policy (CEP), only about 15 percent of schools in improvement in 2004-05 exited improvement status in 2005-06 (1,011 out of 8,646 schools). As the other 85 percent continue to fail to make AYP, it is fair to expect the number of schools in restructuring to grow dramatically over the next few years. (p. 4)

Kowal and Hassel expect the number of schools required to restructure to rise considerably due to the small number of schools that have been analyzed to date (2005-2006). California and Michigan developed their State accountability plans earlier than other States. As a result, they had data that could be analyzed for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). To meet AYP, a school is required to have a specific percentage of students who score in the partially proficient and proficient ranges overall, as well as subgroups of students in the following categories: American Indian, Asian, African American, Latino, Multiracial, White, economically disadvantaged students (those who receive free or reduced price lunch), Limited English Proficient, and students with disabilities. In other words, the NCLB expect the data to be disaggregated according to
these categories because all students are expected to make AYP regardless of their disability, economic status, and racial category.

The Kowal and Hassel study (2006) found that 90% of the schools required to restructure were inner city schools (p. 4). They further found that these schools serve traditionally disadvantaged populations. “In 2004-05, sixty percent of students in restructuring schools qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (compared to 41 percent of students in all public schools), 40 percent were Hispanic and 37 percent were African American (compared to 19 and 16 percent, respectively, in all public schools).”

According to Kowal and Hassel, the majority of the schools targeted for restructuring chose the mildest form of interventions required under the NCLB. For example, under NCLB the following options are available for restructuring a school: reopen the school as a public charter school; replace all or most of the school staff (which may include the principal) who are relevant to the failure to make adequate yearly progress; contract with an outside entity, such as a private management company with a demonstrated record of effectiveness to operate the school; turn the operation of the school over to the State Educational Agency, if permitted under State law and agreed to by the State; or, engage in another form of major restructuring that makes fundamental reforms, such as significant changes in the school’s staffing and governance, to improve student academic achievement in the school in a way that would have substantial promise of enabling the school to make adequate yearly progress (pp. 2-3).

The researchers found that in the majority of cases, schools chose the option to engage in another form of major restructuring rather than the harsher options outlined
above. The fifth option allows schools to comply with NCLB without making the tough decision of structural change that has been necessary to effect real and long lasting change (Kowal & Hassel, 2006).

In their conclusion, Kowal and Hassel (2006) identified four positive outcomes or commonalities of the four schools that were restructured (two schools in Michigan and two in California). These outcomes included the following:

1. NCLB provides schools and districts an opportunity to make change, but gives them wide flexibility on how to proceed (p. 29).

2. NCLB is just one of many forces acting on failing schools (p. 30). Kowal and Hassel found that the schools they studied were witnessing decreases in enrollment and, therefore, they had to implement school reforms even before they were required to do so [through] the enactment of NCLB.

3. Districts’ involvement in the planning process varies widely (p. 31). In some schools there was much parental involvement and others there was little to no involvement by parents.

4. The restructuring process can offer a chance for meaningful community involvement (p. 32).

Kowal and Hassel concluded that NCLB provides schools and districts an opportunity to make change, but gives them wide flexibility on how to proceed and NCLB is just one of many forces acting on failing schools. Kowal and Hassel (2006) found that the schools they studied were witnessing decreases in enrollment and had to implement school reforms even before they were required to do so [through] the enactment of NCLB. The districts’ involvement in the planning process varied widely. In some schools, there was significant parental involvement and in others there was little to no involvement of parents. The restructuring process can offer a chance for meaningful community involvement.
However, Kowal and Hassel also found many negative aspects in the ways in which NCLB was being implemented. They found that there were not enough specifics to the plan for restructuring. In his article, “Congress Left Key Issues Unresolved,” Michael Petrilli (2007) gives one example, “NCLB stated that “teachers coming through alternative routes to certification can be considered “highly qualified” but it also decrees that teachers with “provisional licenses” cannot be deemed highly qualified. Yet most alternative route teachers have provisional licenses. What exactly did Congress intend?” (p. 97). This is a contradiction and highly confusing for correct implementation.

As a result of the Kowal and Hassel study, the State did not provide the schools with enough guidance and technical assistance to make the restructuring effective. The parents of students in many of the failing schools believed that the campuses functioned at an appropriate level. A survey taken in 2006 showed that parents nationwide rated their schools by a margin of 64% as doing an A or B job (Kowal & Hassel, 2006, p. 32).

Similarly, as a result of their study, Kowal and Hassel found that further restrictions on the schools’ ability to restructure are hampered by constraints imposed by State laws. For example, collective bargaining agreements make it difficult to fire teachers even though they are ineffective. Charter schools are overseen by a governing board, which means that any change requires a faculty vote of support to make the change. Likewise, school changes are made at the local level and, thus, are influenced by the local political climate. The politics at the local level usually favor incremental changes and do not support drastic measures. Instead, at the local level, symbolic changes are implemented which result in “spinning wheels” rather than instituting the changes.
that provide the most positive outcomes (Kowal & Hassel, 2006, p. 31). As a result of their study, Kowal and Hassel (2006) concluded that more drastic changes could have been proposed under NCLB but were not implemented.

Major limitations of the Kowal and Hassel study are the small sample size. They analyzed four schools (two each from Michigan and California) and obtained the first year results of the restructuring plans. Therefore, extrapolating these results to national trends is not appropriate. The results of restructuring for each of the schools involved in the study were mixed. One of the schools in the study, Buchanan in Grand Rapids, Michigan, had a population of 90% Hispanic, 8% African-American, and 1% White. The schools’ racial composition was not representative of the city population. Yet, 97% of the school population qualified for free or reduced price lunch (Kowal & Hassel, 2006, p. 10). A large percentage of the school population spoke English as a Second Language. Kowal & Hassel (2006) reported the results prior to restructuring, “In 2004-05, for example, 49 percent of students at Buchanan overall met state standards in reading and 24 percent in writing, compared with only 36 and 15 percent of English-language learners” (p. 11).

The results of the school plan, after restructuring at Buchanan, were summarized as follows:

1) First, under the plan, an external review team made up of district and intermediate school district staff visited the school regularly to discuss student progress with a school improvement team. 2) Second, all schools were also required to adopt a new instructional model chosen by the district. 3) Teachers always used tests to see how their students were doing, but in the past they would administer a test and keep moving forward. The new focus on data forces them to take a look at how they are doing on a more regular basis. I think it’s caused teachers to rethink how they instruct. Under the school’s restructuring plan,
teachers review data four times per year with their colleagues. (Kowal & Hasell, pp. 272-273)

Each of the schools in the study approached the restructuring process differently. The plan at Buchanan was devised and implemented by the school superintendent independently with the justification from the principal that, “in my particular building, if we decide to implement a program, there really isn’t a whole lot of questioning from parents” (Kowal & Hassel, 2007, p. 271). Buchanan was on a school improvement plan for the previous four years before restructuring but had failed to make AYP during those years and, as a result was targeted for restructuring.

In the first year of the school’s improvement plan, as few as 10% of the school population met the English standards for the school and the reading scores indicated that only 16.1% of the students met State reading standards (Kowal & Hassel, 2007, p. 272). In 2004-2005, the fourth and fifth years of the school improvement plan, 41.7% met State reading standards and in 2005-2006, the first year of restructuring, 49.5% of the students met the State reading standards and the school also made AYP for the second year in a row. The researchers concluded that while there had been improvements at Buchanan, the changes were the result of the school improvement plan rather than restructuring under NCLB. They stated:

All in all, the changes at Buchanan are hard to distinguish from the “school improvement” efforts underway at thousands of public schools nationwide, including at Buchanan itself pre-restructuring. While Garcia [the school principal] says “these [changes] were good things for us to be involved in,” he acknowledges that “we were doing a lot of these things already.” Without changes in governance, leadership, or staffing, the same people are still working in largely the same environment. Since Buchanan’s challenges are so great, it is not clear that the scope and substance of the changes underway are sufficient to lift the school’s
achievement over time to meet NCLB’s lofty goals for 2014 (100% proficiency on state tests). (Kowal & Hassel, 2007, p. 274)

However, it could be said that without at least the perceived threat of NCLB, the schools would not have been compelled to begin the school improvement plans and would not have shown improvement. Each of the schools had large populations of minority students (mainly Hispanic) and a significant number of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch. While all of the schools showed some level of improvement after restructuring, the majority of the students did not meet State standards at their grade levels in reading and math. The poorest performing school in the study was Gompers Charter Middle School. Only 12.6% of the students in reading and 6.9% in mathematics met State standards after restructuring. The results of each school are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Percentage of Students Meeting State Reading and Math Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School &amp; Subject</th>
<th>2001-2 Percentage</th>
<th>2002-3 Percentage</th>
<th>2003-4 Percentage</th>
<th>2004-5 Percentage</th>
<th>Post restructuring 2005-6 Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buchanan</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balboa</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millwood</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gompers</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researchers reached two conclusions at the end of the study. First, even though the schools tended to choose the least drastic option, NCLB empowered schools to make changes that they were unwilling to make without the power of federal law. The school administrators acknowledged that without the restructuring requirements of NCLB, they probably would have been unwilling to make any of the more drastic changes or implement changes would have taken longer to make (Kowal & Hassel, 2007, p. 286). Second, NCLB’s requirements act more as a symbolic call to action. If a district were so inclined, they could continue with whatever reforms they were doing and call it restructuring under NCLB (Kowal & Hassel, 2007, p. 30).

Furthermore, in the book No Remedy Left Behind: Lessons From a Half-Decade of NCLB (2007), the authors Hess and Finn stated:

The law [NCLB] is frequently misunderstood as requiring student academic proficiency. In fact, it only requires that states and districts comply with its guidelines regarding reporting of data, spending, planning, and adoption of interventions. So long as officials do those things, whatever their progress or lack of progress in reading and math achievement, they are home free. (p. 310)

*Other problems with NCLB.*

Other problems with the No Child Left Behind Act concern the Supplementary Education Services (SES) that students may receive for failing to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goal. AYP is defined as students meeting “universal proficiency on core subjects by 2014” (Hess & Finn, 2005, p. 5). Under SES, if a campus fails to meet AYP, then a variety of remedies need to be made available to students attending the failing school. SES is essentially a tutoring service for students after school. The services
can be delivered by a diverse set of providers that include private firms. Tutoring services are paid for by federal dollars as a sort of “minivoucher” (Hess & Finn, 2007, p. 7).

SES is required for a school if it has not made AYP for three years in a row. Schools have the option of either providing their own SES services or contracting with outside private companies to provide them. The law requires that if a school is providing SES and there is no improvement for two consecutive years, then SES providers may be withdrawn and another provider must be sought (Casserly, 2007, p. 55). However, according to Casserly, the NCLB is ambiguous “on how evaluations are conducted and what success means, and most States clearly have not pursued these assessments actively” [PAGE NUMBER?]. Casserly (2007) goes on to state that “an analysis conducted by the Denver school system, for instance, showed that its external providers improved state scores only marginally over those of students who received no services” (p. 56).

External providers of SES prefer using their own evaluative measures, which may or may not align with state measures, according to Casserly. Other States that are part of Casserly’s study reported similar results. One example is the Chicago School District that reported that its school providers were more effective in providing SES than one-half of the external providers (Casserly, 2007, p. 56). However, regardless of who provides the services, Casserly’s study found that overall the SES provide only modest student improvement.

Furthermore, a problem arises in most States due to the lack of full implementation of AYP and SES. For example, in Colorado only about 10% of students
who are eligible for SES utilize them (Hess & Finn, 2007, p. 180). In some Colorado districts, the participation rates are as low as 1% of the eligible students. In Colorado, there are over 50 service (tutoring) providers that have been approved by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE).

Another problem is the lack of formal study and evaluation of the efficacy of the tutoring services that providers deliver due to the lack of personnel and the overwhelming duties in which the CDE personnel are currently engaged. These difficulties are also prevalent in the other States that have been studied. Sending students from a failing school to an adequately performing school might also be a problem, particularly for rural, isolated schools in Colorado. Consequently, there may not be another school to which students may transfer due to geographic isolation (Hess & Finn, 2007).

The NCLB based much of their mandates on two reports. The first was a report completed in 1998 by the National Research Council titled “Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children” (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998), and a report conducted in 2000 by the National Reading Panel “Teaching Children to Read” (NRP, 2000). Discussed later in this chapter, these reports deal specifically with best reading practices.

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is another federally mandated program. However, unlike the NCLB that deals with all children, the IDEA deals only with students who have disabilities.

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was originally entitled “The Education of All Handicapped Children Act” and passed in 1975. When Congress
reauthorized the law the Act was renamed The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (Wright & Wright, 2007). There are two main purposes for the Act:

The first purpose is to provide an education that meets a child’s unique needs and prepares the child for further education, employment and independent living. The second purpose is to protect the rights of both children with disabilities and their parents. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (d)(1); Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 15)

As part of the reauthorization of IDEA 2004, the language and purpose are aligned with other school improvement measures such as NCLB. In reauthorizing the IDEA 2004, Congress’s purpose is:

…the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by…having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom…to meet developmental goals and…the challenging expectations that have been established for all children...(Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (c)(5)(A); Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 15)

The original impetus for IDEA was when Congress found that before the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142), the educational needs of millions of children with disabilities were not being fully met because: A) the children did not receive appropriate educational services; B) the children were excluded entirely from the public school system and from being educated by their peers; C) undiagnosed disabilities prevented the children from having a successful educational experience; or D) a lack of adequate resources within the public school system forced families to find services outside the public school system. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 20 U.S.C. § 1400, Part A; Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 45)

When IDEA was reauthorized in 1997, the act emphasized accountability and outcomes by aligning with the NCLB in many areas including the definition of a highly qualified teacher, the components for effective reading instruction, and the definition for Scientifically Based Reading Instruction (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 46). Similarly, students with disabilities are required to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) towards
reaching proficiency by 2013-2014 on state assessments, same as regular education students with some minor deviations discussed below.

The IDEA contains five parts, sections A-E (see Appendix E for a more complete description). Parts B and C, are the sections most likely referred to when discussing IDEA 2004 (Wright & Wright, 2007, p.19).

• Part B provides assistance for education of all children, ages 3-21, with disabilities (containing sections 1411-1419).

• Part C provides for infants and toddlers, ages birth to 2 years, with disabilities (sections 1431-1444).

Section 1412 includes a Free Appropriate Education (FAPE), Child Find, Children Who Attend Private Schools, Tuition Reimbursement, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Inclusion and Mainstreaming, Qualification of Special Education Teachers, Participation in State and District Assessments, Over-Identification of Minority Children, and Mandatory Medication Prohibited (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 24). FAPE “is special education and related services that are provided at public expense, meet state standards, are appropriate, and are provided in conformity with an (IEP)” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 21).

A student is eligible for special education if he or she is found, through an evaluation, to have a disability in one or more of the following categories: autism, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech-language
impairment, traumatic brain injury and visual impairment including blindness (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 194).

The three most typical impairments in special education are specific learning disability, speech-language impairment, and mental retardation. Specific learning disability is described as having difficulty in listening, understanding, and the ability to think effectively that adversely affects a student’s ability to read, write, spell, and the ability to do the academic work of the classroom. A speech-language disability is described as an articulation (unable to speak intelligibly), stuttering, voice problems, and language difficulties (unable to process or understand information that is presented orally) that interfere with educational performance (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 194). Mental retardation is described as an IQ of 70 and below, which would preclude the ability of the person to be able to perform academically without the class work being modified.

IDEA is now aligned with NCLB and, as a result, there has been criticism for expecting special education students to meet proficiency on the State assessment measures by 2013-2014. The critics argue that this is an unrealistic expectation and that, in the past, students in special education and limited language proficiency were excluded from these sorts of tests. The proponents for including special education students and limited language proficiency on State assessments argue that if these students are not included in the assessments, then their needs will be unknown and possibly overlooked (Jewell, 2004).
Special education students and limited language proficiency students are allowed to take alternative assessments if they qualify. For example, students with low cognitive ability can take the Colorado Student Assessment Program Alternative (CSAP-A) rather than the CSAP test that all other students take in Colorado. However, no more than 1% of the students in the grade level tested are allowed to take these alternative assessments (Jewell, 2004). “If States exceed the 1 percent cap, they must decide which 'proficient' scores of students who took the alternate assessments to count as proficient for purposes of ‘adequate yearly progress’ and which to count as not proficient” (Jewell, 2004).

Additionally, States are allowed some flexibility in exceeding the 1% cap “if they can demonstrate that they have larger populations of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and have effectively designed and implemented assessment practices for students with disabilities” (Jewell, 2004).

“Schools are no longer required to give students with limited English proficiency their State's reading test if students have been enrolled in a U.S. school for less than a year. Schools are still required to give those students the State's mathematics test, but they may substitute an English-proficiency test for the reading test during the first year of enrollment” (Jewell, 2004).

Remedies for an Inadequate Education under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

If a school does not provide a student with an adequate education and the parents place the student in a private school where he or she receives an appropriate education, should the parents be reimbursed for the cost of tuition (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 337)?
The section in IDEA that deals with this issue is § 1415, the Procedures Safe Guards section of the Act.

The court case was Burlington School Committee v. Massachusetts Department of Education No. 84-433 (1985). The Supreme Court of the United States (471 U.S. 359) ultimately decided the case. The case involved a student, Michael Panico, who was diagnosed with a learning disability, particularly pronounced in reading. Michael was a third grader receiving reading tutoring from his school, but he was not making progress. Upon assessment, Michael was found to have superior intelligence; however, the school and Michael’s parents could not agree on the source of his learning difficulties. The school officials believed the source was emotional and the parents believed the source of Michael’s difficulties were neurological (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 364).

Michael’s parents transferred him to a private school that specialized in treating students with his type of learning disability. A decision by a subsequent due process hearing officer ordered that the school district should pay for Michael’s tuition at the private school. However, the school district refused to comply with the order and stated that the most appropriate placement for Michael was at one of their schools. The State refused to release educational assistance funds to the school district.

The school district relented and paid the tuition, but refused to pay for the 1979-80 school year, the first year the Panico’s placed Michael in the private school. A district court ruled in the school district’s favor; however, an appeals court ruled against the school district. The Supreme Court heard the case and ultimately decided in favor of the Panicos. They were awarded the tuition reimbursement. In its decision, the Supreme
Court cited the “procedural safeguards” to insure full parental participation in the IEP process as listed in Section 1415 (b) (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 366). Justice Rehnquist in delivering the courts’ opinion, held:

Parents who disagree with the proposed IEP are faced with a choice: go along with the IEP to the detriment of their child if it turns out to be inappropriate or pay for what they consider to be the appropriate placement. If they choose the latter course, which conscientious parents who have adequate means and who are reasonably confident of their assessment normally would, it would be an empty victory several years later that they were right but that these expenditures could not in a proper case be reimbursed by the school officials. (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 337)

The U.S. Department of Education released “state determinations on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for Part B and Part C for the fiscal year 2007” (Ed. Gov, 2009). This document basically shows how each State is doing as far as compliance with IDEA. Colorado, for example, requires “interventions for the implementation of IDEA for three consecutive years (see Appendix C for the results by State). This finding means that Colorado is not in compliance with all provisions of IDEA.

Race to the Top

The Race to the Top is the latest education reform measure and was proposed by President Barack Obama. The measure includes:

• Designing and implementing rigorous standards and high-quality assessments by encouraging States to work jointly toward a system of common academic standards that build toward college and career readiness and that includes improved assessments designed to measure critical knowledge and higher-order thinking skills.

• Attracting and keeping great teachers and leaders in America’s classrooms by expanding effective support to teachers and principals; reforming and improving teacher preparation; revising teacher evaluation, compensation, and retention
policies to encourage and reward effectiveness; and working to ensure that our most talented teachers are placed in the schools and subjects where they are needed the most.

• Supporting data systems that inform decisions and improve instruction by fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system, assessing and using data to drive instruction, and making data more accessible to key stakeholders.

• Using innovation and effective approaches to turn around struggling schools by asking States to prioritize and transform persistently low-performing schools.

• Demonstrating and sustaining education reform by promoting collaborations between business leaders, educators, and other stakeholders to raise student achievement and close achievement gaps, and by expanding support for high-performing public charter schools, reinvigorating math and science education, and promoting other conditions favorable to innovation and reform (Race to the Top, 2009).

The Race to the Top was the impetus for the Colorado Senate Bill 10-191 (SB10-191) that ties teacher and principal evaluations to student performance. States competed for federal dollars for education based on a number of criteria. There were eligibility requirements that the program awarded on a point basis and there were two funding phases associated with the program.

Under Phase One, Delaware was the winner in round one and Tennessee was the winner in round two. Delaware won $100 million in federal grant money and Tennessee won $500 million. The two states won based on the following criteria: adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace; building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals on how to improve instruction; recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and, turning around their lowest-performing schools (Ed. Gov, press release, 2010).
Some of the reasons given for selecting Delaware and Tennessee were “High marks for the commitment to reform from key stakeholders, including elected officials, teachers’ union leaders, and business leaders. In both States, all school districts committed to implementing Race to the Top reforms. Delaware and Tennessee also have aggressive plans to improve teacher and principal evaluation, use data to inform instructional decisions, and turn around their lowest-performing schools. In addition, both States have put in place strong laws and policies to support their reform efforts” (Ed.Gov, press release, 2010).

Colorado scored fourteenth in the Phase One competition. Phase Two applications were due in June 2010. There was $3.4 billion available for the Phase Two competition and awards ranged from $20 million to $700 million depending on the State’s budget for education. “For Phase Two of the Fiscal Year 2010 competition, the State’s budget must conform to the budget ranges below; we will not consider a State’s application if its request exceeds the maximum in its budget range. Most importantly, the State should develop a budget that is appropriate for and consistent with the plan it outlines in its application” (Race to the Top Fund, 2010).

Colorado, for example, has a budget range of $10 to $175 million and, therefore, must not exceed that limit in its application in order to be considered for an award (Race to the Top Fund, 2010). The winners of the Phase Two competition were the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island. Phase Three focuses on Race to the Top applications from school districts. The competition is scheduled for mid-2011.
The Colorado Reading Standards (CRS) provide another example of increased school accountability. The CRS also show that the States are moving towards adopting national educational standards.

*Colorado Reading Standards*

The Colorado Department of Education revised their academic standards in December 2010 (CDE, 2010). Moreover, the CDE standards are aligned with the Common Core Standards (2010) that were developed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). There are 48 States that joined or will be joining the Common Core Standards movement. Alaska and Texas opted out; thus far, 37 States have adopted the Common Core Standards and 48 States are expected to adopt them (Common Core Standards, 2010, p. 2).

The initiative for the Common Core Standards is to “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents have a roadmap for what they need to do to help them. Further, these standards provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live, and allow States to more effectively help all students to succeed,” commented Steve Paine, West Virginia State Superintendent of Schools. “I am excited to have a common framework from which to share best practices with fellow superintendents across the nation. With students, parents, and teachers all on the same page and working together for shared goals, we can ensure that students make progress each year and graduate from school prepared to
succeed and build a strong future for themselves and the country” (Common Core Standards, 2010).

The CDE Academic Standards are aligned with the Common Core Standards to as much as 95%. On June 2, 2010, the CDE adopted the Common Core Standards and integrated them into the Colorado Academic Standards (CDE, 2010, p. 2). The benefit of integrating Common Core Standards with State standards is that there is a national curriculum in concept so there one that has a common set of expectations instead of 50 separate curricula each going its own way. There are seven notable changes below from the 1995 CDE standards (see Table 3):

1. Content name change from Reading and Writing Standards to Reading, Writing, and Communicating Standards.

2. Conceptual change in the standards, which changed the number from six broad standards to four specific ones.

3. Impact of standards articulation by grade level providing for greater specificity for students’ knowledge requirements at each grade level.

