EXPLORING RTI READING INTERVENTION FOR HISPANIC ENGLISH LEARNING KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS IN CENTRAL ALABAMA: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study addressed issues in implementing RTI Tier II reading intervention in kindergarten classrooms which contained Hispanic students learning English. In addition, the scope of reading progress of Hispanic students learning English was explored. The purpose of this research was to examine the frequency in providing RTI reading interventions and how they were implemented in kindergarten with Hispanic children who are learning English.

This study employed an explanatory sequential (Quan→QUAL) mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). To address the purpose of the study, the overarching mixed methods question was:

What is the frequency of RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic kindergarten English learners and how are they implemented? Other quantitative questions included:

- What is the frequency of RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic kindergarten English learners?
- What indicators do teachers use to determine if a student needs RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- What are the factors in planning and delivering RTI Tier II reading interventions?
• What indicators are used to determine progress made by a student receiving RTI Tier II reading interventions?

The central qualitative question was: How are RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic kindergarten English learners implemented in the classroom setting? Sub-questions included:

• What role do teachers’ beliefs about the reading ability of Hispanic kindergarten English learners play in identifying students and delivering RTI Tier II reading interventions?

• What criteria are used to identify a student for RTI Tier II reading interventions?

• How do teachers plan and deliver RTI Tier II reading interventions in the classroom setting?

• What criteria are used to document and establish progress of a student receiving the RTI Tier II reading interventions?

• What is the scope of progress of students receiving RTI Tier II reading interventions?

The first phase of the study included a quantitative survey for all kindergarten teachers in a school district in central Alabama. The second, qualitative phase, included an in-depth multiple case study analysis of four kindergarten teachers. In addition, assessment results of 12 Hispanic ELL focus students were analyzed. Finally, cross-case analysis was conducted on the teacher case studies and focus students. This study shed light on the instructional practices involving RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic ELLs in kindergarten.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family. Thank you to my wonderful husband, David, and my amazing daughter, Kirsten, for their support, encouragement, and understanding throughout this process.

This is also dedicated in the memory of Dr. Maryann Manning. Her life and legacy are an inspiration. Her passion and dedication to literacy for all were spread throughout the world. I will always strive to be more like her.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so many people to whom I owe gratitude for their part in the completion of this work. I would first like to acknowledge my family. My loving husband, David, took on so much responsibility in order for me to reach my goals. He encouraged me and believed in me, even when I didn’t believe in myself. I will always be grateful. My sweet daughter, Kirsten, served as comic relief when I needed it and provided a dose of realism when I had become too detached and engrossed in my work. I am so thankful to have such a great relationship with my precious daughter. Thanks to my mother for being so patient with her most difficult child and encouraging me to pursue my education against all odds. I owe so much to my grandmother; it was she who first inspired me to be an educator. She let me borrow her teaching materials to teach my baby dolls and stuffed animals when I was only 5 years old. Thank you to the rest of my wonderful family who checked on me and encouraged me along the way, even though I am certain they thought I would be in school forever.

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 LITERATURE REVIEW</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories of Language Acquisition</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practices for Reading Instruction</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practices in Reading Instruction for Children Learning English</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners who Struggle as Readers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading First</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading First for Children Learning English</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Reading Programs</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Text Book Adoption</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harcourt Story Town</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter County Reading Instruction Plan</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to Intervention</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTI in Alabama</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTI for Reading in Shelter County</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTI for English Learners</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learner Parent Engagement</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 METHODS</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Methods Research</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical Assumptions</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural Issues</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase One: Quantitative Research</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Findings

Case Study 1: Beatrice
  Themes
  Focus Students
  Themes from Focus Students
  Summary

Case Study 2: Emily
  Themes
  Focus Students
  Themes from Focus Students
  Summary

Case Study 3: Katie
  Themes
  Focus Students
  Themes from Focus Students
  Summary

Case Study 4: Lucy
  Themes
  Focus Students
  Themes from Focus Students
  Summary

Cross-Case Analysis
  Cross-Case Teacher Findings
  Cross-Case Student Findings

6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
  Summary of Mixed Methods Results
  Significance of the Study
  Implications
  Limitations
  Recommendations for Future Research

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

A  IRB Approval
B  Quantitative Teacher Survey
C  Teacher Participant Recruitment Letter
D  Parent Informed Consent Document (English)
E  Parent Informed Consent Document (Spanish)
F  Interview Protocol
G  Informed Consent Document
H  Observation Protocol
I  Interview Transcripts
J  Data Coding Tables
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>School Settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Case Study Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-1 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-1 DIBELS Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-1 Running Record Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-1 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-2 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-2 DIBELS Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-2 Running Record Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-2 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-3 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-3 DIBELS Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-3 Running Record Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-3 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-4 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-4 DIBELS Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-4 Running Record Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>Focus Student 1-4 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>Focus Student 2-1 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>Focus Student 2-1 DIBELS Assessment Results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.21 Focus Student 2-1 Running Record Assessment Results 160
5.22 Focus Student 2-1 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results 161
5.23 Focus Student 2-2 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results 163
5.24 Focus Student 2-2 DIBELS Assessment Results 167
5.25 Focus Student 2-2 Running Record Assessment Results 168
5.26 Focus Student 2-2 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results 169
5.27 Focus Student 3-1 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results 183
5.28 Focus Student 3-1 DIBELS Assessment Results 186
5.29 Focus Student 3-1 Running Record Assessment Results 187
5.30 Focus Student 3-1 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results 188
5.31 Focus Student 3-2 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results 190
5.32 Focus Student 3-2 DIBELS Assessment Results 193
5.33 Focus Student 3-2 Running Record Assessment Results 194
5.34 Focus Student 3-2 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results 195
5.35 Focus Student 4-1 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results 208
5.36 Focus Student 4-1 DIBELS Assessment Results 211
5.37 Focus Student 4-1 Running Record Assessment Results 212
5.38 Focus Student 4-1 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results 213
5.39 Focus Student 4-2 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results 215
5.40 Focus Student 4-2 DIBELS Assessment Results 219
5.41 Focus Student 4-2 Running Record Assessment Results 221
5.42 Focus Student 4-2 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results 222
5.43 Focus Student 4-3 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results 224
5.44 Focus Student 4-3 DIBELS Assessment Results 226
5.45 Focus Student 4-3 Running Record Assessment Results 227
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>Focus Student 4-3 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>Focus Student 4-4 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>Focus Student 4-4 DIBELS Assessment Results</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>Focus Student 4-4 Running Record Assessment Results</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>Focus Student 4-4 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>Focus Students’ DIBELS Assessment Results</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>Focus Students’ Letter Assessment Results – Beginning of the Year</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>Focus Students’ Letter Assessment Results – Middle of the Year</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>Focus Students’ Letter Assessment Results – End of the Year</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>Focus Students’ Letter Sound Assessment Results – Beginning of the Year</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>Focus Students’ Letter Sound Assessment Results – Middle of the Year</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>Focus Students’ Letter Sound Assessment Results – End of the Year</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>Focus Students’ Running Record Assessment Results</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>Focus Students’ English Language Proficiency Assessment Results</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Visual Representation of Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory Design</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Participants’ Level of Education</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Participants’ Area of Degree</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Participants’ Years of Experience</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Participants’ Years of Experience in Kindergarten</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Number of Hispanic ELL Students in Each Classroom</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Frequency of Placement of Hispanic ELLs in RTI Tier II</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Materials Used for RTI Tier II</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Collaboration for Planning</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Person Responsible for Delivering RTI Tier II</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Grouping for RTI Tier II</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Assessments for Determining Progress</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Progress Reported for Hispanic ELLs in RTI Tier II</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Focus student 1-1 beginning of the year writing sample</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Focus student 1-1 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Focus student 1-1 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Focus student 1-2 beginning of the year writing sample</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Focus student 1-2 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Focus student 1-2 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Focus student 1-3 beginning of the year writing sample</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Focus student 1-3 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Focus student 1-3 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>Focus student 1-4 beginning of the year writing sample</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>Focus student 1-4 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>Focus student 1-4 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>Focus student 2-1 beginning of the year writing sample</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>Focus student 2-1 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>Focus student 2-1 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>Focus student 2-2 beginning of the year writing sample</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>Focus student 2-2 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>Focus student 2-2 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>Focus student 3-1 beginning of the year writing sample</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>Focus student 3-1 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>Focus student 3-1 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>Focus student 3-2 beginning of the year writing sample</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>Focus student 3-2 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>Focus student 3-2 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>Focus student 4-1 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>Focus student 4-1 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>Focus student 4-2 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>Focus student 4-2 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>Focus student 4-3 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>Focus student 4-4 middle of the year writing sample</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>Focus student 4-4 end of the year writing sample</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Since the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), many school districts have implemented Response to Intervention (RTI) in an effort to meet federal mandates (IDEA, 2004). Rather than using an intelligence test, the IDEA 2004 reauthorization allowed states to use RTI as a means to identify students with learning disabilities. According to the National Center on Response to Intervention, RTI:

- integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities. ([http://rti4success.org/](http://rti4success.org/))

Response to intervention Tier II reading intervention is being implemented with kindergarten students who have been identified as having difficulty learning to read in English.

According to the National Clearinghouse for English language learners (ELLs), there are over five million children learning English currently enrolled in schools in the United States. The ELL population in the state of Alabama has grown rapidly, and there are now over 20,000 ELL students in Alabama K-12 schools. Shelter County has the highest population of children learning English in the state of Alabama. This school district uses RTI as a means to identify students who have a learning disability.
Kindergarten ELLs who are having difficulty in reading are placed in Tier II intervention
groups in order to identify if the student will respond to the intervention provided.

There is currently a void in the research of how RTI reading intervention is
implemented with kindergarten ELL students. More research is needed to determine the
effectiveness of the reading intervention in an effort to better meet the language and
literacy needs of children learning English, specifically those of Hispanic descent.

Problem

The academic achievement of children learning English is often below their
English speaking peers and children of Hispanic descent are often farther behind than
other ELLs (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008). Children learning English have the
dual challenge of not only learning academic content but learning the English language
simultaneously. Children learning English generally take longer to become readers and
writers (Allington & Cunningham, 2003). According to these authors, children learning
English often struggle with learning to read; however, there is a void in the research of
how RTI Tier II reading intervention is implemented in kindergarten with Hispanic
children who are learning English.

Purpose

This study addressed issues in implementing RTI Tier II reading intervention in
kindergarten classrooms which contained Hispanic students learning English. Gaining
evidence from classroom teachers may lead to a better understanding of frequency in
providing RTI Tier II reading interventions within the district and provide several unique
cases of the intervention. In addition, the scope of reading progress of Hispanic students learning English was explored. The purpose of this research was to examine the frequency in providing RTI reading interventions and how they were implemented in kindergarten with Hispanic children who are learning English.

**Questions**

To address the purpose of the study, the overarching mixed methods question was:

What is the frequency of RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic kindergarten English learners and how are they implemented?

Other quantitative questions included:

- What is the frequency of RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic kindergarten English learners?
- What indicators do teachers use to determine if a student needs RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- What are the factors in planning and delivering RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- What indicators are used to determine progress made by a student receiving RTI Tier II reading interventions?

The central qualitative question was: How are RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic kindergarten English learners implemented in the classroom setting?
Sub-questions included:

- What role do teachers’ beliefs about the reading ability of Hispanic kindergarten English learners play in identifying students and delivering RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- What criteria are used to identify a student for RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- How do teachers plan and deliver RTI Tier II reading interventions in the classroom setting?
- What criteria are used to document and establish progress of a student receiving the RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- What is the scope of progress of students receiving RTI Tier II reading interventions?

Exploring both the quantitative and qualitative research questions yielded a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The quantitative phase provided frequency data for the entire school district, while the second, qualitative phase explored individual cases of teachers providing RTI Tier II reading intervention to Hispanic ELLs.

**Benefits**

This study could benefit general education classroom teachers, English as a Second Language teachers, school and district administrators, curriculum and literacy leaders, policy makers, and most importantly, kindergarten Hispanic students who are learning English. These stakeholders could gain insights about more effective intervention practices for the instruction of reading to kindergarten students learning English. More
effective teaching practices could enable students learning English to have greater success in reading. This study could add to the current body of knowledge of what educators know about providing RTI Tier II reading interventions to Hispanic kindergarten children learning English.

*Organization of the Study*

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the research study. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature related to the research topic. Chapter 3 explains the methods used for the research. Chapter 4 presents the quantitative findings of the first phase of the research. Chapter 5 presents the qualitative research findings from the second phase of the study. Chapter 6 presents a discussion of the findings.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

English Language Learners

English Language Learners (ELLs) are students who speak one or more languages and are learning English (Opitz & Harding-DeKam, 2007). There are an estimated 5 million children learning English in PreK-12 classrooms in the United States (National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition, NCELA). Between the 1998-1999 and 2008-2009 school years, NCELA also reported a 51% growth in the number of English Language Learners in U.S. schools. The National Education Association has projected that number to double again by 2015. The ELL student population in the state of Alabama has grown rapidly. The Alabama State Department of Education reported over 20,000 ELL students in K-12 classrooms. Shelter County has the highest ELL population in the state. For many years, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has documented that students of diverse backgrounds have lower achievement in reading (Au, 2002). Poverty also plays a role in the lives of ELLs. In 2011, 25.3% of Hispanics were living in poverty in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Theories of Language Acquisition

Krashen (1982) presented five hypotheses about second language acquisition. First is the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis in which the author described the distinction between learning and acquiring a second language. According to Peregoy and Boyle (2008), language learning “refers to the formal and conscious study of language forms and functions as explicitly taught” (p. 53). As stated by Krashen, acquisition occurs in
meaningful interactions with native speakers of the target language, and only acquisition will lead to fluent conversation abilities.

Krashen’s *Monitor Hypothesis* suggests that language learning results in an internal monitor for output ensuring proper grammar and sentence structure. Krashen argued that the focus of language teaching should be based on communication rather than learning rules of the language. The *Natural Order Hypothesis* purports that language is acquired in a predictable sequence.

One of Krashen’s key claims for second language acquisition comes from his *Input Hypothesis*. Peregoy and Boyle (2008) explained the acquisition of a second language directly results from the learner’s understanding of the target language in natural communication situations. Krashen (1982) coined the term “comprehensible input” to explain how input language should be understandable, but just above the learner’s acquisition level to provide an appropriate challenge; the author abbreviated this process as \((i + 1)\). Freeman, D. and Freeman, Y. (2002) suggested multiple ways in which teachers can make language and content comprehensible to students. For example, the authors recommended that teachers review content and material in the learner’s native language. Additionally, the authors suggested using visuals to make language comprehensible, including: realia (real things), gestures and body language, graphics, charts, and graphs. Finally, teachers should try to move from the concrete to the abstract. Freeman and Freeman suggested modifying speech such as: speaking clearly, pausing often, and saying the same thing in different ways; using instructional techniques, such as frequent stops, to check for comprehension; and having students explain concepts to each other in either English or their native language.
Krashen’s final hypothesis, the *Affective Filter Hypothesis*, involves socio-emotional elements of learning a language. Peregoy and Boyle (2008), citing Krashen’s studies, concluded “the most important affective variables favoring second language acquisition are a low-anxiety learning environment, student motivation to learn, self-confidence, and self-esteem” (p. 55). The authors encouraged teachers to take time to get to know their children learning English in order to establish trust and a sense of belonging.

Cummins (1981) developed a distinction between conversational language and academic language. As such, conversational language, basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), is less cognitively demanding and more context-embedded. Conversational language is the everyday language used to conduct casual communications and daily tasks. Conversely, academic language, cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), is context-reduced and cognitively demanding. Cummins noted that it takes approximately two years for an individual to develop conversational language but far longer to develop academic language. Researchers have shown that it can take five to seven years or longer to develop academic language proficiency (Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). English language learners have the task of acquiring both conversational and academic language in English.

**World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)**

The WIDA consortium involves 25 states, including Alabama, and serves 940,000 ELLs (www.wida.us). WIDA (2012) was conceived to create a “system of standards and assessments that would assist schools in teaching academic language to English Language Learners” (p. 1). WIDA developed the English Language Proficiency (ELP)
Standards, which addressed language development in the content areas. The ELP standards for grades K-12 span six levels: level 1 - entering, level 2 - beginning, level 3 - developing, level 4 - expanding, level 5 - bridging, and level 6 - reaching. In the state of Alabama, a child who reaches a 4.8 overall score is no longer eligible to receive English as a second language services. WIDA provides performance definitions and indicators for each ELP level. The WIDA consortium has also designed an assessment of ELP aligned with these standards. The ACCESS for ELLs is the assessment given to all entering ELLs to determine their ELP level. This assessment is comprised of all four literacy domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The WIDA-MODEL is an identification and placement assessment for newly enrolled English learners. It is also given to kindergarten ELLs at the beginning of the school year. This assessment is divided into grade level clusters and is adaptive based on the students’ accuracy in responses. This assessment is comparable to ACCESS for ELLs, but it can be administered at any time during the school year, unlike ACCESS for ELLs which has specific testing windows. When these assessments are scored, children receive ELP levels with each of the literacy domains as well as an overall ELP level. Teachers can use these data to better meet the specific language and literacy needs of their children who are learning English. The WIDA consortium provides Performance Definitions and CAN DO Descriptors in an instructional tool entitled, The English Language Learner CAN DO Booklet. This publication provides educators with summaries of what the learner can do at each level of proficiency within each literacy domain and aids in the educational planning process.
Best Practices for Reading Instruction

Children who are learning English often struggle with learning to read; therefore, it is critical for teachers to know how to use Best Practices in teaching reading. Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2012) identified and discussed 18 of the basic qualities and characteristics of Best Practices in reading instruction. First, the authors explained “Reading means getting meaning from print” (p. 106). The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension; without comprehension, authentic reading has not occurred. The phrase “Reading is thinking” aptly describes the meaning-making process that readers must experience in order to deeply comprehend text. Serravallo and Goldberg (2007) explained:

Reading is the act of constructing meaning from a text in an ongoing dialogue between the reader and the text, and between the reader and other readers. When a person reads, (s)he constructs meaning from texts based on her own experiences, knowledge, and interest. (p. 2)

In order for true reading to take place, readers must actively construct meaning from the text and understand what they have read.

According to Best Practices, teachers should name and teach specific reading strategies to aid in the process of comprehension (Zemelman et al., 2012). Miller (2002) stated, “If we want children to develop habits that readers keep, we must heighten their awareness by explicitly modeling and pointing out what readers do and give them time to practice” (p. 29). Similarly, Keene and Zimmerman (2007) noted, “We explicitly teach the comprehension strategies to ensure children don’t simply become expert decoders but also learn to create meaning naturally and subconsciously as they read” (p. 32). Teachers
must teach these strategies to all students, even beginning readers, not just the more advanced students. In *Reading with Meaning* (2002), Miller identified the six most commonly used reading strategies: activating prior knowledge (schema), creating visual images, drawing inferences, asking questions, determining importance, and synthesizing. In *7 Keys to Comprehension* (2003), Zimmerman and Hutchins added a seventh reading strategy, using “fix-up” strategies. The authors articulated that proficient readers are aware of when they understand the material and when they do not. Readers use “fix-up” strategies such as rereading, skipping ahead and then coming back, asking questions, using dictionaries, and reading aloud in order to aid their comprehension when meaning is lost. In order for children to become thoughtful readers they must know these strategies and be able to independently use them.

Zemelman et al. (2012) expressed the importance of teaching reading as a tool for learning. Teaching reading does not only occur during the designated “reading block.” As students read non-fiction throughout the day, they develop content area knowledge; they learn from their reading. In *Strategies that Work*, Harvey and Goudvis (2007) advocated for the integration of content and comprehension in all curricular areas. The authors identified six comprehension strategies that correlates with the reading strategies mentioned above (Keene & Zimmerman 2007, Miller 2002, Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003). Using these comprehension and thinking strategies in content areas empowers children to “think about and actively use the knowledge they are learning as the read” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007, p. 208).

As noted in the research literature, hearing books read aloud is critical to students’ success in learning to read. As recommended by Zemelman et al. (2012), teachers should
read aloud to children many times during the day. Teachers may also use books that are read aloud on tape, CDs, e-readers, and computers to maximize opportunities for students to hear words. By modeling reading for children and providing think-alouds, teachers demonstrate for students the thought processes involved in reading (Zemelman et al., 2012). The combination of reading and thinking aloud provides children with opportunities to visualize the comprehension process of their teachers while listening to books read aloud.

Zemelman et al. (2012) also stated that teachers should support readers before, during, and after reading:

Before kids read a particular text, teachers help students activate prior knowledge, set purposes for reading, and make predictions. During reading, teachers help students monitor their comprehension and construct meaning… After reading, teachers help students savor, share, and apply meaning, and build connections to further reading and writing. (p. 110)

The use of Guided Reading for small group reading instruction is one way that teachers can support students before, during, and after reading by outlining teachers’ actions throughout the process (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Before reading, a teacher selects an appropriate text, introduces the text to students, and asks questions that can be answered as the children read. During reading, the teacher listens to students read, observes reading behaviors and use of strategies, interacts with students as they problem-solve, and makes notes about students’ reading. After the reading, the teacher talks about the story with the children, assesses students’ understanding of what they have read, uses the text to point out other students’ problem-solving strategies, and occasionally has students engage in
extensions of the story through drama, writing, art, or more reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Teachers can also use individual student reading conferences to support readers before, during, and after reading. In *Teaching with Intention*, Miller (2008) explained that conferences are a time to sit alongside children and support them as they read by applying what was taught in whole- and small-group lessons. This personalizes what is already being taught; thus meeting students’ specific needs as they investigate new skills and strategies. Serravallo and Goldberg (2007) suggested that teachers “choose compliments and teaching points to support students as they develop reading behaviors, processes, and strategies that build toward independence” (p. 11). Through conferences, teachers can provide the one-on-one instructional support individual students need *during* reading. This support can lead to more independent readers. Calkins (2001) stated, “Conferring is about helping learners become independent” (p. 114). Zemelman et al. (2012) identified conferences as one strategy to ensure a match between reading assessment and classroom practice. Hence, the reason for supporting students before, during, and after reading is to provide them with the instruction needed to help them develop independence in reading.

Children’s choice of reading material is crucial in developing literate behavior (Zemelman et al., 2012). Limiting children to basal readers does not provide appropriate support for developing reader (Zemelman et al., 2012). Children need to have access to a wide variety of texts and text levels as well as the opportunity to choose books they are interested in and can read independently. Teachers can support student choice by
maintaining a well-organized, inviting classroom library. Collins (2004) discussed the importance of classroom libraries:

In classrooms that are designed for rich work in literacy, there is a prominent and welcoming classroom library for children to find books that will help them grow stronger as readers, encourage them to develop a reading habit, and inspire them as writers. There needs to be a range of books available that includes leveled texts so that children can choose from a variety of books at their independent reading levels. The baskets of books in the classroom library also need to include books that hold children’s interests, pique their curiosity, and simply make them want to read. (p. 9)

In addition to leveled texts, Zemelman et al. (2012) suggested that children also need to read easy books to help develop fluency, comprehension, and success in reading. Easy books foster the type of environment that helps students take risks and develop comprehension strategies, especially among children who are learning English. According to Collins (2004), when children have choice in selecting books, they tend to be more interested and invested in their reading and subsequently grow as readers.

As noted in Best Practices (2012), children should have time for independent reading every day since reading is the best practice for learning to read. Allington (2006) stated “Reading practice – just reading – is a powerful contributor to the development of accurate, fluent, high-comprehension reading” (p. 35). Krashen (2001) reported that children who engaged in in-school free reading and free voluntary reading showed demonstrable growth in reading, especially over time. Children not only need to read every day, but also have time to discuss what they have read with others. Collins (2004)
stated, “This time to talk and think about books with other readers helps children make meaning and supports deeper comprehension” (p. 21). Helping students select appropriate reading materials and providing them with ample time to read and talk about books is a must for children to grow as readers.

Zemelman et al. (2012) recommended that children have many opportunities to interact with print. In What Really Matters for Struggling Readers (2006), Allington stated:

Kids not only need to read a lot, but they also need lots of books they can read accurately, fluently, and with comprehension right at their fingertips. They also need access to books that entice them, attract them to reading. Schools can foster wider reading by creating school and classroom collections that provide a rich and wide array of appropriate books and magazines and by providing time every day for children to actually sit and read. (pp. 85-86)

Children not only need a wide variety of appropriate reading material, but time set aside to delve into these books. Calkins (2001) stated, “It is important for emergent and beginning readers to have lots of opportunities to read and reread simple and memorable patterned text” (p. 269). Teachers can support this goal by engaging students in repeated readings of songs, poems, and big books.

According to Swartz, Shook, and Klein (2002) shared reading is a teaching technique that can support early readers by engaging them in reading and rereading of texts that contain rhythm, rhyme, and repetition. During shared reading, an enlarged text is used and the teacher models reading to students. Students begin to read along with the teacher as they become familiar with the text. Teachers can then provide opportunities for
students to revisit these texts, often independently or with partners. Reading and rereading a variety of texts often helps students build confidence as a reader.

Even children who are not yet reading books can have opportunities to interact with text from environmental print. Environmental print is defined as, “print found in the natural environment of the child. This would include logos, labels, road signs, billboards, and other print found in the child’s immediate ecology” (Kirkland, Aldridge, & Kuby, 1991, p. 29). For children who come to school already having knowledge of environmental print, teachers can use this prior knowledge to build new learning in authentic ways (Aldridge, Kirkland, & Kuby, 2002). Encouraging children to find environmental print, such as road signs, food labels, and restaurant logos, and displaying these items in the classroom provides a print-rich environment in which even the least experienced readers can have successful interactions with text.

Comprehension is the primary focus of reading; however, phonics is skill that may add to students’ reading ability. Best Practices in reading instruction includes well-structured phonics instruction; however, Zemelman et al. (2012) warned that phonics is not a subject in and of itself. Decoding words correctly does not automatically lead to comprehension. Routman (2003) cautioned, “The current emphasis on word calling, automaticity and fluency in the early grades is often at the expense of understanding” (p. 117). Decoding skills are necessary but are not sufficient for skilled comprehension (Zemelman et al., 2012). Students should not be spending time completing reading workbook pages and skill sheets. According to the authors, “There is little evidence that these activities enhance reading achievement, and they often consume precious chunks of
classroom time” (p. 110). While phonics is an important part of reading instruction, it must be a part of a balanced reading program that emphasizes comprehension.

In addition to reading, providing time for writing every day is also important in developing language proficiency (Zemelman et al., 2012). For emergent readers, using developmental/invented spelling is frequently how students begin to decipher the sound-symbol relationship of written language (Zemelman et al., 2012). In addition to writing every day, teachers should encourage students to engage in a variety of writing styles, including: content writing, journaling, and individual writing from writing workshops. Zemelman et al. (2012) supported the use of a workshop model in teaching both reading and writing.

*Best Practices in Reading Instruction for Children Learning English*

There are important aspects to teaching reading to children who are learning English. Previous researchers have documented that “hurrying young English language learners into reading without developing a sound speaking and listening base proves to be detrimental” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Therefore, listening and speaking must be elements of reading instruction for children who are learning English.

Allington and Cunningham (2003) developed a list of instructional strategies that promote literacy among children who are having difficulty in reading, including children learning English. Several of these strategies focus on grouping and interaction. First, the authors recommended cooperative grouping. For children learning English, an appropriate grouping would be only three or four children which would encourage all children to participate. Second, the authors suggested partner activities, such as partner
reading or think-pair-share activities. Allington and Cunningham (2003) stated, “Your child, who is learning English, will benefit more from the partnership if you consider carefully with whom to partner him or her” (p. 206). The authors advised partnering ELLs with both native English speakers, to support language development in English, and more proficient speakers of English who share the same native language as the child with lower proficiency in order to support the ELL student’s first language. Additionally, the authors identified every-pupil response activities in which all children, rather than just one child, respond. This promotes student engagement and is less threatening than activities in which one child is called on and singled out (Allington & Cunningham (2003). These types of interactions allow children learning English to feel more comfortable and promote collaboration in the classroom. These recommendations were consistent with the best practices of establishing a low-risk reading environment (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005).

Allington and Cunningham also suggested strategies for increasing visual support for children learning English. The authors advocated for the development of print-rich classrooms, “Rooms with a word wall, a theme board containing both words and pictures, environmental print, labels, and signs all promote reading, writing, and language development” (p. 208). The use of graphic organizers for reading makes the purpose of the reading more clear, and the use of webs, timelines, Venn diagrams, and story maps before reading sets the purpose and frontloads vocabulary. The authors suggested that teachers bring in real things (realia) to accompany guided reading books in order to motivate children, develop concept understanding, and help students establish meaning. Finally, Allington and Cunningham noted that picture walks and other attention to visuals
before reading allows students to name what they see and be introduced to the language and content of the book before reading. These activities help students pay closer attention to their environment and encourage students to interpret diagrams, maps, graphs and other visual displays. Providing ample visual support to children who are learning English enables them to make sense of content even with limited English language development.

Allington and Cunningham (2003) also identified types of reading activities that are beneficial to children who are learning English. First, the authors suggested reading to children from a variety of different books and encouraged teachers to “be alert of idioms, multi-meaning words, homophones, and other language peculiarities that make sense to you but are always difficult when learning a new language” (p. 207). As teachers become aware of these difficult language structures, they can offer more support and ensure that children learning English understand the language input. Allington and Cunningham (2003) recommended that teachers use pre-reading activities that build prior knowledge and set a purpose for the reading and follow-up with activities that help students monitor comprehension. This places the focus of reading on meaning; comprehension rather than word-calling. Finally, the authors advised teachers to allow time for self-selected reading and conferring. Self-selected reading time is critical for children learning a new language. They need to be encouraged to read and reread books, and they need help in choosing books with pictures and predictable text (Allington & Cunningham, 2003). These recommendations are consistent with the best practices for reading instruction for all children by Zemelman et al. (2005).
Allington and Cunningham (2003) noted that books with predictable text are important for children learning English. In these books, sentence patterns are repeated and are heavily supported with pictures. Freeman and Freeman (2002) further recommended the use of predictable texts and identified a more complete list of text characteristics that support reading for children learning English. The authors encouraged the use of authentic texts that are written to entertain or inform not just books that teach grammar or phonics objectives. Freeman and Freeman (2002) suggested using books with strong text-picture matching to provide non-linguistic cues that visually support the child learning English and texts that are interesting and imaginative to encourage student engagement. Books need to be culturally relevant for students, and situations and characters in the book need to connect with student experiences and backgrounds.

Another important practice for teaching children who are learning English is the implementation of theme-based instruction. Freeman and Freeman (2002) stated, “Theme-based curriculum is important for English learners because it provides continuity for their instruction” (p. 140). Peregoy and Boyle (2008) offered six criteria for organizing thematic instruction to “promote language development, critical thinking, independence, and interpersonal collaboration for English language learners” (p. 94). Recommendations from these criteria included: setting meaning and purpose for the content of the study theme. It needs to be relevant and interesting for students allowing students the opportunity to choose themes and activities thus creating “investment” in their learning objectives; and creating themes that build upon student prior knowledge as well as the use of collaboration in small groups and partnerships. All of these recommendations are consistent with the research by Allington and Cunningham (2003).
Freeman and Freeman (2002) suggested integrating opportunities to use oral and written language for learning purposes during thematic units. Oral and written language of different forms and functions provided during the thematic study support authentic reading and writing for learning. The authors further expressed the need for scaffolding support for children learning English. Thematic instruction supports opportunities for scaffolding as it provides an “atmosphere that respects each student, builds on their strengths, supports their efforts, and values their accomplishment” (p. 94). Finally, the authors explained that variety permeates the learning process during thematic studies. Multiple-variation in reading and writing materials and opportunities, in student groupings and pairings, in roles and responsibilities, in activities and tasks, as well as in difficulty level allows students to maintain high interest levels for learning during thematic studies.

**English Language Learners Who Struggle as Readers**

As established in this review of the literature, children learning English often struggle with learning to read. Over 50% of children who enter schools with primary language other than English score in the bottom third on reading competencies (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). In fact, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported an achievement gap in reading scores in 2011 assessments and all assessment years since 2002. In Alabama, 50% of Hispanic 4th graders scored below basic on the NAEP reading assessment; only 16% were proficient or advanced. This differed from the results of the Alabama Reading and Math Test in which only 19% of 4th grade Hispanic English learners did not meet or only partially met the standards.
A 2001 study by Neufeld and Fitzgerald involving three Latino boys in a low reading group in first grade highlighted important issues in teaching struggling readers. The boys’ reading development was very similar to one another, but they were a full grade level behind their native English-speaking peers. The focus of instruction was on memorization of both sounds and words and adherence to the basal readers. The structure and content of the low-group reading lessons were repetitive and the teacher often did most of the work for the students. The teacher in the study indicated that children could not advance in reading development until they had memorized the sounds and basic words. The researchers posed the possibility that the boys learned what they were taught, and that their slow progression in reading development was based on the type of instruction they received.

Reading First

Many districts are adopting scripted core reading program to meet the requirements of the NCLB’s Reading First Initiative. This initiative was a result of the 2000 research findings of the National Reading Panel (NRP) report. The Reading First legislation mandated that all kindergarten through third grade reading programs contain explicit and systematic instruction in five areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and comprehension.