4. The intentional integration of 21st-century skills and readiness competencies, changing reading and writing from a specific skills block to include competency across all subject and content matter.

5. Integration of the Common Core State Standards.

6. Integration of P-2 Council’s recommendations of integrating preschool with K-12 content standards.
7. Standards are written for mastery, which means that a student has facility with a skill or concept in multiple contexts and the knowledge is not only for a particular grade level, but builds upon previously learned material. (CDE, 2010, p. 2)

The reason the committee gave for revising the standards was that “As the subcommittee began the revision process to improve the existing standards, it became evident that the way the standards information was organized, defined, and constructed needed to change from the existing documents. The new design is intended to provide more clarity and direction for teachers, and to show how 21st-century skills and the elements of school readiness and postsecondary and workforce readiness indicators give depth and context to essential learning” (CDE, 2010, p. 10).

Table 4. Summary of Changes
1995 Colorado Model Content Standards

| Standard 1 | Students read and understand a variety of materials. |
| Standard 2 | Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. |
| Standard 3 | Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. |
| Standard 4 | Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. |
| Standard 5 | Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological resources. |
| Standard 6 | Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. |
| Integration | Integration of 21st-century skills and postsecondary workforce readiness competencies were not deliberately addressed in original document. |
| P-2 | Standards articulated for grade band beginning with kindergarten. Benchmarks articulated by grade band of K-4 with most geared to upper grades. |
| Expectations | The number of grade level expectations was an average of six benchmarks per grade level span. |
2010 Colorado Academic Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 1</th>
<th>Oral Expression and Listening.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 2</td>
<td>Reading for all purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 3</td>
<td>Writing and Composition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4</td>
<td>Research and Reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>The 21st-century skills and postsecondary workforce readiness skills were embedded throughout the evidence outcomes of P-12 and in the prepared graduate expectations.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P-2 Pre-K included. Grade level expectations articulated for each elementary grade.

Expectations Average of 11 grade level expectations per grade level.

(CDE, 2010, p. 3)

*The Common Core State standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects include a separate standard for Language. In this document, those Language expectations are integrated in the four standards as appropriate.

Critics of Common Core Standards liken it to the old Soviet style of central planning for economic growth that ended far short of its goals year after year.

For example, [the critics] say the state is surrendering local control solely for the purpose of getting federal funding. Bob Schaffer representative on the CBE for the 4th Congressional District said that during the discussion by the board the pressure to adopt the standards to acquire the federal funds “was enormous, I think it was the only issue.” He also expressed concern that the adoption of the standards would actually result in educational improvement. “It will set the bar at a common level... another word for common is mediocre” and that with the exception of charter schools “most districts would be satisfied with merely clearing the bar.”

Regarding advocates of the Core concept, Schaffer said they were “the people who believe in five-year plans and central planning to come up with one national answer for 50 sovereign states.” Schaeffer did say that he felt the standards were a fad that would change with the next administration and “go the way of No Child Left Behind and before that outcome-based education and so forth.” (Minor, 2010)

However, voices of support for Common Core Standards include former Colorado Governor Roy Romer; Randi Weingarten, the New York President of the American Federation of Teachers; and Jim Douglas, Governor of Vermont. Even E. D. Hirsch, Jr., a
U.S. educator and literary critic, who has been an opponent of standards—because they are lacking in any real subject knowledge—has signed on to the Common Core Standards. In a recent article Hirsch said:

This document is, I believe, unique in stating that it is neither a curriculum nor a curriculum guide. Rather, it concedes explicitly that proficiency in reading and writing can only be achieved through a definite curriculum that is “coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades.” (Hirsch, 2010)

In the same article, Hirsch expressed his satisfaction that the Common Core Standards were focusing on a “cumulative grade by grade curriculum” rather than standards for multiple grades that the prior system had as its focus. In this way, content curriculum can be structured for one grade only and in the process made more meaningful. Hirsch says that this is important because many educators believe that reading is a transferable skill, that if a student can read one type of genre, he or she will be able to read any type of genre. However, Hirsch says that this is a fallacy. He says, “It’s assumed that once children learn how to convert printed symbols into sounds and words, or “decode,” they can be taught to read anything by practicing strategies such as “find the main idea” and “question the author.” As he says, “Comprehension is domain specific. If you can comprehend this op-ed, it doesn’t mean you can also comprehend Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. Several studies show that ‘poor’ readers suddenly look quite strong when reading on subjects they know a lot about, and ‘strong’ readers who have weak subject knowledge, suddenly look quite weak” (Hirsch, 2010).

Hirsch believes that strong subject matter knowledge is more important than learning skills, such as comprehension skills that teach the reader to think about what
they are reading. This is because no matter how many strategies the reader employs it will not help him or her understand a subject in which she or he has no background knowledge.

*Adequate Yearly Progress*

To fulfill the mandates required by NCLB, schools must demonstrate that they are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) towards reaching universal proficiency by the 2013-2014 school year. The three main qualifications for AYP are to achieve 95% participation in State reading and mathematics assessments, to reach targets for either proficiency or decrease non-proficiency in reading and mathematics, and, reach targets for one other indicator. For example, advanced level of performance for elementary and middle schools in reading and mathematics and graduation rates for high schools are two additional indicators (CDE, 2010).

The CDE more specifically gives the participation rates as, “The most fundamental requirement for making AYP is that 95% of students in the school or district overall, as well as any disaggregated groups with 30 students or more, take the State assessments for both Reading and Math.” The CDE (2010) cites the specific requirements for meeting proficiency as “To meet the AYP Proficiency requirement, students must meet targets for both reading and math. The specific targets are listed below and students scoring partially proficient, proficient, or advanced on CSAP and Lectura, and emerging, developing, or novice on CSAPA are considered AYP proficient.”

Students must be disaggregated by the categories of race, English Language Learners, free and reduced lunch, and by disability, as long as there are 30 or more 12+
month students in that category. Information is not reported for a category containing fewer than 30 students in order to ensure confidentiality and statistical accuracy. However, a school/district/disaggregated group that does not meet an AYP performance target for reading and mathematics proficiency can still meet the target if test data displays a 10% reduction in the non-proficiency rate compared to the previous year (CDE, 2010). The term to describe situation is called Safe Harbor, which is “limited to schools/districts/disaggregated groups with 30 or more 12+ month students for two years in a row. Safe Harbor compares different students from one year to the next, as third through fifth graders for current year compared to third through fifth graders in a previous year” (CED, 2010).

There is still another opportunity to make Safe Harbor if the above-described conditions are not met and it is called Matched Safe Harbor.

A school/district/disaggregated group that does not meet an AYP reading/math performance target or Safe Harbor may have another opportunity to meet the target by demonstrating a 10 percent reduced non-proficiency rate from the previous year by students who took the same test (CSAP or CSAPA) in both years. Matched Safe Harbor compares the exact same students from one year to the next (e.g., current 4th-5th graders who were 3rd-4th graders in prior year). Matched Safe Harbor is limited to schools, districts, and disaggregated groups that meet the 95 percent match rate: if 95 percent or more current 12+ month students (3rd graders removed) did not test in the prior year, school/district or disaggregated group is not eligible for Matched Safe Harbor. (CDE, 2010)

After the schools have met the 95% participation rate and the proficiency targets or the 10% reduction of non-proficiency and/or the Safe or Matched Harbor requirements, they must meet the other indicator target. The other indicator target for elementary and middle schools requires that for the district and school overall, and each disaggregated group of 30 or more students, 1.21% must score advanced in reading and
mathematics. For high schools, the requirement is for the district and school overall and each disaggregated group with 30 or more students, 63% must graduate from high school.

Table 5. "Other Indicator" Performance Targets by Grade Span by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent Advanced for Elementary and Middle Levels</th>
<th>Graduation Rate for High School Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*2002</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>55.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>55.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>55.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
<td>57.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
<td>57.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
<td>57.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
<td>59.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
<td>59.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
<td>63.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(CDE, the other indicator, 2010).

*Note: Starting points were based on 2002 CSAP and 2001 graduation data for the lowest performing disaggregated group. For elementary and middle schools, the advanced proficiency target increases by 10% every three years, except for 2014, when it increases slightly more. The high school graduation rate target increased by 2.1% every three years until AYP 2010 (for 2009 graduation rate), when the U.S. Department of Education required that it be set at 63.00%. However, if a district, school, or disaggregated group does not meet the 63.00% graduation rate, it still will make the target if its 2009 graduation rate is two percentage points or more above its 2008 rate. The graduation rate target will be adjusted again for AYP 2011 and beyond, once we have an on-time graduation rate, but that target has not yet been determined.

**Colorado Senate Bill 09-163**

Another area that demonstrates the standardization of reading is Colorado Senate Bill 09-163. The Colorado Education Accreditation Act of 1998 was repealed and enacted to align accountability and accreditation measures and procedures (CDE, 2009); the new law is 09-163 (see Appendix G). Governor Bill Ritter signed the new bill into law on May 21, 2009. One of the statute’s major provisions is that it “builds on the highly
interactive Colorado Growth Model displays to provide State Performance Reports, District Performance Reports, and School Performance Reports.” The legislation provides accreditation categories and school improvement categories so that parents can be better consumers of their child’s education. For example, the statute ensures that data are available that rates the performance of schools based on the following categories:

- Level 1: Accredited with Distinction
- Level 2: Accredited
- Level 3: Accredited with Improvement Plan
- Level 4: Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan
- Level 5: Accredited with Turnaround Plan
- Level 6: Unaccredited – State Board determines whether situation warrants district reorganization, external management, conversion to innovative school or school zone
- Status, conversion to a charter school or school closure. (Summary of SB 09-163 Accountability Alignment, 2009)

One of the major departures from the old legislation is the Colorado Growth Model. Under the growth model, schools are measured on students’ yearly progress toward catching up, keeping up, and moving up.

- Catching Up - indicates that a student previously scoring Unsatisfactory or Partially Proficient demonstrated enough growth in the past year to reach Proficient or Advanced within three years or by 10th grade (to be on track to “catch up” to the state’s proficiency goal).

- Keeping Up - indicates that a student previously scoring Proficient or Advanced demonstrated enough growth in the past year to maintain proficiency over three years or until 10th grade (to be on track to “keep up” with the state’s proficiency goal over time).

- Moving Up - indicates that a student previously scoring Proficient demonstrated enough growth in the past year to reach the level of Advanced within three years or by 10th grade (to be on track to “move up” to the state’s highest proficiency goal). (The Colorado Growth Model, 2009)
Todd Engdahl (2009) said in an article that appeared in Education News:

The most significant policy proposal of the 2009, Senate Bill 09-163, passed easily and with little examination outside of the House and Senate education committees. It will bring an end to the CSAP-focused system of evaluating schools and replace with a system based on student growth over time, and it will give Colorado a single accountability system to replace the three the state now has.

In the same article, Engdahl discussed the significance of another piece of legislation that is going to change the accountability system in Colorado. The name of this other bill is the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids. The bill was passed in 2008 and its purpose is to create a system of public education standards and assessments from preschool through post-secondary education. The goal is to prepare high school students to be able to enter post-secondary education or trade school without the need for further remediation, as is presently frequently the case (Senate Bill 08-212 Bill Summary). The State Board of Education will adopt standards that are related to the knowledge and skills that students need for workforce readiness. Students must be able to demonstrate competency in the various courses such as science, geography, mathematics, etc. and demonstrate subject matter knowledge in reading in selected content areas. The standards are mandate that schools prepare students’ critical thinking skills, to develop their creativity and innovation abilities, as well as communication and information technology skills. Students will also be required to exhibit English competency (Senate Bill 08-212 Bill Summary).

*Colorado Senate Bill 10-191*

Colorado Senate Bill 10-191 is the latest education accountability measure to be passed. The legislation was enacted to align with the Race to the Top funding opportunity
so that Colorado would be positioned to compete with other States for federal money. Senate Bill 10-191 requires 50% of teacher evaluations to be based on students’ growth. Likewise, two-thirds of a principal’s evaluations are based on student growth and the demonstrated effectiveness of a campus faculty (Engdahl, 2010).

Tenure would not be automatic after three years of employment, but would be granted after “three consecutive years of effectiveness.” An employee would be placed on probation, regardless of the number of years the teacher has served in the district, after two years of unsatisfactory evaluations. The legislation requires that there be mutual consent for the placement of teachers in schools that serve students from low socio-economic neighborhoods instead of placing teachers that receive poor evaluations and are not considered desirable employees, which is currently the practice. Aligned with this provision is the creation of a “career ladder system” that would provide incentives to get top principals and teachers to work in “low achieving schools” (Engdahl, 2010).

The impetus for the legislation was the latest education research that finds good teachers and principals are crucial to a child receiving a decent education. In passing Senate Bill 10-191, State Senator Johnston responded, “Research proves that teachers and principals are the two most important ingredients in determining students’ academic success. One of the things that this bill is going to do is make sure that we can define and identify effective teachers and principals by basing a significant portion of their evaluations on the actual impact their efforts have on student learning,” he commented (Cohen, 2010).
Reports from the National Research Council and the National Reading Panel have been important in setting the standards for best reading practices. The reports are discussed next starting with the National Reading Council.

*National Reading Council: Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*

The National Research Council was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to explore the evidence for the best practices that would prevent reading difficulties. “The goals of the project were to comprehend a rich, but diverse research base; to translate the research findings into advice and guidance for parents, educators, publishers, and others involved in the care and instruction of the young; and, to convey this advice to the targeted audiences through a variety of publications, conferences, and other outreach activities” (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998, pp. 1-2).

Another aim of the project was to put the acrimony that had fueled the controversy over reading instruction and erupted in the “reading wars” to rest. The committee believed that the evidence for best reading practices had emerged due to the progression of the research, and it was time to compile and release this information to the public. The researchers also believed that the focus should be shifted away from the debates of the reading researchers and placed back on the teacher who is alone, as they said, “in her [or his] classroom, with a heterogeneous group of children, all awaiting their passports to literacy” (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998, p. vi).
Major findings.

There are many factors that impact negatively on the acquisition of literacy skills, such as the child’s home environment (i.e., poverty, lack of exposure to rich language, few books in the home, no stories read to the child, etc.), low cognitive ability of the child, poor instruction, resource-deficient schools, children with learning disabilities, and children who have a genetic predisposition for reading difficulties (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 137). Children who come from impoverished environments “are particularly likely to have difficulty learning to read in the primary grades [because they]…begin school with less prior knowledge and skill in certain domains, most notably letter knowledge, phonological sensitivity, familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading, and language ability” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 137).

Parental values on education can also negatively impact children’s learning readiness. The authors cite studies that demonstrate that parents who have a strong belief in the “entertainment value of reading” have children who are more motivated and positive about learning to read than parents who “emphasize the skill aspects of learning to read” (Baker et al., 1997; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 138). Children whose parents believe that learning is something that only occurs at school are less motivated to learn how to read (Purcell-Gates, 1994; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 138; Stipek et al., 1995).

The ways that parents interact with their infants can have a direct bearing on literacy development. Asking and responding to questions is a principal aspect of parent-child interactions about text (Durkin, 1966). The frequency and manner of responding to
children's questions is an important parental influence on early reading ability (Teale, 1978). A study of the interactions during parent-child reading revealed that at least a thousand questions about print and books were asked by two children over a period of several years (Yaden, Smolkin & Conlon, 1989). When parents are shown how to become more responsive and “dialogic” during shared reading, gains in their children's skills have been recorded (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 139; Whitehurst et al., 1994).

The important aspect of these early activities with preschoolers is to prepare them for school so they already have the pre-literacy skills that will make learning to read easier and fun. Children who enter school reading-ready are less likely to become frustrated and turned off to learning to read. Therefore, these youngsters are less likely to view reading as a laborious, something to be avoided at all costs, type of process. As Juel stated (1988), “Children who struggle in vain with reading in the first grade soon decide that they neither like nor want to read.” Therefore, good reading instruction in the early grades is crucial to later success.

Jeanne Chall’s classic book *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* helps inform reading practices in the early grades.

Chall visited classrooms, interviewed experts, and analyzed programs. Yet it was her review and analysis of the then-available research on instructional practices that yielded the most stunning conclusions. Chall found substantial and consistent advantages for programs that included systematic phonics, as measured by outcomes on word recognition, spelling, vocabulary, and reading comprehension at least through the third grade. Moreover, the advantage of systematic phonics was just as great and perhaps greater for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or with low-level abilities entering first grade as it was for better prepared or more privileged children. Chall also noted the need to provide children with the practice in reading that would generate reading fluency and the value of providing challenging reading material in addition to texts that
enabled children to practice skills they had acquired. (Chall, 1967; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, pp. 173-174)

The authors of the National Reading Council report noted that reading difficulties in young children are experienced at three different levels. Each level requires a different mode of intervention. They describe the three levels and methods of intervention as:

1. Primary prevention is concerned with reducing the number of new cases (incidence) of an identified condition or problem in the population, such as ensuring that all children attend schools in which instruction is coherent and competent.

2. Secondary prevention is concerned with reducing the number of existing cases (prevalence) of an identified condition or problem in the population. Secondary prevention likewise involves the promotion of compensatory skills and behaviors. Children who are growing up in poverty, for example, may need excellent, enriched preschool environments or schools that address their particular learning needs with highly effective and focused instruction. The extra effort is focused on children at higher risk of developing reading difficulties but before any serious, long-term deficit has emerged.

3. Tertiary prevention is concerned with reducing the complications associated with identified problem, or conditions. Programs, strategies, and interventions at this level have an explicit remedial or rehabilitative focus. If children demonstrate inadequate progress under secondary prevention conditions, they may need instruction that is specially designed and supplemental—special education, tutoring from a reading specialist—to their current instruction. (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998, p. 16)

*Helping children in grades 1st through 3rd.*

The National Reading Council committee cited studies that demonstrate the efficacy for phonemic awareness in the early grades. Studies by researchers such as Ball and Blachman (1991), Felton (1993), Smith et al. (1993), and Torgesen et al. (1992, 1997) studied the benefit of early phonemic awareness instruction including both with and without “letter-sound correspondence” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 249). The committee found that students at risk for reading difficulties particularly benefit from
phonemic awareness training. A study performed by Hurtford, et al. (1994) performed a study that demonstrated the positive effects of phonemic awareness instruction in dramatic fashion. The study findings included the following analysis:

How effectively has phonological awareness training (alone) benefited word identification? In a sample of 431 children who had not yet received formal reading instruction, 99 had been designated as at risk on the basis of a screening battery (Hurford et al., 1994). Half of the at-risk group received individual tutoring in phonological awareness for a total of about 10 to 15 hours over a 20-week period, during which time regular classroom reading instruction also commenced for all participants. Prior to training, there was a substantial difference (13 to 14 points) between mean standard scores of the not-at-risk children and each at-risk group on the word identification measure. After the training period, this large gap remained for the untrained at-risk group, but the trained group's post-test mean was 7 points below that of the controls who were not at risk. (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 249)

Not surprisingly, the results signified that phonemic awareness was a beneficial reading intervention, but without a well rounded reading program that included phonics instruction (the sound to letter relationship), vocabulary instruction, background knowledge, and the practice of reading itself, the reading instruction will be inadequate. The authors concluded their study of best methods for reading instruction by addressing several crucial areas. First, they discussed the prevention of literacy difficulties in the preschool years and then from kindergarten through the third grade. They identified the best educational methods for teaching children to read in kindergarten through the third grade, especially those children who are considered to be at high risk for reading difficulties. They addressed the importance of high quality reading for all children together with the necessity of “teacher preparation and professional support” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 316). Finally, the committee suggested that further research
focus on exploring the development of assessments that would identify early risk factors that could prevent reading difficulties.

To promote literacy development in the pre-school years and thus, as a preventative measure against later reading problems, the committee recommended:

We recommend that organizations and government bodies concerned with the education of young children (e.g., the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the International Reading Association, state departments of education, the U.S. Department of Education) promote public understanding of early literacy development. Systematic and widespread public education and marketing efforts should be undertaken to increase public awareness of the importance of providing stimulating literacy experiences in the lives of all very young children. Parents and other caregivers, as well as the public, should be the targets of such efforts, which should address ways of using books and opportunities for building language and literacy growth through everyday activities both at home and in group care settings. (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, pp. 317-318)

With regard to reading instruction, the committee recommended the following educational methods that would particularly benefit children at high risk for reading difficulties.

- Kindergarten instruction should be designed to provide practice with the sound structure of words, the recognition and production of letters, knowledge about print concepts, and familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading and writing.

- First-grade instruction should be designed to provide explicit instruction and practice with sound structures that lead to phonemic awareness, familiarity with spelling-sound correspondences and common spelling conventions and their use in identifying printed words, "sight" recognition of frequent words, and independent reading, including reading aloud. A wide variety of well-written and engaging texts below the children's frustration level should be provided.

- Instruction for children who have started to read independently, typically second graders and above, should be designed to encourage children to sound out and confirm the identities of visually unfamiliar words they encounter in the course of reading meaningful text, recognizing words primarily through attention to their letter-sound relationships. Although context and pictures can be used as a tool to
monitor word recognition, children should not be taught to use them to substitute for information provided by the letters in the word.

- Because the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on the development of word recognition accuracy and reading fluency, both of the latter should be regularly assessed in the classroom, permitting timely and effective instructional response where difficulty or delay is apparent.

Recommendations on comprehension included the following:

- Kindergarten instruction should be designed to stimulate verbal interaction to instruct vocabulary and encourage talk about books.

- Beginning in the earliest grades, instruction should promote comprehension by actively building linguistic and conceptual knowledge in a rich variety of domains.

- Throughout the early grades, reading curricula should include explicit instruction on strategies such as summarizing the main idea, predicting events and outcomes of upcoming text, drawing inferences, and monitoring for coherence and misunderstandings. This instruction can take place while adults read to students or when students read themselves.

- Conceptual knowledge and comprehension strategies should be regularly assessed in the classroom, permitting timely and effective instructional response where difficulty or delay is apparent. (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, pp. 322-323)

The committee made recommendations for teacher preparation programs. They noted that teachers are not always adequately prepared to provide reading instruction. They found that teachers were not receiving the necessary skills, techniques, and instructional strategies in their teacher preparatory programs that are necessary to teach reading. In commenting about the adequacy of teacher preparation the committee stated...

…too often, however, such course work is insufficient to provide beginning teachers with sufficient knowledge and skills to enable them to help all children become successful readers. One major factor is that very little time is allocated for preparing teachers to teach reading. A second is that teacher training programs are highly variable in their inclusion of the foundations of reading. (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 329)
The committee recommended that teachers should have the knowledge base to teach reading and that the State certification and teacher education curriculum should be required to teach the necessary skills, techniques, and instructional strategies to be an effective literacy instructor. The committee members stated that at a minimum, the knowledge listed below should be in place (this is a partial list):

- Information about language development as it relates to literacy;
- Information about the relationship between early literacy behavior and conventional reading;
- Information about the features of an alphabetic writing system and other writing systems;
- Information about both phonology and morphology in relation to spelling;
- Information about comprehension and its dependence on other aspects of reading and on language skills;
- Information about phonological awareness, orthographic awareness, and writing development;
- Procedures for ongoing, in-class assessment of children's reading abilities;
- Information on how to interpret and modify instruction according to norm referenced and individually referenced assessment outcomes, including in-class assessments and progress monitoring measures used by specialists;
- Information about the learning and curricular needs of diverse learners (students with disabilities, with limited English proficiency, with English language dialect differences);
- In settings in which children are learning to read in a language other than English, an understanding of—as well as strategies and techniques for—teaching children to read in that language and information about bilingual language and literacy development; and,
- In settings in which non-English-speaking or limited-English-speaking students are placed in an ELL program and learn to read in English, information and skill to help these students confront a double challenge: learning to read and learning a new language. (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 330)
The comprehensive report included a section of recommendations for further study. These findings represent a small sampling of those in the entire report. One of the most important findings is the fact that many reading difficulties can be avoided if children receive the proper pre-literacy skills from home as well as the proper early instruction when they come to school. As the committee noted, reading is typically acquired relatively predictably by children who have normal or above average language skills; have had experiences in early childhood that fostered motivation and provided exposure to literacy in use; are given information about the nature of print via opportunities to learn letters and to recognize the sub-lexical structure of spoken words, as well as about the contrasting nature of spoken and written language; and attend schools that provide coherent reading instruction and opportunities to practice reading.

The disruption of any of these factors increases the risk that reading will be delayed or impeded, a phenomenon particularly prevalent in impoverished urban and rural neighborhoods and among disadvantaged minority populations (Snow, Burns, & Griffin 1998, p. 315). The National Reading Report echoed the findings from the National Research Council and continues to be the reference guide for the standards and accountability agenda to this day.

*National Reading Panel*

Another important source that enlightens knowledge about reading is The National Reading Panel (NRP). The NRP conducted a meta-analyses of thousands of reading research studies to “assess the status of research based knowledge…In 1997, Congress asked the Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human
Development (NICHD) in consultation with the U.S. Secretary of Education to convene a national panel to assess the status of research based knowledge, including the effectiveness to read” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 1). The NRP conducted a thorough analysis of the reading research in the following areas: Alphabeticics, which included Phonemic Awareness Instruction, and Phonics Instruction; Reading Fluency; Reading Comprehension, which also included Vocabulary Instruction; Text Comprehension Instruction and Teacher Preparation and Comprehension Strategies Instruction; Teacher Education and Reading Instruction; and, Computer Technology and Reading Instruction.

The National Reading Panel (2000) screened 1,072 studies to identify those that demonstrated the best methods, 804 studies (or 75%) passed their first screening. As a result of the NRP’s strict screening policies, 38 (or 3.54%) of the research reports passed the final screening (McGuiness, 2005). The NRP set the following screening guidelines for initial screening:

(1) The study was required to be an experimental or quasi-experimental design with a control group; (2) The study was published in a refereed journal 1970; (3) The study must provide data testing the hypothesis that systematic phonics instruction improves reading performance more than alternative phonics instruction or no phonics instruction (i.e., other programs); (4) Reading must have been measured as an outcome; and, (5) adequate reporting of statistics was sufficient to compute effect sizes. (McGuiness, 2004, pp. 122-123)

Description of the Study

Major findings.

Many reading experts, such as McGuinness, have identified alphabeticics, fluency, and teacher education as essential elements in reading instruction. In her 2004 book,
"Early Reading Instruction," McGuinness stated her belief that these essential elements are required for a phonics program and have been absent from most of the practice of reading instruction for the past 30 years, even though they have been known.

The Panel found that teaching students to manipulate phonemes in words (phonemic awareness) is a highly effective strategy among a variety of learners across a range of grade levels. They also found that phonemic awareness instruction significantly improved students’ reading abilities more than reading instruction that lacked this component (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 7).

A brief description of the five Phonics Instructional Approaches from the National Reading Panel’s report follows (p. 8):

1. Analogy Phonics: Teaching students unfamiliar words by analogy to known words (i.e., recognizing that the rime segment of an unfamiliar word is identical to that of a familiar word, and then blending the known rime with the new word onset, such as reading brick by recognizing that –ick is contained in the known word kick, or reading stump by analogy to jump).

2. Analytic Phonics: Teaching students to analyze letter-sound relations in previously learned words to avoid pronouncing sounds in isolation.

3. Embedded Phonics: Teaching students phonic skills by embedding phonics instruction in text reading, a more implicit approach that relies to some extent on incidental learning.
4. Phonics through Spelling: Teaching students to segment words into phonemes and to select letters for those phonemes (i.e., teaching students to spell words phonemically).

5. Synthetic Phonics: Teaching students explicitly to convert letters into sounds (phonemes) and then to blend the sounds to form recognizable words.

Phonics instruction (i.e., the linking of sounds to letters) has a significantly positive effect on reading instruction. However, the Panel found that not all phonics programs are equal. Panel members concluded that the Synthetic Phonics approach had a significant positive outcome for the teaching of reading. The results of the Panel’s meta-analysis found that Synthetic Phonics “produced significant benefits for students in kindergarten through 6th grade and for children having difficulty learning to read” (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Synthetic Phonics had a positive significant effect on older children receiving phonics instruction and disabled readers’ reading skills. Likewise, this strategy was significantly more effective in improving reading skills among underachieving students and low socioeconomic children than other instructional phonics approaches (National Reading Panel, 2000).

*Reading fluency.*

Reading fluency is another important skill that is essential to becoming a good reader. If reading is a laborious, inefficient process that includes many stops and pauses, then it will be difficult for the student to understand what has been read due to the highly conscious effort and memory overload that is being focused on the words of the text. The
Panel found that repeated guided (guided reading means reading that is guided by a teacher, parent, or peer) oral readings had a positive impact on students reading skills (National Reading Panel, 2000). On the other hand, the Panel found that there was not a “positive relationship” for independent silent reading improving reading skills (National Reading Panel, 2000). This seems counterintuitive because it makes sense that the more a student reads, the better they will get. Students who read a lot, typically have larger vocabularies and better fluency and comprehension skills. The Panel pointed out that the studies on silent independent reading thus far have shown a correlational relationship, but not a causal one.

One of the more obvious drawbacks of gaining information from silent independent reading practices is that there is no one present to record the accuracy or mistakes of the reader. There are other factors as well that impede measurement. The first has already been mentioned; studies emphasizing that students read on their own without feedback from an instructor do not have information on mistakes made by the reader. Secondly, the studies could not measure fluency simply because there was no one there to measure it. Thirdly, the Panel was able to analyze only a small number of studies (only 14) and the studies analyzed used different methodologies to conduct their research. Therefore, consistent conclusions could not be made (National Reading Panel, 2000). The Panel was sure to caution that there was not enough information to confirm the efficacy or denial of independent silent reading practices. However, this statement did not mean that the reading technique was not beneficial. Furthermore, future studies that have the
methodological rigor is required to prove whether silent reading holds promise for improving students’ reading skills.

**Vocabulary and comprehension.**

The Panel dealt with vocabulary and comprehension together due to the interdependency of the two domains. Below grade level vocabulary skills lead to low reading comprehension. The study found “…the larger the reader’s vocabulary (either oral or print), the easier it is to make sense of the text” (National Reading Panel, 2000). Using the computer to learn vocabulary was found to be effective. Additionally, the incidental learning of vocabulary through reading text was also an effective method, as was learning vocabulary prior to reading text (National Reading Panel, 2000). Repeated exposure to words also helps. The Panel described reading comprehension as:

Comprehension is defined as ‘intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader’ (Harris & Hodges, 1995). Thus, readers derive meaning from text when they engage in intentional, problem solving thinking processes. The data suggest that text comprehension is enhanced when readers actively relate the ideas represented in print to their own knowledge and experiences and construct mental representations in memory. (National Reading Panel, 2000)

The Panel found that teaching students specific cognitive strategies could improve reading comprehension. The strategies can be used in isolation; however, they are more effective when used in combination or are a part of multiple strategies that are utilized. The National Reading Panel (2000) found the effective strategies that aid reading comprehension to include:

- Comprehension monitoring, where readers learn how to be aware of their understanding of the material;
• Cooperative learning, where students learn reading strategies together;
• Use of graphic and semantic organizers (including story maps), where readers make graphic representations of the material to assist comprehension;
• Question answering, where readers answer questions posed by the teacher and receive immediate feedback;
• Question generation, where readers ask themselves questions about various aspects of the story;
• Story structure, where students are taught to use the structure of the story as a means of helping them recall story content in order to answer questions about what they have read; and,
• Summarization, where readers are taught to integrate ideas and generalize from the text information.

The Panel concluded its findings on comprehension with several suggestions and questions. They found that research suggests that comprehension strategies might be very effective to teach in content areas such as social studies. However, more research is needed. The Panel also questioned which strategies are the most effective for particular age groups and asked which teacher characteristics are more effective than others in teaching these comprehension strategies? (National Reading Panel, 2000).

*Teacher characteristics for teaching reading comprehension.*

The Panel found teaching reading comprehension to be a complex process that requires teachers to have substantial content knowledge in the subject matter that is to be taught, as well as a thorough knowledge of the comprehension strategies that are the most
efficacious for each student. Teachers must also be able to model the comprehension strategies effectively so the students will be able to utilize them. The study was able to examine the research for two approaches; the Direct Explanation and Transactional Strategy Instruction. Only four studies met the Panel’s stringent research requirements and as a result only two comprehension approaches were examined. As a result, the Panel was able to investigate these two approaches in depth.

The Direct Explanation approach focuses on the teacher’s ability to explain explicitly the reasoning and mental processes involved in successful reading comprehension. Rather than teach specific strategies, teachers help students to view reading as a problem solving task that necessitates the use of strategic thinking and to learn to think strategically about solving comprehension problems. For example, teachers are taught that they could teach students the skill of finding the main idea by casting it as a problem solving task and reasoning about it strategically. (National Reading Panel, 2000)

The direct explanation approach uses these terms to describe the instruction: Big Ideas, Conspicuous Strategies, Mediated Scaffolding, Strategic Integration, Judicious Review, and Primed Background Knowledge.

Transactional Strategy Instruction also emphasizes the teacher’s ability to provide explicit explanations of thinking processes. Further, it emphasizes the ability of teachers to facilitate student discussions in which students collaborate to form joint interpretations of text and acquire a deeper understanding of the mental and cognitive processes involved in comprehension. (National Reading Panel, 2000)

Transactional strategies for reading comprehension can also be described by the following terms: make predictions; relate text to background knowledge; ask questions; see clarification (reread, picture clues; visualize meaning; and, summarize (Dulin, retrieved on line, 2011).
The Panel concluded that teacher preparation required:

The four studies (two studies for each approach) demonstrated that teachers could be instructed in these methods. Teachers required instruction in explaining what they are teaching, modeling their thinking processes, encouraging student inquiry, and keeping students engaged. Data from all four studies indicated clearly that in order for teachers to use strategies effectively, extensive formal instruction in reading comprehension is necessary, preferably beginning as early as preservice.

More research is needed to address the following questions. Which components of teacher preparation are most effective? Can reading comprehension strategies be successfully incorporated into content area instruction? How can the effectiveness of strategies be measured in an optimal manner? Can strategies be taught as early as grades 1 and 2, when children also are trying to master phonics, word recognition, and fluency? How can teachers be taught to provide the most optimal instruction? (National Reading Panel, 2000)

*Computer technology and reading instruction.*

Using computer technology to aid reading instruction was a relatively new technique at the time that this report was published in 2000. There was not enough information to determine whether or not its use would be beneficial in aiding reading instruction. The Panel recommended that further research be conducted in this area. However, the Panel noted that the use of hypertext that linked word definitions and supporting text might be useful, especially when paired with writing instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000). The Panel thought that more studies were needed to determine the efficacy of speech technology to help reading instruction. The Panel concluded by making these recommendations for further study:

- **Student Populations.** An important question is whether students with learning disabilities have distinctive instructional needs and whether they benefit from instructional techniques that are different from those that are optimal for other low-achieving (non-disabled) students. The Panel was able to address this question with respect to phonemic awareness and phonics instructional programs
and techniques. It found that both types of students benefit from similar phonemic awareness and phonics instructional programs and techniques. Because of the limited amount of research available, the Panel could not answer this question with respect to instructional programs and techniques aimed at developing reading fluency and comprehension. These important comparisons should be the focus of future research.

- Teacher Education. The primary purpose of teacher education research is to inform the effective practice of classroom teachers in order to improve student performance. Rigorous experimental and qualitative research that defines and characterizes effective teaching methodologies that demonstrate improved student performance is limited. This persistent and major gap in the extant knowledge base must be addressed. Efforts should be made to answer the important questions in this critical area.

- Uses of Technology in Teaching Reading. Here again, credible experimental and qualitative research is lacking. This is understandable in light of the recent development of the relevant technology and its application to reading instruction and student learning. Nevertheless, the Panel believes that this is an important and essentially unexplored field (NRP, 2000, pp. 17-18).

The studies performed by reading researchers informed the National Reading Council and the National Reading Reports. The researchers continue to build off that knowledge to add to the best practices to teach reading.

*Common Core Standards for Best Practices*

Experts for the National Governors Association developed the Common Core Standards for Best Practices. The experts included teachers, school administrators, and reading specialists, and their goal is to provide a clear guide to prepare students for college and the work force. A draft of the standards was released March 10, 2010.

The Common Core Standards’ mission statement is as follows:

The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the
future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the
global economy.

These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards are:

Aligned with college and work expectations;
1) Clear, understandable and consistent;
2) Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
3) Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
4) Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
5) Evidence- and research-based.


The reading standards include the curricula that are to be taught at each grade level. An example of the standards for reading at grade one includes:
Print Concepts
- Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.
- Recognize the distinguishing features of a sentence (e.g., first word, capitalization, ending punctuation).

Phonological Awareness
- Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).
- Distinguish long from short vowel sounds in spoken single-syllable words.
- Orally produce single-syllable words by blending sounds (phonemes), including consonant blends.
- Isolate and pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in spoken single-syllable words.
- Segment spoken single-syllable words into their complete sequence of individual sounds (phonemes).

Phonics and Word Recognition
- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
- Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs (two letters that represent one sound).
- Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
- Know final -e and common vowel team conventions for representing long vowel sounds.
- Use knowledge that every syllable must have a vowel sound to determine the number of syllables in a printed word.
- Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables.
- Read words with inflectional endings.
- Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

Fluency
- Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
- Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.
- Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression.
- Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

(Common Core State Standards Initiative: grade one, 2010)

The International Reading Association Reading Standards

A professional organization that demonstrates a commitment to increased accountability and creating reading standards is the International Reading Association (IRA). A non-profit global organization that has been in existence since 1956, the
International Reading Association is committed to world literacy. The organization has
over 85,000 members worldwide. IRA’s aim is to improve the quality of reading
instruction, disseminate research and information about reading, and encourage the
lifetime reading habit (International Reading Association, 2008).

The International Reading Association developed reading standards that teachers
should know in order to be effective instructors who teach students to read. Developed in
2003, the most recent version of the reading standards was completed in 2008. The IRA
conducted research on what constituted exemplary reading instruction and presented it in

The International Reading Association (IRA) is the specialty professional
association (SPA) that conducts reviews of the Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach
category for the National Council for accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).
NCATE also uses the IRA standards to inform their Reading and Language Arts
Elementary Teacher standards (Standards for Reading Professionals, 2010).

There are six standards that IRA and its members identified as being important for
teachers, reading specialists, administrators, and other educator personnel to know when
teaching reading. They are as follows:

- **Standard 1: Foundational Knowledge**;
- **Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction**;
- **Standard 3: Assessment and Evaluation**;
- **Standard 4: Diversity**;
- **Standard 5: Literate Environment**; and,
Standard 6: Professional Learning and Leadership.

Each Standard is presented in rubric form along with the responsibilities that each educational professional has for the standards. The IRA also identifies the users of the standards (i.e., community colleges, university faculties, and State Departments of Education) as a guideline to develop curricula that address these standards. School administrators, teachers, and members of the staff who are involved in the hiring and evaluation of teachers can use these guidelines to enhance reading instruction effectiveness.

Another benefit of using the IRA standards as a guide in developing a reading program is that they specify a job description and qualifications for each staff member who is a participant in the reading instruction process. The professionals include the “Education Support Personnel Candidate, Pre-K and Elementary Classroom Teacher Candidate, Middle and High School Classroom Teacher Candidate, Middle and High School Reading Teacher Candidate, Reading Specialist Coach Candidate, and Teacher Educator Candidate” (p. 2). The standards also include the responsibilities and qualifications of administrators, which are a positive step to educate and include them in reading practices. Administrator knowledge concerning good reading practices was largely overlooked until recently with the passage of the Race to the Top.

Even with the added responsibility of school accountability, there has been a discrepancy between the school principals’ knowledge of new teaching standards and the teachers’ knowledge of them. In many instances, principals lag behind teachers in pedagogical knowledge. A study conducted by the Rand Corporation supports this view
(Sawchuk, 2008). The study included standards for mathematics in three states: California, Georgia, and Pennsylvania. Although the study did not include State reading standards, the study may be indicative of the knowledge gap that exists between administrators and teachers in the same school and even within the district.

The researchers surveyed 2,350 elementary and middle school mathematics teachers, 260 principals, and 70 school superintendents. Furthermore, the Rand study team reported that the knowledge gap between teachers and administrators concerning standards was more pronounced within a school than between schools in the same district or schools outside of the district. The results indicated that teachers might be more aware of teaching standards than their administrators. This finding implies that teachers exhibit teaching autonomy in their classrooms. In other words, if principals are uninformed about teaching standards, then this may account for the independence of the teachers to do what they choose in the classroom. The results of all three states were parallel. The knowledge gap between teachers in the same school was greater (as high as 97%) than the gap between teachers in different schools (as low as 2%) and the gap was the lowest among teachers in different school districts (1%) (Sawchuk, 2008, p. 3).

The results of the study suggest that educational reforms are not likely to succeed if there is such a disparity of knowledge between administrators and teachers and among teachers in the same school. Furthermore, the researchers state, “the notion that assessment and accountability systems lead to an alignment of learning standards and coordinated instructional efforts among teachers, principals, and superintendents undergirds the standards-based reform movement; which was formally enshrined in
federal legislation through the enactment of the NCLB law” (Sawchuk, 2008, p. 3).

Why is there a disparity of best teaching practices between administrators and teachers? Such disparity suggests that it is difficult for administrators to lead if a knowledge gap exists between the principal and the campus faculty. The Race to the Top initiative aims to remedy this problem through the teacher/principal evaluation process that is tied to student performance. Time will tell as to the effectiveness of this evaluative process. However, strong leadership for successful reforms cannot be overemphasized. It might be the sole difference for teachers to embrace the accountability measures as this example demonstrates:

It does not indicate massive resistance by teachers to standards-based accountability, said Bruce Fuller, a professor of education and public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, and the editor of the *Strong States, Weak Schools* volume. Instead, Mr. Fuller contended, it shows the need for a stronger focus to prepare school and district leaders to serve as coordinators of school improvement efforts. "It is not inevitable that teachers respond to accountability in eclectic ways," he said. "If there is a strong principal, superintendent, or teacher leadership, [educators] will rally around the tools of accountability." (Sawchuk, 2008, p. 3)

The implications suggest that in order for alignment between State standards and teaching practices to come to fruition, more training is required for administrators and teachers so that their knowledge of teaching standards can be aligned. Furthermore, the studies’ results may partially explain the lack of consistent improvement in student test scores under current school accountability measures.

Similarly, the lack of consistent student test results may help to explain why in many schools unscientific reading practices continue, such as the teaching of whole language methods that do not teach the sound to symbol relationship (phonics). The study
suggests that school administrators should be aware of best teaching practices in addition to the teachers.

Reading Expert’s Views

*Predicting early reading skills.*

In a study performed by Schatschneider, Francis, Carlson, Fletcher, and Foorman (2004), indicators of early reading success for the time period between early and late kindergarten show that measures of phonological awareness, RAN letters (rapid automatic naming), and letter sound knowledge are the most predictive for word identification, passage comprehension, or reading fluency ability. On the other hand, “measures of vocabulary, expressive and receptive syntax, and visual perceptual skills are much less predictive than these tasks” at least for early reading skills (Schatschneider, et al., 2004, p. 279). The researchers found that RAN was the most predictive for reading fluency ability.

Reading researchers such as Foorman and Torgesen say there is no longer any controversy that teaching the alphabetic principle (phonemic awareness and phonics) is the best method for early reading instruction. Furthermore, effective reading instruction contains these critical components “phonemic awareness and phonemic de-coding skills, fluency in word recognition and text processing, construction of meaning, vocabulary, spelling, and writing” (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001, p. 203). What remains is how best to deliver these components to the student. Foorman and Torgesen also note that direct explicit instruction (direct instruction is the explicit teaching of the sound to symbols) is
more beneficial than an implied instructional approach (implied is also known as incidental teaching of the alphabetic code while reading). Additionally, students benefit more when teachers use an instructional program that has been researched and shown its efficacy rather than relying on their own curricula approach. Foorman and Torgesen state that,

Expecting teachers to create their own curriculum, as the embedded phonics and Guided Reading approaches assume, is not realistic given the lack of available resources and knowledge base (Moats, 1994). Yet “out-of-the-box” implementations of well-designed, scripted reading curricula will not necessarily be effective either, unless teachers are provided with careful training and support in their use. (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001, p. 206)

Similarly, students who are at risk for reading problems (learning disability, low socioeconomic, hearing impaired, language impaired, poor phonemic awareness skills, etc.) should receive the same sort of instruction as normal students, only more of it. In other words, students who are at risk for reading difficulties require the same sort of reading instruction as their normal peers; however, their instruction should be more intensive. Foorman and Torgesen (2001) state, “Specifically, instruction for children who have difficulties learning to read must be more explicit and comprehensive, more intensive, and more supportive than the instruction required by the majority of children” (p. 206). A reading disability does not have to be a permanent condition, as the example below illustrates.

For example, King and Torgesen (2000) have reported the results of instructional reform in one elementary school that reduced the number of children who were “failing” in reading at the end of first grade from 31.8 percent to 3.7 percent over a five-year period. “Failure in reading” was defined by performance in the lowest quartile on a nationally standardized reading test. At the beginning of this project, 31.8 percent of the children entering the school were “at risk” for reading failure,
but by the end of the project, only 3.7 percent were at risk for failure within the new instructional environment. (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001, p. 206)

Furthermore, Foorman and Torgesen cite the NAEP reading results showing that 38% of fourth graders were reading below the basic level (reading well below grade level) to demonstrate that this percentage is too high to describe students with a learning disability. Rather, 38% of fourth graders were not provided adequate reading instruction to be effective readers (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001, p. 207).

Foorman and Moats (2004) discussed the effectiveness of particular reading practices that facilitate reading success at the kindergarten and first grade level.

For example, in kindergarten initial sound comparisons and blending of onsets and rimes are more predictive of first grade reading, while in first grade it is blending and segmenting of multiple phonemes that predict end of year reading success. Moreover, assessments at the beginning of kindergarten are less reliable than those at the middle or end, as children need time to acclimate to the school environment (Fletcher, et al., 2002). Finally, letter sound identification is more predictive than letter naming in the second half of kindergarten and the beginning of first grade because identifying the sounds of letters is inherently a phoneme segmentation task directly related to phonological decoding of words. Speed of letter names is predictive of Grade 1 reading because many letter names do contain the sounds represented by those letters (e.g., long vowels) and the automatizing of this knowledge should, again, help with phonological decoding. (Foorman & Moats, 2004, p. 53)

Lyon and Chhabra (2004) conducted research that demonstrated students from impoverished backgrounds are especially at risk for a reading disability. They cited a study by Lonigan (2003) that found children from lower socioeconomic households were less adept at manipulating the sound structure (also known as phonological sensitivity) than were their more affluent socioeconomic peers (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004, p. 16).
Lonigan’s study found that children from lower socioeconomic households also exhibit “significantly less growth in knowledge of phonemes, letter names and letter sounds. Vocabulary development, phonological sensitivity, and alphabetic skills are extremely strong predictors of later reading proficiency; typically, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds lag woefully in these abilities” (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004, p. 16). The reason children from impoverished backgrounds have these gaps is because they are engaged in significantly less language and literacy interactions than children from higher income families (Hersch, 2001; Snow, et al., 1998). A study by Hart and Risley (2003) “found that the average child on welfare had half as much experience listening and speaking to parents (616 words per hour) as the average working class child (1,251 words per hour) and less than one third that of the child in a professional family (2,153 words per hour)” (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004, p. 16).