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words (Put Reading First, 2001). Phonemic awareness skills include phoneme isolation, identity, categorization, blending, segmentation, deletion, addition, and substitution. According to Put Reading First, children need to become aware of how sounds in words work before they learn to read print. Based on the research
by NRP, phonemic awareness should take no more than 20 hours to develop. Phonics instruction teaches children the relationship between the letters of written language and the individual sounds of spoken language. The goal of phonics instruction is to help children learn and use the alphabetic principle (*Put Reading First*, 2001). This initiative advocates for systematic and explicit phonics instruction and advocates for only two years of phonics instruction for most students. The NRP (2000) prescribed 10 minutes per day of phonics activities.

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly and is often assessed by the number of words per minute a child can read orally (*Put Reading First*, 2001). Reading fluency impacts reading comprehension; smoother, more automatic readers comprehend more of what they read. Readers should practice re-reading of text orally to become more fluent (*Put Reading First*, 2001).

Vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively (*Put Reading First*, 2001). Oral language and reading vocabulary are important in learning to read. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) described a three-tiered vocabulary approach: Tier I words include common words such as ‘ball’ and ‘baby’ that most children could use in everyday language. Tier III words are more content-specific words such as ‘peninsula.’ The authors explained that vocabulary instruction should focus on Tier II words (such as ‘prepare’ or ‘admire’) in which teachers explicitly introduce these words in context and provide opportunities for children to use these words in spoken language.

*Put Reading First* did not provide a definition of comprehension as it did for the other four components. However, it did state that “comprehension is the reason for reading” (p. 48). The initiative also encouraged teachers to explicitly teach students
comprehension strategies. Although the Reading First components were based on research from the NRP, these studies did not originate from studies of ELLs (Antunez, 2002). Antunez (2002) reported the NRP did not examine research studies related to second language learning and reading, nor did it address issues relevant to reading for ELLs. The research by NPR was used to implement Reading First components for all children, even children learning English who account for over five million Pre-K-12 students in U.S. public schools.

Reading First for Children Learning English

Kauffman (2007) stated, “There are... important differences between teaching reading to native English speakers and to students learning English as a second language” (p. xviii). Children learning English have different needs when learning to read in English. In reviewing Reading First components, researchers and practitioners have identified areas in which difficulties may arise for children learning English as well as considerations for instruction in each of the five components.

Teaching phonemic awareness in English may create some difficulty for children learning English as they learn to read (Kauffman, 2007). If children are not literate in their native language, they may have difficulty recognizing and separating spoken words in print (Antunez, 2002). In addition, some English phonemes may not be present in the child’s native language. When children learning English cannot hear or produce a particular sound in English, it is possible that the sound was not present in their native language and may not have the ability to produce the sound (Robertson, 2009). However, native Spanish-speakers may have more success with phonemic awareness in English because many Spanish letter-sounds for consonants are similar to those in English.
Antunez (2002) explained, “Teachers can enable phonemic awareness in English for ELLs by understanding the linguistic characteristics of students’ native language, including the phonemes that exist and do not exist in the native language” (p. 5). Antunez (2002) recommended using meaningful activities such as language games, singing songs, and reading poems. Robertson (2002) suggested picture matching of words with the same beginning, middle, or ending sounds. It is important that the words used for phonemic awareness instructions are words that the child already knows in English, as this provides the basis of meaning (Antunez, 2002; Robertson, 2009).

Robertson (2009) noted that it is somewhat common for children who are learning English to pick-up on the sound-symbol coding and appear to be proficient readers; however, knowledge of phonics and decoding does not ensure that students understand what they have read. At the same time, English learners who are not literate in their own language or whose language does not have a written form may not understand certain concepts and need to be taught functions of print (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). According to Antunez (2002), Spanish-speaking children may need little phonics instruction for consonants because of the similarities between the two languages; however, Spanish vowels have different names and far fewer sounds so this area of phonics instruction may be more problematic since there are only five vowel sounds in Spanish but 13 in English. Robertson (2009) recommended using manipulatives such as sound boxes and magnetic letters as well as connecting phonics to writing to enhance phonics instruction for students learning English.

Vocabulary development is one of the greatest challenges in reading instruction for children learning English (Antunez, 2002). Researchers have demonstrated that
children learn most vocabulary indirectly through conversations (mainly with adults), listening to adults read to them, and reading extensively on their own (Antunez, 2002). This poses serious disadvantages for children learning English as they often do not have parents or adults in their home who are fluent in English to provide these opportunities. Robertson (2009) stated, “A student’s maximum level of reading comprehension is determined by his or her knowledge of words” (p. 4). All of this points to the fact that students learning English need to be exposed to more vocabulary. Robertson suggested a number of instructional practices to support vocabulary development for children learning English including pre-teaching vocabulary using role-playing, gestures, realia, pointing to pictures, drawings, student-friendly definitions, explaining multiple meaning words, and identifying cognates (words in different languages that sound alike and are derived from the same origin).

Fluency for children learning English should not focus primarily on their reading rate, but rather on reading with expression, comprehension, and meaning (Robertson, 2009). Robertson (2009) recommended that teachers provide children with leveled texts that students can read and reread as well as short passages to develop fluency. Choral reading activities, tape-assisted reading, partner reading, and readers’ theater are all ways to support children learning English to develop reading fluency (Kauffman 2007). In addition to these instructional strategies, Antunez (2002) proposed reading aloud big-books and repeated rereading of books to develop fluency in English.

Comprehension can be the most difficult skill to master for children learning English. Children learning English often read more slowly, have a more difficult time
following a story, and identifying important information or events, which frequently leads to frustration (Robertson, 2009). Antunez (2002) explained:

When students are behind their peers in learning to read, as is often the case for ELLs, their remedial programs consist of phonemic awareness, phonics activities or vocabulary development in isolation. They are not exposed to authentic texts or challenged to think critically or inferentially about stories. (p. 10)

This is often problematic for children learning English because they are not being exposed to high-quality literature and higher-order thinking activities like their native English speaking peers. Multiple authors have identified instructional practices for supporting reading comprehension for children learning English. These recommendations include providing opportunities to build background knowledge, make connections, use graphic organizers, use picture support, answer carefully crafted, meaningful questions, practice story sequencing, and discussing what they have read (Antunez, 2002; Kauffman, 2007; Robertson, 2009).

**Core Reading Programs**

For years, educational leaders have debated the merits of reading instruction, with a focus on phonics-based instruction versus whole-language instruction. Since the implementation of the NCLB 2001, the new catch phrases in teaching reading include “scientifically research-based” and “program fidelity.” In an effort to meet the guidelines of the Reading First Initiative, school districts throughout the United States have adopted research-based scripted core reading programs (Milosovic, 2007). However, there are conflicting views among researchers about the effectiveness of such programs. Routman
(2003) stated, “A red flag should go up whenever you hear ‘research-based’” (p. 195). Routman cautioned educators to look carefully at the research and question its relevance to their student populations. Allington (2011) stated that scripted core reading programs do not work for struggling readers. The author detected a fixation on one-size-fits-all core reading programs even though the What Works Clearinghouse found no evidence to support their use. Multiple researchers have argued that scripted core reading programs do not meet the individual needs of students. For example, Clay (1993) stated, “The teacher must skillfully select the activities needed by a particular child, otherwise she will slow the child’s progress further by having him complete unnecessary work, thereby wasting precious learning time” (p. 19). Children learning English must have their individual needs met and cannot afford to waste time in their journey to become literate in a new language.

In contrast, Moats (1999) articulated the need for scripted core reading programs. In *Teaching Reading is Rocket Science*, the author explained that teaching reading is more complex than most professionals and laypersons realize. Curriculum construction and instructional design in teaching reading are too important to leave to the judgment of individuals. As previously noted, a current trend to control reading instruction is through program fidelity (Shelton, 2010). Achinstein and Ogawa (2006) defined fidelity as a term used by administrators and teachers “to describe strict adherence to the text, pacing guides, and teacher scripts associated with programs adopted by the state or district” (p. 32). As such, numerous school districts are requiring teachers to follow scripted reading programs to fidelity.
State Textbook Selection

In 2007, the Alabama Department of Education held an Expert Review of core reading programs submitted to the State Textbook Committee. The 24-member Expert Review Panel consisted of regional reading coaches, school reading coaches, classroom teachers, and a university professor of reading. The Expert Review Panel was trained and supervised by state staff of the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI). To evaluate the degree to which the core reading program aligned with scientific research in reading, the Expert Review Panel used *A Consumer’s Guide to Analyzing a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis* (Simmons & Kame’enui, 2006). In the first step of this Core Reading Program review, ARI personnel completed an initial evaluation of the 11 programs submitted; of which 10 were recommended for full review. The next step was to use the Consumer’s guide to fully examine each of the remaining program’s critical elements (*Reading First* components). During this review, six panelists were assigned to specific grade levels and further subdivided into groups of three. These individuals familiarized themselves with the program layout and analyzed each critical component. Each sub-group independently scored the critical elements after which the panel of six reassembled to reach a consensus of scores. After each grade level had scored a particular program, the Expert Review panel reported their scores and an overall program score was compiled by ARI staff. The review and final program scores were made available for each district in the state to determine the program they would adopt. The Expert Review Panel did not consider the effectiveness of programs for children learning English.

Shelter County adopted and mandated the use of Harcourt *Story Town* in all kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms. Using the *Consumer’s Guide* to rate
Harcourt *Story Town* for kindergarten, the State’s Expert Review Panel determined that 19 of the 47 critical elements consistently met/exceeded criterion, for a total of 40.4%. ARI staff explained that the 24-member Expert Review Panel had high expectations and conducted a strict review that resulted in relatively low scores. The panel also reported the percentage of critical elements, including items which only partially met the criterion combined with those that consistently met/exceeded, which raised the total to 91.5%. This ranked Harcourt *Story Town* fifth among the nine kindergarten programs reviewed. Fluency was not addressed or scored in the kindergarten review. The expert review provided comments about the program during the debriefing, and the panelists reported that the program was strongest in the area of vocabulary instruction. Panelists noted that the program often confused the terms phonological awareness and phonemic awareness, and expressed the needs for more words to be introduced and an increased cumulative review of sounds. Panelists stated that there was a considerable amount of comprehension, possibly too much, and they had to “dig” to find explicit comprehension instruction. Individuals reported that “Regimented think-alouds were found to serve as the platform for comprehension instruction. Reading to learn strategies appeared to be a key component for this program” (p. 62). When reporting on the program design, these panelists noted that the scope and sequence was not helpful; routines used were not consistent; and navigation between/among units, themes, and lessons was difficult. The panelists concluded that professional development was definitely needed to navigate the program.
Harcourt Story Town

Harcourt *Story Town* claims to be “a research-based developmental reading and language arts program for pre-kindergarten through sixth grade” (p. 2). According to Harcourt, high-quality children’s literature and informational text are the foundation of the program. The kindergarten *Story Town* materials include 20 big books and 20 library books (trade books); 36 of these books are fiction and four are informational text. The Harcourt Professional Development guide states the following: “Story Town features an organized, direct approach to teaching reading. The program emphasizes explicit, systematic instruction in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing” (p. 2). Harcourt affirmed that *Story Town* “reflects current, confirmed research” (p. 2). I tried to contact Harcourt publishing company via email and through face-to-face contacts with Harcourt representatives to obtain these research resources. I asked specifically for research related to effectiveness for English Language Learners; however, I did not receive any replies nor could I access the research through the company’s website.

The kindergarten edition of *Story Town* offers 30 lessons, organized within 10 themes. Two big books and two library books accompany each theme. Weekly instruction for each lesson utilizes a big book, a library book, a story selection from the Read-Aloud Anthology (with no pictures included), poem and song selections (often a different one each day), as well as selected poems to reinforce the letter/sound being taught. Every third week is a review week in which the same big books and library books from the previous two weeks are used. In the “suggested lesson planner” (*Story Town* Teacher Edition, volume 1, T18) the whole group lessons include three areas: daily
routines, word work, and skills and strategies. In the teacher’s edition, there is an illustration of a clock indicating the amount of time to be spent on each activity or objective. Daily routines consist of the following: “begin the day” a song or rhyme which is different each day (five minutes suggested), oral language practice questions, which often correspond to the song or rhyme (five minutes suggested), and phonemic awareness activities (10-30 minutes suggested). The Phonics component includes phonics (30 minutes suggested) and high-frequency word instruction (10-30 minutes suggested). Letter names and corresponding sounds are taught systematically and not completed until the last unit in each lesson. Blending of CVC (consonant, vowel, consonant) begins early in the program and a cumulative blending method is used. For example, “cat” would be cumulatively blended: /k/, /a/; /ka/; /ka/, /t/; /kat/. The final component, “Skills and Strategies,” includes: comprehension instruction for skills and strategies and reading (30 minutes suggested) and building robust vocabulary (10 minutes suggested). In the margins of the Teacher Edition there are objects and materials needed as well as prompts for teachers to use for think aloud, ELL, below-level, and advanced students. Literacy center objectives and activity cards are also provided for listening/speaking, reading, writing, word work, and letters and sounds. Corresponding small-group readers are available for each lesson and include decodable, below-level, on-level, advanced, and ELL books. Lesson plans for small group instruction are provided in the teacher’s editions.

Harcourt Story Town includes a “Strategic Intervention Teacher Guide” in which the introduction states:
The *Strategic Intervention Resource Kit* provides additional intensive systematic teaching and practice to help children learn the skills and strategies important for proficient reading. Aligned with and correlated to the instructional goals and objectives of *Story Town Kindergarten* program, the *Strategic Intervention Resource Kit* optimizes the learning opportunities and outcomes for children at risk. The additional targeted teaching and practice will help children build a strong foundation in the fundamental skills for successfully learning to read. (p. v)

The teacher guide is scripted with daily lesson plans for intervention in phonemic awareness, phonics, high-frequency words, robust vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and reading, each with a specified amount of time to be devoted to each area daily. Each week has four review lessons and the final day is devoted to pre-teaching the objectives for the upcoming week. Important to this discussion, these lessons are most often not linked to text and are not inter-connected. Additionally, the comprehension is from text the teacher reads aloud from a page in the teacher’s edition; there are no pictures to support students’ understanding.

*Shelter County Reading Instruction Plan*

Shelter County (pseudonym) developed a reading instruction plan (SCRIP). This plan outlined the objectives to be taught and instructional guidelines for teachers to follow as well as a curriculum map to be followed to fidelity. The SCRIP specified that kindergarten follow a specific 90 minute framework with an additional 30 minutes for RTI, Tier II intervention. Kindergarten was divided into four whole-group mini-lessons
and four small-group and choice time blocks, and 15 minutes were allocated for each instruction block. The blocks corresponded to the three previously described areas of instruction in Harcourt *Story Town*. The SCRIP recommended that comprehension stand alone in one block and vocabulary instruction be taught one to two days a week during the fourth block. The remaining days of the fourth block could be utilized for teacher choice of mini-lessons or management lessons.

Shelter County also integrated the *Primary Comprehension Toolkit* by Harvey and Goudvis (2007). In the *Teacher’s Guide*, the authors stated “The *Primary Comprehension Toolkit* is not an add-on or an extra” (p. 7). However, the authors explained that it could be integrated with a basal if the *Primary Comprehension Toolkit* text was used. Throughout the *Teacher’s Guide*, Harvey and Goudvis stressed that “text matters” and the vast majority of lessons focused on nonfiction text materials (pp. 16, 22, 32). The SCRIP conveyed a need for an increased amount of non-fiction text to be used in the classroom, “Research reports that students need to read 2/3 nonfiction text in elementary school and be given a purpose for reading and using comprehension strategies” (p. 3). However, Harcourt *Story Town* texts were predominately fiction, with only 10% of books being non-fiction. The SCRIP provided a correlation of the Primary Toolkit lessons with the text from Harcourt that teachers were mandated to use in implementation. Of the 20 Harcourt texts that were chosen to correspond to the *Primary Comprehension Toolkit* lessons, only two were non-fiction. Harvey and Goudvis (2007) advocated for a more individualized approach to text selection. According to the authors, “The big payoff of *Toolkit* teaching comes when you develop your own lessons, using text you have chosen for your kids” (p. 48). The SCRIP identified specific *Primary Comprehension Toolkit*
lessons to be taught during the reading block and encouraged teachers to use the other lessons during unit time with non-fiction text.

Shelter County developed small-group explicit phonics lessons, and these lessons were intended to be implemented with every student on a weekly basis. Lessons were connected to the decodable text provided with the reading program. Shelter County also mandated the use of the *Story Town Strategic Intervention* lessons for RTI, Tier II intervention. These county-developed lesson plans were based on the lessons from *Story Town Strategic Intervention* and were to be followed with all “at-risk” students. Each daily lesson included sub-lessons in all five areas of the *Reading First Initiative*. The SCRIP specified the order in which the sub-lessons were to be taught and the duration component of the lesson. This lesson plan was to be used with all students receiving RTI, Tier II reading intervention. Tier III reading intervention was not implemented in kindergarten in this school district. The belief was that kindergarten students required more school instruction to determine the need for a third level of reading intervention.

**Response to Intervention**

According to the National Center on Response to Intervention, RTI integrates assessment and intervention within a multiple tiered prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. Response to intervention is sometimes referred to as response to instruction. Bender and Shores (2007) defined RTI as “a process of implementing high-quality, scientifically validated instructional practices based on learner needs, monitoring student progress, and adjusting instruction based on the student’s response” (p. 7). With RTI, schools identify students at risk for learning
difficulties, monitor students’ progress, provide evidence-based or scientifically-based interventions, and adjust the intensity and nature of the interventions depending on students’ responsiveness (http://rti4success.org/).

Tier I instruction is given to all students based on a core curriculum (Bender & Shores, 2007). Tier II provides more intensive intervention for students who are struggling. It is recommended that this intervention be provided in small groups with no more than two or three students with the teacher (D. Fuchs & L. Fuchs, 2005). Fuchs and Fuchs (2005) suggested that progress should be monitored weekly. Bender and Shores (2007) indicated that the intervention for Tier II should last between 20 days and 10 weeks. If progress is not made during this time in Tier II, the student would then receive one-on-one intervention in Tier III. This process is used to document students who do not respond to an intervention and may need to be identified for a learning disability. RTI is grounded in the idea of prevention (Sailor, 2009). The purpose of the RTI model is to establish a preventative model of instruction rather than a wait-to-fail model (Haager, Klingner, & Vaughn, 2007). Teachers monitor student progress of learning outcomes and intensify instruction based on students’ needs.

**RTI in Alabama.** Alabama uses a three-tiered approach to RTI in K-12. Student assessment data drive the layers of RTI tiered support. According to the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) (2009), RTI is “an instructional framework that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, gifted, supplemental, and special education services in providing high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to students’ academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs” (p. 1). In
addition to intervention, the ALSDE also notes that RTI may be used as enrichment for diverse learners who have achieved benchmark content goals.

All students receive Tier I instruction. This core instruction is delivered by general education classroom teachers and focuses on the standards in the Alabama Course of Study. According to the ALSDE (2009), all students should receive Tier I instruction that is “high quality research-based instruction that is delivered with fidelity utilizing a curriculum that is viable, rigorous, and standards driven” (p. 6). The state selected core reading programs from which districts could choose to use as the reading curriculum, as mentioned earlier in *Textbook Selection*. Assessment is also a part of Tier I instruction. All children are assessed through a universal screening to determine the level of student mastery of specific content areas. Benchmark assessments are administered at least three times per year and progress is monitored as well. Benchmark assessments, universal screeners, and progress monitoring assessment types are left to the schools to determine and not mandated at the state level. Tier I instruction met the needs of at least 80% of the student population.

As noted, Tier II is a second layer of instruction provided in addition to Tier I when students are not making adequate progress. According to the ALSDE (2009), Tier II interventions provide additional attention, focus, and support and take place in the general education classroom. ALSDE (2009) stated, “Tier II intervention is explicit, systematic, and aligned with Tier I instruction. Instructional interventions are differentiated, scaffolded, and targeted based on the needs of individual students as determined by assessment data” (p. 8). Materials, strategies, and instructional focus should be aligned with Tier I instruction. Student placement into Tier II is based on
assessment data, and placement decisions can be made by the classroom teacher. Tier II interventions may be provided by the classroom teacher, specialized teacher, special education teacher or paraeducator (ASDE, 2009). The amount of instructional time in Tier II is determined at the district central office or school building level and should be based on age, grade, subject, severity of deficit, etc. (ALSDE, 2009). Tier II intervention should be provided for no more than 15% of the student population (ALSDE, 2009).

Tier III instruction is provided for students who are not making progress in Tier I and Tier II. Tier III should be provided for no more than 5% of the student population; students with significant deficits or those who are severely underachieving (ALSDE, 2009). Tier III interventions should be provided by a specialized teacher who is highly skilled in the student’s particular area of deficit. Materials and strategies used for Tier II should be specialized research-based or evidence-based interventions. Additionally, Tier II should be focused on the needs of the students who will be receiving Tier III intervention. These interventions usually occur outside of the classroom and can be provided before or after school (ALSDE, 2009). Decisions for Tier III intervention should be made by a school-based problem solving team. Frequency of assessment also increases in Tier III. These data can be used by the team to determine student progress. If progress is made, the student can be moved back to Tier I and Tier II. If a student does not make progress in Tier III, the team must make instructional decisions as well as determine if the child should be referred for special education evaluation (ALSDE, 2009).

RTI for Reading in Shelter County. Shelter County has an RTI plan which was implemented and followed in the elementary school setting. This plan specifically
addressed each Tier of instruction in reading. The stated goal for using the RTI model was to address deficits determined by universal screeners in reading. The county used the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as the universal screener in kindergarten. DIBELS was developed by Good and Kaminski as an assessment to measure early reading skills in kindergarten through sixth grade. The kindergarten DIBELS assessment includes four sub-tests: first sound fluency, letter naming, nonsense words, and phoneme segmentation. Both first sound fluency and phoneme segmentation assess kindergarteners’ acquisition of phonological awareness. Nonsense word assessment is designed to assess students’ alphabetic principle knowledge. For each sub-test, students’ scores are translated into their level of instructional needs: at-risk (below the benchmark), some-risk (very near the benchmark score), or low-risk (above the benchmark score).

All children in the district received Tier I instruction. The classroom teachers followed the Harcourt Story Town Reading series as the core program. This was followed in both whole group and small group reading lessons. Teachers used multiple assessments at the beginning of the year including: concept about print inventories, phonics inventories, and running records. The district-wide assessment screener, DIBELS, was given to all kindergarten children at the beginning of the year. From these assessments, students who score in the 10th percentile or below nationally go on the school “watch-list.”

Children on this “watch-list” were then moved to RTI Tier II reading intervention. The teacher was required to pull them for extra instruction during the Tier II intervention time. In December, the DIBELS assessment was given again. Students in the 10th
percentile or below nationally, were referred to the school Problem Solving Team (PST).

It was not written in the plan; however, it was understood in the district that English learners in kindergarten did not have to go to PST because they needed more time to acquire English. This message was relayed informally (not in writing) through the instructional department. The PST team was comprised of classroom teachers, specialized teachers, administrators, and parents to form a plan for Tier II and provide instructional services to reduce students’ academic deficits. According to the district plan, the team should consider the following assessments to identify which deficits need to be addressed:

- Phonics inventory
- DIBELS data
- Running records
- Benchmark assessments
- Tier II lesson plans
- Anecdotal notes
- Any other documentation that would support the need for intervention

With an intervention plan in place, the child should receive Tier II reading intervention lessons from the classroom teacher at least two days a week, in addition to daily Tier I small group lessons. The small group lesson should last 20-30 minutes. In addition to the two Tier II lessons with the teacher, children were encouraged to use a computerized reading intervention program three days a week; however, this program was not available for kindergarten. The district instructional department informally relayed that teachers should meet with kindergarten Tier II students every day for both Tier I (15 minutes) and Tier II (20-30 minutes) small group intervention. Kindergarten students were not referred to Tier III unless it was deemed an extreme and unusual case.
RTI for English Learners. The effectiveness of using RTI for children learning English has yet to be determined. Shanahan and Beck (2006) suggested that interventions for early reading used with mono-lingual English speakers can also work for children who are learning English. Brown and Doolittle (2008) also proposed that there is great promise in using RTI with children learning English. Klinger and Edwards (2006) questioned the validity of using RTI with culturally and linguistically diverse students. In a study involving first grade native Spanish speaking English learners, results did not favor the effectiveness of RTI (Linan-Thompson, Cirino, & Vaughn, 2007). Students were provided with RTI reading interventions, but 75-80% did not meet grade-level criteria in decoding, comprehension, and fluency. Additionally, in a study involving kindergarten Spanish/English speakers, students were provided RTI intervention on letter naming fluency (Gliberston & Bluck, 2006). None of the students receiving the intervention met benchmark scores and still fell far below their English speaking peers.

Many teachers and school personnel do not have the training and experience to differentiate between language differences and reading disability (Klingner, Artiles, & Barletta, 2006). Not understanding the difference between language acquisition and reading difficulty could result in children being placed in remedial reading intervention programs who instead, just need more time to acquire the English language. Research for the effectiveness of RTI Tier II reading intervention with children learning English is, at the current time, inconclusive.
**Parent Engagement**

There is a long-held perception that Hispanic families do not value education and are not involved in their children’s education (Gregg, Rugg, & Stoneman, 2012). Ferrer found that Hispanic parents are often not very involved in their child’s school (2007).

However, Hispanic parents do care about their children’s education and want to be involved (Lopez, 2001). In fact, Gregg et al. (2012) found that Latino parents of preschool children had two main hopes for their children: (1) to receive an education and (2) exceed their own academic achievements. Parents also discussed home learning activities which included homework and extending school learning into the home (Gregg et al., 2012). Hispanic parents interpreted their role in providing support to their children to include being nurturing, teaching morals, showing respect, and engaging in appropriate behavior (Carger, 1997). This perceived lack of care and involvement may stem from a difference in viewpoints of parental support and a disconnect between home and school (Gibson, 2002). Delgado-Gaitan (2004) stated that schools and teachers must seek out partnerships with parents of Latino families.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Mixed Methods Research

Mixed methods research is defined as research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). Mixed methods are needed when one source of data alone may be insufficient, results need to be further explained, findings need to be generalized, or a second phase of the study is needed to enhance the first (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) explained, “The goal of mixed methods research is not to replace either of these approaches but rather to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies” (pp. 14-15). Mixed methods research was needed for this study in order to form a complete understanding of the research problem as well as identify qualitative participants. For this study, I employed an explanatory sequential (Quan→ QUAL) mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

For this study, the researcher needed to identify frequency of occurrence and develop a deeper understanding of the planning and implementation of RTI Tier II reading intervention for Hispanic children learning English. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explained that in this design, researchers begin with collection and analysis of quantitative data in the first phase, then, in the second phase qualitative data are used to build upon the results of the first phase. For this study, the quantitative data also informed the selection of participants in the qualitative phase.
Philosophical Assumptions

Researchers make philosophical assumptions which influence their research choices. Creswell (2007) observed that researchers bring their own worldviews, paradigms, and belief sets which inform the study. Creswell (2007) noted, “Good research requires making these assumptions, paradigms, and frameworks explicit in the writing of a study, and at a minimum, to be aware that they influence the conduct of inquiry” (p. 15). A paradigm or worldview is a set of basic beliefs that guide our actions (Guba, 1990). There are four paradigms that inform research: postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism.

As the key researcher for this study, I aligned myself in the pragmatism paradigm, which focused on the research outcomes. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stated, “Pragmatism also helps to shed light on how research approaches can be mixed” (p. 3). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) remarked that pragmatism, “draws on many ideas including employing ‘what works,’ using diverse approaches and valuing both objectives and subjective knowledge” (p. 43). This worldview is typically associated with mixed methods research.

Ontology describes the nature of reality. The goal of this study was to understand the views of individual teachers and the general views of the population of teachers. Exploring both singular perspectives of individual participants and multiple perspectives of the entire sample population allowed for a better overall understanding of the nature of reality for teachers in the study.
Epistemology is the relationship between the researcher and the participants. For this study, practicality was the guide. As the researcher, I personally interviewed four individual teachers because it was not feasible to interact with every single kindergarten teacher in the district. For the qualitative phase, there was closeness between the participants and the researcher. However, for the quantitative phase, there was no face-to-face interaction.

Axiology is the role of values. For this study, I acknowledged my biases that scripted reading intervention programs and phonics-based approaches to reading are not effective methods for children who are learning English. I set aside these biases and presented participants’ perspectives on the topic. Methodology is the process of research. Pragmatism allowed for a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research which was used in this study.

As this is a mixed methods study, I borrowed from the constructivist worldview as related to methodology. Both Stake (1995) and Yin (2009) suggested a constructivist paradigm for case study research, which was used for the qualitative phase. Creswell (2007) explained that in a social constructivism worldview, “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 20). Through my research, I planned to gain an understanding of RTI reading interventions provided to Hispanic kindergarteners who were learning English. Because I wanted to understand the process I conducted individual interviews, observed reading intervention lessons, and reviewed lesson plans and assessment documents. Creswell (2007) posited that in the social constructivist paradigm researchers rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation. I used quotes of participants’ statements in reporting my research findings.
Rhetoric is the language used for the research. I used informal conversations and interviews with the participants, but presented the study findings with a formal style of writing. An advocacy/transformative lens was also used in this study. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) explained, “The transformative perspective paradigm is characterized as placing central importance on the lives and experiences of marginalized groups” (p. 87), including ethnic/racial minorities. This study focused on the planning and implementation of reading intervention lessons provided to Hispanic children learning English, a minority group of the student population. It was important for me, as a mixed methods researcher, to carefully consider each of these assumptions.

_Procedural Issues_

There were several key decisions that had to be made regarding the use of a mixed methods design including: interaction of the QUAN and QUAL strands, the priority of the strands, timing of each strand, and procedures for mixing (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) described mixed methods data analysis as “the process whereby QUAN and QUAL data analysis strategies are combined, connected, or integrated in research studies” (p. 263). For this study, I used a sequential quan → QUAL approach. Quantitative data were collected in the first phase which helped in the identification of frequencies in the research phenomenon. These frequencies were used to inform the qualitative interview protocol. In addition, the qualitative sample was purposefully selected from the quantitative sample. More weight was given to the qualitative strand, which was the second phase of the study. Although gaining an understanding of the overall frequency in RTI Tier II practices within the district was
needed, it was the individual teacher cases and focus students who provided a clear picture of the planning and implementation of the intervention.

Mixing is the interrelating of the quantitative and qualitative strands, and there are specific points of interface when the two are combined or integrated (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Mixing initially occurred at the completion of the quantitative data survey. The survey results informed the qualitative data collection tool. Additionally, the interview and observation protocols were revised based on frequency data from the survey. Mixing also occurred with participant selection. Teacher data provided in the quantitative survey were used to determine participants who met the inclusion criteria for the qualitative phase. Potential case study participants were purposefully selected based on specific criteria indicated on the quantitative survey. Final mixing occurred at the end of the data analysis when case and cross-case data were compared to the initial data of the entire quantitative sample. A visual diagram of this study can be seen in Figure 3.1 to convey the complexity and multi-phase design of the research (Ivankova & Stick, 2007).
Adapted from Ivankova, N. V., & Stick, S.L. (2007).
*Figure 3.1.* Visual representation of mixed methods approach.
Phase One: Quantitative Research

Before any research began, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted (see Appendix A). The quantitative strand of this study involved a survey instrument (see Appendix B). Quantitative survey research is a systematic method for data collection with a goal of predicating population attributes, perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors; this technique has long been used in quantitative research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). As noted by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009), “The remarkable power of the sample survey is its ability to estimate closely the distribution of a characteristic in a population by obtaining information from relatively few elements of that population” (p. 54). This study utilized the most commonly used approach to mixed methods research, combining quantitative questionnaires with follow-up interviews (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Quantitative sampling. The total possible quantitative sample included all 117 kindergarten teachers in Shelter County. Of the 117 teachers, five teachers were on maternity or medical leave. Three teachers team-taught with another teacher and were only responsible for math and science, leaving the reading instruction to their teaching partner. This left 109 total participants, all of whom were given the survey. Teachers from all 14 elementary schools within the district were included. This large sample was needed to determine frequency in the research phenomenon. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) indicated that at least 50 participants are needed for a quantitative sample to yield accurate data; this sample exceeded the suggested sample size. All teachers were
included in hopes of a higher response rate. Teachers were asked to complete the survey on a voluntary basis.