While this information sounds discouraging, it is not hopeless. Lyon and Chhabra (2004) state that the majority of children at risk for reading difficulties can learn to read to average or even above average reading ability with the correct instruction (p. 16). All children require the same reading instruction, but at risk children need more time and intensive remediation in phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004, p. 16; Lyon et al., 2001; Torgesen, 2002a). Torgesen stated that intensive, comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction can reduce reading difficulties in children reading below the basic skills level to less than 6%. However, at risk students cannot wait too long before they receive adequate instruction. Shaywitz (2003) suggests that failure to read by the age of 9 years
old portends a lifetime of illiteracy for at least 70% of struggling readers (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004, p. 16).

On teacher knowledge.

Noted reading expert, Louisa Moats (1994) conducted an exploratory study of teachers’ knowledge of spoken and written language structure. The study group included 52 self-selected experienced teachers who were enrolled in a language study class. They came from a variety of backgrounds that included reading, language arts, and special education. The teachers involved in the study had an average of five years of teaching experience with the range of experience from 0 to 20 years (Moats, 1994, p. 91).

The course consisted of “phonemic awareness training, spoken-written language relationships and careful analysis of spelling and reading behavior in children” (Moats, 1994, pp. 81-82). Phonemic awareness consists of the ability to process the individual sounds in the English language and is considered the “best predictor of a child’s subsequent reading success” (Moats, 1994, p. 84). Phonemic or phonological awareness, the terms may be used interchangeably, was measured in the following ways: phoneme counting - “How many sounds are in sleep?”; phoneme identification - “What is the last sound in cab?”; and phoneme deletion - “Say steak without the t” (Moats, 1994, p. 83).

The teacher knowledge “was obtained from a survey given to study participants at the first meeting of a course entitled Reading, Spelling and Phonology” (Moats, 1994, p. 89). “The survey assessed the specificity and depth of teachers’ knowledge in order to reveal misconceptions or unfocused concepts as well as outright absence of information. Teachers were asked to define terms, locate or give examples of phonic, syllabic, and
morphemic units, and analyze words into speech sounds, syllables, and morphemes” (Moats, 2000, p. 60; Moats, 1994, p. 89).

The results of the study “revealed [the teachers had] insufficiently developed concepts about language and pervasive conceptual weakness in the very skills that are needed for direct, language-focused, reading instruction, such as the ability to count phonemes and to identify phonic relationships…” (Moats, 1994, p. 91). The significance of knowing the components of reading and, as a result, the ability to provide the correct instruction, is that “most children who are classified as having learning disabilities in public schools in fact have reading disabilities” (Kavale and Forness, 1985; Moats, 1994, p. 82). Moats (1994) further stated “prevalence estimates of reading problems in the population of those with learning disabilities ranged from 75% to 85% nationwide” (p. 82). Furthermore, in the “Discussion of Survey Results” Moats stated:

The results of this survey indicate that teachers who are literate and experienced generally have an insufficient grasp of spoken and written language structure and would be unable to teach it explicitly to either beginning readers or those with reading/spelling disabilities. Teachers commonly are misinformed about the differences between speech and print and about how print represents speech. (1994, p. 94)

Mather, Bos, and Babur conducted a study in 2001 and found the results that paralleled those of the Moats study (1994). They found that “many teachers have an insufficient grasp of spoken and written language structure and would be unable to teach reading explicitly to students who struggle (p. 480).

Louisa Moats and Barbara Foorman (2003) advocate for reading instruction that includes phoneme awareness, phonics, word study, spelling, reading fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Furthermore, they cite current educational policies at the federal,
State, and district levels that call for the direct, explicit, systematic instruction of reading components. Moats and Foorman (2003) suggest that even if teachers are using a structured reading program containing all these components, they need to be trained appropriately so that “they are able to recognize and address the needs of all children on the continuum of reading and language proficiency” (pp. 23-24).

The NAEP, CSAP and NAAL (National Assessment of Adult Literacy) data indicate that a lack of vital teacher knowledge for good reading instruction is contributing to the poor reading scores across the nation. The implications of poor reading results in schools result from the fact that many teachers do not have sufficient knowledge about how to teach reading. Therefore, teachers in classrooms who are inadequately prepared to provide reading instruction may partly explain the large number of functionally illiterate students and the increasing numbers of students qualifying for special education.

The reasons for a lack of teacher preparedness are the result of several different causes, according to Moats. She states that the lack of previous course work covering this subject matter is to blame and mentioned previous studies by Nolen, McCutcheon, and Berninger (1990) that:

… concluded after surveying general teacher preparation in reading and writing instruction that program requirements and state certification standards must be upgraded nationwide. Teachers could not, in their estimation, be prepared to meet the diverse needs of students who are at risk for reading/writing failure on the basis of current, minimal requirements in teacher education, which range from no coursework in reading to an average of about 12 course hours. (Moats, 1994, p. 86)

The results from other studies confirm Moats’ estimation of the lack of teacher preparedness. Lyon, Vaasen, and Toomey (1989) found that “after surveying both regular
and special education teachers’ perceptions of their own training, [the results] argued more specifically that many training programs were inadequate” (Moats, 1994, p. 86).

Studies study conducted by Soodak and Podell (1993) and Zigmond (1993) stated, “Students are usually referred to special education when teachers feel they cannot bring about desired outcomes with students.” Evidently, teachers increasingly believe that they cannot bring about desired outcomes with their students because special education has become more populous, rising 30% in the last 10 years (NEA, 2008).

The Moats study further explains that teacher attitudes and reading procedures tend to reflect their professors’ attitudes and beliefs about reading. Reynolds, Wang, and Walberg (1992) surveyed over 100 experts in learning disabilities, including university faculty, to determine by consensus the requisite knowledge and skills that should distinguish teachers of children with learning handicaps. The Reynolds, et al. study found that while the professors emphasized appropriate error correction and direct feedback, they did not provide instruction on the most crucial elements: phonemes, syllables, and morphemes. These results are alarming, especially in light of the fact that the knowledge required to teach reading effectively has been known for the past 20 years.

Moats’ recommendation (1994) from this study is as follows:

To begin, our competency lists and licensing practices should state clearly that licensed teachers must themselves demonstrate phonemic awareness, have a working knowledge of the speech sound system, and know how our orthography represents spoken English. Moreover, the opportunity to learn this information in depth, through study of basic linguistics and application of the concepts in clinical teaching practice, must be part of every teacher-training program in literacy education. (p. 97)
She further explains that “the reasons for teachers’ insufficient knowledge includes the difficulty of the subject matter, the time required to learn it, and the absence of specific standards for training” (Moats, 1994, p. 99). The absence of specific standards for teacher education might be the most damaging factor because knowledge about how to teach reading is available, but it is not being utilized.

Bos, Mather, Narr, and Babur (1999) conducted a study similar to the 1994 Moat work. The researchers investigated how teachers’ knowledge and attitudes would change over time if they were taught how to deliver explicit reading instruction (systematic phonics instruction) to students at risk for reading failure. Bos, et al. called their instruction Project RIME (Reading Instructional Methods of Efficacy), which they described as “an interactive, collaborative professional development project designed to support early elementary and special education teachers as they integrate more explicit instruction for children at risk of reading failure into their curricula” (Bos, et al., 1999, p. 227).

The study compared 11 teachers who received training and 17 teachers who did not participate in training so that they could compare their knowledge and attitudes on explicit reading instruction before the study commenced and after the study ended. The study lasted a year. The study measured student outcomes on reading measures pre and post explicit instruction and compared the results to students who did not receive the instruction.

Most of the teachers that participated in the study had little knowledge about explicit instruction and the majority had been trained in whole language methodology.
The project team taught the reading approach in professional development sessions and collaborated with the teachers to ensure that the explicit instruction was being implemented properly. The project was also characterized by the interaction and support for the teachers who received training had with one another, as well as with the trainers. The interaction enabled the teachers to clear up any misunderstandings or problems they were having with the implementation of the techniques of the program and to bounce ideas off one another.

The study results indicated that teachers had more knowledge about explicit reading instruction techniques after the training than before, a pre-course mean of 14.91 to a post-course mean of 19.18 (Bos, et al., 1999, p. 232). The knowledge the teachers received was maintained over time. The comparison (untrained) group did not see a change in results from pre to post testing. Similarly, the trained teachers had a positive attitude toward their training. As one participant commented after the study, “Throughout the course, I’ve thought of specific students I work with and what particular methods may work on them. One student has come to mind numerous times. He would greatly benefit from instruction in phonological awareness. My only frustration is I didn’t know these strategies sooner” (Bos, et al., 1999, p. 233).

Moreover, student outcomes improved. Students were pre and post tested on letter-sound knowledge, spelling, and reading fluency for both the trained teachers and comparison teachers. The students who received instruction from the trained teachers made greater gains for all three grade levels involved in the study (K-2nd grade), than the students in the comparison group (Bos, et al., 1999, p. 234).
The researchers stated that “the model was designed to capitalize on what research indicates as best practices in professional development” (Bos, et al., 1999, pp. 234-235), [and that the goal] “was to make the teachers more knowledgeable about research based ways of teaching early reading and writing to students at risk for reading failure” (Bos, et. al., 1999, pp. 235-236).

The teachers who participated in the training reported that they were more knowledgeable after the training about how best to deliver reading instruction. The teachers also reported that they thought the training had been “very valuable to extremely valuable, both in general and for their professional growth” (Bos, et al., 1999, p. 235).

In another study, Tolis and Feinn (2008) investigated teachers’ knowledge about reading in Connecticut. They wanted to determine the level of familiarization among teachers who teach in Connecticut in response to a report of the statewide reading blueprint published by the State’s Department of Education. Connecticut created a reading blueprint that outlines grade levels and competencies at those grade levels that students should know before moving on to the next grade level. The blueprint also sets out which teacher is responsible to teach what reading skill and when they should be teaching it.

The researchers found that the teachers reported their certification programs to teach reading did not adequately prepare them to teach all K-3 students how to read. Likewise, the districts in which they taught did not require them to know the State's reading blueprint nor did they provide them in-service training concerning the findings of the National Reading Panel (Tolis & Feinn, 2008, pp. 258-259). The results are
interesting since the district should have been more serious about their State's reading blueprint that was developed as a guide to inform teachers on the most effective reading practices.

Tolis and Feinn found that over 30% of both the elementary and special education teachers felt they were not knowledgeable enough to meet the instructional needs of their under-achieving students. Additionally, 40% to 70% of these teachers felt that they not only needed to know more about teaching children to read, but they also needed to learn how to select and administer reading assessments (Tolis & Feinn, 2008, pp. 258-259).

The Connecticut reading blueprint is based on research findings about the best methods to teach reading, “the nature of skilled reading, the competencies of a proficient reader, and the components required for a “comprehensive, high quality curriculum of reading instruction” (Connecticut State Board of Education, 2000, p. vi). Tolis and Feinn (2008) found that not only were the teachers of Connecticut largely unaware of the contents of their State’s reading blueprint, but they were also unaware of how and what to teach students (p. 255).

Studies such as Tolis and Feinn’s create many questions concerning reading knowledge and instruction. Even if States have reading standards in place, what good are they if the teachers are not aware of them? Why are the school districts not making their teachers aware of these reading standards? Do school districts not feel a sense of urgency that their teachers should be equipped with the latest pedagogical instruction?

The Moats and Foorman (2003) study found that “experienced teachers were more positive about the need for explicit reading instruction; the inexperienced ones were
more wedded to implicit strategies favored by whole language proponents” (p. 26). The opposite of what Moats and Foorman found might be expected due to the perception that new teachers would be more current on the most effective reading instruction. One might also believe that teacher preparation programs would have abandoned the teaching of “whole language” in light of the research that has been conducted by NRP and the NRC that explicitly demonstrates the efficacy of phonics based reading instruction. Similarly, the NCLB calls for the use of scientifically based reading interventions. Therefore, one would think, that if schools want to be aligned with the NCLB, they should follow its prescriptions.

McCutchen, Abbott, Green, Bertvas, Cox, Potter, Quiroga, and Gray (2002) measured kindergarten and first grade teachers’ knowledge and understanding of concepts and terminology for early reading instruction. The researchers found similar to other studies on the subject that the teachers’ knowledge was lower than expected. For example, “In a published survey (Troyer & Yopp, 1990), only about one third of the 163 responding kindergarten teachers reported that they were familiar with the term phonological awareness” (McCutchen, et al., 2002, pp. 69-70). Other researchers stated that:

To teach reading effectively, especially to children who need considerable scaffolding with the alphabetic principle, teachers need more than simple awareness that /k/ is the first sound in cat. They need to understand the phonology represented in (but independent of) spelling patterns in English, and they need to be familiar with ways to help foster the development of their students' phonological awareness and word reading skills. (Ehri, 1995; Ehri & Williams, 1995)
Similarly, “Despite their high knowledge of the world in general, these teachers were not very knowledgeable about English phonology and orthography as measured by the Moats survey” (McCutchen, et al., 2002, p. 75). The results of the study can be summarized as:

Our partnership with primary elementary school teachers has yielded three major findings. First, we have documented that we can deepen teachers' knowledge of phonological awareness. Second, teachers can use that knowledge to change their classroom practice. And third, changes in teacher knowledge and classroom can improve student learning. We discuss the implications of each finding in turn. (p. 80)

In Moats’ book, *Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able to Do*, Moats (1999) specified these components for effective reading instruction: “1) direct teaching of decoding, comprehension, and literature appreciation; 2) phoneme awareness instruction; 3) systematic and explicit instruction in the code system of written English; 4) daily exposure to a variety of texts, as well as incentives for children to read independently and with others; 5) vocabulary instruction that includes a variety of complementary methods designed to explore the relationships among word structure origin, and meaning; 6) comprehension strategies that include prediction of outcomes, summarizing, clarification, questioning, and visualization; and, 7) frequent writing of prose to enable a deeper understanding of what is read.” (pp. 7-8). In short, Moats reported basically the same components identified by the National Reading Council and the National Reading Panel studies.

Moats and Foorman stress that these components should not be given short shrift and the school should not continue to have the expectation that they will have a comprehensive and effective reading program. As Moats and Foorman discovered in their
studies on teacher knowledge of reading, the problem centers on the fact that teacher knowledge in these areas is inadequate among both new and experienced teachers. As these studies demonstrate and the researchers report, there is a lack of teacher preparation for effective reading instruction. These studies strongly suggest that if adequate teacher preparation is not remedied, then it will be difficult for students, especially students who struggle with learning to read and require more time, energy, and teacher knowledge to eliminate the problem, to reach reading proficiency.

In spite of the knowledge available from the NRP and the National Reading Council and reading research, it doesn’t appear that teacher preparation is improving. A report by Moats in 2009 stated:

In our classrooms, workshops, and research studies, we find that teachers often feel unprepared to address the instructional needs of students with language, reading, and writing problems, although these groups compose the large majority of those in remedial and special education. Teachers often have minimal understanding of how students learn to read and write or why many of their students experience difficulty with this most fundamental task of schooling. Although the quality of implementation of an instructional program has everything to do with its success (Haager, Heimbichner, Dhar, Moulton, & McMillan, 2008), poor implementation of adopted programs is a major reason why students at risk fail to progress. (p. 387)

According to Moats, teachers do not know the essential components to teach reading in spite of the progress made in reading research. Teachers continue to lack the ability to identify phonemes, graphemes, syllables, morphemes, basic parts of speech, sentence structures, and narrative or expository discourse organization. Moats cites an example from a study conducted by Spencer et al. (2008) that demonstrates the lack of teacher knowledge, “One of the easiest items of the survey required teachers to correctly identify the number of speech sounds in the word stop. Only 55% of teachers accurately
indicated that *stop* has four sounds, even though this item was one of the easiest on the survey (2009, p. 387). What is more, the teachers were literacy and special education teachers. These teachers would be expected to know how to teach children how to read. The special education and reading teachers stated that they were taught to treat consonant blends such as the *st* in *stop* as one sound as the reason they missed the number of sounds in the word (Spencer, Schuele, Guillot, & Lee, 2008, p. 517).

The authors examined the reading basal manuals that the special education and reading teachers were using and found some disturbing examples of incorrect letter sound instruction. For example, the manual instructed that the letter /x/ was one sound instead of two (ks) (Spencer, et al, 2008, p. 517). How can teachers teach struggling readers when they are confused as to what to teach?

The recommendations from the Spencer, et al. (2008) study support the other studies discussed and report that teachers require more training in phonological awareness. The researchers believe that more instructional materials are required that are designed to support phonemic awareness instruction and speech-language pathologists and should be utilized in early reading instruction due to their specific training in phonemic awareness (Spencer, et al., 2008, p. 518).

In another study, Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich, and Stanovich (2004) discovered that there was a disconnect between what teachers thought they knew about reading instruction and what they actually knew. They found that the teachers in the study had limited knowledge of children’s literature, phonemic awareness, and phonics;
however, the majority of these same teachers evaluated their skills positively

(Cunningham, et al., 2004, p. 139). Similar to the other studies reported, they found:

...we observed that teachers knew relatively little about phonemic awareness (e.g., knowing how many sounds are in the word "stretch") or phonics (e.g., knowing that "what" is an irregular word or knowing the definition of a schwa). These findings support and extend previous research in this area (e.g., Moats, 1994 as cited by Cunningham, et al., 2004, p. 161). It is important to note that these findings in no way imply that the teachers in this sample were not literate individuals; rather, it points out that they lack a degree of technical knowledge that is relevant and that many consider fundamental to the teaching of reading. (Cunningham, et al., 2004, p. 161)

Furthermore, the findings were consistent with other studies in recommending:

The results of our study indicate that the knowledge base of many K-3 teachers is not aligned with the large and convergent body of research demonstrating the key role that component processes such as phoneme awareness and the alphabetic principle play in learning to read. The appropriate response to these findings would be to act to improve the level of knowledge of our teachers in these critical domains. We should continue to turn our attention toward improving teacher preparation and teacher development in the area of early literacy by highlighting the direction that reading education for both pre-service and in-service teachers might take. (American Federation of Teachers, 1999; Brady & Moats, 1997; Cunningham, et al., 2004, p. 161; Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; McCutchen & Berninger, 1999)

Reading Experts and a Standard of Care for Reading

Several reading experts developed literacy standards for reading teachers (see Appendix H). The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) offers these standards to guide the preparation, certification, and professional development of those who teach reading and related literacy skills in classroom, remedial, and clinical settings. The term “teacher” is used throughout this document to refer to any person whose responsibilities include reading instruction. The standards aim to specify what any individual responsible for teaching reading should know and be able to do so that reading difficulties, including dyslexia, may be prevented, alleviated, or remediated. In addition, the standards seek to
differentiate classroom teachers from therapists or specialists who are qualified to work with the most challenging students.

Although programs that certify or support teachers, clinicians, or specialists differ in their preparation methodologies, teaching approaches, and organizational purposes, they should ascribe to a common set of professional standards for the benefit of the students they serve. Compliance with these standards should assure the public that individuals who teach in public and private schools, as well as those who work in clinics, are prepared to implement scientifically based and clinically proven practices.

The experts found teaching reading effectively, especially to students experiencing difficulty, requires considerable knowledge and skill. Regrettably, current licensing and professional development practices endorsed by many states are insufficient for the preparation and support of teachers and specialists. Researchers are finding that those with reading specialist and special education licenses often know no more about research-based, effective practices than those with a general education teaching license. The majority of practitioners at all levels have not been prepared in sufficient depth to prevent reading problems, to recognize early signs of risk, or to teach students with dyslexia and related learning disabilities successfully. Inquiries into teacher preparation in reading have revealed a pervasive absence of rich content and academic rigor in many courses that lead to certification of teachers and specialists. Analyses of teacher licensing tests show that typically, very few are aligned with current research on effective instruction for students at risk. To address these gaps, the IDA has adopted these standards for knowledge, practice, and ethical conduct.
The standards are an outline of content knowledge necessary to teach reading and writing to students with dyslexia or related disorders, effective delivery of instruction, and guidelines for ethical conduct. The standards depict foundational knowledge that should be shared by regular classroom teachers because they, too, are responsible for preventing and ameliorating reading problems whenever possible. The standards provide a content framework for courses and course sequences with proficiency requirements for practical application (e.g., interpretation of assessments, delivery of diagnostic instruction, and successful intervention with a child or adult with a reading disability); criteria for training programs that seek membership in IDA’s Alliance of Member organizations (note that additional requirements for membership are to be determined); criteria for the preparation of those professionals receiving referrals through IDA offices; and, a content framework for the development of licensing or certification examinations.

Louisa Moats, one of the authors of the reading standards, wrote a letter to the International Dyslexia Association outlining what they hope the standards will accomplish. As she stated in her letter “we look forward to using our standards for several purposes, including, but not limited to course design within teacher certification programs; practicum requirements within certification programs; criteria for endorsement of organizations that provide training and supervision of teachers, tutors, and specialists; criteria for the preparation of those professionals receiving referrals through IDA offices; and a content framework for the development of licensing or certification examinations. She continued, “Although this work will be ongoing, it should eventually provide clearer
meaning to terms such as “certified reading teacher” or “certified specialist” (Moats, Davis, Meisel, Swerling & Wilson, 2010).

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention (RTI) was developed as a result of too many children being inappropriately identified for special education services, classified as learning disabled without participating in effective reading instruction in the regular classroom, and receiving no intervening remediation because of costs (Fuchs, Fuchs, Compton & Bryant, 2005).

Prior to the RTI model, students had to wait to fail before they could receive services for reading. Experts such as Stanovich have fortunately made sure that the wait to fail model has been rescinded. The wait to fail model was based on a discrepancy between a student’s IQ score and “against expected performance exemplars, relative to normative peer group data, in order to determine if that student is learning disabled and at-risk for reading failure” (Hodgson, 2008). The weakness of the approach is that by the time the student receives reading remediation it may be too late. For example:

That is, assessments have tended to be undertaken at the end of third grade. By this point in time, students experiencing reading difficulty almost never become good readers (Coyne, Kame’enui & Simmons, 2001, p. 69; Vaughn & Roberts, 2007, p. 139 as cited by Hodgson, 2008)). As well, a lack of reading competence and fluency at this point in time places the child at risk to ultimately drop out of school. (Vaughn & Roberts, 2007, p.138)

The discrepancy between a student’s IQ and academic ability has lost its hegemony over whether or not a student receives reading services. The new model is the determining factor for a student to receive remediation and is based solely on his/her reading or academic ability. In other words, reading ability alone may determine
intervention. Therefore, a student may receive the services he or she requires immediately rather than waiting until a discrepancy occurs between ability and IQ because it often does not present itself until the student is older. Another positive factor concerning RTI is that a student does not need to be qualified for special education to receive reading interventions. A reading specialist, teacher, or other staff member is able to provide interventions as soon as the problem is identified.

Response to Intervention is a three tiered intervention process. A description of the process at the elementary school level is described as:

At the elementary grades, primary prevention is typically conceptualized as instruction in the general education classroom. Only children who fail to respond to this universal core program enter secondary prevention that, in most research-based versions of RTI, involves scientifically validated small-group tutoring. Students who show poor response to this second, more intensive, and standardized form of intervention are considered to have a need for even greater intensity at the tertiary level. Given the student's failure to respond to a validated standard tutoring protocol, tertiary intervention typically involves an individualized program formulated inductively to meet the student's unique needs. In many but not all systems, tertiary intervention is conducted under the auspices of special education, given the student's need for individualized rather than standard programming and given the expense and expertise required for individualized programming. (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006, p. 621)

The general classroom teacher with the help of a literacy coach provides interventions at the tier one and tier two stages. Intervention at the tier three stage is provided by the special education teacher. The benefit is that the student does not have to wait until the reading problem has reached a critical level before they receive help.

However, a negative factor in implementing RTI is that, as of 2008-2009, it is not uniformly applied on many campuses across a school district. Some schools are relatively knowledgeable about the RTI process while other schools know very little about the
model. The plan in the Douglas County School District in Colorado is to have all the schools implementing RTI by the 2009-2010 school year. Therefore, it is too soon to know the effects of the plan, but, if implemented properly, the results could be encouraging, especially due to the early intervention component of RTI.

Another important component for reading success is special education. Prior to the implementation of RTI, students with reading difficulties were automatically referred to special education. Therefore, it is important to discuss how well special education is performing in regards to remediating reading difficulties.

*Reading Results of Special Education Students*

Catone and Brady (2005) pointed out in their study that too often elementary school children who have poor basic skill knowledge in reading advance to middle and high school without the problem being resolved. The researchers cited another study (Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1994) that reported 74% of children diagnosed as dyslexic in grade three would remain that way in grade nine (p. 54).

In another study, Schumaker and Deschler (1988) found that students who perform below the tenth percentile in reading, math, and written expression, demonstrate a leveling off of these skills at the fourth and fifth grade level, which creates a huge gap by the time the students reach high school.

Most States have developed standards and assessments that address skill requirements across subject areas enabling students to create more accountability in education as required by No Child Left Behind. On CSAP, the 2008 scores in reading for eighth and ninth grades under the category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) eighth
grade shows that 82% of students are not proficient in reading and the scores for ninth and tenth grades did not fare much better at 81% and 80% respectively (see Table 6).

The Speech Language Disability (SL) has similar results (see Table 7). The eighth, ninth, and tenth grade CSAP scores indicate that approximately 80% of students score below proficiency. As a group, tenth grade students who are on an IEP scored 75% (see Table 8) below the proficiency range (Colorado Department of Education, 2008). These scores indicate that remediation for reading among students in special education are not having the desired effect.

Table 6. CSAP Scores for Significant Learning Disabled (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Partially Proficient</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>No Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Colorado State Assessment Performance (CSAP of 2008).

Table 7. Speech Language Disability Students (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Partially Proficient</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>No Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Colorado State Assessment Performance (CSAP of 2008).
Table 8. Students on an Individualized Education Plan (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Partially Proficient</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>No Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Colorado State Assessment Performance (CSAP of 2008).

Recent information for all students from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2007) suggests that there has been an improvement in fourth and eighth grade reading scores. There was a two-point improvement for fourth grade over the 2005 scores, and a four-point improvement from 15 years ago; there was a one point improvement for eighth graders over the 2005 scores and a three-point improvement since 1992. However, there has not been an accompanying decrease in the reading gap between minorities and Whites. One of NCLB’s aims is to reduce the gap between minorities and Whites. Furthermore, 33% of fourth grade students continue to read below the basic skills level, while 26% of eighth grade students read below the basic skills level. Basic skills level essentially means the student is functionally illiterate.

Likewise, the reading results for students reading at or above the proficient level are not encouraging (NAEP, 2007). The NAEP found that 33% of fourth graders read at or above the proficient level, while only 31% of eighth graders read at or above the proficient level. Proficiency in reading essentially means that the students’ skills are appropriate for age or grade level. When compared to the NAEP data from 2002, 33% of eighth graders read at or above proficiency and 68% read at or below the basic skill level, compared to 74% of eighth graders in 2007 reading at or above the basic skill level.

In addition, the NAEP reading results for 2005 show that among twelfth grade students, reading proficiency declined since 1992 from 80% to 73% reading at or above
the basic level. During the same time frame, students reading at the proficient level decreased from 40% to 35%. Scores for both male and female students declined from 1992 to 2005, with the gender gap even wider than in 1992 (females scores being higher than males).

Accompanied by other data from the NAEP, these data show that the number of special education students has increased in all racial categories for the years 1998 to 2006 and suggest that the IEP goals to resolve reading difficulties are not being productive. As Catone and Brady (2005) state, “given the apparent perseverance of reading impairments, one interpretation might be that the remediation of reading problems is not being properly addressed through regular education or special education, particularly for those students identified with deficits in the fundamental reading skills necessary for more advanced reading abilities” (p.54).

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter Two began with a brief description of the reading wars, progressed through the standards movement that culminated in the NCLB and the Race to the Top, and ended with a discussion of National Standards, Common Core Standards, and the International Reading Association Reading Standards. The reading experts also weighed in with their views on best reading practices, including the components required for effective reading instruction. Moats and others contributed to the improvement of reading instruction by developing standards that teachers should be required to know in order to be effective and as a guide for teacher certification. However, creating these educational standards has not been a smooth ride.
There has been contention every step of the way. Some individuals do not want standards at all; others disagree as to the substance, breadth, and scope of what the standards should look like. The best method to teach reading has been a part of the contentiousness that finally started to abate after the National Reading Council and the National Reading Panel released their findings on the best reading practices.

Response to Intervention (RTI) was developed because too many students were waiting to fail. In other words, before a student was able to receive services for below grade level reading, a discrepancy was required between the IQ and reading scores (a high IQ in relation to the students reading scores). By the time a discrepancy occurred, the student might be in the fifth or sixth grade, already too late to remediate the problem.

The RTI model provides services when the problem is first identified so that services can begin immediately by a regular education teacher and not only after the student qualifies for special education. This is beneficial to the student because it has been shown that special education students do not fare well in having their reading difficulties remediated.

Reading experts not only believe that a standard of care for reading instruction is required but have also developed one. This dissertation research will be the first to examine the extent to which a consensus exists among reading experts concerning best practices for the teaching of reading.
Chapter Three

Methodology and Design of the Study

The last chapter demonstrated that there has been a flurry of studies, standards, and statutes in regard to best practices for reading instruction. However, what has not been explored is whether there is consensus among reading experts for a standard of care for reading and what that standard would be. The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate that premise. The researcher developed one basic research question with two additional subparts to guide this research project.

The researcher selected a qualitative case study as the best methodology for this dissertation, due to the flexibility it provides in order to probe more deeply into the subject matter. Eisner (1991) summed up the rationale for a qualitative research approach when he stated:

There is a kind of continuum that moves from the fictional that is ‘true’–the novel for example–to the highly controlled and quantitatively described scientific experiment. Work at either end of this continuum has the capacity to inform significantly. Qualitative research and evaluation are located toward the fictive end of the continuum without being fictional in the narrow sense of the term. (pp. 30-31)

In determining to use a case study approach the researcher used the following criteria from Creswell:

1. Researchers determine if a case study approach is appropriate to the research problem. (Creswell, 2007, p. 74)
2. Researchers next need to identify their case or cases… The case can be single or collective, multi-sited or within site, focused on a case or on an issue (intrinsic, instrumental). (Creswell, 2007, p. 75; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003)

3. The data collection in case study research is typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, documents and audiovisual materials. (Creswell, 2007, p. 75)

4. The type of analysis of these data can be a holistic analysis of an entire case or an embedded analysis of a specific aspect of the case. (Creswell, 2007, p. 75)

Creswell (2007) states “that a case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (p.74). Likewise Yin (2003) recommends “six types of information to collect: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts.

This case study met all four of these requirements. It was a single or instrumental case design, as defined by Creswell, with a focus on a single issue: defining a standard of care for reading instruction. In addition, the data collection draws predominantly on detailed interviews with the respondents, as well as documents, such as artifacts, in the form of standards for reading teachers that were collected.

Research Questions

This study was designed to determine if there is a consensus among reading professionals for a standard of care for reading instruction. If a standard of care exists, what are the components and can a standard of care be developed that would guide reading instruction? The information concerning this subject is limited and only recently has it begun to be explored. Therefore, the data gleaned from this study could be the
impetus for further studies and help to create a standard of care for reading that reading professionals and school districts can consult for literacy instruction.

To better understand the subject, this study focused on one main question and two sub questions.

1. What is the standard of care for professionals who teach reading?
   a. How do experts define the effective methodologies to teach reading?
   b. How can the views of experts be translated into practical standards and practice for reading professionals?

In order to discover the answers to these research questions, contextualized interviews were utilized.

*Overview of the Research Design*

Contextualized interviews were conducted to better understand the thoughts and ideas of the participants. Face-to-face interviews were utilized in three instances because the participants residing in Colorado. Three participants resided in another State; therefore, those interviews were conducted by telephone.

*Contextualized Interviews*

*Participants.*

The six participants were chosen for this study due to their professional status within the education field and due to their expertise in the area of reading. Three of the experts are well known reading researchers, lecturers, and authors. One participant is on the faculty at the University of Denver (DU) in the Morgridge College of Education (MCE). Another of the participants is employed with the Colorado Department of
Education (CDE). One of the participants is employed as a literacy coach for several schools in the State of Colorado.

The reading experts were initially contacted by email prior to the interview. The interview questions were sent by email before the actual interview occurred. Also, included with the interview questions was a consent form asking the subjects if they would be willing to participate in the study and the interviews.

*Instruments.*

The researcher prepared an open-ended interview protocol for the study. Open ended questions were utilized to gather more in-depth information and so as not to lead the interviewee in their responses. Weisberg, Krosnick, and Bowen (1996) stated, “Open-ended questions have the advantage of allowing respondents to express their thoughts and feelings in their own words instead of in words chosen by the researcher” (p. 78). The researcher designed questions that would extract the opinions of professionals due to their expertise in reading/literacy knowledge. The researcher used a tape recorder to ensure the accuracy of the respondents’ answers.

*Procedure.*

The interview protocol followed the basic format that Creswell (2007) suggests (p. 136). The researcher used a form consisting of the following: time of interview, date, interviewer, interviewee, position of interviewee, brief description of the project, and ten interview questions.

The interview took anywhere from a half hour to an hour to complete. The researcher sent the interview questions to respondents before the interviews to allow them
to preview the information. The face-to-face and telephone interviews were audio-taped. The respondents reviewed their personal interview transcript to ensure the accuracy of responses and to correct any misstatements or misconceptions that may have occurred in the course of the interviews.

Data analysis

The results of the interview were transcribed from the audio tape and from the notes. The responses were analyzed for any recurrent themes to determine if there was consensus among the participants’ answers. The responses or themes were divided into categories, such as those that stressed phonics instruction compared to those that stressed comprehension strategies as the most important reading skill. There was another category for respondents who did not believe that a standard of care was either desirable nor practical. The data collected for this study provided insight into the consensus of thinking among experts on best reading practices, the uniformity of thought with existing reading standards, and the practical application of these standards for teachers.

Limitations

The focus of this study was to investigate the possibility of a standard of care for professionals who teach reading. However, the study was based on a single-issue case study and there were only five respondents who participated in the study. Therefore, to extrapolate these findings more broadly would be misleading.

Summary

A single case study design was utilized for this study due to the information sought being a single issue; Is there a standard of care for reading professionals? The
interview method provided the researcher with in-depth information about the alignment of thought that reading experts have as to best reading practices. The literature review has made it appear that the subject of reading instruction is a fait accompli. Therefore, matching that assumption with the actual views of reading experts in the profession is an undertaking that is interesting and relevant to the field of education.

The results of this study can be used to inform the practice of reading instruction. If a consensus exists then it can be utilized to inform teaching programs and professional development courses for stronger alignment and guidance into instruction practices. Likewise, if consensus does not exist, the information gained can be used to determine points of disagreement and what is required to overcome these areas’ divergence.
Chapter Four

Data Analysis

This case study examines whether there is consensus for best practices to teach reading and, if so, what they are. This research contributes to the body of literature on best reading practices by supporting the agreed upon information identified by groups such as the National Reading Panel and the National Research Council Reports. Furthermore, the results of this study add to the current literature because it demonstrates what leaders in the field of reading think about best reading practices and whether this information can proceed to the next level of creating a standard of care for best reading practices.

The case study analysis utilized a holistic perspective as the analysis strategy and recurrent themes were generated from the data collection process. As Stake described (1995), “The qualitative researcher seeks a collection of instances, expecting that, from the aggregate, issue relevant meanings will emerge” (p. 75). This chapter provides the results from this case study analysis.

Introduction to Participants

In this case study research, seven participants were chosen because of the similar characteristics they share; they all work in the field of reading research or reading instruction. Four of the participants are well known, leading reading researchers. Dr. Louisa Moats is a consultant advisor for Literacy Research and Professional
Development at Sopris West Educational Services in Longmont, Colorado. Currently the President of Moats Associates Consulting, Incorporated, she has had a distinguished career as a Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Texas at Houston - Health Science Center, the Project Director of NICHD Early Interventions Project in Washington, DC, and as a Distinguished Visiting Scholar in Sacramento County Office of Education and Center for the Improvement of Reading Instruction. She has also been a Licensed Psychologist with a private practice.

Dr. Moat’s educational background includes an Ed.D. (1982) from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education in Reading and Human Development. She received her master’s degree (1969) in Learning Disabilities/Special Education from the Peabody College of Vanderbilt University and a bachelor’s degree in music from Wellesley College (1966).

Another eminent reading researcher is Dr. Joe Torgesen, director of a reading research facility at Florida State University, a professor of psychology, lecturer, and developer of reading assessment tools. He received his Ph.D. in Clinical and Developmental Psychology from the University of Michigan (1976). Dr. Torgesen has been conducting research with children who have learning problems for over 25 years and is the author of over 170 articles, book chapters, books, and tests related to reading and learning disabilities.

Throughout his career, Dr. Torgesen’s work has been continuously supported by research grants from private foundations, the State of Florida, the U.S. Office of Education, and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
(NICHD). For the last 15 years, he has been part of the effort supported by the NICHD to learn more about the nature of reading difficulties and ways to prevent and remediate reading problems in children. His current professional service includes membership on the editorial boards of six research journals, as well as membership on the professional advisory board for the National Center for Learning Disabilities and the Scientific Advisory board of the Haan Foundation for Children.

The third participant in the study is Dr. Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards, an Assistant Professor at the University of Denver. Dr. Hartnett-Edwards has been working in reading education for 24 years and is currently working jointly in the Child, Family, and School Psychology Program and the Teacher Education Program in Morgridge College of Education. A native Californian, Dr. Hartnett-Edwards taught in the K-12 system before working in the Graduate Program at California State University, San Bernardino.

She completed her doctoral work at Claremont Graduate University and participated as a researcher in the federally granted-funded TENDS Project working the Institute of Heart Math in Santa Cruz County, California. Her 2006 book, *Stress Matters*, reflects this research. A lover of reading and writing, Dr. Hartnett-Edwards works with preparing classroom teachers to consider reading and writing strategies that engage all students. In addition, she trained the majority of Reading Specialist Candidates and Reading Coaches in Western Riverside County, California.

Dr. Hartnett-Edwards came to Colorado for a unique language and literacy position working in the Teacher Education Program and Early Childhood in MCE. Her current research addresses oral and written language acquisition for divergent readers in
public schools. Her research includes work with classroom literacy coaching models in rural settings, such as the Hawaiian Islands and urban Minneapolis.

The fourth participant will remain anonymous due to her position at a State Department of Education. She is working on her Ph.D. in education with an emphasis in literacy that focuses on “Teachers’ Perceptions and Knowledge of the Role of Early Language on Later literacy Achievement.” She has worked as a Reading First coach, an elementary classroom teacher for seven years, and currently works as a Senior Consultant for a well known reading program. Additionally, this State Department employee has extensive assessment experience, which includes the DIBELS reading assessment, and she is a Certified Regional Trainer for LETRS program (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling).

The fifth participant is a third year literacy coach in the Weld County School District in Greeley, Colorado. Kelly Seilbach has 17 years in education, grades one through five. Ms. Seilbach has a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences with an emphasis in elementary education and a special education endorsement. She is currently working on a graduate degree in educational leadership.

The sixth participant is a well-known reading researcher. Louise Spear-Swerling, Ph.D., is Professor of Special Education at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven. She has prepared teachers of reading for over three decades. Her research interests include literacy acquisition, reading difficulties, and teacher education and professional development. She has published numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters on these topics, as well as several books, including *Off Track: When*
Poor Readers Become “Learning Disabled” (with Robert Sternberg). As a member of the IDA Professional Standards and Practices Committee, she helped to write the new “Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading” for the International Dyslexia Association.

The seventh participant is another well-known reading researcher, Mary Beth Calhoon, Ph.D., an Associate Professor in the Department of Education and Human Services College of Education at Lehigh University. Dr. Calhoon’s educational achievements include a Ph.D. in Education and Human Development Special Education (Mild/Moderate Disabilities) from Vanderbilt University, a Masters Degree in Education (with a major in Learning Disabilities and a minor in Elementary Education) from Oral Roberts University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from University of Oklahoma.

Dr. Calhoon has had a distinguished career as a special education teacher, professor, and reading researcher. Her career includes working as a Special Education Teacher (Mild-Moderate Disabilities, sixth through twelfth grades) at both Metro Christian Academy in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and at Owasso Junior High School, Owasso, Oklahoma.

Data Collection Process

The method utilized to collect data was interviewing experts in the field of reading research and reading instruction. Patton (2002) describes the interview process as allowing the reader to enter another person’s perspective (p. 341). This process of interviewing reading experts allowed the researcher an opportunity to gain insight into
the scope and depth of the reading problem in this country as well as to explore possible solutions.

Once consent was obtained through email to participate in the study, the researcher scheduled a time for the interview. Three of the interviews were face-to-face in the participant’s office, and the other four were conducted over the telephone. As a result of the location and conditions, the interview could be conducted without interruption.

All of the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed later by the researcher who was also the interviewer for the study. This procedure allowed the interviewer to reflect more fully on the data that was provided by the participants. In addition, the transcribed interviews were emailed back to the participants in order to ensure the accuracy of the data and as an opportunity for the participants to add additional information that they believed was pertinent to the discussion. The interview consisted of ten questions. The questions were open ended, which Patton (1987) in reference to Guba and Lincoln (1981) says, “The openness of naturalistic inquiry permits the evaluator to be especially sensitive to the differing perspectives of various stakeholders” (p. 35). Question One set the tone by asking: Do you believe there are essential components to teaching students to read, and if so, what are they? If not, why not? The participants shared their experiences and opinions about the state of reading instruction in this country.

Procedures for Data Analysis

All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim; the only exception was to change a few minor words that would allow a sentence to flow more smoothly due
to an interviewee’s pause or redirection of thoughts. The changes made did not alter the meaning or the content of the idea being conveyed by the participant. The interviews were transcribed immediately after the interview to maintain accuracy while it was still fresh in the researcher’s mind. Patton (1987) says, “On occasion this process of immediately reviewing the interview will reveal areas of ambiguity or of uncertainty, where you’re not really sure what the person said or meant” (p. 140). As a result of ambiguity, the researcher emailed follow-up questions to the participants to clarify areas of confusion. For example, one area of confusion was: Should phonemic awareness and phonics instruction always be the beginning point of instruction for all readers, regardless of the skills they bring to school?

After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher compared responses to identify common themes or answers to the following research questions.

1. What is the standard of care for professionals who teach reading?
2. How do experts define the effective methodologies to teach reading?
3. Can the views of experts be translated into practical standards and practice for reading professions? If so, how?

*Five Emergent Themes*

*Theme one: essential components.*

In addressing questions one and two, all of the participants agreed that there were essential components to teaching reading. Additionally, the components were understood to be phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency instruction, vocabulary, and comprehension, as outlined in the National Reading Panel and the National Research Council Reports.
However, one of the participants disagreed with the others; she believed that reading comprehension was the most important skill that students needed to be taught, and she disagreed as to the degree the components needed to be taught.

Most participants were as emphatic in their view of the essential components as Louisa Moats was when she expressed, “Yes, and it’s not just a belief. Extensive validation in research, intervention research, experimental research, neuro-science research, etc., not just a philosophic belief, but it is scientifically proven that there are sub components of reading and the reading process itself. It can be measured. There is very clear evidence that reading is a multi-component process. As proficient readers, we have mastered these sub-processes and are no longer consciously aware of them, but plenty of evidence exists that there are components and that at specific points of reading development those components contribute to a substantial variance of overall results. The interaction of those components can be understood in relation to one another. These components – phonological awareness, accuracy, speed of word recognition, fluency and text reading, language comprehension, written expression or encoding – has a prominent role in reading instruction at the level of learning word recognition.”

Similarly, it was not just the reading researchers who believed that there are essential components to teaching reading, but the literacy coach in the public school system also identified the components required to teach reading

Louise Spear-Swerling reinforced what the other reading researchers had to say, “Yes, I do believe there are essential components. I agree with the National Reading Panel; the five components of reading, particularly for the primary grades K-3. I think
that as students become advanced in reading development it is helpful to take the more
differentiated view of comprehension. To think about, for example, literal comprehension
versus inferential comprehension versus understanding of text structure, things like that.
So, I think the five components justified by the National Reading Panel works well for
the primary grades. Then, for typical children beyond the primary grades, they will
generally have the basic phonemic awareness and phonics skills, so that type of
instruction isn’t really developing anymore; what is really developing are vocabulary and
comprehension skills. So, I think it is helpful at higher grade levels, you look at
comprehension in a more fine grained way and think about things like inferencing, literal
comprehension and knowledge of text structure, things like that for sophisticated
comprehension, because comprehension demands increase so much from about grade
four on.”

Primary among these components, laying the foundation for later reading ability,
and that most of the experts identified, was phonemic awareness. As Joe Torgesen said,
“I believe there are essential skills that kids have to acquire to become skilled readers. If
we are focusing on beginning readers, I think they need to acquire a sensitivity or
knowledge about the phonological structure of language. Some people call it phonemic
awareness. They need to acquire a repertoire of word analysis strategies so that they can
be confident when they encounter words that they don’t already know in text. I think that
primary among these word analysis strategies is phonemic decoding. Research suggests
that that is the most reliable set of clues to unknown words in print.”
However, there were differences as to the degree that these components needed to be taught. Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards does not believe that teaching phonemic skills is always necessary. She says that most students learn to read without having acquired those skills. Mary Beth Calhoon stated, “If you are talking about beginning reading, they all need to start off with phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and spelling. They need all of those components in reading. They need all of the big five.”

Mary Beth Calhoon said that in addressing adolescent readers’ concerns, they will need the same type of instruction as the younger students, except in different doses. This is a similar view that was stated by Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards. However, they differ in the following

When you get into adolescent reading, they are going to need all of the components, however, it depends on the dosage of each those components they need to catch up. One of the issues with adolescent reading right now is that many instructors want to increase their comprehension by just giving them comprehension strategies. However, many of these kids are reading below the third grade level, meaning they do not have the necessary decoding skills, and they are not receiving these skills after a certain age. And, I am really worried about adolescent remedial reading at the moment because so many researchers have only provided comprehension to these students and they aren’t getting any results. Therefore, people are thinking that we can’t get their reading skills higher. I have results that show that you can increase their skills if you give them what they need. (Calhoon)

Some kids do learn from a very strong phonetic base but most kids don’t. Most kids understand that language makes sense because they come into school with language making sense and with oral language skills, so they expect written language to make sense. If you break written language down into its smallest pieces it doesn’t make a lot of sense because there are so many exceptions to the item knowledge that is taught. So then kids get real confused. (Hartnett-Edwards)
In terms of how these reading components should be taught, Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards had this to say, “I think we agree on certain components. I think we disagree on the degree to the components. In other words, some will emphasize item knowledge more and some will emphasize meaning more. Or, at some level some will emphasize when item knowledge happens and when meaning happens. So, I think components are similar, but I think emphasis is different.”

Most of the researchers said that the instruction in order to be effective must be systematic and explicit. Systematic, explicit instruction means that the concept is thoroughly and deliberatively taught until understanding is achieved. Explicit instruction can be thought of as the ability to be consciously aware of what you are learning and why you are learning it. All the experts talked about the interaction of the essential reading components and the knowledge on the part of the teacher of when to apply them.