**Quantitative data collection.** The survey was distributed to 109 kindergarten teachers. Each of the 14 elementary schools in the district had a reading coach who worked with all of the teachers in his or her school. As a reading coach, I knew the other coaches and sought their help in distributing and collecting the survey. Reading coaches distributed and collected the surveys on a voluntary basis; 13 out of 14 reading coaches agreed to help. One reading coach indicated that she did not feel she had a strong enough relationship with the kindergarten teachers in her school to get a high response rate. In this case, I sought the help of a kindergarten teacher at that school to help distribute and collect the surveys. I used printed surveys rather than email in an effort to secure a higher response rate. I attached a cover letter to the front of the survey to introduce myself, explain the purpose of the survey, and state that it was voluntary (see Appendix B). Teachers were instructed to return their completed surveys to the reading coach. The reading coaches collected completed surveys and returned them to me in an envelope which I provided. Teachers provided demographic information in the survey, and the survey helped to establish frequency data, such as the number of Hispanic students in each classroom, how many received RTI Tier II reading intervention, how long they had been in Tier II, and the number of Hispanic students progressing in reading.
Quantitative data analysis. The quantitative survey provided frequency data. All data collected from the survey was entered into a data set in Excel. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the frequency in planning and implementation of RTI Tier II reading intervention. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), “Descriptive statistics methods include techniques for summarizing numeric data in easily interpretable tables, graphs, or single representations of a group” (p. 258). Variables were assigned a numeric code to identify their meaning. The data set was analyzed in order to determine frequencies and measures of central tendency, both of which were displayed in data tables and graphs in the discussion of findings. Additionally, themes from the open-ended response portion of the survey emerged. Only six participants responded to the open-ended response question; however, definite themes were apparent from these data.

Phase Two: Qualitative Research

Understanding how teachers planned and implemented reading intervention as part of RTI for Hispanic kindergarteners lent itself well to a qualitative approach. As a qualitative researcher, I used interviews and observations to uncover and explore the participants’ views and experiences. By interviewing various teachers who were providing intervention to Hispanic kindergarten students, I discovered experiences of each teacher as well as common experiences among participants.

Hatch (2002) proposed that “Qualitative research seeks to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it” (p. 7). According to many experts in the field, there is a variety of characteristics of qualitative research. The first characteristic is that qualitative research is conducted in the natural setting. Denzin and Lincoln (2005)
explained, “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). A second characteristic of qualitative research is the role of the researcher as the key instrument for data collection and analysis. Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through interviews, the examination of documents, and through observing behaviors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach to research allows for the utilization of tacit knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) gained from the interactions between the researcher and the participants. The use of multiple sources of data is another characteristic of qualitative research. Merriam (2002) explained, “There are three major sources of data for qualitative research study – interviews, observations, and documents” (p. 12). These data are then used for inductive data analysis. Multiple forms of data provide a better overall picture of the central phenomenon of the study. Creswell (2007) noted, “Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the ‘bottom up,’ by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information” (p. 38). Special criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research include validity, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Another characteristic unique to qualitative research is the focus on learning about the participants’ meaning constructed in relation to a problem, issue, or experience. Creswell (2008) further explained this process, “In qualitative research, describing a trend means that the research problem can be answered best by a study in which the researcher seeks to establish the overall tendency of responses from individuals” (p. 51). Merriam (2002) stated that qualitative research seeks to “understand the meaning people have constructed about their world and their experiences” (pp. 4-5). Qualitative researchers also allow for an emergent
design of the research process. Finally, qualitative researchers strive to provide a holistic account of the problem, issue, or experience being explored. Creswell (2007) asserted “Qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study” (p. 39). The central phenomenon explored in this study was how teachers planned for and provided reading intervention as part of RTI for Hispanic kindergartners who were still learning English.

Qualitative tradition of inquiry. The specific tradition of inquiry used for this qualitative study was case study analysis. According to Creswell (2007):

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case based themes. (p. 73)

Yin (2009) suggested using case study design when the researcher is seeking to answer “how” and “why” questions. Claims by both Creswell and Yin supported the use of a case study approach appropriate for my research question. Specifically, I employed a descriptive, multiple case study design. In descriptive case studies, the end product includes a rich description of a case or cases under investigation (Merriam, 1998). Descriptive case studies also address aspects such as the complexity of situations and the influence of time on a specific issue; these were important to this specific research.

A multiple-case study design was employed for this study. Stake (2006) explained “In multicase study research, the single case is of interest because it belongs to a particular collection of cases. The individual cases share a common characteristic or
condition… and are categorically bound together” (pp. 5-6). This design was appropriate because it allowed me to analyze data within each individual case and across multiple case settings and contexts. In multiple case studies, the researcher examines several cases in order to understand similarities and differences among the cases (Yin, 2009). Although the research was conducted within the same school system, the setting included three different schools. The context of each case was influenced by the individual teacher providing the RTI reading intervention as well as the students who received the intervention. Merriam (1998) noted, “The more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (p. 40). For the final report summary, individual cases and multiple case results were represented (Yin, 2009).

For case study designs, it is important to define the case and determine the unit of analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined a case as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is, in effect, your unit of analysis” (p. 25). For this study, the case was defined as the teacher who provided a reading intervention to Hispanic kindergarten ELL students who were identified as students struggling in reading. This case was in the context of the school, teacher, and student who received the reading intervention. Understanding the nature of the reading intervention, how it was planned, implemented, and received by students was of upmost importance to this research on the reading development of Hispanic kindergarten EL students.

Qualitative sampling. Purposeful sampling was used for this multiple case study. According to Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006), purposeful sampling that seeks
information-rich cases has the greatest potential for generating insight about the research of interest. To meet the study purpose, to understand how RTI reading intervention was implemented with Hispanic students, a “criterion sampling strategy” was used (Hatch, 2002, p. 99). Merriam (1998) stated that for multiple cases the researcher needs to select several cases based on relevant criteria. The criterion for participant selection was kindergarten teachers in central Alabama who currently taught RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons to children of Hispanic descent who were learning English. Teachers who identified a high number of Hispanic students receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention and indicated that their students had made adequate to exceptional reading progress were sought as possible participants. The researcher also employed a “maximum variation sampling strategy” (Hatch, 2002, p. 98) by seeking teachers from different elementary schools throughout the defined area. In case studies, Creswell (2007) also suggested using a maximum variation sampling strategy “to represent diverse cases and to fully describe multiple perspectives about the cases” (p. 129). By including teachers from different elementary schools, this diversity of setting enhanced the exploration of multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2008). Finally, participants with varying years of experience and levels of education were selected to further enhance the maximum variation sampling.

Yin (2009) stated that it is the researcher’s responsibility to conduct case studies with special care and sensitivity towards human participants. For this study, special care and sensitivity included gaining informed consent from each participant, protecting participants from harm or deception in the study, protecting privacy and confidentiality for all participants, and protecting vulnerable groups (Yin, 2009). The Institutional
Review Board (IRB) reviewed the research proposal for this study. I sought permission from the district superintendent to conduct the research and interview teachers employed within the district. The quantitative survey was used to determine possible qualitative participants using the previously listed criteria. The survey also allowed teachers to indicate their willingness to participate in the qualitative research phase. Based on their responses, teachers were ranked by the researcher according to the established criteria. Two of the first four teachers declined further participation; therefore the fifth and sixth teachers on the list were selected. The teachers who indicated a desire to participate and were chosen for the qualitative research phase were emailed a participant recruitment letter (see Appendix C). A total of four teachers were selected. Once the teachers for the case studies had been selected, I sought out focus students from their classrooms. Parents of the Hispanic EL students in the selected teachers’ classrooms who were receiving the reading intervention received a participant recruitment letter (see Appendix D). This letter was also translated into Spanish for parents (see Appendix E). Four students from each class were identified as focus students. Four consent forms from two classes were returned, and two consent forms from the other two classes were returned. There were a total of 12 focus students for the study. In order to develop a deep understanding of the RTI reading intervention provided, closely studying four teachers and 12 students provided enough participants to reach saturation (Creswell, 2007).

Potential participants, both teachers and students, were given a recruitment letter explaining the nature and purpose of the study and details about the time frame of the study, confidentiality protocol, and basic logistics of the interview process. Once teacher participants agreed to become part of the research group, they were provided the
Interview Protocol via email (see Appendix F). Sending the interview protocol in advance provided teacher participants the opportunity to review the questions, reflect on their experiences, and to formulate thoughtful responses to share during the interview. Before the interviews began, participants were provided the Informed Consent Document (see Appendix G) so that they were aware of their rights as participants.

Qualitative data collection. Merriam (1998) stated, “Data collection is about asking, watching, and reviewing” (p. 69). For this multiple case study research, several forms of data were collected. Yin (2012) maintained that case study research is not limited to a single source of data but that rigorous case studies have multiple sources of evidence. According to Patton (1990), qualitative data consist of “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” obtained through interviews; “detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviors, and actions” recorded in observations; and “excerpts, quotations, or entire passages” taken from various types of documents (p. 10). Yin (2012) provided a list of six common data sources of evidence for case study research; of these six I utilized surveys, interviews, direct observations, archival records, and document review.

The first form of data collection was the initial quantitative survey sent to all kindergarten teachers in the district. This survey provided initial quantitative data on how many Hispanic EL students were in teachers’ classrooms, how many students received RTI reading intervention, who provided the intervention, and how long students had been receiving reading intervention. Results from this survey provided a better overall
understanding of the interventions taking place throughout the district; therefore, the survey was needed in order to inform the qualitative research phase.

According to Stake (1995), “Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. The interview is the main road to multiple realities” (p. 64). The primary form of data collection was face-to-face interviews. Interviews were conducted individually with each of the four teacher participants. The initial interview was about one hour and follow-up interviews were scheduled as needed to clarify information or to discuss additional questions that arose. Hatch (2002) stated, “The strength of interviews is that they allow insight into participant perspectives” (p. 97). I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix F) of open-ended questions for these semi-structured interviews. Interview questions were based on the research study questions and followed the same sequence as the research questions. The interviews were standardized as the interview questions were asked in the same order and using the same words with all participants. According to Hatch (2002), standardization allows for the information gathered to be compared systematically, which was helpful with multiple interviews. All interview questions included additional probing questions that were asked by the interviewer for extension and clarification purposes. Even though the interview protocol outlined the questions to be asked during the interview, other questions arose. Glesne (2006) explained that questions may emerge during the interview and may add to or replace the pre-established questions; this process of question formation is ideal in qualitative inquiry. During the course of the interviews, the researcher asked questions to gain more insight into the participants’ views and experiences based on the flow and direction of the interview conversation.
As an additional form of data, I conducted classroom observations. Observations lead researchers toward greater understanding of the case (Stake, 1995). Yin (2012) described the opportunity to make such observations as “one of the most distinctive features in doing case studies” (p. 11). Observations were conducted in each of the participants’ classrooms during reading intervention instruction with the focus children. The observations ranged in length from 20 to 30 minutes. Merriam (1998) provided a list of things to look for to help focus the observation, of these I observed the physical setting; the participants; the activities and interactions during the intervention lesson; and the conversations and subtle factors; such as nonverbal communication, which occurred during the intervention lesson. I created an observation protocol (see Appendix H) and included a place for descriptive notes as well as reflexive notes (Creswell, 2007). I recorded data during the observation on the observation protocol, and also recorded observations and additional reflexive notes immediately after each observation (Stake, 1995).

Archival records and document reviews were the final forms of data collection. Archival records included student records (Yin, 2012). I collected student assessments on the 12 focus students from existing assessments given by the students’ teachers. These assessments were from multiple points spanning the entire school year and included: DIBELS results, concepts about print, alphabet assessments, running records, phonological/phonemic awareness inventories, ACCESS for ELLs, writing samples, as well as other classroom assessments. These assessments aided in understanding the students’ responses to the reading interventions provided.
I also reviewed lesson plan documents from the teachers. Stake (1995) observed “Documents serve as substitutes for records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly” (p. 68). Because it was not feasible for me to observe every reading intervention lesson provided, document review proved to be very beneficial by allowing me to understand the case and how RTI Tier II intervention was implemented throughout the year with the focus students. Additionally, through document review I was able to glean information and details on the reading lessons delivered during Tier I and Tier II and see how they were connected.

Initial data collection began in the middle of March of 2013 with the initial kindergarten teacher survey. Data collection continued through May with teacher interviews and classroom observations. Document review (lesson plans) and archival records (student assessments) began in March and continued through the end of the school year. This timeline allowed for sufficient time to effectively collect all data needed for the study.

**Qualitative data analysis.** According to Merriam (1998), data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. I analyzed data while I was collecting each piece of evidence. Hatch (2002) stated, “Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning” (p. 148). According to Creswell (2007), there are three core elements of qualitative data analysis “preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion” (p. 148). First, the researcher prepared and analyzed the data, such as text data from transcripts. During the interviews, I took field
notes of my impressions, reactions, and tentative interpretations. According to Hatch (2002), these notes are forms of informal data analysis and are essential to the process of an emergent study design. After each interview, I transcribed the audio of the interview, reviewed the transcript, and re-read it multiple times to ensure a deeper understanding (see Appendix I). I also read over each of the classroom observation protocols and interpreted my observational and reflective notes. I also analyzed the lesson plan documents from each teacher and made notes in the margin of the lesson plans. I made connections between interviews, observations, and documents and developed a better understanding of the case.

I also created a data tables for each of the focus children. All assessments were included on the data table, which also aided in organization and retrieval. This data table helped me to see how students performed on multiple assessments throughout the year.

Next, the data were reduced to themes through data coding, ultimately arriving at a deeper understanding of the case study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) offered a slightly different perspective; the authors stated, “Data analysis is not a matter of data reduction, as frequently claimed, but of induction” (p. 333). This refers to emergent themes that the researcher identified from the analysis. Glesne (2006) explained:

Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with the data, you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories. To do so you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret the data you have collected. (p. 147)
I read the transcripts, observation data, and lesson plans and bracketed the words, phrases, and descriptions that commonly occurred. This analysis helped in establishing codes and themes. Stringer (2008) stated, “It is particularly important to use the terms and concepts from the participants’ own talk to label concepts and categories” (p. 99). During data analysis, I highlighted the participants’ words in the transcripts, observation notes, and lesson plans in an effort to identify themes from participants’ quotes. From these analyses, themes and sub-themes emerged. A data coding table was created for each of the teacher participants (see Appendix J). I looked for patterns across the aggregated data that could be considered as a general explanation of the reading interventions that took place, which was the case under investigation.

The last step involved data representation. Qualitative data are often represented in figures, data graphs, charts, tables, discussions, and narratives. After themes and sub-themes were identified, they were added to a data coding table for each participant, along with supporting quotes (Creswell 2007). This helped with organization and locating themes and common passages. The process of hand-coding guided my data representation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) advised that naturalistic analysts be conversant in their approach to data representation.

Because this was a multiple case study, I used cross-case analysis of the data collected in the study. Cross-case analysis allowed for each individual case to be treated as a separate study, and findings accumulated across the other cases in the study (Yin, 2009). Although each case was analyzed separately to identify unique characteristics, cross-case analysis helped me determine commonalities across cases. According to Creswell (2007), analysis should begin with detailed descriptions of the individual cases
and their settings. Because this case study involved separate cases of reading intervention, I analyzed the multiple sources of data from each individual teacher and his/her focus students first. I created tables and graphs that displayed data collected from individual cases in a similar framework (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Analysis of the entire collection of word tables allowed me to draw cross-case conclusions about RTI reading intervention for Hispanic kindergarten EL students.

*Legitimation*

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) defined validity in mixed methods research as “employing strategies that address potential issues in data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations that might compromise the merging or connecting of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusions drawn from the combination” (p. 239). Therefore, establishing validity was of upmost importance in the study.

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) outlined nine typologies of legitimation types to employ in order to overcome threats to validity. Legitimation refers to problems in “obtaining findings and/or making inferences that are credible, trustworthy, dependable, transferable, and/or confirmable” (p. 52). The first type of legitimation is sample integration. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) suggested using the same sample for sequential explanatory mixed methods, the design that was implemented for this study. The next type of legitimation is inside-outside legitimation, which involves using both insider and outsider views. In mixed methods, the research should fully balance the two views (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). For this study, I used insider views by including exact words of the participants from the qualitative sample as well as conducting member checks. For the outsider point of view, my inferences were included and I used external
audits to further provide *etic* viewpoints. The weakness minimization legitimization was addressed in the mixed design of this study since it employed the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative strands in the study design. Additionally, the study was sequential in design, which addressed the sequential legitimization by using an iterative approach to data analysis. To address conversion legitimization, I did not quantify the qualitative data nor over-generalize the quantitative data in the narrative by “qualitizing” it, which would affect the meta-inference quality. For paradigmatic mixing legitimization, both qualitative and quantitative viewpoints were used and each paradigm was viewed as a continuum rather than competing dualism (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). I included both qualitative and quantitative lenses to attend to commensurability legitimization. Legitimation issues for mixing of methods were addressed, and multiple validities were used including both quantitative reliability and validity measures and qualitative measures to establish credibility and trustworthiness. Finally, to speak to political legitimization, the advice of Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) to strive to generate “results [which] answer important questions and help provide workable solutions” (p. 60) was employed. For this study, I specifically provided answers to how RTI Tier II reading interventions were planned and implemented with Hispanic kindergarten students who were learning English.

*Quantitative validity.* In order to establish reliability and validity of the quantitative data, several measures were taken. I used a sample size of more than 50 participants in order to perform accurate statistical analysis and to draw reliable inferences (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Internal validity was addressed as I field tested
the data collection instrument prior to implementing the study to ensure validity. External validity was addressed through the sequential design.

The quantitative survey used in this research was developed by the researcher. The creation of this quantitative tool was thoughtful and purposeful. The researcher used ethnographic knowledge of the research phenomenon based on firsthand experiences of being a kindergarten teacher who provided RTI Tier II reading intervention to Hispanic children learning English. In addition, experts in the research field guided the creation of the survey. Dillman et al. (2009) recommended that survey questions be organized much like a conversation. The survey was developed by organizing the questions in a logical manner which would follow a conversational pattern. In addition, a pilot-study with a small subsample was conducted in order to evaluate the survey and establish content validity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). As stated by Dillman et al. (2009), “Pilot studies give a good sense of how the study procedures will work in practice” (p. 228). The survey was pilot tested with eight kindergarten teachers. Following the survey completion, the researcher conducted a group interview to obtain critical feedback on the clarity and effectiveness of the survey. Through this pilot test, it was determined that the survey was effective, clear, and could be used with a larger sample population to collect quantitative survey data.

Groves (1989) articulated that in order to gain accurate information from surveys, careful consideration to reduce survey errors should be taken with regards to coverage, sampling, nonresponse, and measurement. Coverage error occurs when all members of the population do not have an equal chance of being included. In order to minimize this error, all 109 kindergarten teachers were included in the sample and given the survey.
Sampling error was addressed through this same procedure. Nonresponse error occurs when individuals who do respond are considerably different from those who do not respond. Dillman et al. (2009) suggested a minimizing strategy of motivating all to respond.

In order to motivate teachers to respond, I provided a cover letter explaining exactly what the survey data would provide for the researcher and the field of education, as well as an estimate of how long it would take for them to complete it (see Appendix B). Additionally, I used closed-end questions that would allow for easy completion. An open-ended response about the research phenomenon was optional at the end of the survey. Measurement error occurs when participants respond inaccurately or imprecisely. This is most often due to poor question wording or design (Dillman et al., 2009). I addressed this possible error through the implementation of the pilot study.

**Qualitative credibility.** In qualitative inquiry, validity is defined as “the degree to which the account is representative of the participants’ reality” (Schwandt, 1997). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended the term credibility be used instead of validity to capture the idea of representing the participant’s individual reality or truth space. My goal was to credibly represent the reality of early childhood general education teachers’ experiences in planning and implementing RTI reading intervention to kindergarten Hispanic children learning English. I employed a number of strategies to establish the credibility of the data. Creswell (2009) recommended using at least three credibility strategies to determine the trustworthiness of findings. For this study, five of strategies
were employed: clarification of bias, triangulation, member checking, external audits, and thick, rich descriptions.

Clarification of bias was the first strategy that was employed for this study. Creswell and Miller (2000) referred to this process as researcher reflexivity and defined it as the “process whereby researchers report on personal beliefs, values and biases that may shape their inquiry” (p. 4). Prior to data collection, the researcher identified her experiences with the phenomena of interest and the individual biases she held related to that phenomenon. Through this bracketing exercise, the researcher was able to identify her own biases and put them aside in order to focus on the experiences of the participants.

Creswell and Miller (2000) defined triangulation as “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories” (p. 3). Yin (2009) stated, “A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (p. 115). Stringer (2008) explained that triangulation includes all sources of data including the setting and the stakeholders interviewed. The researcher used triangulation of participants, including multiple participants of both teachers and students; of setting, including three different schools; as well as of data sources including interviews, observations, lesson plan documents, and reflexive field notes.

Following data collection and transcription, the researcher conducted member checks. Glesne (2006) defined member checking as “Sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and or drafts of the final report with research participants to make sure you are representing them and their ideas accurately” (p. 38). The researcher sent each of the interviewees a transcript of his or her interview via email. Participants were
asked to check for accuracy and were given the opportunity to expand on or clarify their responses. This verification procedure allowed the researcher to determine the extent to which impressions of the interviews were consistent with the actual experiences of the participants.

Throughout the process of planning and executing this research study, I received external audits. An external auditor is “an outside person [who] examines the research process and product through ‘auditing’ your field notes, research journal, analytic coding scheme, etc.” (Glesne, 2006, p. 38). My doctoral committee provided external audits throughout the process. This ongoing review allowed me to clarify the research purpose and goals and develop the appropriate study strategies and protocols. Throughout the process of planning and executing this research project, I received guidance and critique.

Thick, rich descriptions were used in the study. Glesne (2006) explained that thick, rich descriptions allow the reader to “enter the research content” (p. 38). The researcher used the text from the interview transcriptions as the data. Specific quotes from the participants’ own words were used in the data analysis, identification of themes and sub-themes, and reporting the study findings.

Ethical Considerations

Stringer (2008) suggested that ethical considerations are made to “ensure that no harm is done to people through their inclusion in the research” (p. 36). Creswell (2007) regarded ethical considerations as “especially important as we negotiate entry to the field site of the research; involve participants in our study; gather personal, emotional data that reveal the details of life” (p. 44). The researcher took multiple steps to ensure ethical
considerations were made. Stake (2010) emphasized that participants of research studies are not completely able to protect themselves, and that research review boards, when involved, are too far removed from the research to protect them as well. Therefore, it was my responsibility to ensure the ethical considerations of the study.

This research study underwent a review from IRB. I completed the application in its entirety and provided it to IRB along with the recruitment letter, interview protocol, observation protocol, and informed consent document. Revisions to these documents were made based on suggestions from the IRB. IRB approval for this research was obtained prior to any contact with participants or implementation of data collection strategies (see Appendix A).

APA ethical standards for research were carefully considered throughout the process of the study with regards to deception in research, informed consent, and participant protections (APA, 2010). According to the sixth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010), authors are expected to give credit to others for their work, ideas and contributions to the current study. The Publication Manual (2010) states, “The ethical principles of scientific publication are designed to ensure the integrity of scientific knowledge and to protect the intellectual property rights of others” (p. 15). Every effort was made in this study to attribute all contributions made by others whether quoted or paraphrased.

Similarly, since the research was conducted at school sites and the participants were teachers and students, special ethical considerations were made. Hatch (2002) stated, “Qualitative researchers doing research in education contexts have special ethical responsibilities when the participants in their studies are students and teachers” (pp.66-
It was important to ensure that participants did not perceive themselves in any way as subordinate to me or coerced into participation in the study (Hatch, 2002). Through conversations with participants and through careful wording of the recruitment letter, I conveyed the value of their voice and the importance of understanding their views and experiences in order to address the issue of teaching reading intervention to EL students.

Another ethical consideration was the issue of reciprocity. According to Hatch (2002), “Reciprocity is an ethical issue in any research effort” (p. 66). I informed participants that their interview responses and observations of their intervention lessons would be of great value to the study. However, I stressed that they would not be monetarily or otherwise compensated. The letter also explained that participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time. All participants entered into the study on a completely voluntary basis.

Finally, the ethical consideration of confidentiality was addressed. Through the recruitment letter and conversations, participants were assured the anonymity of their identities and the confidentiality of their contributions to the study. Each participant selected a pseudonym for the study. The names of the school sites were also changed to provide another layer of anonymity. All data collected were stored on a password-protected computer or locked file cabinet.

**Role of the Researcher**

Before the research study began, I took time for introspection of my personal biases concerning the phenomenon. It was important to keep these personal feelings from interfering with interpretations of participants’ views (Hatch, 2002). Yin (2009) stated,
“Case study investigators are especially prone to this problem because they must understand the issues beforehand” (p. 72). Researchers must also make apparent their own experiences with the phenomenon of interest. By identifying and bracketing my biases, I attempted to avoid examining what I thought I would learn and instead, simply learned from the participants.

At the time of this study, I was a graduate student pursuing a Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education. I was a reading coach; two of the case study participants were teachers with whom I worked in a coaching relationship within our school. I had been a general education classroom teacher for 11 years, eight of which were in kindergarten. I had children learning English (ELs) in my classroom each year. After three years in the classroom, I came to the realization that I did not have the professional knowledge needed to meet the EL students’ linguistic, academic, and cultural needs. Upon this realization, I pursued a Master’s Degree in Teaching English as a Second or Other Language. After receiving my degree, I decided to stay in the general education classroom, believing that because ELs spend a majority of their day in the general education classroom, I could make the most difference in that setting. I became an advocate for ELs and their families. I presented effective teaching strategies for ELs at professional teaching conferences for both ESL teachers and general education teachers. I held the belief that children learning English have specific language and literacy needs that are not always being addressed in the general education classroom. Prior to my course work in ESL, I felt frustrated, incompetent, and unprepared to teach children learning English. As the reading coach, I often worked with teachers who did not know how to effectively teach reading to their children who were learning English. This was
the primary bias I had to bracket during the research. My passion for teaching reading and working with children learning English influenced my decision to pursue this research topic.

As the researcher, I was the primary source for all data collection. I conducted the interviews and observations and transcribed them. I also analyzed the lesson plan documents and transcriptions during the data analysis phase. After analyzing the data and identifying themes and sub-themes, I reported the research findings. These roles are consistent with the qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2007).

**Feasibility of the Study**

This study was feasible since I had access to the resources needed to conduct the study. Using Mervyn Sterne Library, I could locate peer-reviewed articles and prior research on the topic as well as qualitative research texts. I collaborated with a fellow doctoral student as well as my doctoral committee to develop my research topic; however, I was the primary researcher. I needed to gain access to the school district I planned to engage for the study. I was employed by and had access to the district. Participants were limited to schools and teachers within the district who were willing to participate in the study. The study took one year to complete. I first had to go through the IRB approval process and then gain access to participants through a gatekeeper. The gatekeeper was the superintendent of the school district. The principals of each school were also notified. Teachers were invited to participate and willingly volunteered.

There were several advantages and disadvantages to this specific research. As the primary researcher, I had experience in teaching reading to children learning English; this
made the teachers’ and students’ experiences with reading intervention more understandable to me.

Reporting the Study

There is no standard format for reporting mixed methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The quantitative data were reported in both tables and figures as well as accompanying narratives. However, the qualitative data received the most weight. Case study reports were written with rich descriptions in order for the reader to feel that they vicariously experienced the case situation (Merriam, 1998). Yin (2012) further explained, “You need to present the evidence in your case study with sufficient clarity to allow the readers to judge independently your later interpretations of the data” (pp. 14-15). I described each individual case in-depth, with sufficient detail and included narrative quotes from participants as well as data from documents. The study report was descriptive and carefully depicted several major components of each of the multiple cases (Stake, 1995). Yin (2009) stated that the, “multiple-case report will contain multiple narratives, covering each of the cases singularly, usually presented as separate chapters of sections” (p. 170). In the report, I also included a section devoted to describing the cross-case analysis and results. Stake (1995) noted, “The actual writing of the report will be a combination of the researchers’ intuition and the evidence from the cross-case analysis” (p. 79). Finally, in writing the report, I kept the potential audiences and research focus in mind (Merriam, 1998).
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Quantitative Findings

Research Questions

The quantitative questions guided the first phase of this research. The data collection and analysis processes of the first phase of the study sought to provide answers to the following quantitative research questions:

- What is the frequency of RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic kindergarten English learners?
- What indicators do teachers use to determine if a student needs RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- What are the factors in planning and delivering RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- What indicators are used to determine progress made by a student receiving the RTI Tier II reading interventions?

Setting

The setting for this research was a county district in central Alabama. The total county population is just under 200,000. The county has both rural and suburban communities and is the fastest growing county in the state, with a 38% increase in population since 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In 2011, 6% of the total population was Hispanic.

Shelter County (pseudonym) school district has a total of 35 schools, 14 of which are elementary schools. In the 2012-2013 school year, the district served 28,642 students.
Of this total enrollment, 2,247 students were in kindergarten. At the time of this study, Shelter County had the highest population of students learning English in the state of Alabama; 9.75% of the total student population was comprised of students who were learning English. There were 48 different languages and 66 countries represented in the student population. In Shelter County, 3,265 students spoke a language other than English in the home. There were 1,367 students who received English as a Second Language (ESL) services. There were 298 kindergarteners in the district who received ESL services. Of this total, 264 kindergartners were of Hispanic descent.

During the 2012-2013 school year, Shelter County had almost 9,400 students who received free and/or reduced lunch. The district total for free and reduced lunch was 32.84%. These figures provided a glimpse into the socio-economic lives of the K-12 students in the district. There were 2,190 ELL students who received free and reduced lunch. Of the total amount of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch, 23.3% were ELL students.

**Participants**

There were 109 possible teacher participants for the quantitative phase of the study, and all of them were given the survey. There were 14 elementary schools in the district. Teachers from 13 of the 14 schools participated in the study. A total of 70 teachers completed and returned the survey for a response rate of 64%.

Descriptive data for the total sample were collected for the following characteristics: level of education, area of teaching degree, years of experience, years of experience teaching kindergarten, grades taught outside of kindergarten, and number of
Hispanic students in their classroom. These descriptive data were needed to develop an overall picture of the teachers’ education and experience in the district.

**Level of education.** There was variety in the level of education among the teachers in the sample (Figure 4.1). The majority, 59% (n=31), held a master’s degree in education. There were 36% (n=25) of the sample who held a bachelor’s degree in education. Far fewer teachers held an educational degree above a master’s. Only 4% (n=3) held an educational specialist or AA degree. One teacher did not provide this information. Overall, 95% of the teachers held a bachelor’s or master’s degree.

![Figure 4.1. Participants’ level of education.](image)

**Area of degree.** In addition to the level of education, it was also important to see the area(s) of the degree(s) held by the teachers in the sample (Figure 4.2). Of the sample population, 85% (n=60) of teachers’ degree(s) were in early childhood (EC) or
elementary education (EE), or a combination of both. Only 3% (n=2) of teachers held a degree in teaching English as a second or other language (ESOL). These two teachers held the ESOL degree in addition to the EC/EE degree. There were 11% (n=8) of the teachers in the sample who held an EC/EE and a degree in another area (special education, psychology, human development, counseling, or administration). One participant did not provide this information. These data indicated a very low percentage of classroom teachers who held a degree specializing in teaching children who are learning English.

Figure 4.2. Participants’ area of degree.

Years of experience. For the total years of teaching experience of the sample there was a downward trend, which was expected (Figure 4.3). Of the sample, 33% (n=23) of teachers had 0-5 years of experience, 27% (n=19) of teachers had 6-10 years teaching experience, 23% (n=16) of teachers had 11-19 years of experience, and 16% (n=11) had
20 or more years of teaching experience. One participant did not provide this information. These data showed a variety of teaching experience among the sample.

![Bar chart showing years of teaching experience](image)

*Figure 4.3.* Participants’ years of teaching experience.

*Years of experience teaching kindergarten.* In addition to identifying the total years of teaching experience in the sample, it was also informative to know their years of experience with teaching kindergarten (Figure 4.4). Similarly, there was a downward trend in years of experience in teaching kindergarten. Of the sample, 43% (n=30) of teachers had 0-5 years of experience in kindergarten, 27% (n=19) of teachers had 6-10 years of kindergarten experience, 16% (n=11) of teachers had 11-19 years of kindergarten experience, and 13% (n=9) of the teachers had 20 or more years of teaching experience in kindergarten. One participant did not provide the years of experience in kindergarten.
These data showed a variety of years of teaching experience in kindergarten. Of the sample, 56% had six or more years of experience in teaching kindergarten. This indicated that a large percentage of the sample was experienced in teaching children in kindergarten and familiar with kindergarten curriculum and instruction.

Of the total sample, 50% (n=35) had taught only kindergarten in their teaching career and 49% (n=34) had taught grades above kindergarten. One participant did not provide this information. These data indicated that half of the sample population was familiar with the curriculum and instruction that occurs beyond the kindergarten years.

![Bar chart showing years of experience in kindergarten](image)

**Figure 4.4.** Participants’ years of kindergarten teaching experience.
**Students in Tier II**

*Number of Hispanic students in class.* In order to understand prevalence of Hispanic ELLs, teacher participants provided the total number of Hispanic ELLs in kindergarten (Figure 4.5). The majority of teachers, 59% (n=41), did not have Hispanic ELLs in their kindergarten classrooms. The remaining 41% (n=29) reported having between one and 10 Hispanic children learning English in their classrooms. There were 14 teachers who had one to three Hispanic ELLs, 11 teachers who had four to seven Hispanic ELLs, and four teachers who had eight to 10 Hispanic ELLs in their classrooms. These data from the sample population indicated that in this district less than half of the kindergarten teachers had Hispanic ELLs in their classrooms. Additionally, there was great variability in the number of Hispanic students who were learning English in each classroom.

![Figure 4.5](image)

*Figure 4.5.* Number of Hispanic ELL students in each classroom.
*Hispanic ELLs in Tier II.* The 29 teachers who had Hispanic students learning English in their classrooms reported a total of 129 Hispanic ELLs in kindergarten. Of these 29 teachers, 90% (n=24) had Hispanic ELLs who placed in RTI Tier II reading intervention groups. It was important to determine the frequency for placement of Hispanic ELL students in RTI Tier II. There were only 33% (n=43) of the sample Hispanic ELL students who had not placed in RTI Tier II reading intervention groups. The remaining 67% (n=80) of Hispanic ELLs were placed in RTI Tier II reading intervention groups because they had been identified as at-risk for difficulties in learning to read. Of this total, 5% (n=6) of ELLs were moved out of RTI Tier II during the year because they had progressed in reading and no longer needed intervention. There were 62% of Hispanic ELLs who were placed in RTI Tier II reading intervention groups at the beginning of the school year and continued in these groups until the end of the school year (with the exception of two students who transferred later during the school year and were immediately placed in Tier II). These data indicated an overrepresentation of kindergarten Hispanic ELL students in RTI Tier II reading intervention. In addition, the data indicated that the vast majority (93%) of Hispanic ELLs in kindergarten did not move out of RTI Tier II reading intervention groups once they had been placed in them.
Figure 4.6. Frequency of placement of Hispanic ELLs in RTI Tier II.

**Trends in RTI Tier II.** The quantitative data presented from this point forward is from the 24 teachers who indicated that they provided RTI Tier II reading intervention to Hispanic ELLs. These data provided more information on how students were placed in RTI Tier II as well as how their progress was determined. Additionally, these data provided a better understanding of how teachers planned and implemented RTI Tier II reading intervention with kindergarten Hispanic ELLs.

**Identifying students.** Of the 24 teachers, 23 indicated that they used a variety of assessments to determine if their Hispanic ELL students needed RTI Tier II. One teacher only used the school Problem Solving Team (PST) plan for placement in RTI Tier II reading intervention. The most common forms of assessments were the DIBELS and classroom assessments (phonics inventories, running records, and concepts about print). Teachers also identified the use of observations and anecdotal notes to determine Tier II
placement. Only 38% (n=9) of teachers indicated using students’ report cards for Tier II placement, and only one teacher noted using students’ Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plans. None of the teachers in the sample indicated the use of the WIDA-MODEL for ELLs as a factor for determining placement in RTI Tier II reading interventions.

Planning Process

Teachers reported a variety of planning methods for RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic ELLs. There was variability in materials used for instruction, collaboration in planning, and instructional delivery methods.

Materials. Teachers listed a variety of materials used for RTI Tier II reading interventions for kindergarten Hispanic ELLs (Figure 4.7). Teachers indicated using the Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons, self-created lesson plans, a mixture of Harcourt and teacher created plans, as well as additional resources. Not all of the teachers specified what additional resources were used; those who did described them as skill-based, reading foundation games found from online teaching websites. The majority, 54% (n=13), of teachers used a combination of the Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons and teacher created lessons. There were 8% (n=2) of teachers who used only the Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons for RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons. The remaining teachers used additional resources in combination with teacher created lessons and/or Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons. Only three teachers did not use the Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons with their Hispanic ELL students during RTI Tier II reading intervention.
Collaboration. There was great variability in the collaborative planning process for RTI Tier II reading intervention (Figure 4.8). Of the 24 teachers, 29% (n=7) planned independently for Tier II, 33% (n=8) planned with other kindergarten teachers, and 21% (n=5) planned collaboratively with other kindergarten teachers and the ESL teacher. One teacher planned with just the ESL teacher, and one teacher indicated collaborative planning with the reading coach. Only 25% (n=6) of kindergarten teachers providing RTI Tier II to Hispanic ELLs planned collaboratively with the ESL teacher. These data indicated that a majority of the teachers, 71% (n=18), planned collaboratively with others; however, a very low percentage of classroom teachers, 25%, utilized the ESL teacher for planning interventions for Hispanic ELL students.
Instructional Delivery

These data indicated that there was variability in the instructional delivery methods used for RTI Tier II. There was variability in the person delivering the RTI Tier II intervention lesson as well as the size of the group for intervention lessons.

Person delivering Tier II. There was variability in the person delivering RTI Tier II reading intervention (Figure 4.9). Of the 24 teachers, 46% (n=11) reported that the RTI Tier II lessons were delivered by the classroom teacher. One teacher indicated that the ESL teacher delivered all RTI Tier II lessons for the Hispanic ELL students in the classroom. However, 42% (n=10) of the classroom teachers reported a shared responsibility with the ESL teacher for RTI Tier II. Therefore, in 46% of the classrooms,
the ESL teacher was involved in the delivery of RTI Tier II. One teacher indicated that both she and the instructional aide shared the responsibility for delivering Tier II RTI intervention lessons. In this specific case, one of the students in this classroom received special education services and had both an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and an LEP. Finally, one teacher shared the responsibility of RTI Tier II delivery with the Reading Coach who provided instruction for struggling readers periodically. These data indicated that approximately half of the teachers delivered the RTI Tier II reading intervention alone. Further, the ESL teacher was involved in the delivery of RTI Tier II in only half of the classrooms.

![Figure 4.9](image)

*Figure 4.9.* Person responsible for delivering RTI Tier II.

**Grouping.** There was great variability in the reported grouping strategies for RTI Tier II reading intervention (Figure 4.10). Most of the Hispanic ELL students met with the teacher in a small group setting for RTI Tier II. One teacher reported only meeting
with Hispanic ELLs one-on-one for RTI Tier II reading intervention. 17% (n=4) reported using both one-on-one and small groups for implementing RTI Tier II intervention. There were 19 teachers (79%) who reported using only small groups for RTI Tier II. Teachers reported the sizes of small groups as 3-6 students. It was important to determine if students met in small groups comprised of only ELLs or in groups with both ELLs and native English speakers (NES). Four teachers (17%) indicated that they only implemented RTI Tier II for Hispanic ELLs in small groups comprised of ELL students only, while 54% (n=13) of teachers indicated that they implemented RTI Tier II reading lessons with small groups containing both ELLs and NES. These data indicate a large variability in the grouping strategies used by teachers for RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons. It is important to note that 25% (n=6) reported grouping strategies that would not expose Hispanic ELLs to NES during RTI Tier II reading intervention.

![Figure 4.10](image.png)

*Figure 4.10.* Grouping for RTI Tier II.
Student Progress

Teachers indicated variety in the way that student progress was determined (Figure 4.11). While assessments were used by all teachers, there was no consistency among them. All of the teachers indicated the use of classroom assessments for determining student progress. Additionally, 92% (n=22) used anecdotal notes when determining progress of students receiving RTI Tier II. The DIBELS assessment was used as an indicator of progress by 75% of teachers (n=18). Teachers reported using a combination of many of these assessments to determine student progress. Only two teachers reported using their observations of Hispanic ELL students in reading to determine progress. These data indicated a lack of consistency with measure for determining progress of Hispanic ELLs receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention.

Figure 4.11. Assessments for determining progress.
Teachers used the above assessments to determine student progress. The teachers in this study reported progress for the 80 Hispanic ELL students who still received RTI Tier II at the end of the school year (Figure 4.12). All 80 of these children had been in the intervention group since the beginning of the school year, with the exception of two students who entered later in the school year, but were immediately placed into the RTI Tier II reading intervention group. One child was reported to have made no progress from the RTI Tier II reading intervention. Of the 80 students, 23% (n=18) had made minimal progress, 51% (n=41) had made adequate progress, and the remaining 25% (n=20) had made exceptional progress. These data indicated that 76% of the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading interventions had made adequate to exceptional progress; however, they still remained in the intervention groups for the entire school year.

Figure 4.12. Progress reported for Hispanic ELLs in RTI Tier II.
Social-Emotional Well-Being

In addition to frequency data, text data from the open-ended response question were also compiled. Although only six teachers responded to the open-ended question, a definite theme of social-emotional well-being for Hispanic ELL students emerged. Teachers reported that the small group instruction for Hispanic ELLs allowed children to be more comfortable and grow in confidence. One teacher commented:

I have found that having my Hispanic ELL students in a small group of 3-4 for RTI Tier II reading instruction provides a very comfortable opportunity for my students to talk, share, and ask questions without the reservations that they sometimes have during our whole group lessons.

Teachers reported that students’ confidence levels changed during the school year. One teacher explained, “The first half of the year is difficult because there is a language barrier and the students typically have low self-confidence.” Another teacher noted that students were much more confident by the end of the year. She stated, “They have built friendships and developed confidence which is a huge part of the learning process.”

Making students feel comfortable in school was important to participants. One participant indicated that she felt responsibility for “lowering a student’s affective filter – making them feel more ‘at-home’ with the English language and culture.” The overall social-emotional development and well-being of Hispanic ELL students was important to participants.
Summary

The quantitative survey provided data on the planning and implementation of RTI Tier II with kindergarten Hispanic ELLs. Important information about the frequency of and process for placement in RTI Tier II was revealed. In addition, factors for planning and delivery methods for RTI Tier II were determined. Finally, the rate of progress for students who received RTI Tier II was identified.

Teachers reported that a large percentage of Hispanic ELL students were at-risk for reading difficulty. This sentiment was consistent with the findings by Allington and Cunningham (2003) that children learning English are often struggling readers. A total of 67% (n=86) of kindergarten Hispanic ELLs were placed in RTI Tier II reading interventions. This high number of Hispanic ELLs in Tier II further demonstrates the achievement gap reported for children who enter school with a native language other than English (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). Of the 129 students identified as Hispanic ELLs, 86 were placed in RTI Tier II reading intervention groups. This high number demonstrated that this subgroup of the student population was over-represented in RTI Tier II reading groups, which could be due to the lack of understanding between language difference and learning difficulty, as described by Klingner et al. (2006). This discrepancy was further explored in the second phase of the study with the case study participants.

Teachers identified varying processes for determining the need for RTI Tier II intervention. Teachers used the DIBELS assessment as well as classroom assessments; however, there were inconsistencies related to the assessments used to place children in RTI Tier II and the assessments used to determine student progress in RTI Tier II. These
irregularities may have resulted in students staying in RTI Tier II longer than necessary because there were no established methods for accurately and consistently measuring student progress.

In addition, most of the reading assessments used assessed isolated reading and pre-reading skills, such as phonics and phonemic awareness. It has already been determined that Spanish speaking ELL students often have more success with phonics and phonemic awareness due to the sound-symbol system that is very similar to English (Antunez, 2002; Kauffman, 2007). However, assessments lacked a focus on vocabulary and comprehension. Running records were the only assessment used that included a comprehension piece. The lack of vocabulary and comprehension assessment was problematic because these areas are often the most difficult for children learning English (Antunez, 2002; Kauffman, 2007; Robertson, 2009). The survey also revealed that teachers did not use the WIDA-MODEL assessment in determining placement in RTI Tier II, and only one teacher reported using the student’s LEP plan. These data indicated that very little attention had been given to the Hispanic ELL students’ level of English language proficiency when placement in RTI Tier II was determined.

There was a great deal of variation among participants’ reported planning processes. A vast majority (71%) planned collaboratively with others; however, only 25% indicated planning RTI Tier II intervention lessons with the ESL teacher. This again was problematic, as only two of the classroom teachers had specialized training in teaching ELLs. As previously noted (Klingner et al., 2006), many teachers do not have the ability to separate the process of second language acquisition from a true difficulty with learning to read. Survey results revealed that 42% of teachers reported sharing responsibility for
delivering RTI Tier II reading interventions with the ESL teacher. There was a mismatch between the total who planned together (25%) and those who shared responsibility for delivering RTI Tier II intervention lessons (42%).

The materials used by teacher participants also varied. Teachers used a combination of Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons and teacher created lessons. Further research into how these materials were combined was a focus of the qualitative research phase of this study. Only three teachers (12%) did not use the Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons; all of the other teachers used it in some way in their instruction. Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons were built around the five components of Reading First. As previously noted, the Reading First model was based on studies in which no ELL students participated (Antunez, 2002). Additionally, teachers indicated using resources such as skill based games in RTI Tier II. This further demonstrated that the focus of these lessons was on reading sub-skills and rarely focused on comprehension and vocabulary development. This was problematic since ELLs need more instruction for comprehension and vocabulary (Antunez, 2002; Kauffman, 2007; Robertson, 2009). The instructional materials mirrored the problems seen with the assessments used to determine placement and progress of Hispanic ELLs receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention.

The vast majority of teachers indicated the use of small group instruction for delivering RTI Tier II reading intervention. Teachers reported having 3-6 children in RTI Tier II intervention groups. This ratio is double the recommended group size of 1-3 students as suggested by Fuchs and Fuchs (2007). Additionally, 25% of teachers indicated grouping strategies that were comprised of only ELLs. As such, one-quarter of
the Hispanic ELL students in RTI Tier II did not have native English speakers as models while in reading intervention groups.

The progress of kindergarten Hispanic English learners receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention was reported to be mostly adequate and exceptional. There were 86 Hispanic ELL students who were identified as needing RTI Tier II. Only six students moved out of RTI Tier II reading groups during the school year. This indicated that 62% of the Hispanic ELLs stayed in RTI Tier II reading intervention groups for the entire school year. This is far longer than the suggested timeline of up to 10 weeks (Bender & Shores, 2007). Of the 80 students, 76% were reported as having adequate or exceptional progress. If students made an adequate to exceptional amount of progress, why did they remain in the intervention? This question was further explored in the qualitative phase of the study.
QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

The qualitative research questions guided the creation of the interview and observation protocols. These questions also guided the researcher in the data collection and analysis of the second phase of research. The central qualitative question was: “How is RTI Tier II reading intervention for Hispanic kindergarten English learners implemented in the classroom setting?” Sub-questions included:

- What role do teachers’ beliefs about the reading ability of Hispanic kindergarten English learners play in identifying students and delivering RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- What criteria are used to identify a student for RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- How do teachers plan and deliver RTI Tier II reading interventions in the classroom setting?
- What criteria are used to document and establish progress of a student receiving the RTI Tier II reading interventions?
- What is the scope of progress of students receiving RTI Tier II reading interventions?

SETTING

Teacher participants represented a total of three different school settings. Each school was from a different area of the school district, and there were children learning English at each of the three schools. The three schools represented a high, moderate, and
small population of ELL students. In addition, the socio-economic level of each school varied (as determined by the number of students receiving free and/or reduced lunch). Each school was unique and offered diversity in the setting of the research study (Table 5.1).

*Ivey Elementary.* Ivey Elementary (pseudonym) is located in the northernmost area of the district. Ivey Elementary serves children in kindergarten through 3rd grade. In the 2012-2013 school year, there were a total of 682 students. Of the total student population, 11.14% were ELL students. There were 170 students in kindergarten. Of that total, 22 kindergarten children received ESL services; 18 were of Hispanic descent. There were a total of eight kindergarten teachers, two of whom were qualitative case study participants in this research. Ivey Elementary school had two ESL teachers; one served ELL students in first and second grades and the other worked with ELL students in second and third grades.

At Ivey Elementary, 27.71% (n=189) of the students received free and/or reduced lunch. Of this total, 53 were ELL students. Of the total ELL population at this school, 70% received free and/or reduced lunch. These data provide insight regarding the socio-economic levels of children learning English at Ivey Elementary.

*Heights Elementary.* Heights Elementary (pseudonym) is located in the southwest area of the district. Heights Elementary serves children in kindergarten through 2nd grade. In the 2012-2013 school year, there were a total of 816 students. Of the total student population, 2.5% of the population was ELL students. There were 258 students in
kindergarten. There were a total of nine kindergarten children who received ESL services; all nine were of Hispanic descent. There were a total of 13 kindergarten teachers; one was a qualitative case study participant in this research. There was one ESL teacher who worked with all ELL students in the school.

At Heights Elementary, 19.25% (n=159) of the student population received free and/or reduced lunch. Of the total ELL population, 70% received free and/or reduced lunch. These data provide insight regarding the socio-economic levels of children learning English at Heights Elementary.

Mountain View Elementary. Mountain View Elementary (pseudonym) is located in the southwest area of the district. Mountain View Elementary serves children in kindergarten through 3rd grade. In the 2012-2013 school year, there were a total of 962 students. The ELL students comprised approximately 20% of the total student population. There were 212 students in kindergarten. There were a total of 51 kindergarten children who received ESL services; 48 were of Hispanic descent. There were a total of 13 kindergarten teachers; one was a qualitative case study participant in this research. There were a total of five ESL teachers at Mountain View Elementary. The ESL teachers were not grade level specific.

Mountain View Elementary was a Title I school. There was a total of 45.22% (n=430) of the students who received free and/or reduced lunch. Of the ELL student population, 93% received free and/or reduced lunch. These data provide insight regarding the socio-economic levels of children learning English at Mountain View Elementary.
Table 5.1

School Settings

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<th>Setting</th>
<th>Title I school Status</th>
<th># of Students</th>
<th># of ELL Students</th>
<th># of Kindergarten Students</th>
<th># of Kindergarten ELL Students</th>
<th># of Kindergarten Hispanic ELLs</th>
<th>% of ELLs Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
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<td>189</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>93%</td>
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</table>

Participants

The teacher participants selected for the qualitative case studies were unique and offered diversity to the group. The participants were from three different schools within the district and had from one year to 28 years of experience in teaching. Two of the teachers had taught grades other than kindergarten. The participants had between one and 22 years of experience in teaching kindergarten. Two had bachelor’s degrees (one was working toward a master’s) and two had a master’s degree. While they all had either an elementary or early childhood degree, there was variation in their area of degree. Two had elementary only, one had early childhood only, and one had a dual elementary/early childhood degree. All of the teacher participants had children learning English in their classrooms as well as in RTI Tier II reading intervention groups.
Table 5.2  
Case Study Participants

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<th>Teacher</th>
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<th>Area of Degree</th>
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<th>Hispanic ELs in Tier II</th>
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Qualitative Findings

There were four teachers involved in the case study research. Each teacher chose a pseudonym to protect confidentiality. I interviewed each teacher separately. In addition, I observed two to three RTI Tier II lessons in each of the teachers’ classrooms. Each teacher provided me with reading lesson plans for Tier I and Tier II. Assessment data and writing samples for each focus student in each classroom were also provided. These multiple forms of data served to provide an in-depth understanding of each case.

Case Study 1: Beatrice

Beatrice was a 27 year old female of Hispanic descent. She was a kindergarten teacher at Ivey Elementary school and had a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. This was her first year in education and her first year working with kindergarten children. All of Beatrice’s student teaching and field placements had been with older grades. In addition, this was her first experience working with children learning English. She indicated that she used her experience of being an English learner to better teach her
students. She had 22 kindergarten students in her classroom, and all seven of her children learning English were of Hispanic descent. Six of these students received RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons.

**Themes**

From the interviews, observations, and document reviews, six themes emerged. Parent engagement, social-emotional well-being of students, lesson planning, lesson delivery, second language acquisition, and assessments all emerged as themes from the case (Appendix J). Many of these themes had sub-themes as well.

**Parent Engagement**

Beatrice expressed that parent engagement was an important factor for her Hispanic ELL students receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention. Three sub-themes were identified within the theme of parent engagement: value of education, home support, and school readiness.

Beatrice said that she felt that the parents of her Hispanic ELLs did not value education. She stated, “They don't put a lot of, not all of them, but a majority of them, do not put a lot of emphasis on education.” She drew from her personal experiences of her own family not supporting her decision to pursue a college education. She explained that parents of other ELL students placed more value on education. She said, “I feel like, if you look at the families that are coming in: your Japanese, your Chinese, your Arabic, you have in their culture, much more of a focus on education.” Overall, Beatrice
suggested that the parents of her Hispanic ELL students did not value an education for their children.

Home support for learning was another area in which Beatrice said Hispanic parents failed their children. She stated, “The parents either don't speak English or don't have time. They don't even know how to put in the time or effort to help their kids.” Beatrice recognized that even if parents did want to help their children at home, they often did not know how or did not have the skills to do so. She explained, “I've even had some of them [parents] tell me ‘I don’t know how to help my kid with their homework; I don’t even have the English words. I don't even know if he or she is saying these words correctly.’” Beatrice saw this issue most often with incomplete homework. She witnessed a difference in parents’ abilities to help with homework based on their experience with American schools. Beatrice said:

I can’t even tell you how hard it is to get homework completed by my Hispanic English learners. I don’t get homework back from them that is completed, except for those families who have been in the United States for a while and have already have experienced it with other children. Those that are coming in with their very first young kids, I don’t think they know where to start, how to begin, or how to do it.

Overall, Beatrice indicated that the parents of her Hispanic ELL students did not support their child’s learning at home.

This lack of home support was also linked to school readiness, specifically reading readiness. Beatrice noted that her Hispanic ELLs were not as prepared for learning to read as the other students in her class. She stated emphatically, “They are not
prepared; they're not.” She suggested that this could be linked to the lack of background experiences for Hispanic ELLs. Beatrice said, “Our children of Mexican descent don't have a lot of background.” She also mentioned that students do not get to practice reading at home. Due to a lack of value for education, lack of home support, and limited background experiences, Beatrice said that her Hispanic ELL students were not as prepared for school as other children.

Social-Emotional Well-Being

Beatrice was concerned with her students’ social-emotional well-being. She shared that building self-confidence and avoiding frustration were important for her Hispanic ELL students. This was apparent in the classroom environment and as she interacted with students.

Beatrice’s classroom environment supported students’ social-emotional well-being. She used a workshop approach in both reading and writing. The classroom buzzed with student reading and conversations. During the RTI Tier II reading intervention lesson, students who did not receive RTI Tier II were all around the room and read both independently and with partners, listened to books, worked on the computer, and built words with letters and on whiteboards. This is what the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II experienced while other children worked in small groups with the teacher.

The classroom was filled with print. There were numerous children’s books on a variety of reading levels and topics. There were word walls of high frequency words, vocabulary words, and word family words. Children’s work filled the walls. Materials
were accessible to children, and it was evident that children had experience with this structure. The Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention were at the small group reading table with a self-selected collection of books they were reading while waiting for the lessons to begin.

Beatrice shared that she had worked to build her Hispanic ELL students’ self-confidence in reading. She explained, “That's been one of my struggles this year, trying to get my kids motivated and letting them know that they are a good reader and that they can do this!” Her work in this area was evident through her interactions with children. Beatrice was positive and encouraging in every RTI Tier II lesson observed. She smiled at her students, offered praise for their efforts, and gave high-fives when they finished reading. During one lesson, students worked to stretch and write simple words. The student who finished first announced, “Ha, ha! I’m done!” Beatrice kindly said there was not a winner but that everyone was taking their time to write the sounds they heard. This helped to lower students’ affective filter.

Beatrice provided enough support to help students grow as readers, but not so much that they became frustrated. She stated:

I don’t want to push them to the point that they are getting frustrated. That is what I see a lot with my kids, too. I can just tell it in their face if I am pushing them too much to the point they are getting frustrated.

This was evident in her responsiveness to children during RTI Tier II reading lessons. In one small group RTI Tier II lesson, a student could not recall a sight word she had just read on the previous page. The student was visibly frustrated and dropped her head into her hands with a loud sigh. Beatrice smiled and suggested she go back to the page where
she had read the word and see if she could remember. The student took her advice and was able to read the word and continue reading the book. In another lesson, a student was writing the word “cab.” The student had written the “a” and “b” backwards. Beatrice asked the student to look at the letter ‘b,’ the student quickly corrected the letter formation. After she corrected the ‘b,’ Beatrice asked if the word looked right. When the child responded that it did, the teacher smiled and said, “Good, it’s better then!” She did not push the student too hard or too far, rather she accepted the small success of the student on this task.

Lesson Planning

Beatrice discussed her lesson planning process, and I reviewed her reading lesson plans. Three sub-themes emerged: documented lesson plans, connection of Tier I and Tier II, and collaboration with other teachers. These sub-themes were all deemed important to Beatrice in her work with Hispanic ELLs who received RTI Tier II reading intervention.

Beatrice explained that she did not use the scripted RTI Tier II lesson plans provided by the school district. She stated that she used them as a guide to develop her own lesson plans. Beatrice explained, “I use it [scripted RTI Tier II plans] to help give me ideas and to guide me to what they need to be doing. I do not use it explicitly. I want my lessons to fit my kids.” However, as I reviewed the lesson plans she gave me, I realized that RTI Tier II lessons were most often not written. I reviewed a total of 20 small group lesson plans, and there were only five weeks’ worth of RTI Tier II plans completed. For the completed weeks, the lesson focus was different each day. Letter
naming, phonics, high frequency words, and one day of comprehension were included in completed plans. Reading sub-skills were the main focus of the lessons. Fridays were left open to re-teach and/or review RTI Tier II outcomes as needed. There were three weeks of plans that were partially completed and 12 weeks with no Tier II plan written. This indicated that RTI Tier II plans were most often not written by the teacher.

Beatrice said that she tried to connect Tier I and Tier II instruction. She explained:

I try to hit on everything that I am teaching. I look at the phonological, the phonemic, and the comprehension and I try to incorporate that into the RTI. And then I am looking at what I am doing in whole group and bringing it in and connecting everything back for them in RTI.

Beatrice said that she tried to use the same instructional language for Tier II that she used for Tier I. Beatrice stated, “I'm using more of the Tier I language with them, like I will still use the vocabulary and comprehension, such as inferring, or talking about the characters and setting, so we still use that vocabulary.” This was very apparent in the lessons observed.

In one observation lesson, the students were reading a decodable text. Beatrice asked the students many questions as they read to ensure they understood the text. The reading strategy introduced that week during Tier I was inferring. She asked the students in RTI Tier II many inferential questions such as: “Where do you think the mud came from?” “Why would he need a rag and a mat to take a bath?” “Who do you think told him to get a bath?” She asked children to not only answer but to explain their thinking. She asked follow-up questions such as: “What made you think that?” Even on weeks that
Beatrice did not write out lessons, she often listed the intentional outcome for each day which aligned with the Tier I instruction.

In addition, Beatrice indicated that she collaborated with the ESL teacher as she planned for RTI Tier II for her Hispanic ELL students. Beatrice said, “We get together once a week during a planning time. We will discuss things. If I ever have any questions, we will get together and discuss it. Now she pulls them too.” Beatrice and the ESL teacher both worked with the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II. Beatrice pulled them for small group instruction twice daily; one time for Tier I and again for Tier II. The ESL teacher pulled them daily for an additional small group reading lesson.

For lesson planning, Beatrice identified the district RTI Tier II scripted lessons as only as a guide. She worked closely with the ESL teacher to provide appropriate instruction for her Hispanic ELL students receiving RTI Tier II. She tried to connect Tier II instruction to the Tier I instructional focus; this link was apparent in lesson plans and observation lessons. The vast majority of RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons was not written out in her lesson plans. This may indicate that RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons were not pre-planned.

*Lesson Delivery*

Beatrice used a small group format for RTI Tier II reading intervention lesson delivery. Lesson plans and observations revealed the group size was typically from three to five students. At the beginning of the year, the RTI Tier II group consisted of both ELLs and native English speakers. However, toward the middle of the year, the native
English speakers moved out of the group, leaving only Hispanic ELLs in the RTI Tier II intervention group.

Materials used for RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons varied. Beatrice used books, picture cards, letter cards, magnetic letters, and dry erase boards. In each of the three lesson observations, decodable texts were used. Beatrice indicated using the Harcourt text. Two of the three lessons included the use of Harcourt decodable books. In the other lesson, a teacher-created word family book (-ug family) was used. Beatrice often had children read sight words or stretch and write simple words before reading the book. Beatrice always pointed out to students that the words they were reviewing would be in their book.

Children were engaged during RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons. Beatrice shared that often her Hispanic students receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention were not engaged during Tier I whole group lessons. She said, “I find that during whole group time, it is hard to keep their attention. It's hard to get them to want to come out and participate and be engaged in the lesson.” Beatrice expressed that students were much more engaged during small group lessons. She explained that she tried to make it fun for students so they did not view coming to her table a second time each day as a punishment. Children actively discussed their reading with one another and with Beatrice. Students read independently while Beatrice listened in on their reading as well as chorally together. Students wrote sight words and stretched and wrote simple three-letter words. Overall, the students were actively reading, writing, listening, and talking during RTI Tier II reading lessons.
It was evident that Beatrice worked diligently to provide comprehensible input during each lesson. She documented in her lesson plans that she would use pictures to support ELL students’ comprehension during reading lessons. She shared that she used repetition as well. Beatrice stated, “I repeat myself three or four times with my kids. It helps them because they are hearing it over and over and over again and they are getting that experience over and over and over again.” She suggested that hearing stories, explanations, and examples repeatedly helped her Hispanic ELL students. More evident in her lesson delivery was the use of reframing. Beatrice would often repeat questions or explanations in a different way when students did not understand something. Additionally, Beatrice modified her speech when she worked with Hispanic ELL students. She revealed, “I find myself talking slower to them. I try to slow it down for them to make sure that they understand. I find myself articulating everything more when I am around them to make sure they hear it.” Beatrice’s speech patterns were not observed to be overly slow or loud, but rather she made sure she used a rate of speech appropriate for her ELLs developing listening needs. Beatrice used picture support, repeating or reframing, and modified speech. This indicated that she tried to provide comprehensible input to her Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading interventions.

Beatrice said that she wanted her lessons to focus on meaning making during reading. She explained, “I wanted to know that the whole story made sense.” She asked many questions as children were reading and ensured they understood the story. Beatrice said that she knew the difference between reading the words and actually understanding the text. She noted, “I wanted to make sure that they better understood the story, not just
reading the words, but to actually know what was going on.” This was evident in her questioning strategies as well as her focus on vocabulary. During the observed lessons, Beatrice would often stop and ask children what a word meant. For example, after one student sounded out the word ‘cub’ she asked him what that meant. When he said he was not sure, she asked if the picture could help him. Although the child could not explain what a cub was, he pointed to it in the picture. She supported him further and said, “A cub is a baby bear.” Beatrice expressed a desire for her Hispanic ELL students receiving RTI Tier II reading interventions to read for meaning. This was evident in her instructional practice.

Second Language Acquisition

Beatrice recognized that Hispanic students learning English were not only learning to read, but were also acquiring English as a second language. She explained:

There are so many steps they have to go through. It is not even just knowing two different sounds for each letter, but they know the English sound and the Spanish sound for them it is figuring out which sound they're going to give me the English one or the Spanish. And then they are translating in their head and trying to make sense of it. A word could mean one thing in Spanish and something else totally different in English, with the vocabulary even how you say things.

She noted that native English speakers did not have this added complexity when they learn to read. Beatrice also acknowledged that some sounds differ in Spanish and English. She explained that during one lesson a child was confusing the /b/ and /p/ sounds. She explained that could be due to “interference from what do the sounds do in
Spanish.” She expressed knowledge of the sound differences in English and Spanish. However, in her lesson plans she had made a note that questioned whether or not one of her Hispanic students needed speech. Beatrice recorded that the student was confusing the /v/ and /b/ sounds which is common for Spanish speakers who are learning English. This indicated that she may not have been fully aware of phonology as it relates to a student’s ability to hear and produce certain sounds.

**Assessments**

Beatrice reported using several assessments to place students into the RTI Tier II reading intervention group. She explained:

> We did DIBELS, and *Show Me Book* [concepts about print assessment], and the phonics inventory. And the majority of it was just my personal observations. Seeing what they did know, what they didn’t know, and seeing what they could do independently versus with my help. All of that guided me to where they needed to be.

Beatrice indicated that her personal observations of children helped her to determine their needs in RTI Tier II reading. She said that she determines student progress through her own observations. Beatrice explained, “I can tell what they are getting and what they are not getting.” This indicated that Beatrice did not use ongoing assessment data to evaluate students’ progress in reading.

Beatrice presumed that students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention made progress in reading. She noted that students progressed quickly at first, but then progression slowed after they learned to identify letters. She explained, “My Hispanic
kids got their letters and they were getting them quick, but come December, they slowed down a bit.” She attributed this stall in progress to a lack of vocabulary knowledge when students began to read books.

Beatrice said that in relation to other children, her Hispanic ELL students progressed more quickly. She stated, “It’s a huge progression, where I see my kids who are not even English learners, they’re progressing a lot slower.” She attributed this rapid progress to not having prior experience before school. She explained, “I think for English learners, they’ve never been exposed to it so this is such new information, they are like sponges and they’re soaking it up because they’ve never experienced it.” Beatrice explained that she assessed the progress of her Hispanic ELLs in RTI reading intervention. She shared, “If they do make progress, I try to see where and how much progress they have made, and if they are able to move out of the group.” Two Hispanic ELL students who had received RTI Tier II had progressed and were moved out of the group. For those who did not progress enough, Beatrice said that she backed up and re-taught to fill in gaps in students’ learning. She said that she felt unsure if the Hispanic ELL students receiving RTI Tier II had caught up to their native English speaking peers. She explained:

It’s hard to say because it is split 50/50. I have two who can have full-out conversations and I am sure that, for the most part, they understand everything they are saying. I still have two, who if you didn’t know them, it would be hard to understand them. They still speak a lot of “Spanglish.”