For example, the State Department employee explained the necessity of systematic, explicit instruction and the interaction of the components when teaching reading. “From the research I know, there is definitely a logical sequence involved in learning to read. However, that doesn't mean that a teacher should proceed from phonemic awareness to phonics to fluency to vocabulary to comprehension. It’s quite complicated to explain, but essentially phonemic awareness is definitely the simplest skill level, but alphabetic principal (phonics) should be introduced as soon as possible.

Phonemic awareness (PA) activities are more beneficial when phonics is done together with PA activities. From the beginning, the teacher should be building a child's vocabulary and helping even preschool children develop comprehension skills at the
listening level. Fluency is even taught at this age in the sense that we want children as young as preschool to develop fluency of the PA skills they are learning. I could go further with my explanation, but hopefully you can get the gist of what I am saying. It isn’t about balance either; it’s knowing what is most important at each phase of learning to read and weighing the instructional decision accordingly. At the lower grade levels, there would be an emphasis of time spent on PA, phonics, and fluency of these skills, while at the upper levels there would be an emphasis of higher level phonics, vocabulary building, and reading comprehension. Again, this doesn't mean that you aren't building vocabulary and comprehension skills in the younger grades.”

So, it is necessary as a teacher to know when to employ a component based on what a child needs rather than blindly following a scripted instructional path from phonemic awareness to phonics to fluency and so on. Differentiated instruction based on the skill level of the child was unanimous among the experts.

Joe Torgesen said, “To focus on the child rather on instruction because, I also believe that it’s true that some children require lots of instruction and some children require very little instruction in some of these things. The ones that require little instruction in these components is because they have acquired them through a more natural process of language development. I think one of the huge challenges that we have right now, when we talk about consensus in best practices, is dealing with this diversity of student needs for instruction. It’s like some people looking at an elephant, some people describe it one way and other people describe it another way. These are blind people because they are touching different parts of the elephant. The people who focus on
struggling readers and what their needs are for instruction or at risk kids, poor children, for example, they are going to have a very different instructional picture than people that focus on middle and upper class kids for instruction. I want to preface it with that, but I believe there are essential skills that kids have to acquire to become skilled readers. If we are focusing on beginning readers I think we need to acquire a sensitivity or knowledge about the phonological structure of language. Some people call it phonemic awareness.

Theme two: Consensus on best practices.

When the researcher asked if there was consensus on best practices to deliver these components, there was a difference of opinion that most notably depended on the environment the expert worked in. The reading researchers all were of the opinion that consensus exists among scientific researchers as to the best methods to teach reading. For example, Louisa Moats said, when addressing this question, “We have had a series of documents, all of which have concluded pretty much the same thing. I don’t think that consensus is widely taught or widely appreciated. So, we still have a big gulf between the consensus in our best scientific work and what goes on in the field.”

Joe Torgesen agreed that consensus exists for best reading practices among members of the scientific community. He said, “I think that among serious researchers, people who do empirical research in reading, not those that tell stories or go in and describe anecdotes for instruction, but among serious researchers there is a pretty strong consensus. I think that consensus has been represented quite well in a number of government reports, consensus reports such as the National Reading Panel and some follow up reports. The Institute of Education Sciences is preparing what they call practice
guides to distill research consensus for research supported practices, which represent a
method for moving towards a consensus. Obviously, there’s not complete consensus,
there is a lot of difference of opinion. However, I think among pretty serious researchers
there is a pretty good consensus.”

Louisa Moats put the consensus in a historical perspective when she said, “It
started in the 1960’s with the first grade studies that were funded by the U.S. Department
of Education. Then we had Jeanne Chall’s analysis in 1967. Then we had Lauren
Resnick’s work, a three-volume work published in 1979, and we got a copy of that when
I was a graduate student. The other day I looked at the concluding chapter and it was a
three-volume work called *The Theory and Practice of Beginning to Read* and in it she
(Lauren Resnick) states clearly everything that has since been stated in the NRP about the
components of instruction and how you were going to get better results. And then we had
the Anderson report in 1985, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*. Then we had the National
Academy of Sciences report in 1998 and then we had the NRP in 2000 and we don’t have
anything since then.

But none of these reports disagree with one another and, if anything, the
consensus in the scientific community is more and more solid and I would say, where it
has gone since the NRP is more toward an examination of the interaction between these
essential components and instruction at certain points in reading development, so that the
portrait that current studies construct is somewhat more complex. But, the consensus has
been the same that if you want to get the best results with the most kids in the least
amount of time, you need to begin with a code emphasis program. That is a program of
instruction that is organized around deciphering the alphabetic code that needs to be prefaced with phonological awareness and needs to be connected with building fluency and it has to be simultaneously combined with a strand for oral language, vocabulary, language development, and all those things tend to converge as soon as kids can actually read.”

Similarly, Louise Spear-Swerling agreed that consensus exists in the scientific community for the best practices to teach reading. “Yes, I think in general there is among scientific investigators. There might not be consensus on everything but there certainly is on many key points. We know beginning readers benefit from explicit systematic phonics instruction. We know that reading instruction needs to be comprehensive and address not just phonics but the other components of reading. We know comprehension should still be explicitly taught and that children need many opportunities to apply their developing phonics skills in reading books. So, those kinds of things go into good reading practices and there is certainly ample scientific consensus on those kinds of points.”

When I posed the question to the State Department employee, she was less sure there was consensus as to the best reading practices. She believed that there should be consensus due to the evidence, but unfortunately there was not. She said, “When I first read that question I had to laugh because it depends on who you ask. I would like to say yes, there is definitely consensus. We’ve got plenty of research to show us that it’s a certain way and that we teach kids to read in a certain manner, following a certain protocol, but the research also shows us that there are conflicting arguments. So, we still have people out there who might believe in a different way if that makes sense.”
Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards thought that the answer was different depending on to whom you addressed the question, “I don’t believe there is a current consensus. I do believe there are two camps. There are the people who believe you learn item knowledge first and then meaning second. Then there are people who believe they should be learned at the same time. So, I do believe that that is a huge issue. I think that that’s a big conversation that is in the literature and I think it depends very much whether you’re talking to reading researchers or educators versus special education educators.”

Mary Beth Calhoon, also, did not believe a consensus exists for best reading practices due to the different theoretical backgrounds to which educators are wedded. For example, she stated, “There is not a consensus. Among educators there is not a consensus. I think that it has to do with the different theoretical backgrounds that people come at this with and it also comes from the idea that it is best to let kids discover their own reading. There are also those people who believe that children can learn implicitly by just reading more. Then, there are those who think that children need to be taught very explicitly to learn how to read because they are not going to pick it up on their own. And, then there are those who are in the middle that think reading means a little bit of both.”

Kelly Seilbach, the literacy coach in the schools, was the most definite in her assessment that a consensus does not exist, perhaps because she sees, firsthand, reading instruction in several different schools. She responded to the question, “No, there are best practices like explicit instruction, modeling, guided practice, and application, however, there are too many theories and teachers have the right to choose. In Weld
County, there is consensus. Also, professors at the universities may not teach best reading practices because they have a different philosophy.”

**Theme three: Severity of the reading problem.**

Most of the reading experts agreed on the severity of the problem with the exception of Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards. When asked whether she agreed with Reid Lyon’s statement that 30% to 40% of students cannot read (meaning they have some ability to read, however they are reading at only the basic or below basic level and not at the proficiency level), she said she disagreed,

“I don’t agree with anything that Reid Lyon says. However, I would say that probably most classrooms have about 20% of their kids struggling in some way. But, the problem with a statement like that is what is Reid Lyon defining as reading. Because grade level standards are sort of an arbitrary cut line that somebody defined. And, some kids may read better than what that cut line shows depending on the testing. And some kids may read different genres better. So, it depends on, first of all, what you’re defining as reading. People getting communication out of written text, that’s what reading is. Or, is it that passing some specific standardized test is defining them as a reader. Through my experience working in classrooms across many, many states, is that there is usually 20% of the class that needs a little bit more help. They need something either presented differently or they need more time with it. So, no, I disagree with him.”

Louise Spear-Swerling agreed that based on the NAEP scores, that statistic was correct. She said, “The statistic is probably from NAEP. I believe that that is pretty
accurate. That a pretty high percentage of students are not reading at a proficient level as
determined by tests like the NAEP and in some places it is a lot worse than that.”

The State Department employee also agreed that based on national and State
statistics, approximately 30% to 40% of students cannot read at the proficient level. She
said, “Yes. My first thought to that answer was yes because I thought about the NAEP
scores. They tend to say, I mean we tend to be around 40% to 60% of kids that can read.
The statistics for the U.S. have been pretty flat. We’re not really making gains. And, if
you think about Colorado, our reading CSAP scores have been between 60% and 70%
proficient. So, that’s right there with that 30% to 40% of students who can’t read. I do
agree and I think that it shouldn’t be that bad.”

Joe Torgesen similarly agreed, “I think we do have really good evidence on this.
The only evidence I ever cite and that is right now; the evidence suggests that 33% of
fourth graders in this country cannot read at the basic level of competency. It’s wrong to
say they can’t read. Of course they can read to some extent. They can read at the first
grade level or the second grade level but they can’t read well enough to do fourth grade
level work and that’s a hard fact. That is, 33% cannot read at the basic level in this
country. Then, with African Americans, it’s 52% and with Whites, it’s about 22% that
read at the below basic level.

So, there’s a huge difference there. However, it’s wrong to say they can’t read and
I think Reid [Lyon] often gets misquoted a lot on that. He doesn’t really mean that that
they can’t read. He means that they can’t read at grade level, that is what he means.”
Kelly Seilbach believes that these dismal reading figures are true from her perspective. She has been employed as a literacy coach for a number of years and has witnessed some of the more difficult reading problems in the schools. Her response was, “I haven’t heard the exact quote, but the NICHD [National Institute of Child Health and Development] said that student illiteracy was a national health problem.” She believed that the problem could be attributed to the residual effects of whole language. Likewise, for 30% of students, reading will be the hardest thing they ever do. These kids will need explicit instruction, intensive remediation, and whole language instruction has only exacerbated the problem. She said that whole language created huge gaps in reading.

Louisa Moats quoted the statistics from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) to illustrate the severity of poor reading skills in the United States. Moats said, “Also, a statistic we cite a lot is the National Center on Adult Literacy that documents that 14% of adults in the U.S. are totally illiterate. They really cannot read. Another 26% are very poor readers and have trouble with everyday reading. They don’t read. They don’t read well enough to read a newspaper and be informed by it. So, that is 40% of the population and that is horrifying.”

Finally, Mary Beth Calhoon emphatically agreed with Reid Lyon that 30% to 40% of the students in U.S. could not read. She stated that, “Yes, I wholly agree with it. There are so many regular education students out there who cannot read very well, that it is an epidemic. I have students who want to be teachers and are very poor readers.” When I asked Mary Beth to what she attributes this staggering rate of poor reading ability, she said, “I attribute it to poor reading instruction and a lack of teachers understanding the
content of teaching reading. They are handed these programs, but they really don’t understand why and what they are teaching. Also, the administrators change their minds frequently. For example, one year they want to teach this and the next year they want to teach something different. The teachers are just bounced around like crazy and they have to learn to use this program one year and then, no, now we are going to use this program.” Mary Beth also believes that students are not learning any of the reading component skills in depth, but rather, are receiving what she calls a splintering of skills.

Theme four: The need for national reading standards.

All of the participants believed that national standards for reading instruction were a good idea; however, implementing them was more problematic. Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards liked the Common Core Standards. However, she did not like the redundancy that you find when you have common core standards that are due to the overlap you have with state standards. She also thought that there were too many standards.

Louisa Moats (one of the developers of the Common Core Standards that have been adopted by a number of States) and Louise Spear-Swerling were both on the Professional Standards and Practices Committee and helped to write the new Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading for the International Dyslexia Association.

Louise Spear-Swerling said, “I think it would be great for the IDA (International Dyslexia Association) reading standards to be adopted nationally. I think unfortunately, that that is unlikely to happen, especially in the near term, because even though the
standards were intentional to include general education teachers, many people are going to tend to see them as intended for the special educators because they are coming through the International Dyslexia Association. I think people are going to tend to see them for special education, especially if they don’t actually read them very carefully. If you actually read them, it is explicit right at the beginning that teacher educators who prepare general education classroom teachers, as well as those who prepare reading specialists or special educators, anybody who teaches reading, should be following these standards.”

Louisa Moats was a bit more pessimistic about reading standards being adopted nationally, even though she has been an integral part of the Common Core Standards and the standards that were developed for the IDA. She attributed this to the lack of political will, that whoever has the politician’s ear at the time wins the debate, regardless of the efficacy of the reading method. She said, “It is not helpful for our federal and State governments to be constantly changing. There is no sustainability in good practices. I mean, I just see this happening over and over again, that even though we have these scientific consensus reports, we don’t have any institutions that consistently and over long term and with some leverage, stay on message.

There is no sustainability for the kind of reports that people need and then it’s not just a question of support, because you can have organizations like RMC that are wonderful and was contracted by Reading First to provide technical assistance, and they do that extremely well, but I’m sure the State leadership in Idaho doesn’t have any idea what RMC is nor does what they are promoting. So, why have RMC funded with a federal grant if they have absolutely no influence or control over what people do? And,
where does that come from? It should come from mechanisms like the Reading First grant process where states are actually penalized if they are misusing the money.”

Moats continued, “And that’s a tough question. Because, when we had over the last decade the reading first initiative, where the U.S. Department of Education took very bold steps to try and implement what we know from science for the benefit of high poverty schools through the State granting process, we were able to, as long as the leadership was strong, through the creation of federally funded mentoring institutions like the RMC and regional centers for technical supports and grant funded program centered in universities, to create outreach and professional development. We really did make a dent in the reading problem in these high poverty schools and there are numerous State reports that show substantial benefit for Reading First when the practices described were actually implemented. But, we had a big problem in implementation and with a lot of States getting the money but failing to support best practices because of the entrenched misunderstanding of what was going to work in these schools. As well, as the entrenched unwillingness of requiring people to learn how to teach and to use research based methodologies and to understand what that meant.”

The State Department employee embraced the idea of national reading standards enthusiastically. She made the point that we have standards for students, so why not have them for teachers. As she said, “Well, I think we need common standards for teachers, just like we have common standards for students. Only recently we started to think about national standards for students. And so, I think as we move in that direction, we need to talk more about national standards for teachers.”
Joe Torgesen had a pragmatic approach for the need for standards, “You can’t just impose standards until people feel the need for it. Therefore, one thing I think is probably the first step is collecting data to see how you are actually doing. The IES (government) is spending all kinds of money to make this data readily available on the NAEP website. I use that data all the time to look at the various States to see how they are doing compared to the national average and so forth. I wish we had it down to the district level, but that’s going to triple or quadruple or multiply the cost exponentially.”

Torgesen also said that developing standards, while important, is not going to be easy. “I think that another good thing is to continue to work to publish consensus documents that have some scientific credibility. These are reports, like the National Reading Panel and the IES practice guides that are a pretty serious attempt to find out what the research says. I’ve been on two or three of those committees and, unfortunately, when you get down to really specific questions about practice there often isn’t a lot of research to support what people believe in. So, I think we are some ways away from having a very detailed set of practice standards based upon research.”

Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards said, “I like the Common Core Standards because I find them to be a bit more global. I think reading is comprehension based and I think that should be what your standards are looking at. Everything else is simply a tool to get there. So, how to do that nationally? I don’t know. Our goal as reading teachers should always be to get kids to understand. Whatever you have to do to get them there, that’s your strategies.”
Mary Beth Calhoon stated that there are standards such as those developed by the International Reading Association; however, she thought that these were too ambiguous. There was too much leeway in interpretation to make them practical. She thought that in order to make reading standards practical that the universities would have to change their instruction because too many professors so adamantly believe in whole language instruction. She provided this example how universities will circumvent phonics instruction even when it is mandated by the State, “When I was at another university, we passed one of the very first State laws that made it mandatory that the general education reading courses teach phonics or the five big ideas from the National Reading Panel. They ended up getting around that requirement bydevoting only one day to teaching phonics out of the whole semester.

Theme five: Best instruction for preparing teachers.

One of the main barriers in preparing teachers to teach reading comes from the difference of opinion among experts on the best method to teach students to read. This is one reason for the difficulty in developing national reading standards for teachers to follow in order to obtain certification. For example, Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards viewed remediating struggling readers this way, “So, I think if there were a focus on that one to one, highly trained, highly focused, intervention for primary students, then you could do more small group with middle grades and upper grades for those kids that fall through the cracks or the kids that didn’t get it in the primary grade for whatever reason.

So, you question what would be the most effective. I think it has to be taught with continuous text. I don’t think item knowledge is a tool for reading, not the in all and end
all of reading. So I’m not really a phonics first interventionist. I believe much more in putting kids into books and finding out what they need as they work through books. Because that’s kind of the way we read. So, what’s efficient and effective, I think it depends on the reader. I hate to say that because that kind of cops out, but that’s part of the problem. One size doesn’t fit all. One intervention program doesn’t fit all. One teacher’s model doesn’t fit all. We just have to be better attuned to realizing when it’s not fitting what we do then. Do we have another approach to their reading problem and we don’t tend to do that right now?”

Louise Spear-Swerling had another opinion about the best method to help a struggling reader. “I think that the curriculum has to address the important components of reading that we talked about earlier. The knowledge base about the components is important, but also how the components fit together. How, for example, trouble with fluency can create a drain on comprehension or the fact that phonemic awareness effects a student’s acquisition of decoding skills. They need to understand how the components tend to shift with development.

So, phonemic awareness is primarily important in the earliest stages of learning to read, whereas the vocabulary and comprehension demands escalate greatly from around grade four on. So, teachers have to understand not just the five components, but how the components fit together and change with development and then they need to be able to put that knowledge into practice in assessing children, in early identification of children with early reading problems and being able to provide good instruction in the different components. Providing intervention for children who are struggling is essential because
even though typical readers at a particular grade level may have acquired certain lower-level components of reading, some struggling readers may not have developed those components. For instance, if you are an upper elementary school teacher and have a student who is struggling with decoding, that student could easily be struggling with phonemic awareness. So, even at the upper grade levels, students who are struggling in reading can have difficulty with these basic components.”

Louisa Moats said that in order to instruct teachers in good reading practices this would have to happen, “Does that mean teaching the people who teach reading instructors? Maybe if we start there that could make a difference. I don’t know. There would have to be a new kind of institution that would have to be an academy for people who actually teach the courses in the universities. And, there would have to be some board certification process for anybody who teaches teachers how to teach reading. The board certification process would have to be governed by people who are not politically motivated but who understand content.

The closest thing we have to this right now is what is going on in the State of Massachusetts. The achievement level of kids in that State is the highest. The standards adopted by the State were bold and specific, very strong, and this was before the Common Core State Standards were even developed. Then what they did, which is very specific, is to create a test which teachers have to pass before they can get into the classroom. So, that has driven change in what teachers learn before they get their license. And there are also more stringent requirements for teachers who are coming in from out of state. They have to get a reading instruction competency license.”
Louisa says that the positive situation in Massachusetts could all be unraveled if the political winds change. She says, “What has been very encouraging to me is that there have been leaders at the State level in Massachusetts, who some of them came through the same program I went through at Harvard, so that helps. They really understood what had to be taught and they gained power within the State. They got these standards passed, they got the test constructed, they had friends in the Governor’s office and they got all this done. But, it could all be unraveled if there is some kind of political shift. It could all be unraveled if the Reading Recovery people get the upper hand again and it could all go down the tubes because it is still politically governed. But, that is where something is happening and the courses are very substantive and the exam is very substantive and it actually gets at the heart of the knowledge base.

Another is the kind of substance we’ve outlined in the International Dyslexia Association Standards on the preparation of teachers of reading. We really tried to capture there what the knowledge base is about and I think that there is probably excessive depth and breadth in that set of standards and if someone is going to be a classroom teacher, they won’t know everything that is in those standards, but if somebody is charged with intervention or teaching the kids who are struggling, and yes, that is 40% of the population, then they need to know all that stuff.”

Joe Torgesen said, “I think they ought to be really knowledgeable in two areas of research. They ought to be really knowledgeable in the basic science of reading, that’s called the psychology of reading. I don’t care much about the brain research. I don’t know that that informs us much at all as educators. I think they [teachers] ought to be
very aware of the research that’s been done on the role. For example, of how weak contextual cues are in terms of helping you to identify just the right word, if that’s all you have. Keith Stanovich did a lot of work in this area and they ought to be really aware of LeMay’s how sight words develop. They ought to be aware of Freddie Hiebert’s work on the role of text and supporting reading and the work on phonologic and phonemic skills in reading. So, there ought to be a whole course on that. That’s based upon current research and that really helps people understand a good conceptual understanding of the critical skills that are involved in being a good reader.”

Louisa Moats said, “The cause for poor teaching is due to a lack of the right knowledge on the part of teachers; the reason is the fact that our institutions of higher education are not the repositories of this knowledge-base. So, we have most teacher training programs [lacking in this essential knowledge base] and I would say that one of the bright lights in this national scene has been the National Council on Teacher Quality and the relentless criticism that they have generated of our institutions of higher education and organizations like the International Reading Association and what they have not contributed to substantive change.

But, if we’re talking about the best way to deliver standards nationally, we first have to ask, ok, where has anyone generated a set of standards that actually embody what we know about instruction that would actually be used in teacher training. The standards, such as the Common Core Standards, are a good place to start; however they did not go far enough. Another are the IDA Standards. However, an impediment to all of this is our institutions of higher learning that are not changing rapidly enough. They are clinging to
outmoded, ineffective teaching methods. We also need to change the pre-service training of teachers so that they have the knowledge they need to be effective. That knowledge would go a long way as far as changing the teaching profession and enabling teachers to do the work that would really make a difference.”

Joe Torgesen added, “There ought to be several courses on specific instructional methods for reading, both that are suitable for kids making normal progress that come to school with adequate preparation and then also for the kids who come to school that don’t get it the first time, that need more preparation. That ought to be based on what works in terms of the science of instruction and I think that teachers need to be given very careful instruction in how to design explicit lessons for kids who struggle.

That is, I think a great weakness in most teachers, is that they are not prepared. I think they should have exposure to the current consensus documents. I mean, a part of every curriculum should be some summary or synopsis of the National Reading Panel. There ought to be an integration of these IES [Institute of Education Sciences] practice guides into curriculum in schools of education. That’s the knowledge part.

Then, I think there has to be a much bigger investment in carefully monitored practicum experience in where kids get a chance to see really effective teachers in action as models, and then they get a chance to try out some skills under the observation of a skilled person. Current student teaching methods just leave so much to chance in terms of the kinds of models that students are exposed to and what they learn. But, they should have…part of every student’s reading instruction should be the experience of trying to
tutor, or one-on-one or in small group of struggling readers, so they can really see firsthand and up close what kind of challenges those kids have.”

An area of agreement on the training that teachers need in order to be effective was teachers should have more practical experience. Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards believes that teachers need to receive more hands on knowledge to be effective. “Okay, I really think reading teachers in classrooms should have to teach someone to read as part of their pre-service instruction. So, they need to participate in a supervised tutoring model with a number of different levels and of different types of reading problems. I think that is the best way you learn how to teach reading is that you learn by actually doing it. But, teachers also need the support and direction as to why this is working and why this isn’t working, by putting themselves in the place of a struggling reader. So, I think it is a combination of the two. I think in pre-service programs we tend to do too much theory, for example, and not enough case study. So, I think that more of a case study, experiential model would be the best way. It’s expensive so that’s why we don’t do it.”