This indicated language acquisition was a factor in her evaluation of students’ reading progress.
Focus Students

Four Hispanic ELL children were chosen as focus students from Beatrice’s classroom. There were three girls and one boy. All four children were born in the United States. The focus students entered kindergarten with varying levels of language proficiency and print knowledge. I collected and analyzed assessments that had been administered by Beatrice throughout the school year. The writing samples were taken from beginning, middle, and end of the school year. For each student, letter identification, DIBELS results, running records, and ACCESS for ELLs from multiple points in the school year were analyzed.

Focus Student 1-1. Student 1-1 was a five year old girl of Hispanic descent. This was her first experience with public school. She entered kindergarten with the ability to name many upper- and lower-case letters; 12 upper-case and 14 lower-case (Table 5.3). She had not yet developed sound-symbol relationships with letters in English. This was evident in her beginning of the year writing sample (Figure 5.1). She had written random letters, numbers, and other figures around her picture.

By mid-year, she had learned almost all letters and sounds. Even though not all letters had been explicitly taught by this point in the school year, she had learned all but three upper and lower-case letters. In addition, she had learned all but two letter sounds (u and z). Her middle of the year writing sample showed that she had developed more concepts about print (Figure 5.2). She wrote the letters on the line beneath the pictures. The letters were together without spaces and the sound-symbol correspondence was still difficult to decipher.
By the end of the school year, this student had learned all of the sounds and all but one lowercase letter. The last writing sample indicated her knowledge of the alphabetic principle (Figure 5.3). Her writing was more extensive and print awareness was even more evident. She had spelled many sight words correctly (me, my, and, we) and had used invented spelling on other words (brother, slide). She conveyed her story in both pictures and print. Student 1-1 made exceptional progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence over the course of her kindergarten year.

Table 5.3

Focus Student 1-1 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upper-case Letters</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower-case Letters</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Sounds</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.1.  Focus student 1-1 beginning of the year writing sample.

Figure 5.2.  Focus student 1-1 middle of the year writing sample.
Student 1-1 did not take the DIBELS assessment at the beginning of the year. She took the assessment for the first time in the middle of the year (Table 5.4). Based on this assessment, she was at-risk in three areas: letter naming, phoneme segmentation, and nonsense word fluency. This assessment indicated that she needed intensive instructional support. She was considered proficient on first sound fluency at the middle of the year. For the end of the year assessment, she had made progress in all areas except letter naming fluency, in which she decreased by one point. She was considered at-risk in two areas: letter naming and nonsense word fluency. She was able to read six nonsense words automatically (without decoding and blending) but was considered to be emerging in this...
area and needed strategic instructional support. Overall, at both testing points during the year, Student 1-1 was identified as at-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on several sub-tests. She was identified as *needed intensive instructional support*.

Table 5.4  
*Focus Student 1-1 DIBELS Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Sound Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Assessment not taken</td>
<td>56*</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Naming Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Assessment not taken</td>
<td>29***</td>
<td>28***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>41***</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>14***</td>
<td>22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(correct letter sounds)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>6**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(whole word read automatically)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low Risk / Established / Core Support  
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support  
*** At-Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support  
NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period

Beatrice also administered running records with Student 1-1 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.5). This student showed exceptional growth in her reading level from December to May. In December, she was at a level AA but read on
Kindergarten EL Reading Intervention

level D by May. Although her comprehension scores were 66% in March and May, there were only three comprehension questions asked about each book, two of which she answered correctly. She was very accurate in her reading; however, miscues could not be analyzed. Student 1-1 did not attempt unknown words; instead she waited for the teacher to give her the word before she continued. The district benchmark level set for the end of kindergarten was a level C. Student 1-1 exceeded this benchmark expectation.

Table 5.5
Focus Student 1-1 Running Record Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined

The English language proficiency (ELP) of Student 1-1 was assessed at the beginning and end of the year (Table 5.6). At the beginning of the year, her ELP level was entering (level 1). Her ELP for speaking, reading, writing, and literacy were all at the entering level. She was more advanced in listening and was considered developing (level 3). Student 1-1 rapidly gained proficiency during her kindergarten year. By the end of the year assessment, she had increased her overall ELP from a 1.0 to a 3.8. Her listening, speaking, and oral language skills were considered to be either bridging or reaching, both of which are comparable to native English speakers of her age. Her reading increased from a 1.0 to a 1.7. Reading was the area in which she progressed least according to the
ACCESS for ELLs assessment. Overall, she became much more proficient in English in all domains of literacy.

Table 5.6

Focus Student 1-1 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Assessment</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Oral Language</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of the Year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the Year</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 1-1 showed progress on each assessment she was given. By the end of the year, she was an emergent reader and writer. However, there were several contradictions in the assessments. Her letter and sound knowledge assessment given by Beatrice indicated that she knew all of the sounds and all but one lower-case letter. Her knowledge of letters and sounds were apparent in her writing as well. However, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated that she had a deficit in this area. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test. Student 1-1 accurately read many sight words and simple words (box, Sam, bed, bear) in text. However, the DIBELS assessment results indicated that she had a deficit in reading nonsense words (which are used to access alphabetic principle knowledge). Her ELP scores increased in all areas; however, she grew the least in reading. Student 1-1 did not show signs of having difficulty in learning to read. Instead, she showed rapid growth in ELP, reading, and writing as indicated by various assessments.
Focus Student 1-2. Student 1-2 was a five year old boy of Hispanic descent. This was his first experience with public school, but he had older siblings in school. He entered kindergarten with the ability to name two upper-case letters (Table 5.3). He had not yet developed sound-symbol relationships with letters in English. His beginning of the year writing sample was taken from early November (Figure 5.4). This was the first sample Beatrice took from his writing. He had used a sentence starter from a previous reading lesson in which Beatrice introduced the high frequency word “go”. In this piece, he continued to represent sounds with letters, but his writing was difficult to decipher.

By mid-year, he had learned almost all of the letters (24 upper-case and 23 lower-case) and sounds (18). Even though not all letters had been explicitly taught by this point in the school year, he had learned all but five of them. In addition, he had learned all but eight letter sounds. His middle of the year writing sample showed more independence in his ability to apply sound symbol relationships (Figure 5.5). He wrote the letters on the line beneath the pictures but was not yet leaving space between words. The beginning of his story showed his emerging ability to use letters to represent sounds; however, after the first few words the sound correspondence was difficult to decipher.

By the end of the school year, this student had learned all letters and all but two sounds (u and a). The last writing sample indicated his knowledge of the alphabetic principle (Figure 5.6). His writing was more extensive and print concepts were more evident. He had even labeled his picture of the veterinarian with a sign that read: “Vet for Dogs.” He had spelled many sight words correctly (for, my, go, to, the) and had used
invented spelling for other words (went, because). Student 1-2 made exceptional progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence during his kindergarten year.

Table 5.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper-case Letters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-case Letters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Sounds</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(I go to the....)

Figure 5.4. Focus student 1-2 beginning of the year writing sample.
(Me and my friends at...)

Figure 5.5. Focus student 1-2 middle of the year writing sample.

(My mom went to go to the vet for my dog because my dog...)

Figure 5.6. Focus student 1-2 end of the year writing sample.
Student 1-2 did not take the DIBELS assessment at the beginning of the year. He took the assessment for the first time in the middle of the year. Based on this assessment, he was at-risk in three areas: letter naming, phoneme segmentation, and nonsense word fluency (Table 5.8). This assessment indicated that he needed intensive instructional support. He was considered proficient on first sound fluency at the middle of the year. For the end of the year assessment, he had made progress in all of the areas. He was considered at-risk in three areas: letter naming and nonsense word fluency (correct letter sounds and whole words read). He was able to read three nonsense words automatically (without decoding and blending) but was considered to be deficient in this area and needed strategic instructional support. Overall, at both testing points during the year, Student 1-2 was identified as at-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on several sub-tests. He was identified as needed intensive instructional support in reading.
### Focus Student 1-2 DIBELS Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Sound Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Assessment not taken</td>
<td>47*</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Naming Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Assessment not taken</td>
<td>17***</td>
<td>28***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>27***</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>11***</td>
<td>18***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(correct letter sounds)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(whole word read automatically)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low Risk / Established / Core Support  
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support  
*** At-Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support  
NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period

Beatrice also administered running records to Student 1-2 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.9). This student showed exceptional growth in his reading level from December to May. In December, he read level AA texts but was reading on level C by May. He made very little progress from December to February; he remained on level AA and only grew 2% in accuracy. By March he had progressed as an emergent reader and read on level B with 96% accuracy. His miscues indicated he used syntax and visual cues to make meaning; he changed the word “here” to “there.” Later in the story,
he had this same miscue but self-corrected and re-read the word “here” correctly.

Although his comprehension score was 66% in March, there were only three comprehension questions asked, two of which he answered correctly. By May, he read independently on level C. His accuracy was at 97%. He miscued on the word “said” twice, both times reading it as “say,” which is a common syntactical error with young ELL children. His comprehension was at 100%. Student 1-2 met the district benchmark level C set for the end of kindergarten.

Table 5.9

*Focus Student 1-2 Running Record Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined

The English language proficiency (ELP) of Student 1-2 was assessed at the beginning and end of the year (Table 5.10). At the beginning of the year, his ELP level was *entering* (level 1). His ELP for listening, speaking, reading, writing, and literacy were all at the entering level (level 1). Student 1-2 gained proficiency in English during his kindergarten year. By the end of the year assessment, he had increased his overall ELP from a 1.0 to a 1.9. His listening, writing, and oral language skills were considered to be beginning (level 2). All other areas were between 1.8 and 1.9 (level 1). His reading
increased from a 1.0 to a 1.8. Reading was the area in which he progressed least according to the *ACCESS for ELLs* assessment. Overall, he was more proficient in English in all domains of literacy at the end of his kindergarten year.

Table 5.10

**Focus Student 1-2 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Assessment</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Oral Language</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of the Year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the Year</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 1-2 showed progress on each assessment given. By the end of the year, he was an emergent reader and writer; however, there were several contradictions in the assessments. His letter and sound knowledge assessment given by Beatrice indicated that he knew all of the letters and all but two of the sounds. His knowledge of letters and sounds was apparent in his writing as well. However, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated that he had a deficit in this area. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test. Running records showed his ability to accurately read many sight words and simple words in text. He read with high accuracy and comprehension. However, the DIBELS assessment results indicated that he had a deficit in reading nonsense words. His ELP increased in all areas by a small amount. Overall, Student 1-2 did not show signs of having difficulty in learning to read. Instead, he
showed growth in his ELP and increased in reading and writing as indicated by various assessments.

*Focus Student 1-3.* Student 1-3 was a five year old girl of Hispanic descent. This was her first experience with public school, but she had attended a bilingual preschool for two years prior to kindergarten. She also had older brothers who were in school. Her mother had attended the Family Literacy program at the school. She entered kindergarten with the ability to name 22 upper-case and 15 lower-case letters (Table 5.11). On her initial assessment, she did not give the sounds for any letters. However, some sound-symbol relationships were evident in her beginning of the year writing sample (Figure 5.7). She had written the first and last sounds of words as labels in her picture (Dr – door, and HS – house). She had also written names as labels for people in her pictures.

By mid-year, she had learned almost all of the letters and sounds. Even though not all letters had been explicitly taught by this point in the school year, she had learned all but two upper- and two lower-case letters. In addition, she had learned all but three letter sounds (b, u, and y). Her middle of the year writing sample showed that she had developed more concepts about print and sound-symbol relationships (Figure 5.8). In addition to labeling people in the picture, she wrote the letters on the line beneath the picture. She left spaces between words and the story was easier for the reader to decipher. She expressed her story about going to the movies with her brothers with both pictures and print.

By the end of the school year, this student had learned all of the letters and sounds. The last writing sample indicated her knowledge of the alphabetic principle.
(Figure 5.9). Her writing was more extensive and print awareness was even more evident. She had spelled many sight words correctly (at, Mom, my, has) and had used invented spelling on other words (staying, house, because). She conveyed her story about staying at her house. Student 1-3 made exceptional progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence.

Table 5.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper-case Letters</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-case Letters</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Sounds</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.7. Focus student 1-3 beginning of the year writing sample.
(Me and my brothers go to the movies and I liked the movie “Wreck it Ralph”)

Figure 5.8. Focus student 1-3 middle of the year writing sample.

(Today I am staying at my house because my mom doesn’t has no…)

Figure 5.9. Focus student 1-3 end of the year writing sample.
Student 1-3 took the DIBELS assessment at all three testing periods (Table 5.12). Results from the first DIBELS assessment indicated she was at-risk in letter naming. She was considered to be emerging on first sound fluency. Phoneme segmentation and nonsense word fluency were not given for this test period. These results indicated that she needed intensive instructional support for letter naming fluency and strategic support for first sound fluency. The mid-year DIBELS results indicated that she was at-risk in all areas but had made progress on each sub-test. For the end of the year assessment, she had again made progress in all areas. She was still considered to be at-risk in two areas: letter naming and nonsense word fluency. She was able to read eight nonsense words automatically (without decoding and blending) and was considered to be low-risk in this area. At all testing points during the year, Student 1-3 was identified as at-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on several sub-tests. She was identified as needing intensive instructional support in reading.
Table 5.12

*Focus Student 1-3 DIBELS Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Sound Fluency</td>
<td>17**</td>
<td>40***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Naming Fluency</td>
<td>19***</td>
<td>41***</td>
<td>48***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>11***</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense Word Fluency (correct letter sounds)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>18***</td>
<td>30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense Word Fluency (whole word read automatically)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*  Low Risk / Established / Core Support
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support
*** At-Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support
NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period

Student 1-3 also read with Beatrice at multiple points during the school year for a running record (Table 5.13). This student showed exceptional growth in her reading level from December to May. In December, she was at a level AA but read on level D by May. She made progress from December to February and moved from a level AA and to a level B with 98% accuracy but with low comprehension. By March, she had progressed as an emergent reader and read on level D with 97% accuracy. Her miscues indicated that she frequently did not attempt unknown words; she took lengthy pauses on two words.
and waited for the teacher to provide the word. Although her comprehension score was 66% in March, there were only three comprehension questions asked, two of which she answered correctly. Interestingly, the one comprehension error marked by Beatrice could have been correct had language been considered. Student 1-3 answered, “in the bottom of the bed” when in fact it was “underneath the bed.” Therefore, she may have had more comprehension than her score indicated. She read independently on level D in May as well, but her accuracy had increased to 98%. She still did not attempt unknown words but rather waited for Beatrice to tell her the words. Student 1-3 exceeded the district benchmark level C set for the end of kindergarten and independently read on level D.

Table 5.13

**Focus Student 1-3 Running Record Assessment Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined

The English language proficiency (ELP) for Student 1-3 was assessed at the beginning and end of the year (Table 5.14). At the beginning of the year, her overall ELP level was entering (level 1.6). Listening and speaking were her most developed areas of language (level 4 and level 3); therefore, her overall oral language was developing (level 3.5). Reading was entering (level 1) and writing was beginning (level 2), which made her
overall literacy level *entering* (level 1.5). Student 1-3 made significant gains in English proficiency during her kindergarten year. By the end of the year, she had increased her overall ELP from a 1.6 to a 4.3. Her listening and speaking proficiency was *bridging* and *reaching*, which is similar to her native English speaking peers. Her writing increased from a 2.0 to a 4.4. Her reading increased from a 1.0 to a 1.9. Reading was the area in which she progressed least according to the *ACCESS for ELLs* assessment. Overall, she gained English proficiency in all domains of literacy at a rapid rate during her kindergarten year.

Table 5.14

*Focus Student 1-3 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Assessment</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Oral Language</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of the Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the Year</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 1-3 showed progress on each assessment given. By the end of the year, she was an emergent reader and writer; however, there were several contradictions in the assessments. Her letter and sound knowledge assessment given by Beatrice indicated that she knew all of the letters and sounds. Her knowledge of letters and sounds was apparent in her writing as well. However, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated she had a deficit in this area. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test.

Running records showed her ability to accurately read many sight words (look, said, can,
see, going, etc.) and simple words (Ben, car, big, etc.) in text. She read with high accuracy. However, the DIBELS assessment results indicated that she had a deficit in reading nonsense words. Her ELP increased in all areas. In fact, she scored a 4.3 and the exit score for ESL is 4.8. She was very close to this score in just one school year. Overall, Student 1-3 did not show signs of difficulty in learning to read. Instead, she showed immense gains in her ELP as well as outstanding increases in reading and writing, as indicated by various assessments.

Focus Student 1-4. Student 1-4 was a five year old girl of Hispanic descent. This was her first experience with public school. She entered kindergarten with the ability to name two upper-case letters and one lower-case letter (Table 5.15). On this initial assessment, she did not give the sounds for any letters. However, some sound-symbol relationships were evident in her beginning of the year writing sample (Figure 5.10). She had also written names as labels for people in her pictures and ‘M’ for ‘Mom’.

By mid-year, she had learned almost all of the letters and sounds. Even though not all letters had been explicitly taught by this point in the school year, she had learned all but three upper-case and four lower-case letters. In addition, she had learned all but three letter sounds (b, z, and u). Her middle of the year writing sample showed that she had developed more concepts about print and sound-symbol relationships (Figure 5.11). She used a complete sentence to convey her story about her Mom.

By the end of the school year, this student had learned all of the sounds and all but one lower-case letter. The last writing sample indicated her knowledge of the alphabetic principle (Figure 5.12). Her writing was more extensive and print awareness was evident
in her spacing and use of punctuation. She had spelled many sight words correctly (go, in, the, my) and had used invented spelling for other words (playing, with). Although two words could not be deciphered, she conveyed her story about playing with her brother and her Mom with both pictures and print. Student 1-4 made exceptional progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence during kindergarten.

Table 5.15

*Focus Student 1-4 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper-case Letters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-case Letters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Sounds</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5.10.* Focus student 1-4 beginning of the year writing sample.
(My Mom sees Valerie.)

*Figure 5.11.* Focus student 1-4 middle of the year writing sample.

(I play go in the --- with my brother and my Mom and my ---.)

*Figure 5.12.* Focus student 1-4 end of the year writing sample.
Student 1-4 did not take the DIBELS assessment for the first testing period but did for the middle and end of the year (Table 5.16). The mid-year DIBELS results indicated that she was at-risk in all areas. These scores indicated that she needed intensive instructional support for letter naming, first sound fluency, phoneme segmentation, and nonsense words. For the end of the year assessment, she had made progress in some areas but was still identified as at-risk. She decreased in letter naming from a 28 to a 24 but improved dramatically in phoneme segmentation. At both testing points during the year, Student 1-4 was identified as at-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on all sub-tests. She was identified as needing intensive instructional support in reading.
Table 5.16

Focus Student 1-4 DIBELS Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Sound Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Assessment Not Taken</td>
<td>24***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Naming Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Assessment Not Taken</td>
<td>28***</td>
<td>24***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>19***</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>11***</td>
<td>20***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(correct letter sounds)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(whole word read automatically)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low Risk / Established / Core Support
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support
*** At-Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support
NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period

Beatrice completed running records with Student 1-4 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.17). This student showed outstanding growth in her reading level from December to May. In December, she was at a level AA but read on level C by May. She progressed from December to February and moved from level AA and to level A with 96% accuracy and excellent comprehension. By March, she had progressed as an emergent reader and read on level B with 96% accuracy. Her miscues indicated that she frequently did not attempt unknown irregular words (said, are); she took lengthy pauses
on these two words and waited for the teacher to tell her the words. However, she self-corrected miscues while reading which had not been evident in previous running records. Although her comprehension score was 66%, there were only three comprehension questions asked, two of which she answered correctly. At the end of the school year, she read independently on level C, and her accuracy had increased to 97%. Her comprehension remained at 66% (2 out of 3); however, the sentence structure of the third question was very complex and may have been difficult for her to understand. Student 1-4 met the district benchmark level C set for the end of kindergarten.

Table 5.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined

The English language proficiency (ELP) of Student 1-4 was assessed at the beginning and end of kindergarten (Table 5.18). At the beginning of the year, her overall ELP level was entering (level 1.6). Listening and speaking were her most developed areas of language (level 3); therefore, her overall oral language was developing (level 3). Reading and writing were both entering (level 1) which made her overall literacy level entering (level 1). Student 1-4 made significant gains in English proficiency during her
kindergarten year. By the end of the year assessment, she had increased her overall ELP from a 1.6 (entering) to a 2.7 (beginning). Her listening and speaking proficiency was expanding. Her writing increased from a 1.0 to a 3.3; this was her greatest gain. Her reading only increased from a 1.0 to a 1.6. Reading was the literacy domain in which she progressed least according to the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. Overall, she gained English proficiency in all domains of literacy during her kindergarten year and moved up one proficiency level in English.

Table 5.18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Student 1-4 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELP Assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of the Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the Year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 1-4 showed progress on each assessment given. By the end of the year, she was an emergent reader and writer; however, there were several contradictions in her assessments. Her letter and sound knowledge assessment given by Beatrice indicated that she knew all of the sounds and all but one letter. Her knowledge of letters and sounds was apparent in her writing as well. However, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated that she had a deficit in this area. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test. Running records showed her ability to accurately read many sight words (look, here, is, up, you, etc.) and simple words (red, bed, bear, etc.) in text. She read with
high accuracy. However, the DIBELS assessment results indicated that she had a deficit in reading nonsense words. Her ELP increased in all areas. Overall, Student 1-4 did not show difficulty learning to read. Instead, she showed vast gains in her ELP as well as great increases in reading and writing as indicated by various assessments.

Themes from Focus Students

All four focus students from Beatrice’s classroom showed progress in reading, writing, and overall English language proficiency from the beginning to the end of the year in kindergarten. Beatrice’s students came to kindergarten with varying knowledge of letter names. Two children knew very few (two and three) while the other two knew many (26 and 37). None of the four students could identify letter sounds at the beginning of the year. By the end of the school year, all of the children knew all upper-case letters. Two children knew all lower-case letters, and the other two knew 24 lower-case letters. Three of the four children knew all the letter sounds by the end of the year; the fourth knew 24.

Interestingly, all four children were identified as at-risk on all sub-tests of the DIBELS. At the end of the year, a benchmark was not determined for phoneme segmentation for kindergarten, but all four students had improved in this area. On all other areas (letter naming and nonsense word reading) all four children were still considered at-risk. Data indicated that they needed intensive instructional support in these areas of reading. This conflicted with the alphabet assessment given by Beatrice. All four children knew almost every single letter and sound. This discrepancy may have been due to the fact that the DIBELS assessment was a timed test. In addition, all students were at-
risk in nonsense word reading. This assessment was used to determine if children could apply the alphabetic principle to unknown words. Again, this was contradictory to Beatrice’s running records and student writing samples, which may have been influenced by the nature of the assessment. In the context of real books, reading real words, all four of the students were successful emergent readers and had met the benchmark reading level set by the district. However, out of context, with isolated nonsense words, they had no other support for the meaning making process of real reading.

All of the focus students in Beatrice’s class met the end of the year benchmark level C. In fact, two children exceeded the benchmark and were independently reading on level D. All four of the students read with high accuracy; between 97-98%, but three of the children were still at low comprehension levels (66%) in their reading.

All four of the children made outstanding progress as emergent writers. At the beginning of the year, they represented their stories through pictures. By the end of the year, students conveyed their stories with both pictures and print. Students spelled many high frequency words correctly and used invented spelling for their writing. The students’ concepts about print were also more advanced.

Each focus students’ English language proficiency increased during the school year. All students were at entering at the beginning of the year, but their overall ELP varied by the end of the year, one at each level one through four. Interesting, all four children made the least amount of gain in the domain of reading. This may be due to the fact that the reading portion of the ACCESS for ELLs is not real reading. The reading portion involves matching pictures to pictures, words to pictures, and sentences to
pictures. However, when reading real books as the teacher conducted running records, all students showed progress in their reading ability.

**Summary**

Overall, Beatrice indicated that kindergarten Hispanic ELL students were not prepared for learning to read in kindergarten. She suggested that parents played a big role in this lack of preparation. According to Beatrice, Hispanic parents did not value education in general. She also did not see evidence that her Hispanic ELL students had support at home for reading. She attributed this to a lack of interest, time, and/or ability of Hispanic parents. Beatrice identified these factors as contributors to the lack of readiness for her kindergarten Hispanic ELL students.

Beatrice expressed concern for her students’ social-emotional well-being. She took measures to ensure that they felt comfortable and built confidence throughout the year. An open and trusting relationship was established and evident in student-teacher and peer interactions. These relationships may have been a contributing factor to students’ overall gains in oral language proficiency.

There was a definite void in written RTI Tier II lesson plans, but it was evident that Beatrice was responsive to her students’ needs in reading. She connected reading Tier I and Tier II lessons. Although her lessons were mostly focused on reading skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, and sight word recognition), every observed lesson had comprehension and conversation embedded within it. Interestingly, even with this skills-based instructional approach, students did not reach benchmark goals on skills-based assessments. In fact, even with multiple levels of intervention provided by Beatrice in
Tier II and the ESL teacher in another small group; her Hispanic ELL students made the least amount of progress on the ACCESS for ELLs in the domain of reading.

Beatrice indicated that she used observations as a form of assessing student progress in RTI Tier II. She suggested that reading progress had slowed down after December; however, reading assessments and writing samples indicated rapid progress. Since there was no consistent measure of progress, teaching may not have been as intentional as it could have been for students. In addition, Beatrice assumed that her Hispanic ELL students knew letters and sounds in Spanish and needed to translate them metacognitively. However, there were no assessments of the focus students’ literacy skills in their native language. Interestingly, when Beatrice attempted to explain her students’ reading progress, she instead explained how well they could converse in English. This indicated that she may not have been able to distinguish between language difference and reading difficulty.

Case Study 2: Emily

Emily was a 23 year old Caucasian female and a kindergarten teacher at Ivey Elementary School. Emily held a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and was working on a master’s in teaching English as a second language. This was her third year in education. She had two years of previous experience in kindergarten and had taught second grade for one year. She had worked with children learning English in all three years of her career. The year before coming to Ivey Elementary, she had worked in a school with an extremely high ELL population. That year, 75% of her class was comprised of Hispanic ELL students. In the 2012-2013 school year, Emily had 21
kindergarten students. Emily had a total of six Hispanic English learners and two of them received RTI Tier II reading intervention.

*Themes*

From the interviews, observations, and document reviews, six themes emerged: Parent engagement, social-emotional well-being of students, lesson planning, lesson delivery, second language acquisition, and assessments emerged as themes from the case (Appendix J). Many of these themes had sub-themes as well.

*Parent Engagement*

Emily indicated that parent engagement was an important factor for her Hispanic students who were learning English. Two sub-themes emerged: school readiness and home support. Emily felt that her Hispanic ELLs were not as prepared for kindergarten as other students. When discussing school readiness of her Hispanic ELLs, Emily shared, “I think they are less prepared.” She immediately followed that statement with, “I don’t think it is because the parents do not care.” Emily felt that parents did care about their children and their education.

Although Emily believed Hispanic parents wanted to help their children at home, she explained that they often did not know how. She stated:

I’ve found the parents always say, ‘We want to help, but we don’t know what to do.’ Whereas the English-speaking parents know how to read with their kids in English and know what to expect, but lot of them have never been in the American school system and don’t know what to do.
Emily shared that she encouraged Hispanic parents to read to their children in Spanish at home. She explained, “Letting them know that it is fine to read with them in Spanish, because it is still building the concepts of print and that will jump start them.” Overall, Emily believed that parent engagement through home support for learning was important. She tried to help parents understand that reading to their children in Spanish would still help reading development in English.

Social-Emotional Well-Being

Emily was concerned for the social-emotional well-being of her Hispanic students who were learning English. She wanted to build her students’ self-confidence and social skills. These beliefs were evident in her practice.

Emily’s classroom environment supported students’ social-emotional well-being. The classroom had a steady hum of student conversations and reading. She used a workshop approach in both reading and writing. During the RTI Tier II reading intervention lesson, students who did not receive RTI Tier II were all around the room reading both independently and with partners, listening to books, working on the computer, and building words with letters and on dry erase boards. This is what the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II experienced while other children worked in small groups with the teacher.

The classroom was filled with print. There was an abundance of children’s books on a variety of reading levels and topics. There were word walls of high frequency words, vocabulary words, and word family words. Materials were accessible to children, and it was evident that children had experience with this structure. The Hispanic ELL students
who received RTI Tier II reading intervention were at the small group reading table with a self-selected collection of books they were reading while waiting for the lessons to begin.

Emily believed that carefully choosing an instructional focus was important to her Hispanic students’ social-emotional well-being. She did not want to frustrate them with learning tasks that were too difficult. She shared:

Especially with the Hispanics, and all ELLs, I have found that confidence is the biggest thing and it can so easily be crushed. You just have to be very careful to make sure they are ready and that you’ve given background and have given them the knowledge to be successful.

She also wanted her Hispanic ELL students who were receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention to feel more comfortable with speaking. She encouraged students to talk throughout the day. She explained: “When they don’t feel comfortable talking in general, I found that they are even less comfortable reading.” Emily believed that allowing children to talk helped build their social skills as well, which she felt was important. She explained: “If you can strengthen their social skills, then it helps with the reading and their confidence and then they can make the predications and connections that the non-ELs can already do.” Her kindergarten students played daily in social centers such as: home-living, block building, art, puzzles, and games. This indicated that she believed social development was important for all kindergarten students.

Lesson Planning
Emily discussed her lesson planning process, and I reviewed her reading lesson plans. Four sub-themes emerged: documented lesson plans, instructional focus, student needs, and collaboration with the ESL teacher. These sub-themes were all deemed important to Emily in her work with Hispanic ELLs who received RTI Tier II reading intervention.

Emily used the scripted Tier II lesson plans provided by Shelter County. She explained: “I plan them [Tier II intervention lessons] through using what the county gives us. I use that at the beginning of the week to see how they do on that and based on how they can perform on that, I will adjust it.” She did not believe that these plans always met her Hispanic ELL students’ needs. She explained, “A lot of times, I have found the plans we get from the county are almost too high for them.” As I reviewed her lesson plans, I could not find evidence of these adjustments. For the entire first semester of kindergarten, Emily’s lesson plans only referenced the scripted lesson plan, for example: “Harcourt Intervention Lesson 11.” There were no copies of these lesson plan with her other small group plans. Although she may have adjusted the plan during instruction, there was no documentation of the adjustments. In January, RTI Tier II reading intervention plans reflected Emily’s planning rather than adherence to the scripted plans. However, lessons for RTI Tier II were very often the exact same for weeks in a row. There were no RTI Tier II plans for the month of May. Emily shared her view of RTI Tier II for Hispanic ELL by stating: “It is just a lot of repetition, repetition, repetition.” This belief was certainly evident in her lesson plans.

Emily’s lesson plans reflected a focus on reading skills rather than comprehension. As I reviewed her lesson plans, I found that letter and sound
identification, phonological awareness, phonics (blending words), and sight word recognition were most often the instructional focus. Emily confirmed this in her statement, “I focus more on letter names and sounds and that blending of the words.” She explained that she wanted her Hispanic ELL students who received Tier II reading intervention to know the basics before they left kindergarten. For Emily, these basics were isolated reading skills. In the RTI Tier II lesson plans for January through April, there was no focus on comprehension documented in the intervention plans. However, in May, during one observation, she had her students identify the main idea of the story they read. This was the only comprehension instruction that I was able to identify from observations and document reviews.

Emily stated that she focused on students’ needs during RTI Tier II reading intervention. She did not feel that Hispanic students learning English needed intervention more than other children learning English. However, she indicated higher participation of Hispanic students in RTI Tier II by stating, “My lower Hispanic students come every day.” She expressed that she planned instruction based on individual student needs. She explained, “The books that I pull for them in their small groups, they range from level A to level C. A lot of times it is different for each kid, it’s not necessarily the same book for each one.” She felt she selected instructional materials based on student need. However, in the observed lesson in May, she had the children using an alphabet chart to name letters and sounds. In addition, she used letter flashcards for speed drills. At this point in the year, her Hispanic ELL students knew all or almost all of their letters and sounds. This might indicate that she focused on the skills they would need for DIBELS testing.
Emily indicated that she planned with the ESL teacher. She worked with the ESL teacher to determine who needed RTI Tier II reading intervention and the instructional focus of the intervention. She explained, “I talk with the ESL teacher and get her opinions on what she is observing and pull ideas from her as well from the resources she has.” In addition, she shared instructional responsibilities with the ESL teacher. She stated, “I provide it [RTI Tier II] and then the ESL teacher will pull them during our reading block.” Emily planned with the ESL teacher weekly.

For lesson planning, Emily utilized the district RTI Tier II scripted lessons for the entire first semester. For the second semester, she planned skill-based lessons for RTI Tier II for her Hispanic students who were learning English. She focused mainly on skills: letter identification, phonics, phonemic awareness, and word recognition. RTI Tier II lesson plans were very repetitive and often did not change for weeks at a time.