The State Department employee had this to say about what teachers should be required to know, “I am sort of in the process of going through the LETRS modules and being certified to train those. But, I know a special education teacher and I tell him all the time these modules should be taught in higher education. This should be a course. So when I read that question, that’s immediately what I thought about. You know, if we could just teach those, I think it’s about twelve or thirteen different modules, if we could just teach those modules to future teachers … that would make a difference in their preparation.
Each module, I think I took them all home, I’ve been using them in my own research; each module is focused on a specific component of how we teach students to read. So, for example, there’s one module entirely devoted to comprehension. It is based on what we know about research on comprehension instruction and how it’s important for students, and what we know about best practices, for example. So, if you’re going through the training, you’ll get an opportunity to see all the research that’s out there and then you practice and develop strategies for teaching comprehension. So, each module focuses on one specific area. There’s one on spelling and how to analyze kids’ spelling skills. Phonological and phonemic awareness is another one, and they talk about what are the sounds of our language. The modules explain how we teach those to kids. You learn all about the vowel circle and how to teach those sounds (the vowels) explicitly to kids. I can tell you that that’s all stuff I didn’t learn in my undergraduate program.”

Mary Beth Calhoon thought that part of the problem is that universities are not able to prepare teachers to teach reading to any depth of knowledge because they are constrained by the streamlined courses they have to offer. She said it is not the universities fault either because students do not want to go to school for three or four years. So, if the university cannot offer them the coursework in 18 months, they will go to a school that can. She said that it is a matter of competition.

She also stated that there was a shortage of good text books in which to instruct students. She lamented the fact by saying, “I wish there was one. There are books out there. I like to use Louisa Moat’s book Speech to Print, but that is not a curriculum. I actually try to teach the teachers the phonics that is in my reading program because it
goes so in depth on the subject. However, that becomes very difficult in one course. But, there is not a good text book out there that covers the subject in depth enough to have teachers prepared to teach reading. Unless they took three or four courses and that is the issue. There are not enough courses; we had to streamline the number of courses so much that the students do not get the content.”

Summary

This chapter presented and analyzed the findings from the study. The data were collected from seven participant interviews. The participants included reading experts from a variety of backgrounds. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed for emergent themes that developed. The researcher contacted the participants to ask additional questions where clarification was needed, and upon completion, the participants were provided a copy of their responses to check for accuracy. The implications of the findings will be presented in Chapter Five.
Chapter Five

Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

The purpose of this case study is to explore the possibility of a consensus among reading professionals for developing a standard of care for reading instruction. The unique perspective of experts in the field of reading was explored to provide an understanding of the agreement as well as barriers that exist, which could prevent a reading standard for best teaching practices to come to fruition. The importance of finding a consensus for best reading practices cannot be overemphasized due to the poor reading results of children across the United States on assessments such as the NAEP.

Seven reading experts were interviewed for the study, including five participants who are involved in reading research. The participants received a copy of the questions prior to the interview so that they would have time to reflect on them. An informed consent letter was also sent prior to the interview to explain the study and to obtain agreement to participate in the study. Once consent was obtained, the interview consisted of an open-ended interview format where the participants shared their thoughts about reading consensus, the best way to create a standard for best practices for reading instruction, the severity of the reading problem, and the best method to instruct teachers.

The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed except to change grammatical errors that naturally occur during conversational speech, making the responses more...
presentable. However, the changes in no way changed the content of the responses and were sent back to the participants for their approval. Additionally, the transcripts were analyzed for emergent themes and placed into categories that related to the appropriate research question.

Discussion of Results

Through the participants’ responses and triangulation of the data by analyzing documents, the following five major themes emerged from the study:

1. Essential components;
2. Consensus on best reading practices;
3. Severity of the problem;
4. The need for national reading standards; and,
5. Best instruction for preparing teachers.

Discussion and Interpretation

The researcher explored this topic using a qualitative case study approach to gain deeper insight into this issue. He conducted interviews of reading experts in order to analyze and examine whether consensus exists for the best practices of reading instruction.

Chapter Four presented information on the data collection and analysis process that included the seven interviews. Five emergent themes surfaced during the course of this study. Chapter Five discusses and interprets the themes and findings, which are presented in reference to the research questions that served to guide this study:
1. What is the standard of care for professionals who teach reading?
   a. How do experts define the effective methodologies to teach reading?
   b. How can the views of experts be translated into practical standards and practice for reading professionals?

The Difficulty in Establishing a Standard of Care

This study was designed to investigate the possibility of a consensus that would be interested in developing or promoting a standard of care for professionals who teach reading. National reading standards exist in the form of the Common Core Standards and the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading for the International Dyslexia Association that Louisa Moats and Louise Spear-Swerling assisted in authoring. However, the faithful adoption and implementation still depend on university professors’ acceptance of these standards. As Mary Beth Calhoon expressed this problem, “It is just amazing how so many general education professors are so adamantly whole language. The other experts also expressed frustration that although the scientific information has been available for quite some time as to best reading practices, university professors either choose to ignore the evidence, or are largely unaware of best practices.”

Another explanation is that the “reading wars” have not abated. Strongly held beliefs are stubborn, even when confronted with contrary evidence; therefore, it is difficult to let go of beliefs that many professors have acquired over the course of their careers. Joe Torgesen mentioned that in some universities, before changes can occur, you have to wait for the older faculty to retire and they can be replaced by new faculty who are not so wedded to old ideas.
Similarly, when students in teaching programs are not receiving current information on best reading practices, or if they are, but the information is dismissed by their professors as not being important, it is no wonder that teachers are not teaching reading methods that are supported by the latest research. There have been several studies (Moats, 1994; Moats & Foorman 2003; Piasta, Connor, Fishman & Morrison, 2009; Tolis & Feinn, 2008) demonstrating that new teachers know less about best reading practices than teachers who have been teaching for a while, which seems odd considering that new teachers should be equipped with the latest scientific evidence. As Joe Torgesen said, “There are many universities that do not trust research; they don’t trust data, nor do they really know how to conduct research.”

A final explanation for the lack of a reading consensus and, thus, a standard of care for reading instruction, is due to what the Louisa Moats described as the vagaries of the politicians. The Reading First Initiative, which had the power to defund money to States that were not following a scientifically prescribed reading program, was discontinued because the political situation changed. According to Louisa Moats and others, this happened because the publishers of whole language programs were losing billions of dollars. Therefore, as a result of the politicians being influenced by money contributed to their campaigns by these companies, the Reading First Initiative became defunct. Since reading methods are heavily influenced by political considerations, it is very difficult to maintain stability in reading instruction, especially when it is a multi-billion dollar industry.
These are but a few of the explanations as to why a consensus and, therefore, a standard of care for reading, is difficult to establish. However, great strides have been made in the form of the Common Core Standards and the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading.

The Consensus on the Reading Components

The essential components for teaching students to read was the first major theme to emerge from the study. Most of the participants identified the five components that were essential to learning to read as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These were the components that were also identified as essential to teaching reading as identified by the National Reading Panel. Joe Torgesen (2003), said,

From our research on the process of learning to read, we know that kids really need to have solid, fluid, functional phonemic awareness as they begin learning to read. They need to have a mastery of the alphabetic system to decode unknown words. They need to work towards building fluency in word recognition. We need to stimulate the growth of their vocabulary, because that helps them construct meaning. And then we need to teach them how to think while they read, which is developing comprehension strategies. All of these elements are critically important. (pp. 2-3)

As Louisa Moats pointed out, these were not just ideas that she held but were held by the scientific community as well. Moats expressed that it has been scientifically proven that teaching reading is a multi component process. In her article, “Teaching Reading is Rocket Science,” Moats (1999) stated that, “Indeed, a chasm exists between classroom instructional practices and the research knowledge-base on literacy development. Part of the responsibility for this divide lies with teacher preparation programs, many of which, for a variety of reasons, have failed to adequately prepare their
teacher candidates to teach reading” (p. 7). Additionally, Moats (1999) indicated that the scientific research is unanimous on the components necessary to teach reading.

Well-designed, controlled comparisons of instructional approaches have consistently supported these components and practices in reading instruction:

- Direct teaching of decoding, comprehension, and literature appreciation;
- Phoneme awareness instruction;
- Systematic and explicit instruction in the code system of written English;
- Daily exposure to a variety of texts, as well as incentives for children to read independently and with others;
- Vocabulary instruction that includes a variety of complementary methods designed to explore the relationships among words and the relationships among word structure, origin, and meaning;
- Comprehension strategies that include prediction of outcomes, summarizing, clarification, questioning, and visualization; and,
- Frequent writing of prose to enable deeper understanding of what is read. (Moats, 1999, pp. 7-8)

All of the participants agreed that there were essential components to teach reading. Kimberly Hartnett-Edwards holds a different view from the other participants. The difference, she believes, is in the emphasis that these components should be taught. Hartnett-Edwards believes that there is consensus on the reading components; however, the difference lies in that some instructors will stress item knowledge more than comprehension while others stress comprehension more. Hartnett-Edwards believes that the emphasis should be strongly tilted in favor of the comprehension component because that is the purpose of reading.
Similarly, Hartnett-Edwards did not believe that phonemic awareness or phonics was absolutely necessary for good reading instruction. “I think reading has to be taught with continuous text. I don’t think item knowledge is a tool for reading, not the in all and end all of reading. So I’m not really a phonics first interventionist. I believe much more in putting kids into books and finding out what they need as they work through books. Because that’s kind of the way we read.”

I believe that Hartnett-Edwards accurately expressed the divide that exists in the reading community over the best methods to teach reading. During our interview, she expressed that there are two camps in regard to reading instruction that prevents a consensus on best practices from occurring.

There is a consensus to teach reading among most of the reading experts. There is agreement that there are essential components to teaching reading and what the components are. However, there is disagreement as to the degree that they should be taught or whether some of the components need to be taught at all. Even though this was only a small sample of participant views, it seems to reflect the broader viewpoint that can be gained from the literature, that there is a divergence of opinion in regard to the essential components to teach reading. There are a number of reading experts who believe the components such as phonemic awareness are an integral part of any reading program, while others stress that reading comprehension is the most essential skill and that the other components can be either superficially taught or omitted altogether. As a result of this divide, it will be difficult to reach universal consensus for the best reading practices, and, therefore, adoption of these methods in the schools will be difficult to achieve.
Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation has been discussed as an important component in the effective implementation of reading instruction. All of the participants in the study shared the concern that teachers are not being adequately prepared to teach reading in their university programs. As Louisa Moats stated,

Other complex and demanding professions insist on much more stringent training and preparation than that required of teachers. Pilots, engineers, optometrists, and art therapists, for example, must learn concepts, facts, and skills to a prescribed level, must conduct their practice under supervision, and must pass rigorous entry examinations that are standardized across the profession. Continuing education to stay abreast of proven best practices is mandated. The public interest is protected by professional governing boards that monitor the knowledge base and oversee the competence of these licensed professionals. We, the consumers of these professional services, should be able to trust that any person holding a license has demonstrated competence and is accountable to his or her professional board of governance. (Moats, 1999, p. 12)

In another study, Piasta, et. al. (2009) found,

Our sample of well-educated (100% with bachelor’s degrees and 29% with master’s degrees), highly experienced ($M = 11.40$ years) teachers displayed rather low levels of explicit knowledge concerning language/print structure and literacy concepts: Teachers averaged only 52% correct on the Teacher Knowledge Assessment. Other studies of teacher knowledge in this domain have found similar results (Bos et al., 2001; Cunningham et al., 2004; Mather et al., 2001; Moats, 1994; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Moats & Lyon, 1996; Troyer & Yopp, 1990). It appears that many teachers in the field lack the specialized content knowledge required to inform their classroom practices and provide first-grade students with effective explicit reading instruction. (p. 243)

Louisa Moats was harsh in her criticism in stating that at least one of the causes for poor teacher preparation was “that our institutions of higher education are not the repositories of this knowledge-base. So, we have most teacher training programs lacking in this essential knowledge base…”
Joe Torgesen believes that a great weakness in most teachers’ education is that they are not prepared. He believes that teachers do not know the research nor are they made aware of the consensus documents such as the National Reading Panel. He felt that the schools of education should incorporate the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) practice guides into curriculum in the schools of education.

Louise Spear-Swerling said that teachers must have the knowledge to understand not just the five components, but how the components fit together and change with development. They need to be able to put that knowledge into practice when assessing children for the early identification of reading problems and being able to provide good instruction using different components. Furthermore, Swerling stated that teachers are often not given the skills they need to teach reading well, especially to children who struggle.

So, there is consensus among the reading experts that teacher preparation programs need to be enhanced. All of the reading experts felt that teachers come out of teacher preparation programs with inadequate knowledge and experience to teach reading. Similarly, experts such as Mary Beth Calhoon believe that the textbooks to teach reading are lacking. She thought that textbooks similar to the Speech to Print book written by Louisa Moats and covered all aspects of language structure are sorely needed. However, good textbooks that comprehensively teach reading instruction are not readily available according to Calhoon.

Reading experts, such as Louisa Moats, have called for stronger licensure requirements for teachers. These experts advocate that teachers be able to demonstrate
they have the requisite knowledge to teach by passing a rigorous examination. Louisa Moats has also called for a National Board, similar to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) populated only by scientists, who would oversee teacher certification and reading standards.

Most experts agree that teacher preparation programs need to be improved. A problem with implementation is money. Student teachers receive limited training in the classroom, usually a semester, and most experts think that is inadequate. However, extending teaching experience would be more expensive. Calhoon stated that teacher programs have to condense three to four years of courses into an 18 month program because students want to earn their degrees as quickly as possible, and if the college or university cannot adhere to that time line, teacher candidates will go elsewhere. As a result, courses are streamlined and students may not be receiving the depth of instruction they need to be effective teachers.

*Can the Experts’ Views Be Translated into Practical Standards?*

The answer to this question is yes, because they already have these standards in the Common Core Standards and the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading. However, universal adoption is particularly problematic, as has previously been discussed. If the universities are not going to widely accept the scientific consensus for best reading practices, then it will be difficult to disseminate these practices down to the school level.

Another problem with the dissemination of knowledge is that many administrators in the schools are unaware of best reading practices. A study conducted by the Rand
Corporation supports this view (Sawchuk, 2008). There is a knowledge gap; therefore, it is little wonder that the needed information for best reading practices is not consistently applied at the school level.

Another problem often cited has been the trendiness of education. Calhoon mentioned that a principal may be enthusiastic to use a method one year after attending a conference, but then after reading a book over the summer, be ready to go in a different direction. This not only does not allow for the new methods to take hold but also requires teachers to learn new programs.

An additional problem occurs when selected teachers are using scientific reading methods and know the research, but their principals do not and, therefore, do not support their teaching practices. Teachers have been known to get into trouble with their principals if they are not using the methods that their administrator deems appropriate.

Most of the participants agree that there is scientific consensus for best reading practices. The problem is that the consensus exists among the scientific investigators; however, it is not known by the teachers who are responsible for teaching students in the classroom. Teachers who do not know the appropriate knowledge are an intractable problem that was identified by all of the experts.

A solution proposed by Joe Torgesen would be to have all students in a teacher preparation program taught the information provided by the National Reading Panel Report, the National Reading Council Report, and the other existing consensus documents that provide the current scientific research on reading. Perhaps, if prospective
teachers were taught this information, there will be more agreement on what constitutes the most beneficial methods to teach reading.

The Severity of the Problem

Perhaps the single largest barrier to a consensus for reading standards is due to a difference of opinion on the severity of the problem. Among the participants, all but one agreed that approximately 30% to 40% of students in the United States cannot read at grade level. One participant thought that the figure was closer to 20%. If there is not a consensus on how large the problem is, then there will not be a sense of urgency to provide a solution.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine if a consensus exists among reading experts for a standard of care regarding best reading practices. Using a combination of interviews and a review of documentation, these conclusions were drawn from the research.

1. A consensus exists among reading experts for a standard of care for professionals who teach reading with qualification. Six of the seven participants identified the five components that are required to teach reading as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

2. One participant did not agree that these components were necessary. The participant believes that most children learn to read without needing to know phonemic awareness or phonics. Additionally, the participants were not optimistic that a consensus for best reading practices could be developed due to the
theoretical perspectives held by many university professors that are anti-phonics instruction.

3. The study found that six of the seven participants agreed on the severity of the problem. They agreed that approximately 30% to 40% of students in the U.S. cannot read at grade level. One participant believed it was closer to 20% of students who cannot read adequately and grade level is not a good measure to use because it is nebulous. Likewise, the participant did not believe that only one assessment such as the NAEP should be used to come to that conclusion.

4. All of the participants believed that better teacher preparation was required to prepare teachers to teach reading.
   
   a. Requirements included knowledge of the consensus documents such as the National Reading Report.
   b. Teachers needed more practical experience working with all level of students.
   c. Teachers should have stricter licensure requirements that demonstrate knowledge of language structure and the components to teach reading.

5. All of the participants thought that national reading standards were a laudatory goal; however, they did not believe that standards were practical due to the opposing philosophical perspectives that are present at this time.

Limitations

This study examined a limited number of participants. A wider pool of participants is required to reach more general conclusions. For example, it would have
been helpful to interview more reading experts who had opposing views than the ones held by the majority of the participants. Likewise, a study that analyzes the knowledge that school administrators have about reading would be important because administrators dictate what teachers can teach in the classroom.

*Implications*

The implications of this study are important due to the reading difficulties that a large percentage of students in the United States have with reading. The research generated information that can be utilized by the schools to inform reading practices. Similarly, the information can benefit principals, administrators, and other stakeholders and institutions that are involved in reading instruction.

The findings from this research demonstrate that information from consensus documents needs to be more widely disseminated to students that want to be teachers. A few of the reading experts felt that a shortcoming of many teacher preparation programs was that the students did not know the research and were unaware of the findings of the National Reading Panel Report and other consensus documents on reading research.

The reading experts identified the reading components that the National Reading Panel Report and the National Reading Council Report found were important pieces of curriculum in reading instruction. School systems would do well to incorporate the reading components into their instruction as part of their professional development for teachers. As Moats and Foorman (2003) in *Measuring Teachers’ Content Knowledge of Language and Reading* stated, “The study concluded that teachers can deepen their knowledge of phonology and orthography in a two week institute with periodic follow-
up, and the knowledge that teachers gain affects their behavior in the classroom. Kindergarten and first grade students’ achievements on most key variables can improve as a consequence” (p. 27).

Having recent graduates pass an exam that includes knowledge about the essential components and how they interact with one another could strengthen teacher licensure programs. The Moats and Foorman (2003) study found that even teachers that were involved in the licensure program had difficulty with language structure at the level of phonology and orthography (p. 26). All participants identified improved teacher training as an area of need to produce more knowledgeable, better prepared teachers. Licensure exams could incorporate this knowledge in the assessment to ensure that teachers have the foundational knowledge to teach reading.

The participants all agreed that reading standards would be beneficial to the teaching profession. It would have to be a set of standards on which most experts could agree. The reading experts who participate in the study thought that developing reading standards was problematic due to the different philosophic views people have on reading. The Common Core Standards appear to be a good place to start because even people with divergent views seem to agree that they are a good idea. The reading standards that were developed for the International Dyslexia Association, even though they are more specific than the Common Core Standards, might be more difficult to find consensus. Louise Spear-Swerling said, “They were likely to be identified with special education, even though they were designed for all teachers.”
Finally, Joe Torgesen said that people need to be convinced that standards are necessary. He said that making people aware of the reading problem – from assessments such as the NAEP that show the dismal numbers of our students’ reading scores – will help to educate people on the need for stronger reading standards.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the limitations of the study, future research should include a larger sample of participants. A larger variety of reading experts that included teachers in a variety of teaching settings (public and private schools, universities) would be helpful. Additionally, it would be helpful to elicit the views of principals and other administrators that are in control of teaching materials, curriculum, and professional development, to determine their knowledge of best reading practices. It would also be beneficial to conduct a study involving parents on their knowledge of best reading practices, so they can better advocate for their children.

**Reflections**

This study explored reading experts’ views on best reading practices and on the possibility of developing reading standards that can guide reading instruction. Using individual interviews and reviewing the literature, the researcher sought to gain insight into what experts view as effective reading practices and how the dismal reading scores of students can be improved. Five major themes emerged from the study. They were the essential components for reading instruction, consensus for best reading practices, the severity of the problem, the need for reading standards and best instruction for preparing
teachers. The findings of this study have implications for teachers in K-12 schools, university professors, administrators, and parents.
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Appendix A

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

Jurisdictions
Bulgaria, Canada, Ontario Canada, Quebec, England, France, Germany, Hong Kong, SAR1, Hungary, Iceland, Iran, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Romania, Russian Federation, Scotland, Singapore, Slovak, Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, United States

Description of PIRLS international benchmarks: 2006

Advanced - 625
• Interpret figurative language
• Distinguish and interpret complex information from different parts of text
• Integrate ideas across text to provide interpretations about characters’ feelings and behaviors

High - 550
• Reading skills and strategies
• Recognize some textual features, such as figurative language and abstract messages
• Make inferences on the basis of abstract or embedded information
• Integrate information to recognize main ideas and provide explanations

Intermediate - 475
• Identify central events, plot sequences, and relevant story details
• Make straightforward inferences from the text
• Begin to make connections across parts of the text

Low - 400
• Reading skills and strategies
• Recognize some textual features, such as figurative language and abstract messages
• Make inferences on the basis of abstract or embedded information
• Integrate information to recognize main ideas and provide explanations
• Retrieve explicitly stated details from literary and informational texts
Appendix B

Peter W. V. San Francisco Unified School District (1976)

60 Cal. App. 3d 814; 131 Cal. Rptr. 854; 1976 Cal. App. LEXIS 1774

Procedural Posture: Appellant student sought review of an order of the Superior Court of the city and County of San Francisco (California) that sustained respondent school district's demurrers and entered a judgment that dismissed appellant's complaint.

OVERVIEW: Appellant student went to a school in respondent school district. Appellant filed a negligence action against respondent that alleged he was inadequately educated. The trial court sustained respondent's demurrers with leave to amend. The trial court dismissed the action when appellant failed to file an amended complaint. Appellant sought review. The court found that in order to state a cause of action against a public entity, every fact material to the existence of statutory liability had to be pled with particularity. In order to maintain a negligence claim, appellant had to plead facts showing respondent owed a duty of care to appellant, negligence that constituted a breach of that duty and injury to appellant. The court affirmed because appellant did not plead the requisite duty of care. The question of whether respondent owed a duty of care to appellant was to be determined by the court. The court found respondent did not owe appellant a duty of care because there was no conceivable way to measure respondent's conduct, there was no reasonable degree of certainty that appellant suffered injury, and there was no connection between respondent's conduct and the injury.

OUTCOME: The judgment of the lower court that dismissed appellant student's negligence case against respondent school district was affirmed because respondent did not owe appellant a duty of care. There was no conceivable way to measure respondent's conduct, there was no reasonable degree of certainty that appellant suffered injury, and there was no connection between respondent's conduct and the injury.

CORE TERMS: cause of action, duty of care, misrepresentation, skill, requisite, tort liability, school district, mandatory duties, educational, immunity, public entity, proximate result, public schools, achievement, governing board, high school, actionable, pleaded, italics, public school system, tort claims, public policy, grade level, negligently, demurrer, formula, omission, public policy considerations, duty to exercise reasonable, injury suffered
Appendix C

IDEA Results by State

*IDEA* details four categories for the secretary's determination. The categories include:

- Meets the requirements and purposes of *IDEA*;
- Needs assistance in implementing the requirements of *IDEA*;
- Needs intervention in implementing the requirements of *IDEA*; or
- Needs substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of *IDEA*.