Lesson Delivery

Emily used a small group format for RTI Tier II reading intervention lesson delivery. Lesson plans and observations revealed the group size typically ranged from three to five students. The RTI Tier II group consisted of both ELLs and native English speakers. For the theme of lesson delivery, three sub-themes emerged: flexible grouping, materials, and student engagement.

Emily explained that she used flexible grouping for her RTI Tier II small group reading intervention. She described flexible grouping by stating, “It is 3-5 students, depending on the exact skill we are working on.” For Tier II she claimed that she pulled only the students who needed the focus skill for that intervention time. She stated:
Maybe one day we are working on the alphabetic principal and I will pull those kids but not all, not the ones who really have it. The next day we may work on blending where I have all of those kids who are Tier II.

Emily did not list the names of students participating in the RTI Tier II reading intervention on her lesson plan. Because of this, I could not analyze the flexible groups and compare the instructional focus of the lesson to the students’ assessments.

Materials used for RTI Tier II reading interventions varied. Emily listed many materials used to teach skills. She stated:

We pull letters, CVC word cards, stamps, games that they have in word work to reinforce word families, building words, working on sight words through flashcards and incorporating it through games.

Materials for skill-based instruction were evident in her lesson plans. For many weeks she reviewed letters and sounds with her Hispanic ELL students by playing a bean bag game in which she tossed them a bean bag with a letter on it and they identified the letter and sound. She also used flashcards to have students quickly name letters. In addition, she focused on phonics by using letter dice to build and blend words. Her lesson plan indicated that students would, “roll dice with letters, write, and blend the sounds together.” She also focused on sight words by using flash cards or games in which students had to automatically read the sight word to be successful in the game. From my observation and document review, I concluded that Emily used mostly games to teach skills in isolation.

Emily also indicated that she used books during RTI Tier II reading intervention. She listed the types of books she used:
The decodable books, the leveled readers, the Reading A-Z, I pull some word family books. Sometimes I make my own books, because when you get to the end of the year, what I find out there is too difficult so I take books that I find and make my own version that is more their level.

Although Emily reported using books in RTI Tier II reading intervention, my review of the lesson plans revealed the use of real books was rarely noted in RTI Tier II lesson plans. During both RTI Tier II reading intervention lesson observations, students did read books, but it was only for a small portion of the lesson. For example, during an observation of one RTI Tier II lesson, students read a book for only five minutes of the 16 minute intervention.

Finally, student engagement emerged as a theme in this case. Emily wanted her students to enjoy RTI Tier II reading intervention and believed that they did. She explained:

They LOVE it. It is seen as a special treat to come here so they are excited. They are listening and paying attention. I try to disguise things as games, so they don’t see it as, ‘I have to go to the teacher table again!’ They see it as a time when they get to come and play games with me.

Emily’s perception of her Hispanic students’ engagement during the lesson was quite different from what I observed. During observations I noted that children were often not engaged. Children were looking around the room or had their head down on the table. During one observation, a child was supposed to be reading and rereading a short book. She read it once and then sat and looked around the room for three minutes until the teacher turned to listen to her read. During another lesson, the children were supposed to
read a decodable text. One student proclaimed that he did not want to read the book. When Emily announced they were going to play a sight word game, one child sighed and asked, “Again?” This indicated that students were not as engaged and enjoying RTI Tier II as Emily had thought.

Overall, Emily used small, flexible groups for delivering RTI Tier II reading intervention. She used a variety of materials for instruction. Almost all instructional materials were used to teach isolated skills. Lesson plans indicated that she used mostly games, flashcards, and words building to teach phonics and recognition of high frequency words. Lesson plans revealed that books were rarely used as instruction material for RTI Tier II reading intervention in Emily’s class. Finally, Emily explained that she wanted her students to enjoy RTI Tier II reading intervention and believed that they did. However, my observation notes indicated Hispanic ELL students were unengaged during RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons.

Second Language Acquisition

Emily recognized the importance of second language acquisition for her Hispanic students who are learning English. She expressed that her Hispanic ELLs in RTI Tier II intervention, they have more to learn than reading alone. She stated, “With the ELLs, it is the concepts of print, and the language, and the confidence, and just their basic communication.” She also expressed her belief that allowing her students to use their native language was important to acquiring English. She explained:

Just making sure that they are allowed to do clarifications in Spanish, and not just make them be English-only all the time. Allow them interactions with ESL kids
and non-ESL kids; because a lot of times they will speak in English without you forcing it. When they use the Spanish it is to get clarifications of what exactly is going on, if they don’t have that clarification in Spanish they are not going to use their English.

Emily also knew she had to help her Hispanic ELL students build their vocabulary in English in order for them to be successful readers. She shared, “It is building their vocabulary and building their English so they can then make connections to the stories.” Emily knew the value of allowing students to use their first language during the process of second language acquisition.

Assessment

Assessment emerged as a theme in this case. Emily discussed the assessments she used as well as progress made by students. She explained, “I try to do assessments regularly just to see how they are making progress.” She reported using many different assessments to determine the progress of the students in her classroom. She used, “DIBELS, running records, concepts about print, and the phonics inventory.” Emily used these assessments to analyze specific needs. She explained:

If I see something on DIBELS or in the phonics inventory, then I pull other things to see if they can do it. Then I work with different things within that to see what they are missing. Like with phonics inventory, are they missing consonants? Are the missing vowels? Are they missing similar letters? Or is it just they couldn’t do the assessment and they really can do it.
There was no mention of weekly progress monitoring of Hispanic ELL students receiving RTI Tier II. The Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention had been in the intervention group for the entire year. Emily indicated that the Hispanic ELL students in RTI Tier II had made progress and were even on grade level. She explained, “They are reading on grade level, but it is still a matter of building their confidence. Most of them are right where I want them. I still have 2 Hispanic students who are just trying to put everything together, so they are still a little bit behind.” This revealed that even though the students were on grade level, Emily still believed they needed reading intervention.

Focus Students

Two Hispanic ELL children were chosen as focus students from Emily’s classroom. There was one girl and one boy. Both students were born in the United States. The focus students entered kindergarten with varying levels of language proficiency and print knowledge. I collected and analyzed assessments that had been administered by Emily throughout the school year. The writing samples were taken from beginning, middle, and end of the school year. For each student, letter identification, DIBELS results, running records, and ACCESS for ELLs from multiple points in the school year were analyzed.

Focus Student 2-1. Student 2-1 was a five year old girl of Hispanic descent. This was her first experience with public school. She entered kindergarten with the ability to name four upper-case and two lower-case letters (Table 5.19). She also knew the sound
of one letter, ‘b,’ which was in her name. In her first writing sample, it was evident that she was stringing letters as writing and her picture was not very detailed (Figure 5.13).

By mid-year, she had learned almost all of the letters and sounds. Even though not all of the letters had been explicitly taught by this point in the school year, she had learned all upper-case and all but three lower-case letters. In addition, she had learned almost all consonant sounds but did not know vowel sounds. Her middle of the year writing sample showed that she still had difficulty applying sound-symbol relationships in writing (Figure 5.14). This sample was a prompted content area opinion piece. The class had been learning about seasons. Emily gave her class a sentence that started, “My favorite season is __.” Student 2-1 received a further prompt of “I can go to __.” Once she had copied these two sentences and written ‘p’ for ‘pool,’ she began to write random sight words from the word wall. This sample indicated that she knew writing was comprised of words, but she was not yet able to convey her thoughts independently.

By the end of the school year, this student had learned all of the letters and sounds. The last writing sample demonstrated her developing knowledge of the alphabetic principle (Figure 5.15). Her writing was more extensive and print awareness was evident. She had used invented spelling in her writing. This sample was from a content writing piece about frogs. Her writing was more of a list of important words and ideas about frogs than a coherent piece; she left out many words. This gave insight into her oral language development in English. Student 2-1 made great progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence during kindergarten. She was beginning to apply the alphabetic principle in her writing by the end of the year.
Table 5.19

*Focus Student 2-1 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper-case Letters</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-case Letters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Sounds</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5.13.* Focus student 2-1 beginning of the year writing sample.
(My favorite season is summer. I can go to my pool...)

*Figure 5.14.* Focus student 2-1 middle of the year writing sample.

(The baby frog is all laid frog mom came mom tadpole egg hatch when)

*Figure 5.15.* Focus student 2-1 end of the year writing sample.
Student 2-1 did not take the DIBELS assessment for the first testing period but did for the middle and end of the year (Table 5.20). The mid-year DIBELS results showed that she met the benchmarks in first sound fluency and phoneme segmentation. This indicated that she did not need intervention in these areas. She was considered at-risk in letter naming and nonsense word fluency. These scores indicated she needed intensive instructional support for letter naming and nonsense words. For the end of the year assessment, she had made progress in two areas, but her score stayed the same in phoneme segmentation. She was still identified as at-risk in letter naming and nonsense words. She was not able to read any nonsense words automatically. At both testing points during the year, Student 2-1 was identified as at-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on several sub-tests. She was identified as needing intensive instructional support in reading.
Emily completed running records with Student 2-1 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.21). This student showed outstanding growth in her reading level from December to May. In December, she was at a level AA but read on level C by May. She did not progress from December to February but remained on level AA. By March, she had progressed as an emergent reader and read on level B with 98% accuracy. Her only miscue was replacing the word ‘said’ with ‘say,’ which is a common syntactical miscue for many young ELLs. Her comprehension was at 100%. At the end of the school
year, she read independently on level C and her accuracy had increased to 100%. She only had one miscue, which she self-corrected. Her comprehension was at 100%. It is unclear why Emily did not complete a running record with student 2-1 on a higher level. Student 2-1 met the district benchmark level C set for the end of kindergarten.

Table 5.21
Focus Student 2-1 Running Record Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined

The English language proficiency (ELP) of Student 2-1 was assessed at the beginning and end of kindergarten (Table 5.22). At the beginning of the year, her overall ELP level was entering (level 1.3). Listening and speaking were her most developed areas of language; level 3 and level 2 respectively. Her overall oral language was beginning (level 2.5). Reading and writing were both entering (level 1) which made her overall literacy level entering (level 1).

Student 2-1 made great gains in English proficiency during her kindergarten year. By the end of the year assessment, she had increased her overall ELP from a 1.3 (entering) to a 4.2 (expanding). Her listening (level 6) and speaking (level 5.6) proficiency were reaching and bridging. This indicated that her oral language was comparable to native English speakers of her age. Her writing increased from a 1.0 to a
4.4, although her reading only increased from a 1.0 to a 1.9. Reading was the literacy domain in which she progressed least according to the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. Overall, she gained English proficiency in all domains of literacy during his kindergarten year and advanced three proficiency levels in English.

Table 5.22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Student 2-1 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELP Assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning of the Year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End of the Year</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 2-1 showed progress on each assessment given. By the end of the year, she was an emergent reader and writer; however, there were several contradictions in her assessments. The end of the year letter and sound assessment indicated that this student knew all of the letters and sounds. Although she knew all of the letter names, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated that she had a deficit in letter naming fluency. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test. Running records showed her ability to accurately read many sight words and simple words in text. She read with high accuracy (98-100%). However, the DIBELS assessment results indicated that she had a deficit in reading nonsense words, which is meant to assess alphabetic principle knowledge. Her ELP increased in all areas; however, reading was the literacy domain in which she improved the least. Overall, student 2-1 did not show difficulty
learning to read. Instead, she showed significant gains in her ELP as well as great increases in reading and writing, as indicated by various assessments.

*Focus Student 2-2.* Student 2-2 was a six year old boy of Hispanic descent. This was his first experience with public school. He did not know any letters or sounds in English when he entered kindergarten (Table 5.19). In his first writing sample, it was evident that he was using pictures only to carry the meaning of his story (Figure 5.13). His picture was very detailed and illustrated his story about playing outside his apartment with his friend. He was able to write his name.

By mid-year, he had learned almost all of the letters, 22 upper-case and 22 lower-case. He had learned many consonant sounds but did not identify vowel sounds. His middle of the year writing sample showed that he was beginning to apply sound-symbol relationships in writing (Figure 5.14). This sample was a prompted content area opinion piece. The class had been learning about seasons, and Emily gave the class a sentence that started: “My favorite season is __.” Student 2-2 received a further prompt of “I can go to __.” Once he had copied these two sentences, he used invented spelling for “beach” (BECH) and added another sentence. Although he had copied the word “summer” from the prompt, he used invented spelling for this word in his own final sentence. This sample indicated that he had emerging ability to convey his thoughts independently through writing.

By the end of the school year, this student had learned all of the sounds and all but one lower-case letter. The last writing sample indicated his developing print awareness (Figure 5.15). He had used a content word wall for spelling as well as an invented
spelling for the word “big” (beg). This sample was from a content writing piece about frogs. He had illustrated each stage of the frog’s life cycle with great accuracy. He explained each stage in his writing but left out many connecting words. This gave insight into his oral language development in English. Student 2-2 made great progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence during kindergarten. He was beginning to apply the alphabetic principle in his writing by the end of the year.

Table 5.23

*Focus Student 2-2 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper-case Letters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-case Letters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Sounds</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.16. Focus student 2-2 beginning of the year writing sample.
(I like summer. I can go to the beach. It is summer.)

Figure 5.17. Focus student 2-2 middle of the year writing sample.

(This is a frog, the eggs, tadpole, froglet, and this is an adult frog, big frog.)

Figure 5.18. Focus student 2-2 end of the year writing sample.

Student 2-2 did not take the DIBELS assessment for the first testing period but did for the middle and end of the year (Table 5.24). The mid-year DIBELS results
indicated that he was at-risk in all areas. These scores indicated that he needed intensive instructional support for first sound fluency, letter naming, phoneme segmentation, and nonsense words. For the end of the year assessment, he had made progress in all areas except for reading nonsense words automatically. He met the benchmark for letter naming fluency. There was not a benchmark set for phoneme segmentation, but his score improved from the middle to the end of the year. He was still identified as at-risk in nonsense words. He was able to say each sound and then blend the nonsense word but was still considered to be at-risk due to only identifying 30 sounds in one minute. He was not able to read any nonsense words automatically. At both testing points during the year, Student 2-2 was identified as at-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on several sub-tests. He was identified as needing intensive instructional support in reading.
Table 5.24

Focus Student 2-2 DIBELS Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Sound Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Assessment Not Taken</td>
<td>42***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Naming Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Assessment Not Taken</td>
<td>39***</td>
<td>62*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>25***</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency (correct letter sounds)</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>16***</td>
<td>30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency (whole word read automatically)</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low Risk / Established / Core Support
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support
*** At-Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support
NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period

Emily completed running records with Student 2-2 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.21). This student showed outstanding growth in his reading level from December to May. In December, he was at a level AA but read on level D by May. In December, the level A running record was discontinued because he could not read any words on the first page. He progressed from December to February and moved to level A. He had good accuracy and excellent comprehension. By March, he had progressed as an emergent reader and read on level B with 96% accuracy. There were two words in this
text that he did not know and did not attempt. This indicated that he was not applying strategies to read unknown words but rather deferred to the teacher to provide the word for him. His comprehension was at 100%. At the end of the school year, he read independently on level D. He only had one miscue, which he self-corrected. His comprehension was at 100%. It was unclear why Emily did not continue with this student on to a higher level text. Student 2-2 exceeded the district benchmark level C set for the end of kindergarten.

Table 5.25
Focus Student 2-2 Running Record Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined

The English language proficiency (ELP) for Student 2-2 was assessed at the beginning and end of kindergarten (Table 5.26). At the beginning of the year, his overall ELP level was entering (level 1.0). Writing and speaking were his most developed areas of language (level 2). Listening and reading were both entering (level 1). His overall oral language was entering (level 1.5). His overall literacy level was entering (level 1.5).

Student 2-2 made gains in English proficiency during his kindergarten year. By the end of the year assessment, he had increased his overall ELP from a 1.0 (entering) to a 2.4 (beginning). Speaking and writing remained his highest literacy domain areas; both
had increased from *beginning* (level 2) to *developing* (level 3). His overall literacy had increased from *entering* (level 1) to *beginning* (level 2), but his reading only increased from a 1.0 to a 1.7. Reading was the literacy domain in which he progressed least, according to the *ACCESS for ELLs* assessment. Overall, he gained English proficiency in all domains of literacy during his kindergarten year and advanced one proficiency level in English.

Table 5.26

**Focus Student 2-2 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Assessment</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Oral Language</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of the Year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the Year</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 2-2 showed progress on each assessment given. By the end of the year, he was an emergent reader and writer; however, there were several contradictions in his assessments. The end of the year letter and sound assessment given by Emily indicated that he knew all of the sounds and all but one lower-case letter. Although he knew 51 of 52 upper and lower-case letters, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated that he had a deficit in letter naming. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test. Running records showed his ability to accurately read many sight words and simple words in text. He read with high accuracy (96-100%). However, the DIBELS assessment results indicated that he had a deficit in reading nonsense words. His ELP
increased in all areas; however, reading was the literacy domain in which he grew the least. Although he grew the least in reading on the ACCESS for ELLs, he exceeded the end of the year reading level expectation set by the district. Overall, student 2-2 did not show difficulty learning to read. Instead, he showed significant gains in his ELP as well as great increases in reading and writing, as indicated by various assessments.

Themes from Focus Students

Both students from Emily’s classroom showed progress in reading, writing, and overall English language proficiency from the beginning to the end of the year in kindergarten. Emily’s students came to kindergarten with varying levels of knowledge of letter names, from just a few to none at all. By the end of the school year, both children knew all upper-case letters. One student knew all lower-case letters and the other student knew all but one. Both students had learned all letter sounds.

Both children were identified as at-risk on DIBELS. One student met the DIBELS benchmark for letter naming fluency, and the other was identified as at-risk in this area. This conflicted with the alphabet assessment given by Emily. Both children knew almost every single letter and sound. This discrepancy may have been due to the fact that the DIBELS assessment was a timed test. In addition, both students were at-risk in nonsense word reading. This assessment is used to determine if children can apply the alphabetic principle to unknown words. Again, this was contradictory to Emily’s running records and student writing samples, which may have been due to the nature of the assessment. In the context of real books, reading real words, both of the students were successful emergent readers and had met the benchmark reading level set by the district. However,
out of context, with isolated nonsense words, they had no other support for the meaning making process of real reading.

Both focus students in Emily’s class met the end of the year benchmark level C. In fact, one student exceeded this benchmark and was independently reading on level D. Both students read with high accuracy (100%) and excellent comprehension (100%). It was unclear why Emily did not conduct a running record with each student on a higher level text. With 100% accuracy and 100% comprehension on the text, students should have continued to a higher level.

Both children made progress as emergent writers. At the beginning of the year, both students represented their stories through pictures only. By the end of the year, students’ writing contained both pictures and print. Students spelled many high frequency words correctly, used a content word wall, and used invented spelling in their writing. The students’ concepts about print were also more developed. It was difficult to determine these students’ true writing progress due to the fact that the middle and end of the year samples from both students were prompted writing pieces for which they had a sentence stem to complete.

Each focus students’ English language proficiency increased during the school year. Both students were at entering at the beginning of the year, but their overall ELP varied by the end of the year, one at level 2 and the other at level 4. Interesting, both children made the least amount of gain in the domain of reading. The reading portion of the ACCESS for ELLs involves matching pictures to pictures, words to pictures, and sentences to pictures. However, when reading real books as the teacher conducted running records, all students showed much greater progress in their reading ability.
Summary

Overall, Emily indicated that her kindergarten Hispanic ELL students were not prepared for learning to read in kindergarten. Emily did not believe that this was due to parents’ lack of concern or care, but rather a lack of knowledge on how to help. Emily encouraged the parents of her Hispanic ELL students to read to them in Spanish. This encouragement allowed parents to support learning at home.

Emily expressed concern for her students’ social-emotional well-being. She made efforts to build her students’ confidence in speaking and reading. In addition she wanted to help her students develop socially. She provided opportunities for students to talk and play daily. These opportunities may have been a contributing factor to students’ overall gains in oral language proficiency.

Emily used the scripted RTI Tier II plans for the entire first semester of kindergarten. During the second semester, she wrote skill-based lesson plans for RTI Tier II reading intervention. Her lessons focused mainly on isolated skills (letter identification, phonemic awareness, phonics, and sight word recognition). Even with this skill-based approach to reading instruction, the students did not meet benchmarks on skill-based assessments such as DIBELS. In fact, even with multiple levels of intervention provided by Emily in Tier II and the ESL teacher in another small group; her Hispanic ELL students made the least amount of progress on the ACCESS for ELLs in the domain of reading.

Emily believed she matched RTI Tier II instruction to the needs of her Hispanic ELL students. However, she was still reviewing letters and sounds in May at which time one of the focus students knew all letters and sounds and the other focus students knew all sounds and all but one lower-case letter. This indicated that her instruction was not
matched to student needs. Overall, the types of skill based instruction she provided seemed to align with how students would be assessed on DIBELS.

Emily indicated that she used assessments to determine student progress in RTI Tier II. She did not use any form of weekly progress monitoring, only periodic assessments that were required by the district. Since there was no consistent measure of progress, teaching may not have been as intentional as it could have been for students. In fact, Emily even stated that her Hispanic ELL students were reading on grade level, but needed to stay in RTI Tier II to build their confidence. This may indicate that she could not distinguish between second language development and reading difficulty.

Case Study 3: Katie

Katie was a 45 year old Caucasian female. She was a kindergarten teacher at Heights Elementary School. Katie had a master’s degree in early childhood education. She had a total of 22 years of teaching experience, all of which had been in kindergarten. She had six years’ experience in working with English language learners. Each year, she had two to five ELLs in her kindergarten classroom. During the 2012-2013 school year, she had 20 kindergarten students. She had three Hispanic ELLs in her classroom, two of whom received RTI Tier II reading intervention.

Themes

From the interviews, observations, and document reviews, five themes emerged. Social-emotional well-being of students, lesson planning, lesson delivery, second language acquisition, and assessments all emerged as themes from the case (Appendix J). Many of these themes had sub-themes as well.
Social-Emotional Well-Being

Katie was concerned with her students’ social-emotional well-being. This was apparent in the classroom environment and as she interacted with students. She knew her students well and discussed their individual personality traits as well as their specific instructional needs. It was evident that Katie cared about her students. She took measures to avoid frustrating students during instruction.

Katie’s classroom environment supported students’ social-emotional well-being. She used a workshop approach in both reading and writing. Her classroom was not a quite place; instead students were engaged in discussion and collaboration each time I visited. During the RTI Tier II reading intervention lesson, students who did not receive RTI Tier II were all around the room and read both independently and with partners. They listened to books, read to each other, and used computers for reading or listening to stories online. This is what the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II experienced while other children worked in small groups with the teacher.

The classroom was filled with print. There were numerous children’s books on a variety of reading levels and topics. There were books spread throughout the classroom. There were word walls of high frequency words, vocabulary words, and word family words. Children’s work filled the walls. Materials were accessible to children, and it was evident that children had experience with this structure.

There were several areas for play in the classroom. Katie had a home living area, puzzles, games, blocks, and puppets. She also had a large fish tank positioned near the science center. The science center contained many objects for students to explore and
investigate. There was a loft in the classroom where children could go to play or read. This environment suggested that social play was important to Katie in her work with kindergarten children.

Katie believed that play was important for her children. She did not want academics to overtake students' social play time. As she discussed one of the students who received RTI Tier II, she shared that he needed that social interaction to build his oral language. She explained, “They need to go play; because that is what I am pulling them from, free-choice time. I am like, he just needs to go build with blocks or go play in the loft!” Katie knew that her students needed RTI Tier II reading intervention, but felt they needed time for social interaction to build their oral language in English.

Katie was very careful not to overwhelm or frustrate her Hispanic students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention. She was very aware of her students’ ability and used that knowledge in her work with students. She explained, “I don’t want [Student 3-1] to get frustrated. He can get frustrated really easy, so I don’t want to frustrate him by overwhelming him with too much information that he can’t do.” In all of the observed RTI Tier II lessons, I saw evidence that she provided appropriate support and interacted with her students in positive and reassuring manner.

Lesson Planning

Katie discussed her lesson planning process, and I reviewed her reading lesson plans. Three sub-themes emerged: documented lesson plans, instructional focus, and collaboration with the ESL teacher. These sub-themes were all deemed important to Katie in her work with Hispanic ELLs who received RTI Tier II reading intervention.
Not all lesson plans were provided. Katie offered a lesson plan from the beginning of the year and three from the end of the year (for the lessons I observed). Katie explained that she used the scripted RTI Tier II lesson plans provided by the school district. She stated, “I do use the Harcourt.” She felt that this was required by the district. However, during the observed lessons, I did not see a clinical, scripted approach. Katie was careful to foster a great deal of conversation with her Hispanic students who received RTI Tier II reading interventions. For example, the students had to segment the word “gull” and write it. Katie contextualized this word by referring back to the sea gulls in a book she had recently read aloud. As they read the decodable book; she stopped and asked them many questions. For example, she asked the students to tell her more about that bug. One student described it by color; the other student identified it by name and told what she know about the bug. This type of contextualization and conversation permeated all RTI Tier II lessons. This indicated Katie’s belief that basic skills were not enough for her students; they needed to build oral language and comprehension. She adapted the scripted lesson to accommodate what she believed her students’ needed.

Katie indicated that the instructional focus of RTI Tier II changed throughout the year. She explained, “First, they’ve got to learn the alphabet. Just basic, basic letter ID; what a letter is and what it looks like.” At the end of the year, her students still recited the alphabet and sounds using an alphabet chart at her small group table. She explained the change in instructional focus, “As time progressed, we were working on sounds and blending and just recognizing words.” I observed this during RTI Tier II lessons. Katie had students segmenting, writing, and blending words they would see in the decodable text selected for reading during the lesson. However, the focus I identified from RTI Tier
II reading intervention lessons was on comprehension and conversations that served to build oral language; the skills were embedded but not the main focus.

In addition, Katie indicated that she collaborated with the ESL teacher as she planned for RTI Tier II for her Hispanic ELL students. Katie explained:

I do sometimes meet with the ELL teacher if she and I are both noticing something that needs to be addressed more, either with her or myself. If I notice something, I will ask, ‘Can you work with them on this?’ and she is good about saying ‘Okay, this is what we did and he could not do this or…’ so she and I work well like that.

Katie and the ESL teacher both worked with the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II. Katie pulled them for small group instruction twice daily; one time for Tier I and again for Tier II. The ESL teacher pulled one student daily for an additional small group lesson and the other student two to three days per week.

For lesson planning, Katie identified that she used district RTI Tier II scripted lessons. She identified basic skills as the instructional focus; however, she incorporated a great deal of comprehension and conversation within the lessons. She worked closely with the ESL teacher to provide appropriate instruction for her Hispanic ELL students receiving RTI Tier II.

Lesson Delivery

For the theme of lesson delivery, three sub themes emerged. One-on-one instruction, materials, and repetition were all considered important to Katie in regards to lesson delivery.
Katie used small group and one-on-one instruction for RTI Tier II reading intervention lesson delivery. Lesson plans and observations revealed the group size was typically from one to three students. The RTI Tier II group consisted of only Hispanic ELLs. Katie worked with one student one-on-one most often. She explained

I think, for him, he was just so lacking; he needed one-on-one. He cannot get it in a small group when there are 3 or 4 other children, because he needs one-on-one instruction to focus on me, to hear and to concentrate. There are not as many distractions as there are in small group.

She did pull in the other student(s) based on their need and the instructional focus of the lesson.

Materials used for RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons varied. Katie used an alphabet chart, books, picture cards, letter cards, alphabet dice, and dry erase boards. In each of the three lesson observations, decodable texts were used. Katie indicated using the Harcourt ELL text as well. In all three observed lessons, student read a Harcourt decodable book and the ELL book. The ELL book contained a picture and only one word on each page. She shared:

I do use the decodable books from Harcourt, and then I use the ELL book from Harcourt. They are not great pictures, but for him… I’ll be honest; I did not use them last year because the ones I had because it didn’t suit their needs. But for him, it has been good just to see a picture and a word and to go from there. And trying to get him to talk more about those things he sees.
Katie had children read sight words and stretch and write simple words before reading the book. Katie always pointed out to students that the words they were reviewing would be in their book.

Katie believed that repetition was important in lesson delivery. She explained that RTI Tier II reading intervention provided, “repetitive practice daily.” Many times during the interview, Katie shared that her students needed to hear the same thing over and over and have more practice with the skills. All of the lessons observed followed predictable, repetitive pattern.

**Second Language Acquisition**

Katie recognized that Hispanic students learning English were not only learning to read, but were also acquiring English as a second language. She shared, “First, they’ve got to learn the language and then figure out how it works and how to apply it to their life and to their learning.”

She spent a great deal of time fostering student talk in her classroom and in RTI Tier II. She explained, “I want to get them talking as much as possible.” This was evident in the discussions she fostered during RTI Tier II reading interventions. She explained, “We did a lot of just looking at the pictures and talking about the pictures. Just talking! Just trying to have conversations; just trying to get him used to hearing and making words.” Overall, Katie exhibited an understanding of the important role of oral language development in the process of acquiring English as a second language.

**Assessments**
Katie reported using many assessments to place students into the RTI Tier II reading intervention group. She explained:

We use the phonics inventory, we do use DIBELS. We use running records: the Rigby running records. Other school assessments, which we have 10 million-gazillion, that I don’t have the right names for… just school-wide assessments.

This indicated that Katie believed there were possibly too many assessments given. She narrowed down the assessments used for placement in RTI Tier II reading intervention. She explained, “A lot of it is based on their DIBELS scores and just teacher observations.” Katie shared that her personal observations of children helped her to determine their needs in RTI Tier II reading.

Katie consistently documented students’ ability on her lesson plans. For example, she wrote a plus sign below the objective if all students were successful. If a student had difficulty with a certain skill or task, she documented their initials so she could go back and review with specific students. This indicated she used ongoing observations and documentation of students’ ability to guide her instruction. She wanted to connect her instruction and assessments. Katie explained, “They should all go together and I am hoping that it does. I just think that it does all go together with what we are teaching them in whole group and small group and intervention and that is what I am assessing.”

Katie shared that students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention made progress in reading. She explained, “In the assessments, and in the DIBELS scores, and in the running records. Even in their writing, I can see growth.” She did share her belief that Hispanic students took longer to catch up in reading than other ELL students. She attributed this to cultural factors. She shared, “They seem to be more immersed in their
Spanish culture and language than to be open to learning the English language.” This was interesting because Katie never mentioned a lack of motivation from her students. For the two Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention, she explained:

[Student 3-2] has almost caught up. [Student 3-1] has not caught up; he is about 3 nine-weeks behind. He is where some of the other students came in August; that is where he is just starting to be.

She shared that Student 3-1 will be repeating kindergarten the following school year.

Overall, Katie believed that the social-emotional well-being of her students was important. She provided a caring classroom environment and many opportunities for students to interact socially with their peers. Katie used the scripted RTI Tier II lesson plans, but focused more on comprehension and conversations during the intervention time. She also knew how important oral language development was in the process of acquiring the English language. She provided many opportunities for students to talk throughout the day. Finally, assessment played an important role in identification and documenting progress of Hispanic students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention.

*Focus Students*

Two Hispanic ELL children were chosen as focus students from Katie’s classroom. One was a girl and one was a boy. Both students were born in the United States. The focus students entered kindergarten with varying levels of language proficiency and print knowledge. I collected and analyzed assessments that had been administered by Katie throughout the school year. The writing samples were taken from beginning, middle, and end of the school year. For each student, letter identification,
DIBELS results, running records, and ACCESS for ELLs from multiple points in the school year were analyzed.

*Focus Student 3-1.* Student 3-1 was a five year old boy of Hispanic descent. Only Spanish was spoken in his home. This was his first school experience. At the beginning of kindergarten he could not identify any letters or sounds (Table 5.27). He had not yet developed sound-symbol relationships with letters in English. This was evident in his beginning of the year writing sample (Figure 5.19). He had only colored the middle of the page red.

By mid-year, he had learned many letters. He knew 20 upper-case letters and 11 lower-case letters. He had not yet developed sound-symbol correspondence and could not identify letter sounds. His middle of the year writing sample showed that he had developed more concepts about print (Figure 5.20). He wrote a string of letters and symbols on the line beneath the pictures. The letters were together without spaces and there was no sound-symbol correspondence. However, he had begun to understand that print carried meaning in writing and attempted to include print in his own writing. In addition, his drawing was more detailed than his earlier sample. The mid-year sample included people-like figures.

By the end of the school year, this student had learned all letters and all but three sounds. The last writing sample indicated his knowledge of the alphabetic principle (Figure 5.21). His writing was more extensive and print awareness was even more evident. He conveyed his story in both pictures and print. For this piece, he had one-on-one support from the teacher and used a word wall as a resource for spelling. In fact, he
spelled almost every single word correctly. This sample indicated what he was able to accomplish with individual support, but may not reflect his independent writing abilities. Overall, student 3-1 made exceptional progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence over the course of his kindergarten year.

Table 5.27

*Focus Student 3-1 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upper-case Letters</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower-case Letters</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Sounds</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 5.19.** Focus student 3-1 beginning of the year writing sample.

**Figure 5.20.** Focus student 3-1 middle of the year writing sample.
(This weekend I played outside. It snowed a little. I was very cold. I was happy to see the snow.)