Data and criteria used to make determinations:

*IDEA* identifies specific technical assistance or enforcement actions aligned with each of the determinations, with the exception of "meets requirements," that the Department must take under specific circumstances. If a state "needs assistance" for two consecutive years, the Department must take one or more enforcement actions, including among others, requiring the state to receive technical assistance, designating the state as a high-risk grantee, or directing the use of state set-aside funds to the area(s) where the state needs assistance. If a state "needs intervention" for three consecutive years, the Department must require a corrective action plan or compliance agreement, or withhold further payments to the state. Any time a state "needs substantial intervention" the Department must take immediate enforcement action, such as withholding funds or referring the matter to the Department's inspector general or to the Department of Justice.

Not meeting the requirements as set in Part B are the following states:

- Needs Assistance: Delaware, Guam, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Texas, Virgin Islands, and Vermont.
- Needs Intervention: Bureau of Indian Education, Louisiana, and Rhode Island.
• Needs Intervention (three consecutive years): Colorado, District of Columbia, and Indiana.

Not meeting the requirements for IDEA as set in Part C:

• Needs Assistance: Alaska, Maine, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming.


• Needs Intervention: Georgia, Kentucky, New Mexico, and Nevada.

• Needs Intervention (three consecutive years): District of Columbia.
Appendix D

ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION
Part B — Student Reading Skills Improvement Grants

SEC. 1205. EXTERNAL EVALUATION.

• (a) IN GENERAL- From funds reserved under section 1202(b)(1)(C), the Secretary shall contract with an independent organization outside of the Department for a 5-year, rigorous, scientifically valid, quantitative evaluation of this subpart.

• (b) PROCESS- The evaluation under subsection (a) shall be conducted by an organization that is capable of designing and carrying out an independent evaluation that identifies the effects of specific activities carried out by State educational agencies and local educational agencies under this subpart on improving reading instruction. Such evaluation shall take into account factors influencing student performance that are not controlled by teachers or education administrators.

• (c) ANALYSIS- The evaluation under subsection (a) shall include the following:

  ◦ (1) An analysis of the relationship between each of the essential components of reading instruction and overall reading proficiency.

  ◦ (2) An analysis of whether assessment tools used by State educational agencies and local educational agencies measure the essential components of reading.

  ◦ (3) An analysis of how State reading standards correlate with the essential components of reading instruction.

  ◦ (4) An analysis of whether the receipt of a targeted assistance grant under section 1204 results in an increase in the number of children who read proficiently.
(5) A measurement of the extent to which specific instructional materials improve reading proficiency.

(6) A measurement of the extent to which specific screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based instructional reading assessments assist teachers in identifying specific reading deficiencies.

(7) A measurement of the extent to which professional development programs implemented by State educational agencies using funds received under this subpart improve reading instruction.

(8) A measurement of how well students preparing to enter the teaching profession are prepared to teach the essential components of reading instruction.

(9) An analysis of changes in students' interest in reading and time spent reading outside of school.

(10) Any other analysis or measurement pertinent to this subpart that is determined to be appropriate by the Secretary.

(d) PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT- The findings of the evaluation conducted under this section shall be provided to State educational agencies and local educational agencies on a periodic basis for use in program improvement.
IDEA Provisions

IDEA 2004 was composed of five parts:

- Part A-General Provisions (Section 1400-1409)
- Part B-Assistance for Education of all Children with Disabilities (Sections 1411-1419)
- Part C- Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (Sections 1431-1444)
- Part D-National Activities to Improve Education of Children with Disabilities (Section 1450-1482)
- Part E-National Center for Special Education Research (Section 9567)

Additionally most parents, advocates, attorneys and educators will refer to the following sections:

- Section 1400-Findings and Purposes
- Section 1401-Definitions
- Section 1412-State Responsibility (the Catch-all Section)
- Section 1414-Evaluations, Eligibility, Individual Education Programs (IEP), Educational Placements
- Section 1415-Procedural Safeguards
  (Wright and Wright, 2007, p. 19).

As part of the obligations of the school district under IDEA the state monitors the following:

The State must monitor the local educational agencies (LEAs) located in the State, using quantifiable indicators in each of the following priority areas, and using such qualitative indicators as are needed to adequately measure performance in those areas:

* Provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
* State exercise of general supervision, including child find, effective monitoring, the use of resolution meetings, mediation, and a system of transition services as defined in 34 CFR 300.43 and in 20 U.S.C. 1437(a)(9).
* Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services, to the extent the representation is the result of inappropriate identification (Ed. Gov, 2007).

Additionally the state also monitors: the requirement that states develop performance plans; no later than December 3, 2005, each State must have in place a performance plan that evaluates the State's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of Part B of the Act, and describes how the State will improve such implementation:
* Each State must submit the State’s performance plan to the Secretary for approval in accordance with the approval process described in section 616(c) of the Act.
* Each State must review its State performance plan at least once every six years, and submit any amendments to the Secretary.
* As part of the State performance plan, each State must establish measurable and rigorous targets for the indicators established by the Secretary under the priority areas described in 34 CFR 300.600(d). Ed. Gov, 2007). [34 CFR 300.601(a)] [20 U.S.C. 1416(b)].
NCLB

1. A single statewide accountability system applied to all public schools and LEAs.
   - "All schools and LEAs" includes Title I and non-Title I schools and LEAs.
   - Student assessments are administered and the accountability system is applied in the same manner for all schools, regardless of receipt of Title I funds.

2. All public school students are included in the State accountability system.
   - A student attending the same school for a "full academic year" must be included when determining if a school has made AYP.
   - A student that attends more than one school in a district during the school year is only included in determining if a district has made AYP.
   - All student results are included in the school level report card.

3. A State's definition of AYP is based on expectations for growth in student achievement that is continuous and substantial, such that all students are proficient in reading and math no later than 2013-2014.
   - Accountability systems must establish proficiency goals statewide, based on assessment data from the 2001-02 school year, that progressively increase to reflect 100 percent proficiency for all students by 2013-14.
   - These goals must increase at steady and consistent increments during the 12-year timeline, although not necessarily annually throughout the 12 years (i.e., States cannot establish goals that will require the most substantial progress toward the end of the 12-year timeline).
   - Increases in proficiency rates must occur for a school to make AYP. Progress in student achievement from the "below basic" to the "basic level" is not in and of itself sufficient to meet AYP requirements. However, States and LEAs are strongly encouraged to develop systems to recognize very low-performing schools that are making such improvement.

4. A State makes annual decisions about the achievement of all public schools and LEAs.
   - States may calculate AYP for a school using up to three consecutive years of data.
   - If a State chooses to average data over two or three years, it must still determine whether a school or district made AYP on an annual basis.
5. All public schools and LEAs are held accountable for the achievement of individual subgroups.  
   - Accountability decisions must be based on the achievement of each subgroup in the law, as well as overall achievement.
   - States must set separate, measurable annual objectives for each of these subgroups that ensure they meet the deadline to reach proficiency within 12 years.
   - Subgroups for accountability are major ethnic/racial groups, economically disadvantaged students, limited English proficient (LEP) students, and students with disabilities. The goals for each subgroup may be the same as long as each subgroup reaches 100 percent proficiency in 12 years.

6. A State's definition of AYP is based primarily on the State's academic assessments.  
   - Decisions about school and LEA progress must be primarily determined by achievement on academic assessments.

7. A State's definition of AYP includes graduation rates for high schools and an additional indicator selected by the State for middle and elementary schools (such as attendance rates).  
   - Other academic indicators may be included in addition to these required indicators.
   - These indicators may only have the effect of indicating a school did not make AYP. In other words, a State may use these indicators to identify a school for improvement, but they may not be used to prevent a school from being identified for improvement.

8. AYP is based on separate reading/language arts and math achievement objectives.  
   - Each subgroup of students enrolled in schools and LEAs must meet annual objectives in reading and math for the school or LEA to make AYP.

9. A State's accountability system is statistically valid and reliable.  
   - In determining AYP, a State is not required to use disaggregated data when the number of students in a subgroup is (a) too small to yield statistically reliable information or (b) the results would reveal personally identifiable information.
• Each State determines a minimum size of a group, below which the results would not be statistically reliable for use in determining AYP. States make a reasonable determination of that number based on the technical specifications of their assessments.

10. In order for a school to make AYP, a State ensures that it assessed at least 95% of students in each subgroup enrolled.

• Schools must report all student results by subgroup. The number of students in a subgroup must be of sufficient size to produce statistically reliable results for the 95% requirement to affect AYP. In other words, if the number of students in a subgroup is too small to produce statistically reliable results, the State need not, on the basis of the 95% requirement, identify the school as not making AYP, even if fewer than 95% of the students in that subgroup take the State's assessment.
State Accountability Duties and Procedures.

Assigns to the state board of education (state board) the following duties with regard to accountability:

- Reviewing the performance of the statewide public education system and setting, reaffirming, or revising statewide targets for measuring the performance of each public school, each school district, the institute, and the state in the areas of student longitudinal academic growth, student achievement levels on the statewide assessments, postsecondary and workforce readiness, and progress made in closing the achievement and growth gaps (the performance indicators);
- Adopting the Colorado growth model (growth model) for measuring student longitudinal academic growth;
- Entering annually into an accreditation contract with each school district and the state charter school institute, and accrediting each school district and the institute based on its performance under the contract, including performance on the performance indicators, implementation of its plan, implementation of its system for accrediting its public schools, and compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements;
- Removing a school district's or the institute's accreditation if it remains at or below a certain accreditation category for 5 consecutive school years, and directing the school district or the institute to take certain restructuring actions;
- Based on the recommendations of the department of education (department), annually directing each public school in the state to adopt a performance, improvement, priority improvement, or turnaround plan, based on the public school's performance; and
- Directing a school district or the institute to restructure one of its public schools if the school remains at a specified plan type or below for 5 consecutive school years (Colorado Department of Education, 2009).

The major purpose of the bill is (Summary of SB 09---163 Accountability Alignment, 2009):

1. Aligning conflicting accountability systems into a single system that passes federal muster.

   A. Establishes an expanded set of State Performance Indicators for the state, districts, and schools
      a. Student academic growth (measured by the Colorado Growth Model)
      b. Student achievement levels (measured by the percent of students scoring advanced, proficient, partially proficient, and unsatisfactory)
      c. Extent of achievement gaps based on income and ethnicity
      d. Postsecondary readiness (measured by graduation rates and ACT/PWR)
B. Performance indicators selected to be consistent with the revised district accreditation process and federal expectations
C. Requires the Colorado State Board of Education to adopt statewide targets on each and report results

2. Modernizing and aligning reporting of state, district and school performance information
   A. Builds on the highly interactive Colorado Growth Model displays to provide State Performance Reports, District Performance Reports, and School Performance Reports
      a. Provide results on the state education performance indicators and data required by state and federal law
   B. Creates SchoolView, a web-based portal for the public and educators to access all publically reported data about state, district, and school performance and characteristics
      a. Allows print summaries and export for secondary analysis
      b. Reduces school and district reporting burden

3. Creating a fairer, clearer and more effective cycle of support and intervention.
   A. Creates authority for the Commissioner to appoint a State Review Panel to evaluate district and school improvement strategies and make recommendations on needed interventions

4. Enhancing state, district, and school oversight of improvement efforts
   A. Provide high quality CDE service and support: (1) ready access to data and research to support interpretation, decision making, and learning; (2) consultative services on best practices for improvement and implementation; (3) evaluation and feedback on district and school plans. Provide support with increasing CDE involvement based on need and resource availability, including turnaround support for chronically low-performing districts and schools
   B. Assign district accreditation categories and school improvement categories based on results related to state targets for State Performance Indicators and overall state performance. In assigning accreditation categories, also consider duration of district or school performance challenges and progress made under current improvement efforts
   C. Align district accreditation categories with levels of support and improvement required while retaining six levels of performance categories
      a. Level 1: Accredited with Distinction
      b. Level 2: Accredited
      c. Level 3: Accredited with Improvement Plan
      d. Level 4: Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan
      e. Level 5: Accredited with Turnaround Plan
      f. Level 6: Unaccredited – State Board determines whether situation warrants district reorganization, external management, conversion to innovative school or school zone
      g. Status, conversion to a charter school or school closure
D. Expect districts to assign accreditation categories to schools in a manner that is aligned with and meets or exceeds the rigor of the state system for districts.
Appendix H

SECTION I: KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE STANDARDS

A. Foundation Concepts about Oral and Written Learning

Content Knowledge:
1. Understand and explain the language processing requirements of proficient reading and writing.
   • Phonological (speech sound) processing
   • Discourse (connected text level) processing
2. Understand and explain other aspects of cognition and behavior that affect reading and writing.
   • Attention
   • Executive function
   • Memory
   • Processing speed
   • Graphomotor control
3. Define and identify environmental, cultural, and social factors that contribute to literacy development (e.g., language spoken at home, language and literacy experiences, cultural values).
4. Know and identify phases in the typical developmental progression of:
   • Oral language (semantic, syntactic, pragmatic)
   • Phonological skill
   • Printed word recognition
   • Spelling
   • Reading fluency
   • Reading comprehension
   • Written expression
5. Relationships among phonological skill, phonic decoding, spelling, accurate and automatic word recognition, text reading fluency, background knowledge, verbal reasoning skill, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing.
6. Understand and explain the known causal relationships among the major components of literacy development change with reading development (changes in oral language, including phonological awareness; phonics and word recognition vocabulary; reading comprehension skills and strategies; written expression).
7. Know reasonable goals and expectations for learners at various stages of reading and writing development.

Application
1. A: Explain the domains of language and their importance to proficient reading and writing (Level 1). B: Explain a scientifically valid model of the language processes underlying reading and writing (Level 2).
2. A: Recognize that reading difficulties coexist with other cognitive and behavioral problems (Level 1). B: Explain a scientifically valid model of other cognitive influences on reading and writing, and explain major research findings regarding the contribution of linguistic and cognitive factors to the prediction of literacy outcomes (Level 2).

3. Identify (Level 1) or explain (Level 2) major research findings regarding the contribution of environmental factors to literacy outcomes.

4. Match examples of student responses and learning behavior to phases in language and literacy development (Level 1).

5. Explain how a weakness in each component skill of oral language, reading, and writing may affect other related skills and processes across time (Level 2).

6. Identify the most salient instructional needs of students who are at different points of reading and writing development (Level 2).

7. Given case study material, explain why a student is not meeting goals and expectations in reading or writing for his or her age/grade (Level 1).

Explanatory Notes
An extensive research base exists on the abilities that are important in learning to read and write, including how these abilities interact with each other, how they are influenced by experience, and how they change across development. Teachers’ knowledge of this research base is an essential foundation for the competencies and skills described in subsequent sections of this document.

B. Knowledge of the Structure of Language

Content Knowledge
1. Phonology (The Speech Sound System): Identify, pronounce, classify, and compare the consonant and vowel phonemes of English.

2. Orthography (The Spelling System): Understand the broad outline of historical influences on English spelling patterns, especially Anglo-Saxon, Latin (Romance), and Greek.

3. Define grapheme as a functional correspondence unit or representation of a phoneme.

4. Recognize and explain common orthographic rules and patterns in English.

5. Know the difference between high frequency and irregular words.

6. Identify, explain, and categorize six basic syllable types in English spelling.

7. Morphology: Identify and categorize common morphemes in English, including Anglo-Saxon compounds, inflectional suffixes, and derivational suffixes; Latin-based prefixes, roots, and derivational suffixes; and Greek-based combining forms.

8. Semantics: Understand and identify examples of meaningful word relationships or semantic organization.

10. Identify the parts of speech and the grammatical role of a word in a sentence.
11. Discourse Organization: Explain the major differences between narrative and expository discourse.
12. Identify and construct expository paragraphs of varying logical structures (classification, reason, sequence).
13. Identify cohesive devices in text and inferential gaps in the surface language of text.

Application
1. A: Identify similar or contrasting features among phonemes (Level 1). B: Reconstruct the consonant and vowel phoneme inventories and identify the feature differences between and among phonemes (Level 2).
2. Recognize typical words from the historical layers of English, e.g., Anglo-Saxon, Latin-Romance, Greek (Level 1).
3. Accurately map graphemes to phonemes in any English word (Level 1).
4. Sort words by orthographic “choice” pattern; analyze words by suffix ending patterns and apply suffix ending rules.
5. Identify printed words that are the exception to regular patterns and spelling principles; sort high frequency words into regular and exception words (Level 1).
6. Sort, pronounce, and combine regular written syllables and apply the most productive syllable division principles (Level 1).
7. A: Recognize the most common prefixes, roots, suffixes, and combining forms in English content words, and analyze words at both the syllable and morpheme levels (Level 1). B: Recognize advanced morphemes, e.g., chameleon prefixes (level 2).
8. Match or identify examples of word associations, antonyms, synonyms, multiple meanings and uses, semantic overlap, and semantic feature analysis (Level 1).
9. Construct and deconstruct simple, complex, and compound sentences (Level 1).
10. A: Identify the basic parts of speech and classify words by their grammatical role in a sentence (Level 1). B: Identify advanced grammatical concepts, e.g., infinitives, gerunds (Level 2).
11. Classify text by genre; identify features that are characteristic of each genre, and identify graphic organizers that characterize typical structures (Level 1).
12. Identify main idea sentences, connecting words, and topics that fit each type of expository paragraph organization (Level 2).
13. Analyze text for the purpose of identifying the inferences that students must make to comprehend (Level 2).

Explanatory Notes
Formal knowledge about the structure of language—recognizing, for example, whether words are phonetically regular or irregular; common morphemes in words; and common sentence structures in English—is not an automatic consequence of high levels of adult literacy. However, without this kind of knowledge, teachers may have difficulty interpreting assessments correctly or may provide unintentionally confusing instruction to
students. For instance, struggling readers are likely to be confused if they are encouraged to sound out a word that is phonetically irregular (e.g., some), or if irregular words, such as come and have, are used as examples of a syllable type such as “silent e.” Similarly, to teach spelling and writing effectively, teachers need a knowledge base about language structure, including sentence and discourse structure. Research suggests that acquiring an understanding of language structure often requires explicit teaching of this information and more than superficial coverage in teacher preparation and professional development.
Appendix I

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dissertation Research

(Investigating the Possibility of a Standard of Care for Professionals Who Teach
Reading)

You are invited to participate in a study that will try and develop a standard of care for
the teaching profession in order for education malpractice lawsuits to be adjudicated for
negligent teaching practices; particularly as negligent teaching practices relate to poor
reading instruction. John Michael McCord, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of
Denver, Colorado, conducts the study. Results will be used to fulfill the requirements in
completing a dissertation. John Michael McCord can be reached at
(jmikemccord@aol.com or at 303-660-5394). The dissertation advisor, Dr. Sylvia D.
Hall-Ellis, Morgridge College of Education, Department of Education, University of
Denver, Denver, CO 80208, 303-871-7881 or shellis@du.edu, supervises this project.
Participation in this study should take about 30 minutes of your time. Participation will
involve responding to 8 questions about education malpractice and creating a standard of
care for reading instruction. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks
associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may
discontinue the interview at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any
questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal
from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise
entitled.

Your responses will be identified by code number only and will be kept separate from
information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your
responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data and any reports
generated as a result of this study will only identify you according to your profession
(i.e.: reading expert, expert in the field of school accountability, etc.). However, should
any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful
subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order
or subpoena. Although no questions in this interview address it, we are required by law to
tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and
neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview,
please contact Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of
Human Subjects, at 303-871-3454, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Research and
Sponsored Programs at 303-871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have.

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called Education Malpractice: Creating a Standard of Care. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature _____________________ Date _________________
___ I agree to be audiotaped.
___ I do not agree to be audiotaped.
___ I agree to be videotaped.
___ I do not agree to videotaped.

Signature _____________________ Date _________________

___________ I would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to me at the following postal or e-mail address:
Appendix J

Contact persons name and address

Date

Dear (contact persons name)

My name is J. Michael McCord and I am a graduate student at the University of Denver, Colorado, working on my Ph.D. dissertation project. The title of my dissertation is *Investigating the Possibility of a Standard of Care for Professionals Who Teach Reading*. A hot topic in education for several years has been standards. There are educators who strongly support educational standards and those that are adamantly opposed. However, whichever side you support one thing is clear and that is they are not going away anytime soon. My purpose for writing this dissertation is that in light of the research findings into effective reading instruction by such organizations as the National Reading Panel, the National Research Council’s *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* and others, is there enough consensus among reading professionals to create a standard of care for reading instruction?

Your participation in this study will be held in the strictest confidence. Your identity nor will your school or organization be associated with the data and results. If you wish to receive a copy of the summary of this report, please check the space at the end of the informed consent letter accompanying this letter.

The interview should take approximately 30 minutes to complete and will be held at a time and location that is convenient for you. Please use the self-stamped envelope to reply to this request. If you decide that you do not wish to participate, please return this letter and interview questions to me. Then you will not receive any follow up requests to participate in this study from me.

Thank you for your time and if you have any questions please feel free to contact me at 720-413-9773 or my home 303-660-5394. If you could mail your response back to me within two weeks I would greatly appreciate it.

As is required, this research will follow the International Review Board’s rule and regulations in the conduct of this study. If you have any questions regarding this study
you may contact: Dr. Sylvia Hall Dissertation Chair, College of Education, University of Denver, CO 80208 at 303-871-7881 shellis@du.edu.

Sincerely,
J.Michael McCord
Ph.D. Candidate
University of Denver
303-660-5394
jmikemccord@aol.com
Appendix K

University of Denver
Sylk Sotto-Santiago, MBA
Manager, Regulatory Research Compliance
Tel: 303-871-4052
Certification of Human Subjects Approval
January 24, 2011
John McCord, PhD
To,
Subject
TITLE: Investigating the Possibility of a Standard of Care for Professionals Who Teach Reading
IRB#: 2011-1645
Dear Human Subject Review
McCord,
The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed the above named project. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol at the 01/11/2011 meeting. This approval is effective for twelve months. We will be sending you a continuation application reminder for this project. This form must be submitted to the Office of Sponsored Programs if the project is to be continued. This information must be updated on a yearly basis, upon continuation of your IRB approval for as long as the research continues.
NOTE: Please add the following information to any consent forms, surveys, questionnaires, invitation letters, etc you will use in your research as follows: This survey (consent, study, etc.) was approved by the University of Denver's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research on 01/11/2011. This information must be updated on a yearly basis, upon continuation of your IRB approval for as long as the research continues. This information will be added by the Research Compliance Office if it does not already appear in the form(s) upon continuation approval.
The Institutional Review Board appreciates your cooperation in protecting subjects and ensuring that each subject gives a meaningful consent to participate in research projects. If you have any questions regarding your obligations under the Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.
Sincerely yours,
Susan Sadler, PhD
Chair, Institutional Review Board
for the Protection of Human Subjects

Approval Period:
Funding:
Investigational Device:
Assurance Number:
01/11/2011 through 01/10/2012 EXPEDITED - NEW
Review Type:
SPO:
Investigational New Drug : 00004520, 00004520a
Appendix L

Research Questions

Investigating the Possibility of a Standard of Care for Professionals Who Teach Reading

1. Do you believe there are essential components to teaching students to read, and if so, what are they? If not, why not?

2. Do you believe there is a current consensus or standard of best practices for educators to deliver these components?

3. What is the best way to deliver these standards nationally?

4. What do you base your reading theories on or what do you use as a guide to inform you of best reading practices?

5. What do you believe would be the best curriculum for preparing reading instructors and ensuring their knowledge in reading instruction (ie. certification)?

6. Reading experts such as Reid Lyon claim that 30 to 40% of students cannot read. Do you agree with this statistic?

7. What do you attribute this staggering rate to?

8. What do you believe are the most efficient and effective methods for teaching struggling readers?

9. What would you do to help the struggling reader that has gone beyond the third grade and continues to have reading difficulties?

10. Do you believe our nation’s schools fail to meet these struggling readers needs? Why or why not?

Thank you for your time.

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