*Figure 5.21.* Focus student 3-1 end of the year writing sample.

Student 3-1 took the DIBELS assessment at all three testing points during the year (Table 5.28). Based on beginning of the year assessment, he was at-risk in both areas: first sound fluency and letter naming fluency. He scored a zero on both of these sub-tests. This assessment indicated that he needed intensive instructional support. On the middle of the year DIBELS assessment, his first sound fluency score had increased from a zero to a 10 and letter naming fluency had increased from a one to a 27. Sub-tests for phoneme segmentation and nonsense words were given for the first time during this testing period; student 3-1 was identified as at-risk in these areas. Student 3-1 was considered at-risk in all areas for the mid-year DIBELS assessment. For the end of the year assessment, he had
made progress in all areas except nonsense word fluency (whole words read). On the letter naming fluency sub-test he increased his score to 53. This indicated he was some-risk rather than at-risk in this area. Overall, at all three testing points during the year, Student 3-1 was identified as at-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on many sub-tests. He was identified as needed intensive instructional support.

Table 5.28

**Focus Student 3-1 DIBELS Assessment Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Sound Fluency</td>
<td>0***</td>
<td>10***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Naming Fluency</td>
<td>0***</td>
<td>27***</td>
<td>53**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>14***</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense Word Fluency (correct letter sounds)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>5***</td>
<td>8***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense Word Fluency (whole word read automatically)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0***</td>
<td>0***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low Risk / Established / Core Support
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support
*** At Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support
NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period
Katie also administered running records with Student 3-1 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.29). This student showed little growth in his reading level from December to May. In December, he was not yet reading independently. In February, he began to read very simple text independently and was independent on level AA. His accuracy was 94%, but Katie did not complete the comprehension section of the running record with him. The next running record completed with Student 3-1 was in May. At that time he had progressed to a level A independently with 96% accuracy and 100% comprehension. With high accuracy and comprehension on level A, it is unclear why Katie did not continue to a higher level text for another running record. The district benchmark level set for the end of kindergarten was a level C. Student 3-1 did not meet this benchmark expectation.

Table 5.29

*Focus Student 3-1 Running Record Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined

The ELP of Student 3-1 was assessed at the beginning and end of the year (Table 5.30). At the beginning of the year, his ELP level was *entering* (level 1) in all areas. Student 3-1 made very little gains in proficiency during his kindergarten year. By the end
of the year assessment, he had increased his overall ELP from a 1.0 to a 1.5. All domains remained at the *entering* level. Katie indicated that Student 3-1 was very shy and rarely spoke in the classroom. In fact, she often met with him one-on-one so that he would have to speak in order to converse with her. Overall, Student 3-1 gained very little proficiency in English during his Kindergarten year.

Table 5.30

*Focus Student 3-1 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Assessment</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Oral Language</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of the Year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the Year</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 3-1 showed little overall progress over the course of his kindergarten year. One area in which he did make great progress was on letter and sound knowledge. At the beginning of the year, he did not know any letters or sounds, but by the end of the year, he knew all letters and all but three sounds. However, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated that he still had a deficit in this area. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test. I was unable to analyze his independent writing ability, due to the end of the year sample being a piece completed with the teacher. He made very little progress as an independent reader and did not meet the end of the year benchmark level set by the district. His ELP scores remained at the *entering* level from
the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Katie shared that Student 3-1 would be repeating kindergarten the following school year because he did not meet end of the year kindergarten expectations.

*Focus Student 3-2.* Student 3-2 was a six year old girl of Hispanic descent. This was her first experience with public school. She entered kindergarten with the ability to name many upper- and lower-case letters; 20 upper-case and 23 lower-case (Table 5.31). She did not know the sounds of any letters. However, her beginning of the year writing sample (Figure 5.22) taken from late September revealed she had already begun to use some sound-symbol correspondence. She had labeled shapes and described the roof color of a house.

By mid-year, she had learned all letters and sounds, even though not all letters had been explicitly taught by this point in the school year. Her middle of the year writing sample showed that she had developed more concepts about print (Figure 5.23). She had written a complete sentence with high frequency words spelled correctly. She used both pictures and print to convey meaning.

The last writing sample indicated her knowledge of the alphabetic principle (Figure 5.24). This piece was a graphic organizer for in which she included animals that live on a farm. She used invented spelling for some words and spelled some of the sight words correctly. There was a very small space for writing; this may have caused her writing to be less organized. She wrote in complete sentences, but had to continue her writing above what she had written in order to complete her writing. Student 3-2 made
exceptional progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence over the course of her kindergarten year.

Table 5.31

_**Focus Student 3-2 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results**_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upper-case Letters</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower-case Letters</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Sounds</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5.22.* Focus student 3-2 beginning of the year writing sample.
(I like to eat bananas)

Figure 5.23. Focus student 3-2 middle of the year writing sample.

(A baby duck lives on a farm. Animals live on a farm. A cow lies on a farm. A pig lives on a farm.)

Figure 5.24. Focus student 3-2 end of the year writing sample.
Student 3-2 took the DIBELS assessment at all three testing points during the year (Table 5.28). Based on beginning of the year assessment, she was identified as some-risk in both areas: first sound fluency and letter naming fluency. In one minute she was able to identify the first sound of 21 words and name 25 letters. The scores from this assessment indicated that she needed strategic instructional support. On the middle of the year DIBELS assessment, his first sound fluency score increased to a 33; however, she was still at-risk in this area. For letter naming fluency, she increased to a 61. This score indicated she was at benchmark for this area. Sub-tests for phoneme segmentation and nonsense words were given for the first time during this testing period; student 3-2 was identified as some-risk in these areas. Overall, Student 3-2 was considered some-risk for reading difficulty based on the mid-year DIBELS assessment. For the end of the year assessment, she made progress in phoneme segmentation and nonsense word fluency. She decreased in letter naming fluency and stayed the same for nonsense word fluency (whole words read). Overall, at all three testing points during the year, Student 3-2 was identified as some-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on many sub-tests. She was identified as *needed strategic instructional support.*
Table 5.32

Focus Student 3-2 DIBELS Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Sound Fluency</td>
<td>21**</td>
<td>33***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Naming Fluency</td>
<td>25**</td>
<td>61*</td>
<td>53**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>50**</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense Word Fluency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(correct letter sounds)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>27**</td>
<td>47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense Word Fluency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(whole word read</td>
<td>0***</td>
<td>0***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>automatically)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low Risk / Established / Core Support
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support
*** At Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support

NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period

Katie also administered running records with Student 3-2 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.5). This student showed exceptional growth in her reading level from December to May. In December, she was at a level B. She had high accuracy (98%) and comprehension (100%). In February, she read a level D text with 99% accuracy. Katie did not complete the comprehension portion of the running record. There was no running record conducted between February and May. At the end of the year, she read a level E text with 98% accuracy and 100% comprehension. It is unclear
why Katie did not continue to a higher level for another running record at each testing point. The district benchmark level set for the end of kindergarten was a level C. Student 1-1 exceeded this benchmark expectation.

Table 5.33

Focus Student 3-2 Running Record Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Reading Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined

The ELP of Student 3-2 was assessed at the beginning and end of the year (Table 5.34). At the beginning of the year, her overall ELP level was beginning (level 2). Her ELP for listening and speaking was more advanced than her reading and writing. Student 3-2 rapidly gained proficiency during her kindergarten year. By the end of the year assessment, she had increased her overall ELP from a 2.6 to a 4.9. Her listening, speaking, and reading were considered to be bridging or reaching, both of which are comparable to native English speakers of her age. She scored the lowest in the domain of writing, in which she was still developing. Because her overall composite score was a 4.9, she will no longer qualify for English as a Second Language (ESL) service for the 2013-2014 school year. Overall, according to the ACCESS for ELLs assessment, Student 3-2 has
reached an ELP level comparable to native English speakers her age and no longer needs ESL services.

Table 5.34

**Focus Student 3-2 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Assessment</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Oral Language</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning of the Year</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End of the Year</strong></td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 3-2 showed progress on each assessment she was given. By the end of the year, she was an emergent reader and writer. She exceeded the benchmark set by the district for independent reading level. Her letter and sound knowledge assessment given by Katie indicated that she knew all of the sounds and all but one lower-case letter. Her knowledge of letters and sounds were apparent in her writing as well. However, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated that she had a deficit in this area. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test. Student 3-2 accurately read many sight words and simple words (box, Sam, bed, bear) in text. However, the DIBELS assessment results indicated that she had a deficit in reading whole nonsense words automatically (which are used to access alphabetic principle knowledge). Her ELP scores increased in all areas. In fact, she exited ESL due to having a 4.9 overall composite score.
Student 3-2 did not show signs of having difficulty in learning to read. Instead, she showed rapid growth in ELP, reading, and writing as indicated by various assessments.

Themes from Focus Students

The students from Katie’s classroom showed progress in reading, writing, and overall English language proficiency from the beginning to the end of the year in kindergarten. However, the amount of progress was very different. Student 3-1 made very little progress, while student 3-2 made drastic progress during the school year. Katie’s students came to kindergarten with varying levels of knowledge of letter names, from none at all to almost all. By the end of the school year, both children knew all letters. One student knew all letter sounds and the other student knew all but three.

Neither student met benchmark overall on DIBELS. Both students were identified as some-risk on the DIBELS sub-test for letter naming fluency. This conflicted with the alphabet assessment given by Katie; both children knew every single letter of the alphabet. This discrepancy may have been due to the fact that the DIBELS assessment was a timed test. In addition, one student benchmarked in nonsense word fluency, but the other was at-risk. However, both children were at-risk for reading whole nonsense words automatically. This assessment was used to determine if children can apply the alphabetic principle to unknown words. Again, this was contradictory to Katie’s running records and student writing samples, which may have been due to the nature of the assessment.

Katie’s students were at different independent reading levels at the end of the year. Student 3-1, was at a level A which indicated he was not at benchmark for independent reading. Student 3-2 class exceeded the end of the year benchmark level C by reading independently on level E. Both students read with high accuracy (96-98%)
and excellent comprehension (100%). It was unclear why Emily did not conduct a running record with each student on a higher level text. With high accuracy and comprehension on the text, students should have continued to a higher level in order for their true independent level to be established.

Both children made progress as emergent writers. At the beginning of the year, both students represented their stories through pictures and Student 3-2 included print. By the end of the year, students’ writing contained both pictures and print. Students spelled many high frequency words correctly, used a word wall as a reference, and used invented spelling in their writing. The students’ concepts about print were also more developed.

Each focus students’ English language proficiency increased during the school year. However, the overall ELP for her students were very different. Student 3-1 was still at a level 1 proficiency level by the end of the year. Student 3-2 had scored above a 4.8 which meant she would be dismissed from ESL services.

Katie shared that Student 3-2 was not consistently in the RTI Tier II reading group. She moved in and out of intervention based on the skills being taught. Overall, assessments for student 3-2 showed no indications her of having difficulty learning to read.

Assessments conducted throughout the school year indicated that Student 3-1 needed additional support in reading. Katie responded to his need by providing RTI Tier II reading intervention daily since the beginning of the school year. Most often the RTI Tier II for Student 3-1 was delivered in a one-on-one setting. Even with the additional, intensive support provided for Student 3-1, he did not make enough progress and Katie decided to have him repeat kindergarten the following school year.
Summary

Overall, Katie expressed concern for her students’ social-emotional well-being. She made efforts to build her students’ confidence in speaking and reading. Katie focused on building language and providing opportunities for children to talk and play throughout the day. These opportunities may have been a contributing factor to students’ overall gains in oral language proficiency.

Katie used the scripted RTI Tier II plans for kindergarten. Katie adapted these lessons to incorporate interaction, discussion, and a focus on comprehension. Katie believed that her Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention needed basic reading skills such as letter identification, phonics, and recognizing high frequency words. Even with this skill-based approach to reading instruction, the students did not meet benchmarks on skill-based assessments such as DIBELS.

Katie believed she matched RTI Tier II instruction to the needs of her Hispanic ELL students. However, she was still reviewing letters and sounds in May at which time both students knew all letter names; one knew all sounds and the other only lacked three letter sounds. This indicated that her instruction was not matched to student needs. Overall, the types of skill based instruction she provided seemed to align with how students would be assessed on DIBELS.

Katie indicated that she used assessments to determine student progress in RTI Tier II. She did not use any form of weekly progress monitoring, only periodic assessments that were required by the district. Since there was no consistent measure of progress, teaching may not have been as intentional as it could have been for students. In fact, Katie even stated that one of her Hispanic ELL students was reading on grade level, but
needed to stay in RTI Tier II to build confidence. This student had already exceeded the end of the year independent reading level by February. Katie shared that one student was repeating kindergarten because he was so far behind, but believed it was related to his lack of proficiency in English. This data may indicate that Katie could not distinguish between second language development and reading difficulty.

*Case Study 4: Lucy*

Lucy was a 51 year old Caucasian female. She was a kindergarten teacher at Mountain View Elementary. Lucy had a master’s degree in elementary and early childhood education. She had 28 years of teaching experience, 20 of which had been in kindergarten. She had also taught first, second, and fourth grade. During the 2012-2013 school year, Lucy team taught with another kindergarten teacher. Lucy taught reading to both classes while the other teacher was responsible for math and science lessons. Lucy had worked with children learning English for many years. She had eight Hispanic ELL students in her reading class, and all eight received RTI Tier II reading intervention.

*Themes*

From the interviews, observations, and document reviews, four themes emerged. Parent engagement, social-emotional well-being of students, lesson planning, and assessments all emerged as themes from the case (Appendix J). Many of these themes had sub-themes as well.
Parent Engagement

Lucy believed that parents were important to the success of her Hispanic students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention. She believed that the support students received at home had an impact on their education. She explained:

I have always had very supportive parents. They want the best for their children. They are willing to help at home and work with their children. They do not always know what to do or how to help, but they are always willing. I think that makes a big difference in my students.

Lucy identified that parents were not always sure how to help their children at home, but that they were willing to do so. Lucy sent materials home with students so that students would know what to work on with their children. She stated, “I also send home books every week. I send home 5 books for them to read at home.” Lucy also sent homework in a homework journal for parents to complete with their children. Overall, Lucy felt that parents were supportive and were willing to help their children at home with school work.

Lucy mentioned several times her belief that Hispanic students were no different from any other child in her classroom. She claimed that, for them, learning to read was no different from the process that any other child goes through. Lucy stated that her Hispanic children who received RTI Tier II intervention were as equally prepared for school upon entry in kindergarten as other students. She explained, “They come with what they have and we just go from there. I do not think they are any more or less prepared.” However, when she discussed student progress later, she contradicted this statement. She said, “They come in farther behind so they have farther to go.”
Overall, Lucy felt that parents played an important role in their child’s education. Supporting learning at home was one way that she believed parents helped. She stated the parents of her Hispanic ELL students were willing to help at home. Lucy shared conflicting thoughts about her Hispanic ELL students’ school readiness. She stated they were no more or less prepared than other students, but later shared that they came in father behind.

Social-Emotional Well-Being

Lucy was aware of her students’ social-emotional well-being. She shared that providing a safe environment and building self-confidence were important for her Hispanic ELL students. This was apparent in the classroom environment and her interaction with students.

Lucy’s classroom environment supported students’ social-emotional well-being. She used a workshop approach in both reading. The classroom hummed with student reading and conversations. During the RTI Tier II reading intervention lesson, students who did not receive RTI Tier II were all around the room and read both independently and with partners, listened to books, and played phonics games on the computer. This is what the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II experienced while other children worked in small groups with the teacher.

The classroom was filled with print. There were numerous children’s books on a variety of reading levels and topics. There were word walls of high frequency words, vocabulary words, and word family words. The classroom had games, a loft, and a
playhouse. There were small, relaxing chairs all around the room for children to sit and read. Lucy described the importance of her classroom environment:

I think a print rich environment helps. In the classroom, there is print everywhere. We have print on the walls and ceilings. We have books all over the room… all kinds of books. They have places they can read and places they can write.

Materials were accessible to children, and it was evident that children had experience with this structure. The Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention were at the small group reading table with Lucy.

Lucy wanted to provide an environment in which her students felt safe. She believed this helped build their self-confidence. She felt that building a classroom community would help achieve this goal. She explained:

A community is another important part. I try to foster a community of learners. I want them to feel safe. I want them to help each other and feel comfortable, that makes them more confident.

During each observation, I saw children working together and helping one another. Lucy was very kind to all of her students. She used a soft, encouraging tone. She praised her students often. She encouraged students to work together. There were many pairs of students around the room partner reading and listening to books and working on the computers together. If students were off task, Lucy encouraged another student to go over and help them get back to reading or listening to reading. Lucy also tried to avoid frustrating her students. She aimed to align her instruction with her students’ ability. She explained, “It is also important to just start where they are. I figure out what they know
and build from there.” Overall, Lucy’s students seemed happy in school and excited about each lesson I observed.

Lesson Planning

Lesson planning emerged as a theme in this case. Documented lesson plans, instructional focus, materials, student engagement, and collaboration with the ESL teacher all emerged as sub-themes. Lucy did not use the scripted RTI Tier II lesson plans provided by the district. In fact, she did not mention them at any point during our conversations.

Lucy only provided lesson plans for the weeks during which I observed. She provided both her Tier I and Tier II reading lesson plans. As I reviewed the lesson plans, I realized they were very repetitive. Tier I small group and Tier II small group lessons were almost identical. Both Tier I small group lessons and RTI Tier II lesson plans indicated a focus on phonics and sight words. This aligned with her belief that Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II needed repetition in instruction. She explained, “It just has to be repetitive. They have to do it over and over before they can get it on their own. So we do a lot of the same thing over and over again.” This repetition was evident in the observed lessons as well. For each observed lesson, students sounded out CVC words, wrote the words, and read the words to one another. After that, they read a decodable text chorally. There was no discussion of the text before, during, or after reading. Finally, the small group lesson concluded with students engaging in some type of skill-based activity on the SmartBoard.
The instruction of RTI Tier II reading intervention was focused on skills such as letter naming, sounding out and blending words, and reading high frequency words automatically. Lucy confirmed this focus:

We have to start with letters and sounds. They have to know that before they can read. So we spend most of our time on learning letters and the sounds they make.

Then we move on to blending words. I just really focus on the basics with them.

At the time of the research, Lucy was focused on reading and writing CVC words. She described the Tier II instruction and stated, “Mostly it is just building and reading words. I want to make sure they can read and write CVC words.” Comprehension instruction was not observed during any of the three lessons. For each lesson observed, students choral read a decodable book, closed it and moved on to the next skill-based activity. There were no comprehension questions or conversations present in any lesson.

The materials used for RTI Tier II reading intervention reflected the skill-based focus. As documented in the lesson plans, phonics and sight words were the main focus of RTI Tier II lessons and the materials supported these goals. Lucy stated, “I use the decodable books from Harcourt and the sight words for the week. I use those now, to make sure they can blend and decode words and read the sight words automatically.” Decoding and blending words was an important aspect of reading to Lucy. She listed the materials used for instruction. She stated, “We use the cubes to build CVC words and change the letter cubes to make different words. I also use writing, I have them stretch the CVC word and write it. Then they read it back.” This was seen in each lesson observed.
Student engagement also emerges as a sub-theme in lesson planning. The students were actively engaged during the RTI Tier II lessons observed. They were all happy; smiles and giggles permeated the small group table. Lucy described student engagement:

They use the SmartBoard a lot. They read CVC words and sight words. They build the CVC words on the SmartBoard too. They write the CVC words on the table and read them off. Each child gets to read a word and the others have to listen and then find the word the child read and erase it from their list of words. They are also peer helpers; they help each other a lot.

Her description was validated through my RTI Tier II lesson observations. In addition, students talked to Lucy and to each other throughout the lesson. Most of the discussions focused on the correctness of the CVC words written as well as the reading of those words.

Finally, Lucy shared that she planned with the ESL teacher. She explained, “We talk to make sure they are getting all they need.” Lucy shared responsibility for providing instruction to her Hispanic ELL students. She stated, “I do all of the reading intervention and the ESL teacher pulls them too.” Lucy took full responsibility for providing RTI Tier II to her Hispanic ELL students.

Assessment

Lucy reported using several assessments to place students into the RTI Tier II reading intervention group. She explained:
At the beginning of the year they do the ACCESS to see where their English is. I also use observations and the benchmark assessment, running records. I also use the observational survey; the concepts about print. Although she used assessments to determine students’ need for RTI Tier II reading intervention, she felt that she made the final decision of who needed intervention. She stated, “The teacher decides who actually needs the intervention.” DIBELS played a role in the identification of students who needed RTI Tier II, but Lucy did not believe this was the determining factor. She explained, “There is a ‘watch list’ of students from the DIBELS. That is just those who scored low enough for us to keep an eye on and make sure they are progressing.” There was no indication that Lucy used ongoing, weekly assessments to evaluate students’ progress in reading. In fact, assessments were not the determining factor for students to move out of RTI Tier II. Lucy explained that students stayed in RTI Tier II, “Until they can blend. That is what they have to be able to do to get out of the intervention group.” This indicated that blending was the most important component of reading for Lucy.

Lucy believed that in relation to other children, her Hispanic ELL students progressed more during the year. She stated:

I think they make more progress. They come in farther behind so they have farther to go. They have to learn English and learn to read at the same time.

Because they have more to learn, they progress more.

She firmly believed that all of her Hispanic ELL students receiving RTI Tier II reading interventions had made progress. She stated, “They do make progress, they all do.” However, she shared that not all students catch up to their native English speaking peers.
She explained, “They are just spread out like the native English speakers. Some do catch up, some do not; they are at different levels just like the kids who speak English.” Even though she expressed that all students had made progress, all of the students in the RTI Tier II reading group had received intervention since the beginning of the year.

**Focus Students**

Four Hispanic ELL children were chosen as focus students from Lucy’s classroom. There were three girls and one boy. All four students were born in the United States. The focus students entered kindergarten with varying levels of language proficiency and print knowledge. I collected and analyzed assessments that had been administered by Lucy throughout the school year. Writing samples were taken from the middle and end of the school year. For each student, letter identification, DIBELS results, running records, and *ACCESS for ELLs* from multiple points in the school year were analyzed.

*Focus Student 4-1.* Student 4-1 was a five year old boy of Hispanic descent. This was his first experience with public school. He entered kindergarten with the ability to name four upper-case letters and five lower-case letters (Table 5.35). He had not yet developed sound-symbol relationships.

By mid-year, he had learned almost all of the letters; 26 upper-case and 24 lower-case letters. Even though not all letters had been explicitly taught by this point in the school year, he had learned all but two of them. He had also learned 23 letter sounds. His middle of the year writing sample reflected his emerging ability to apply sound symbol relationships (Figure 5.25). Interestingly, he did not use pictures, only print. His first
sentence was very clear; however, after the first few words the sound correspondence was difficult to decipher. Lucy even made a note on the sample that Student 4-1 could not read his own writing beyond the first sentence.

By the end of the school year, this student had learned all but two lower-case letters and all letter sounds. The last writing sample indicated his knowledge of the alphabetic principle (Figure 5.6). His writing was more extensive and print concepts were more evident. He had used both pictures and print in this piece. He had spelled many sight words correctly (like, the, my) and had used invented spelling for other words (bunny). Lucy recorded what he wrote on the left of his writing piece. His writing did not convey a clear meaning. This sample was a prompted writing piece about bats. The lack of clarity in his writing may have indicated a lack of knowledge about the prompted topic. Overall, Student 4-1 made exceptional progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence during his kindergarten year.

Table 5.35

*Focus Student 4-1 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upper-case Letters</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower-case Letters</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Sounds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(I like dogs...)

**Figure 5.25.** Focus student 4-1 middle of the year writing sample.

**Figure 5.26.** Focus student 4-1 end of the year writing sample.
Student 4-1 took the DIBELS assessment at all three testing points during the year (Table 5.36). Based on beginning of the year assessment, he was at-risk in both areas: first sound fluency and letter naming fluency. This assessment indicated that he needed intensive instructional support. On the middle of the year DIBELS assessment, his first sound fluency score had increased from a zero to a 31 and letter naming fluency had increased from a one to a 35. Sub-tests for phoneme segmentation and nonsense words were given for the first time during this testing period; student 4-1 was identified as at-risk in these areas. Even with great increases in scores, he was still identified as at-risk in all areas for this testing period. For the end of the year assessment, he had made progress in all areas except nonsense word fluency (whole words read). Overall, at all three testing points during the year, Student 4-1 was identified as at-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on all sub-tests. He was identified as needed intensive instructional support.
Table 5.36

*Focus Student 4-1 DIBELS Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Sound Fluency</strong></td>
<td>0***</td>
<td>31***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Naming Fluency</strong></td>
<td>1***</td>
<td>35***</td>
<td>46***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>23***</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong> (correct letter sounds)**</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>7***</td>
<td>21***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong> (whole word read automatically)**</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*  Low Risk / Established / Core Support
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support
*** At Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support
NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period

Lucy also administered running records to Student 4-1 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.37). This student showed exceptional growth in his reading level from December to May. In December, he read level A texts but was reading on level D by May. He progressed from December to February moving from a level A to a level B. His accuracy and comprehension were both high. His only miscue was on the word “rabbit”, which he replaced with “bunnies.” This indicated he was actively making meaning as he read. By March he had progressed as an emergent reader to a level C with
96% accuracy and 80% comprehension. His miscues indicated he used meaning and visual cues as he read; he changed the word “dig” to “big.” This was consistent with his letter identification assessment, in which he confused b and d. His other miscue was on the word “cow” which he replaced with the word “moo.” This may indicate he did not know the name of the animal in English. He also self-corrected a miscue on “will” for which he first said “we” but then corrected his miscue.

By May, he read independently on level D. His accuracy was at 99%. He miscued on the word “put”, sounding it out and used a short vowel /u/. He often sounded out unknown words in the text. His comprehension was at 97%. He self-monitored by correcting miscues as he read. According to the high accuracy and comprehension on this text, a running record on a higher level should have been conducted. However, Lucy noted that his oral reading fluency included choppy phrasing. This could be indicative of his developing spoken language proficiency rather than reading fluency. Student 4-1 exceeded the district benchmark set a level C and read independently on level D at the end of kindergarten.

Table 5.37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ELP of Student 4-1 was assessed at the beginning and end of the year (Table 5.38). At the beginning of the year, his ELP level was *entering* (level 1) in all areas. Student 4-1 gained proficiency in English during his kindergarten year. By the end of the year assessment, he had increased his overall ELP from a 1.0 to a 2.2. His listening, speaking, and reading proficiency have all progressed to beginning (level 2). Writing had progressed form a 1.0 to a 1.9, remaining at *entering* level. His reading increased from a 1.0 to a 2.9; which was his largest gain according to the *ACCESS for ELLs* assessment. Overall, he was more proficient in English in all domains of literacy at the end of his kindergarten year.

Table 5.38

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Student 4-1 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELP Assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning of the Year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End of the Year</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 4-1 showed progress on each assessment given. By the end of the year, he was an emergent reader and writer; however, there were several contradictions in the assessments. His letter and sound knowledge assessment given by Lucy indicated that he knew all except two letters and all letter sounds. His knowledge of letters and sounds was apparent in his writing as well. However, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated
that he had a deficit in this area. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test. Running records showed his ability to accurately read many sight words and simple words in text. He read with high accuracy and comprehension. However, the DIBELS assessment results indicated that he had a deficit in reading nonsense words even though he sounded out many unknown words (evident in his running records). His ELP increased in all areas by a small amount; his overall ELP score moved up one proficiency level. Overall, Student 4-1 did not show signs of having difficulty in learning to read. Instead, he showed growth in his ELP and increased in reading and writing as indicated by various assessments.

**Focus Student 4-2.** Student 4-2 was a six year old girl of Hispanic descent. This was her first experience with public school. She entered kindergarten with the ability to name just a few upper- and lower-case letters; 2 upper-case and 3 lower-case (Table 5.39). She had not yet developed sound-symbol relationships.

By mid-year, she had learned many more letters and sounds. She knew 17 upper-case and 15 lower-case letters. In addition, she had learned 15 letter sounds. Her middle of the year writing sample showed that she had developed some concepts about print (Figure 5.27). She used only print; she did not draw a picture. Beyond her first sentence she wrote only high frequency words in familiar patters (I like the..., I see a...) but did not form complete thoughts. This may indicate that she did not yet realize that writing carried meaning.

By the end of the school year, this student had learned all letters and sounds. The last writing sample indicated her knowledge of the alphabetic principle (Figure 5.28). Her
writing was more extensive and print awareness was even more evident. She used invented spelling many words (because, lunch, chair). She also spelled many high frequency words correctly (I, like, my, see, to). She used many details in this piece and even included onomatopoeia. She conveyed her story in both pictures and print. This writing was a teacher prompted piece about bats. The teacher wrote the correct spelling on the student’s writing sample. Student 4-2 made exceptional progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence over the course of her kindergarten year.

Table 5.39

*Focus Student 4-2 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upper-case Letters</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower-case Letters</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Sounds</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(I like the a pumpkin. I like the a my. I see a.)

Figure 5.27. Focus student 4-2 middle of the year writing sample.
Kindergarten EL Reading Intervention

(Eek! Eek! said a bat. I like my bat. I see my bat. His name is Lauren because he like his name. My bat like to eat fish. He says, yum, yum, yum. My bat sat on a chair. He likes to sit on a chair. He sat to eat lunch and feed babies.)

Figure 5.28. Focus student 4-2 end of the year writing sample.

Student 4-2 took the DIBELS assessment at all three testing points during the year (Table 5.40). Based on beginning of the year assessment, she was at-risk in both areas: first sound fluency and letter naming fluency. This assessment indicated that she needed intensive instructional support. On the middle of the year DIBELS assessment, his first sound fluency score had increased from a six to an 18 and letter naming fluency had increased from a zero to a 23. Sub-tests for phoneme segmentation and nonsense words were given for the first time during this testing period; student 4-2 was identified as at-
risk in these areas as well. Even with great increases in scores, she was still identified as at-risk in all areas for this testing period. For the end of the year assessment, she had made progress in all areas. She was still considered at risk in letter naming fluency, even though she correctly identified 49 letters in one minute. She met the benchmark for nonsense word fluency, but was still considered as some-risk for nonsense whole words read. Overall, at all three testing points during the year, Student 4-2 was identified as at-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on all sub-tests. She was identified as *needed intensive instructional support.*
Table 5.40

**Focus Student 4-2 DIBELS Assessment Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Sound Fluency</strong></td>
<td>6***</td>
<td>18***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Naming Fluency</strong></td>
<td>0***</td>
<td>23***</td>
<td>49***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>33***</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>11***</td>
<td>50*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(correct letter sounds)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(whole word read automatically)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low Risk / Established / Core Support
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support
*** At Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support
NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period

Lucy also administered running records to Student 4-2 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.41). This student showed exceptional growth in her reading level from December to May. In December, she read a level B with 91% accuracy. This indicated her independent reading level was A. However, Lucy did not complete the comprehension portion of the running record. Student 4-2 progressed from December to February moving from a level A to a level B. She had high accuracy and comprehension; 95% and 100% respectively. Her only miscue was on the word “deer”, which she waited
for Lucy to give her the word rather than attempting it on her own. This indicated that she was not using strategies to determine unknown words. By March she had progressed as an emergent reader to a level C with 98% accuracy and 80% comprehension. She sounded out many words in the text (will, nap, dig, sip, kiss). She also self-corrected a miscue on the word “like,” which she had first replaced with “see.” This running record indicated that she had become much more strategic in determining unknown words in a text. For both the February and March running record, Lucy indicated that the oral reading fluency of Student 4-2 was choppy.

By May, she read independently on level D. Her accuracy was at 95%. She often sounded out unknown words in the text. There were many sight words that she did not know and waited for Lucy to supply (where, down, here, out). Her comprehension was 97%. She self-monitored by correcting miscues as she read. According to the high accuracy and comprehension on this text, a running record on a higher level should have been conducted. However, Lucy noted that her oral reading fluency included choppy phrasing. This could be indicative of her developing spoken language proficiency rather than reading fluency. Student 4-2 exceeded the district benchmark set a level C and read independently on level D at the end of kindergarten.
Table 5.41

Focus Student 4-2 Running Record Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Reading Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension</strong></td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined

The ELP of Student 4-2 was assessed at the beginning and end of the year (Table 5.42). At the beginning of the year, her ELP level was entering (level 1) in all areas.

Student 4-2 gained little overall proficiency in English during her kindergarten year. By the end of the year, she had increased her overall ELP from a 1.0 to a 1.9. At the end of the year her listening ELP was expanding, level 4.1; this was the domain in which she progressed most. Speaking was beginning at the end of the year, level 2.7. Writing had increased to developing, level 3.3. Reading proficiency only progressed to from a 1.0 to a 1.2. Even with all of the intervention she received, reading was the domain in which she made the least gains according to the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. Overall, Student 4-2 made little gains in overall English proficiency due to the low level of proficiency in reading.
Table 5.42

Focus Student 4-2 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Assessment</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Oral Language</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of the Year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the Year</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 4-2 showed progress on each assessment given. By the end of the year, she was an emergent reader and writer; however, there were several contradictions in the assessments. The letter and sound knowledge assessment given by Lucy indicated that Student 4-2 knew all letters and sounds. Her knowledge of letters and sounds was apparent in her writing as well. However, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated that she had a deficit in this area at all three testing points during the year. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test.

Running records showed her ability to accurately read many sight words and simple words in text. However, the DIBELS assessment results indicated that she had a deficit in reading nonsense words even though she had the ability to sound out unknown words (evident in her running records). Her ELP increased in all areas by a small amount; however, her overall ELP score remained at the entering proficiency level (level 1) due to her low reading proficiency level. In contrast, Student 4-2 exceeded the district benchmark independent reading level set at level C and read independently on level D at the end of kindergarten. The ACCESS for ELLs reading assessment was not an
assessment or reading real text, but rather matching pictures to pictures and pictures to print. In the context of reading real text, student 4-2 had developed as an emergent reader. She read with high accuracy and comprehension. Overall, Student 4-2 did not show signs of having difficulty in learning to read. Instead, she showed excellent growth in her reading and writing abilities as indicated by various assessments.

**Focus Student 4-3.** Student 4-3 was a six year old girl of Hispanic descent. This was her first experience with public school. At the beginning of kindergarten she did not know any letters or sounds (Table 5.43). By mid-year, she had learned many letters and sounds. She knew 23 upper-case and 20 lower-case letters. In addition, she had learned 22 letter sounds. Lucy did not provide a mid-year writing sample for Student 4-3. Lucy shared that she was not yet writing at that point of the year.

By the end of the school year, this student had learned all upper-case letters and all but one lower-case letter. She knew all but one letter sound. The last writing sample indicated her knowledge of the alphabetic principle (Figure 5.29). She used invented spelling many words (bat, water, cold). She also spelled many high frequency words correctly (I, like, my, see, go, to). Student 4-3 made exceptional progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence over the course of her kindergarten year.
Table 5.43

Focus Student 4-3 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper-case Letters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-case Letters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Sounds</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(I like see bat. My bat go to water. [Do] not go the water [it is] cold.)

Figure 5.29. Focus student 4-3 end of the year writing sample.

Student 4-3 took the DIBELS assessment at all three testing points during the year (Table 5.44). Based on beginning of the year assessment, she was at-risk in both areas: first sound fluency and letter naming fluency. She scored a zero on both sub-tests. This assessment indicated that she needed intensive instructional support. On the middle of the
year DIBELS assessment, her first sound fluency score had increased from a six to a 28 and letter naming fluency had increased from a zero to a 15. Sub-tests for phoneme segmentation and nonsense words were given for the first time during this testing period; student 4-3 was identified as at-risk in these areas as well. Even with great increases in scores, she was still identified as at-risk in all areas for the mid-point testing period. For the end of the year assessment, she made progress on all sub-tests, but was still considered at-risk in all areas. Overall, at all three testing points during the year, Student 4-3 was identified as at-risk for learning difficulty in reading due to deficits on all sub-tests. She was identified as needed intensive instructional support.
Table 5.44

Focus Student 4-3 DIBELS Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Sound Fluency</td>
<td>0***</td>
<td>28***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Naming Fluency</td>
<td>0***</td>
<td>15***</td>
<td>33***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>16***</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense Word Fluency (correct letter sounds)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>16***</td>
<td>27***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense Word Fluency (whole word read automatically)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low Risk / Established / Core Support
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support
*** At Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support
NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period

Lucy also administered running records to Student 4-3 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.45). This student showed growth in her reading level from December to May. In December, she read a level A with 100% accuracy and comprehension. Student 4-3 remained on a level A in February. Lucy had her read a level B text. Student 4-3 had 87% accuracy. Lucy did not complete the comprehension portion of the running record. It is unclear why Lucy did not go back to a level A text for another running record. By March she had progressed to a level B with 100% accuracy and
comprehension. She sounded out unknown words in the text (deer, nap). On the March running record, Lucy indicated that the oral reading fluency of Student 4-3 was poor as she read word-by-word without proper phrasing.

In May, she remained at level B. Lucy conducted a running record with Student 4-3 on a level C text. Her accuracy was at 92%. She often sounded out unknown words in the text and self-corrected miscues. Lucy noted that her oral reading fluency included choppy phrasing. This could be indicative of her developing spoken language proficiency rather than reading fluency. Student 4-3 read independently on level B at the end of kindergarten and did not meet the district benchmark set a level C.

Table 5.45

*Focus Student 4-3 Running Record Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined

The ELP of Student 4-3 was assessed at the beginning and end of the year (Table 5.46). At the beginning of the year, her ELP level was entering (level 1) in all areas. Student 4-3 gained little overall proficiency in English during her kindergarten year. By the end of the year, she had increased her overall ELP from a 1.0 to a 1.8. At the end of
the year her ELP was still entering, in all areas except for writing, which was beginning, level 2. Overall, Student 4-3 made little gains in overall English proficiency.

Table 5.46

*Focus Student 4-3 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Assessment</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Oral Language</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of the Year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the Year</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 4-3 showed progress on each assessment given; however, there were several contradictions in the assessments. The letter and sound assessment given by Lucy indicated that Student 4-3 knew all but one letter and one sound. Her knowledge of letters and sounds was apparent in her writing as well. However, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated that she had a deficit in this area at all three testing points during the year. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test.

Running records showed her ability to accurately read many sight words and simple words in text. However, the DIBELS assessment results indicated that she had a deficit in reading nonsense words even though she had the ability to sound out unknown words (evident in her running records). She did not meet the end of the year reading benchmark set by the district, but did improve throughout the year.
Her ELP increased in all areas by a small amount; however, her overall ELP score remained at the *entering* proficiency level (level 1). Overall, Student 4-3 did not meet the benchmark on several assessments, even though she had made progress on each one. This indicated that she was learning, but was not progressing at a rate needed to meet benchmarks by the end of kindergarten.

*Focus Student 4-4.* Student 4-4 was a six year old girl of Hispanic descent. This was her first experience with public school. At the beginning of kindergarten she knew very few letters; two upper-case and one lower-case (Table 5.47). She did not know any letter sounds. By mid-year, she had learned all letters and all but one sounds. At this point in the year, not all letters had been taught explicitly. The mid-year writing sample for Student 4-4 was difficult to decipher (Figure 5.30). She wrote many high frequency words, but her piece was not coherent. Lucy made a note on the sample that Student 4-4 could not read her own writing. This could have indicated that Student 4-4 did not know that her writing should carry meaning.

By the end of the school year, this student had learned all letters and sounds. The last writing sample indicated her knowledge of the alphabetic principle (Figure 5.31). This was a teacher prompted writing piece. Student 4-4 used both pictures and print on this piece. She used invented spelling many words (said, snake, tomorrow). She also spelled many high frequency words correctly (the, I, love, you, like, my, see). The student’s writing was very detailed and even included onomatopoeia. Student 4-4 made exceptional progress in letter identification and sound-symbol correspondence over the course of her kindergarten year.
Table 5.47

*Focus Student 4-4 Letter and Sound Knowledge Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter and Sound Knowledge</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper-case Letters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-case Letters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Sounds</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5.30.* Focus student 4-4 middle of the year writing sample.
(Sss, Sss, said the snake. I love you snake. Good boy snake. I will see you tomorrow. I go see you tomorrow. My snake is yellow. My snake is sad. I like my snake. Good boy snake. Snake don’t be sad. I love you too.)

Figure 5.31. Focus student 4-4 end of the year writing sample.

Student 4-4 took the DIBELS assessment at all three testing points during the year (Table 5.48). Based on beginning of the year assessment, she was at-risk in both areas: first sound fluency and letter naming fluency. She scored a zero on first sound fluency and a three on letter naming fluency. This assessment indicated that she needed intensive instructional support. On the middle of the year DIBELS assessment, his first sound
fluency score had increased from a zero to a 54 and letter naming fluency had increased from a three to a 53. Even with these vast gains, she was still considered to be at-risk in these areas and needed intensive instructional support. Sub-tests for phoneme segmentation and nonsense words were given for the first time during this testing period. She scored a 48 on phoneme segmentation fluency and a 26 on nonsense word fluency. Even with great increases in scores, she was still identified as at-risk in all areas for the mid-point DIBELS testing.

For the end of the year assessment, she made progress on all sub-tests. She met the benchmark for letter naming fluency and nonsense word fluency. She was considered to be at some-risk on reading whole nonsense words. Overall, for the end of the year DIBELS assessment, she was identified as established, needing only Core reading support.
Table 5.48  
Focus Student 4-4 DIBELS Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS sub-test</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Middle of the Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Sound Fluency</strong></td>
<td>0***</td>
<td>54***</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter Naming Fluency</strong></td>
<td>3***</td>
<td>53***</td>
<td>70*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>48***</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>26**</td>
<td>45*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(correct letter sounds)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonsense Word Fluency</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(whole word read automatically)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Low Risk / Established / Core Support  
** Some Risk / Emerging / Strategic Support  
*** At Risk / Deficit / Intensive Support  
NA – Not Applicable – sub-test was not given for that period

Lucy also administered running records to Student 4-4 at multiple points during the school year (Table 5.49). This student showed exceptional growth in her reading level from December to May. In December, she read a level A but had progressed to level D by the end of the year. In December, Student 4-4 read a level B text with 100% accuracy and 60% comprehension. Lucy determined that her independent reading level was A. In February, Lucy had her read another level B text. Student 4-4 had 100% accuracy and 60% comprehension again. This time, Lucy considered Student 4-4 to be independent on
a level B, even though she had the same exact accuracy and comprehension as she did in February. By March she had progressed to a level C with 98% accuracy and 80% comprehension. She sounded out unknown words in the text (will, kiss, it). She also self-corrected miscues as she read. On this running record, Lucy indicated that the oral reading fluency of Student 4-4 included choppy phrasing.

In May, Student 4-4 moved to level D. Lucy conducted a running record with her on a level D text. Her accuracy was at 99%. She sounded out several unknown words in the text (top, plane, ramp, hill). Her comprehension was at 80%. Lucy noted that her oral reading fluency had improved and that she now used proper phrasing. With high accuracy and comprehension as well as good fluency, it is unclear why Lucy did not continue to a level E text for another running record. Student 4-4 exceeded the district benchmark set for independent reading level.

Table 5.49

Focus Student 4-4 Running Record Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Record</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ELP of Student 4-4 was assessed at the beginning and end of the year (Table 5.50). At the beginning of the year, her ELP level was *entering* (level 1) in all areas.

Student 4-4 gained two proficiency levels in English during her kindergarten year. By the
end of the year, she had increased her overall ELP from a 1.0 to a 3.3. Her listening and reading proficiency showed the greatest gains and were approaching comparability to native English speakers of her age according to the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. She showed the least progress in speaking proficiency. Student 4-4 made great gains in overall English proficiency.

Table 5.50

Focus Student 4-4 English Language Proficiency Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Assessment</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Oral Language</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Composite Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of the Year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the Year</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND – not determined for the testing period

Student 4-4 showed exceptional progress on each assessment given; however, there were several contradictions in the assessments. The mid-year letter and sound assessment given by Lucy indicated that Student 4-4 knew all but one letter and one sound. However, the assessment results from DIBELS indicated that she had a deficit in this area and needed intensive instructional support. This may have been due to the fact that DIBELS was a timed test. By the end of the year, Student 4-4 benchmarked on all but one sub-test on DIBELS.

Running records showed her ability to accurately read many sight words and simple words in text. However, the mid-year DIBELS assessment results indicated that
Kindergarten EL Reading Intervention

She had a deficit in reading nonsense words even though she had the ability to sound out unknown words (evident in her running records). She met the end of the year DIBELS benchmark for correct letter sounds in nonsense words, but was still deemed some-risk for reading whole nonsense words.

Her ELP increased in all areas. She increased two proficiency levels in English during her kindergarten year. Her greatest gains in ELP were in listening reading. She gained least in speaking proficiency. Overall, Student 4-4 showed exceptional progress in her reading, writing, and ELP during her kindergarten school year. She met or exceeded benchmarks on multiple assessments.

Themes from Focus Student Assessment Data

All four focus students from Lucy’s classroom showed progress in reading, writing, and overall English language proficiency from the beginning to the end of the year in kindergarten. Lucy’s students came to kindergarten with varying knowledge of letter names. All children knew less than 10 letter names. None of the four students could identify letter sounds at the beginning of the year. By the end of the school year, all of the children knew all upper-case letters. Two children knew all lower-case letters and the other two knew 24-25 lower-case letters. Three of the four children knew all the letter sounds by the end of the year; the other child knew 25.

At the beginning and middle of the year all four children were identified as at-risk on the DIBELS assessment. Data indicated that they needed intensive instructional support in reading. This conflicted with the mid-year alphabet assessment given by Lucy. One child knew every letter, two children knew almost all letters, and one knew more than half of the letters. This discrepancy may have been due to the fact that the DIBELS
letter naming fluency sub-test was a timed assessment. In addition, three students were at-risk in nonsense word reading and one was considered some-risk. This assessment was used to determine if children could apply the alphabetic principle to unknown words. Again, this was contradictory to Lucy’s running records and student writing samples, which may have been influenced by the nature of the assessment. In the context of real books, reading real words, all four of the students were successful emergent readers and all but one had met the benchmark reading level set by the district. However, out of context, with isolated nonsense words, they had no other support for the meaning making process of real reading.

Three out of four focus students in Lucy’s class met the end of the year benchmark level C. In fact, three children exceeded the benchmark and were independently reading on level D. The students’ accuracy and comprehension varied. However, it was unclear why Lucy did not continue to higher text levels with some of the students based on their high accuracy and comprehension. Lucy noted that many of the students’ oral reading fluency was poor. However, this may have been related to their developing spoken language rather than reading fluency alone. Lucy did not move some of the focus students to higher text levels based on their oral reading fluency. This indicated that Lucy may not have been able to distinguish between English language development and reading ability.

All four of the children made progress in writing. Lucy did not provide a beginning of the year sample. She shared that they were not writing at that point in the year. By the end of the year, students conveyed their stories with both pictures and print. Students spelled many high frequency words correctly and used invented spelling for
their writing. The students’ concepts about print were also more advanced. All of the student samples were written from teacher prompts. This brings into question the types of writing opportunities the focus students provided during their kindergarten year.

Each focus students’ English language proficiency increased during the school year. All students were at entering at the beginning of the year, but their overall ELP varied by the end of the year, two at level 1, one at level 2, and one at level 3. There were no consistencies found in the areas and amount of improvement among the four focus students. However, two children remained at the entering ELP level from the beginning to the end of the school year.

Summary

Overall, Lucy shared mixed views about kindergarten Hispanic ELL students’ readiness for learning to read in kindergarten. She believed that parents played an important role in her students’ education. She felt that students were very supportive of education and were willing to help at home. She shared that parents may not always know how to help. Lucy provided reading materials for parents to read with their children each week.

Lucy cared about her students’ social-emotional well-being. She ensured the classroom environment was established to make students feel comfortable. She also took measures to build a caring classroom community. A positive, supportive relationship was established and evident in student-teacher and peer interactions.

Lucy did not provide all of her lesson plans. However, the lesson plans she shared showed repetition in reading lessons. The Tier I and RTI Tier II lessons were almost identical in each lesson. Lucy’s lessons were focused on reading skills (phonemic
awareness, phonics, and sight word recognition). There was a complete void of comprehension instruction in the lesson plans and observed lessons. This lack of comprehension instruction was revealed in the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. At the end of her year, two of her students were still at an entering ELP level for comprehension. Interestingly, even with Lucy’s skill-based instructional approach, not all of her students reached benchmark goals on skills-based assessments.

Lucy indicated that she used several forms of assessment to identify student needs for RTI Tier II. However, she felt that she had the ultimate decision of who needed RTI Tier II reading intervention. Overall, she only used students’ ability to blend words as the determining factor for moving out of the RTI Tier II reading intervention group. She did not use students overall reading ability to establish progress, but rather a single skill. In fact, three out of four students exceeded the independent reading benchmark level, but still remained in RTI Tier II.

There were several instances in running records that Lucy did not move students to a higher level text when it was warranted. She noted poor oral reading fluency on almost all of her students running records. This may have been indicative of their speaking proficiency in English rather than their oral reading alone. It is unclear if Lucy was able to distinguish between language difference and reading difficulty.

**Cross-Case Analysis**

Each individual case was considered unique; however, there were several themes that were consistent across cases. Cross-case analysis was applied to the four teacher cases as well as the 12 focus students. Parent engagement, social emotional well-being,
lesson planning and delivery, second language acquisition, and assessments all emerged as cross-case themes for teacher participants.

Cross-Case Teacher Findings

Parent engagement. Three of the four teachers indicated that parent engagement was an important factor for their Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention. Only Beatrice held the belief that Hispanic parents did not value education. All teachers in this study felt that parents wanted to help their children at home. This was consistent with Lopez’ research (2001) findings that Hispanic parents want to be involved. However, the teachers shared that parents often did not know how to help. Delgado-Gaitan (2004) stated that teachers must seek out partnerships with parents. Both Emily and Lucy did this. Emily encouraged parents to read with their children in Spanish. Lucy provided emergent level text for the students to read at home each week. All teachers in the study indicated that their Hispanic students were not as prepared for kindergarten as other students.

Social-emotional well-being. All teachers in the study believed that social-emotional well-being was important for their Hispanic students who received RTI Tier II reading interventions. The environment of each classroom was warm, inviting, and child friendly. The print rich environment provided in each classroom aligned with Allington and Cunningham’s (2003) suggestion for a print-rich environment. Children had many opportunities to interact during social play as well as during reading. Beatrice, Lucy, and Emily specifically mentioned building their students’ confidence in reading and spoken language. Both Beatrice and Katie explained the extra effort they made to avoid
frustration in their Hispanic ELL students. The importance placed on social-emotional well-being aligned with Krashen’s *Affective Filter Hypothesis* (1982).

**Lesson planning and delivery.** There was great variability among the participants’ lesson plans. Not all of the teachers in the study provided all of their lesson plans for the entire school year. Two of the four teachers did; Beatrice and Emily. Three of the four teachers indicated they created their own RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons. Katie was the only teacher who consistently used the scripted RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons provided by the district. Emily used the scripted lessons for the entire first semester, but created her own lessons second semester. However, during the second semester, the lesson plans were identical for weeks at a time. Beatrice created her own lesson plans for RTI Tier II, but did not consistently have RTI Tier II lesson plans documented.

All four teachers indicated planning with the ESL teacher. Some planned together on a weekly basis while others planned together when specific student needs arose. This contrasted with the quantitative data from this study which indicated only 25% of the larger sample population reported planning with the ESL teacher.

Three of the four teachers in the study indicated the instructional focus of RTI Tier II was mastering basic skills. At the beginning of the year, teachers reported focusing on letter identification and sound recognition. Later in the year, the focus changed to blending simple words and identifying high frequency words automatically. Routman (2003) cautioned against this approach because these basic skills begin to take precedence over comprehension. Zemelman et al. (2012) explained that phonics is included in reading instruction, but comprehension is the primary focus of reading.
Beatrice was the only teacher who expressed that comprehension was the goal of her work with Hispanic ELL children who received RTI Tier II.

The skills-based approach was apparent in lesson plans and lesson observation for the teachers in this study. Antunez (2002) warned that this approach often leads to isolated instruction and a lack of exposure to authentic texts. This was observed as teachers used alphabet dice, CVC word cards, skill-based games, and flashcards to teach isolated skills such as letter identification, blending words, and automatically reading high frequency words. However, even with this skills-based instructional focus, the vast majority of Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention did not meet benchmarks on skill-based assessments.

Each teacher used the decodable text provided with Harcourt. These contrived texts often led to confusion and lack of comprehension with the Hispanic students receiving RTI Tier II. In fact, an instructional focus on comprehension was rarely documented or observed during RTI Tier II reading interventions. In Lucy’s case, the students read the decodable book chorally and then moved to the next activity; there were no comprehension discussions about the text. Allington and Cunningham (2003) suggested the use of patterned text for reading instruction with ELLs. These text types were not seen in the RTI Tier II lessons provided in this study.

There was great variability among the group settings for RTI Tier II reading interventions. Katie used mostly one-on-one instruction. Emily used flexible groups based on student needs. Beatrice’s and Lucy’s reading groups consisted of three to five students; all of whom were ELLs. Fuchs and Fuchs recommended no more than three
students in a group (2005). In addition, all teachers indicated that the ESL teacher provided extra small group lessons for their Hispanic ELL students.

The instructional sequence of RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons was very predictable within each case. Not all cases followed the same sequence, but they were all uniquely consistent. All teachers used repetition. Several of the teachers indicated that repetition was important for their Hispanic students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention.

Second language acquisition. Factors involving second language acquisition emerged in three of the four teacher cases. Both Beatrice and Emily indicated that building their students vocabulary in English helped them in reading. Emily explained that allowing her students to use Spanish to clarify also helped with overall understanding during reading. Katie focused on the importance of student talk in building oral language. These three teachers demonstrated an understanding of the importance of building listening and speaking skills. However, Snow et al. (1998) explained that pushing reading prior to students having sound listening and speaking ability in English was detrimental. These three teachers focused on reading skills but still identified the importance of listening and speaking. Lucy did not mention factors of second language acquisition, in fact; she believed that learning to read was the same for ELLs as it was for native English speakers.

Assessments. Finally, there were commonalities among the assessments used by the teachers in the study. The teachers used DIBELS, phonics inventories (including letter and sound identification), concepts about print, running records, and observations with anecdotal notes. It was interesting that most children knew almost all letters by mid-
year, but teachers still had children recite the letters and sounds from an alphabet chart almost daily. For running records, teachers often omitted the comprehension portion of the assessment. This directly correlates to the lack of focus on comprehension in their instruction as well. In addition, many children were not taken to higher level texts for running records when their accuracy and comprehension scores warranted it. This could indicate that teachers held preconceived ideas about students reading ability and did not move beyond that level in assessing their reading. Oddly, none of the teachers consulted the students ELP levels based on the WIDA-MODEL assessment. All teachers indicated using observation as an assessment; however, Katie was the only teacher who documented these observations. Overall, there was no mention of weekly progress monitoring, as suggested by Fuchs and Fuchs (2005).

Student progress was mentioned by each teacher in the study. All teachers believed their Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II had made progress. Lucy believed her ELL students made more progress than native English speakers because they came in further behind thus had more to learn. Katie believed both of her students had made progress; one had caught up to native English speakers and the other student was very far behind. However, Katie mentioned that her Hispanic ELL students progressed more slowly than other students. Beatrice believed that her students made rapid progress the first half of the year, but slowed during the second semester due to their lack of vocabulary. Emily also indicated that vocabulary was important to the rate of progress for her Hispanic ELL students. Again, there was no mention of weekly progress monitoring. In addition, even though teachers indicated all students made progress, they did not connect this progress to no longer needing RTI Tier II reading intervention. Overall the
teachers seemed to be unable to distinguish between language difference and reading difficulty. This is consistent with the findings of Klinger et al. (2006).

**Cross-Case Student Findings**

There were several commonalities among the assessment results for each of the 12 focus students. Cross-case analysis of the focus students revealed similar progress among focus students.

**DIBELS.** The DIBELS assessment results throughout the year indicated that the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention did not meet benchmarks overall (Table 5.51). At the beginning of the year, five students did not take the DIBELS assessment. Of the seven who did take the assessment, six were identified as at-risk and one was considered some-risk. At mid-year, all students took the DIBELS assessment. 10 of the 12 were considered at risk; two were identified as some-risk.

By the end of the year, one student had met the established benchmarks on all sub-tests and was considered to be low-risk. Three students were considered to be some-risk and eight were at-risk according to the DIBELS assessment. All students made progress throughout the year. The students’ overall poor performance on this assessment may have been due to the fact that DIBELS is a timed test.

Several sub-tests results were contradictory to classroom assessments given on the same skill. For example, 75% of the focus students were still identified as at-risk for letter naming fluency at the end of the year. However, seven of the students knew all letters and five knew between 50-51 letters (discussed in-depth below). This indicated they did not have a deficit in this area. In addition, 75% (n=9) of the focus students were
identified as at-risk in nonsense word fluency (correct letter sounds). However, 75% (n=9) of the focus students knew all of the letter sounds (discussed in-depth below). The remaining 25% (n=3) knew between 23-25 letter sounds. This indicated that the focus students, in fact, did have a strong foundation in applying the alphabetic principle.

The inconsistencies between the classroom assessments and DIBELS may have been due to the fact that DIBELS is a timed test. The timed test does not allow sufficient wait time before responding that ELL students often need (Allington and Cunningham, 2003). At the end of the year, 67% (n=8) of the focus students were still considered at-risk for reading difficulties, 25% (n=3) were identified as some-risk, and only one was determined to be low-risk. Overall, 11 of the 12 students were identified as having deficits in basic early literacy skills; however, they all made progress on the DIBELS assessment at each testing point.

Table 5.51

Focus Students’ DIBELS Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIBELS instructional recommendation</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year</th>
<th>Mid-Year</th>
<th>End of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-risk</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some-risk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At-risk</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not tested</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Number represents total of students.

Letter and sound identification. The focus students’ knowledge of letters and sounds at the beginning of the year varied (Table 5.52). By mid-year, all students knew more than half of the letters; two students knew all of the letters (Table 5.53). By the end of the year 54% (n=7) knew all letters and five knew all but one or two letter names
Kindergarten EL Reading Intervention

(Table 5.54). This indicated that students did not have difficulty in learning letters of the alphabet.

At the beginning of the year, 11 of the 12 students did not yet know any letter sounds; one student knew the sound for one letter (Table 5.55). By mid-year, one student still knew zero letter sounds, 10 students know half or more letter sounds, and one student knew all letter sounds (Table 5.56). This indicated tremendous progress from the beginning of the year. By the end of the year, 75% (n=9) of the focus students knew all letters and sounds and 25% (n=3) knew between 23-25 letter sounds (Table 5.57). This indicated that students did not show difficulty in learning letter sounds, but rather made tremendous progress in this skill during their kindergarten year.

Table 5.52

*Focus Students’ Letter Assessment Results – Beginning of the Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Letters Identified</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26+</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.53

*Focus Students’ Letter Assessment Results – Middle of the Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Letters Identified</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31-32</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-51</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.54

*Focus Students’ Letter Assessment Results – End of the Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Letters Identified</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50-51</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.55

*Focus Students’ Letter Sound Assessment Results – Beginning of the Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Letter Sounds Identified</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.56

*Focus Students’ Letter Sound Assessment Results – Middle of the Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Letter Sounds Identified</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13+</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.57

*Focus Students’ Letter Sound Assessment Results – End of the Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Letter Sounds Identified</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23-25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Running Records. Running records were administered by the classroom teacher at multiple points during the year. Katie only administered running records in December, February, and May. The other three teachers conducted running records four times during the year. All students made progress in their independent reading ability during the year as evident by their increase in reading level. The district set the end of the year benchmark level for independent reading at level C. Only two of the 12 focus students did not meet this benchmark (Table 5.58). Three students met the benchmark level C by May. Seven of the focus students exceeded the benchmark set and read independently on level D or E by the end of the year. Overall, this indicated that 83% of the focus students met or exceeded the independent reading level benchmark set by the district. In addition, the accuracy rate and comprehension score indicated they could have been moved to a higher level text for another running record. This data indicated that 10 of the 12 students were reading grade-level text independently, which indicated they did not have difficulty in reading.

Table 5.58

Focus Students’ Running Record Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Level</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Determined</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Number represents number of students at each level.*
English language proficiency. At the beginning of the year, the majority of students, 92% (n=11) had an entering ELP level (Table 5.59) as indicated by the WIDA-MODEL. At the end of the year, the ACCESS for ELLs was given. Only four students remained at the entering level. Two of these four were from the same classroom. The instruction in this classroom focused solely on skills, with comprehension and discussion of text not ever represented in RTI Tier II lesson plans nor present during lesson observations. All students made some progress in English proficiency. 67% of students increased in proficiency level by the end of the year.

Table 5.59

Focus Students’ English Language Proficiency Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP level</th>
<th>Beginning of the Year (WIDA-MODEL)</th>
<th>End of the Year (ACCESS for ELLS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – entering</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – beginning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – developing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – expanding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – bridging</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – reaching</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Number represents number of students at each level.

Overall, the assessment data from the focus students in this study indicated rapid growth in reading during their kindergarten year. Only one student showed to have difficulty on both classroom and standardized assessments. The other students showed growth in all areas; however, authentic classroom assessments and writing samples revealed greater gains in the students’ abilities than the DIBELS assessment. This indicated that authentic classroom assessments may be more appropriate in determining
the success of Hispanic ELL students than large-scale standardized assessments. Even with the skills-based approach to instruction found in these classrooms, students did not fare well on the skills-based DIBELS assessment.

The student data indicated immense progress so it is unclear why 11 of the 12 focus students remained in RTI Tier II reading intervention for the entire school year. This indicated that the teachers may not be able to distinguish between language difference and reading difficulty. This is consistent with the research findings of Klinger et al. (2006).
Discussion of Findings

Summary of Mixed Methods Results

The questions from both phases of this study were revisited. Similar findings emerged from the two phases. The questions from the quantitative, qualitative, and overarching mixed method are answered. Not all findings from the qualitative phase shed light on questions raised in the quantitative phase.

Quantitative Research Questions

What is the frequency of RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic kindergarten English learners? Teachers reported a large percentage of Hispanic ELL students were at-risk for reading difficulty. This finding was consistent with the research by Allington and Cunningham (2003) that children learning English are often struggling readers. A total of 67% (n=86) of kindergarten Hispanic ELLs were placed in RTI Tier II reading interventions. These students remained in RTI Tier II for the entire kindergarten school year. This high number of Hispanic ELLs in Tier II further demonstrates the achievement gap for children who enter school with a native language other than English (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). The high percentage demonstrated that this subgroup of the student population was over-represented in RTI Tier II reading groups. This could be due to the lack of understanding between language difference and learning difficulty, as described by Klingner et al. (2006).

What indicators do teachers use to determine if a student needs RTI Tier II reading interventions? Teachers identified varying processes for determining the need for
RTI Tier II intervention. Teachers used the DIBELS assessment as well as classroom assessments; however, there were inconsistencies related to the assessment used to place children in RTI Tier II and the assessments used to determine student progress in RTI Tier II. These irregularities may have resulted in students to staying in RTI Tier II longer than necessary because there were no established methods for accurately and consistently measuring student progress.

Most of the reading assessments used assessed isolated reading and pre-reading skills, such as phonics and phonemic awareness. It has already been determined that Spanish speaking ELL students often have more success with phonics and phonemic awareness due to the sound-symbol system that is very similar to English (Antunez, 2002; Kauffman, 2007). However, assessments lacked a focus on vocabulary and comprehension. Running records were the only assessment used that included a comprehension piece. The lack of vocabulary and comprehension assessment was problematic as these areas are often the most difficult for children who are learning English (Antunez, 2002; Kauffman, 2007; Robertson, 2009). The survey also revealed that teachers did not use the WIDA-MODEL assessment in determining placement in RTI Tier II, and only one teacher reported using the student’s LEP plan. These data indicated that very little attention had been given to the Hispanic ELL students’ level of English language proficiency when placement in RTI Tier II was determined.

What are the factors in planning and delivering RTI Tier II reading interventions? There was a great deal of variation among participants’ reported planning processes. A vast majority (71%) planned collaboratively with others; however, only 25% indicated
planning RTI Tier II intervention lessons with the ESL teacher. This again was problematic, as only two of the classroom teachers had specialized training in teaching ELLs. As previously noted (Klingner et al., 2006), many teachers do not have the ability to separate the process of second language acquisition from a true difficulty with learning to read. Survey results revealed that 42% of teachers reported sharing responsibility for delivering RTI Tier II reading interventions with the ESL teacher. There was a mismatch between the total who planned together (25%) and those who shared responsibility for delivering RTI Tier II intervention lessons (42%). This could indicate that the ESL teacher was not well informed of students’ reading needs prior to implementing RTI Tier II reading lessons.

The materials used by teacher participants also varied. Teachers used a combination of Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons and teacher created lessons. Only three teachers (12%) did not use the Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons; all of the other teachers used it in some way in their instruction. Harcourt Strategic Intervention lessons were built around the five components of Reading First. As previously noted, the Reading First model was based on studies in which no ELL students participated (Antunez, 2002). Additionally, teachers indicated using resources such as skill based games in RTI Tier II. This further demonstrated that the focus of these lessons was on reading sub-skills and rarely focused on comprehension and vocabulary development.

This was problematic since ELLs need more instruction for comprehension and vocabulary (Antunez, 2002; Kauffman, 2007; Robertson, 2009). The instructional materials mirrored the problems seen with the assessments used to determine placement and progress of Hispanic ELLs receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention.
The vast majority of teachers indicated the use of small group instruction for delivering RTI Tier II reading intervention. Teachers reported having 3-6 children in RTI Tier II intervention groups. This ratio is double the recommended group size of 1-3 students as suggested by Fuchs and Fuchs (2005). Additionally, 25% of teachers indicated grouping strategies that were comprised of only ELLs. As such, one-quarter of the Hispanic ELL students in RTI Tier II did not have native English speakers as models while in reading intervention groups.

What indicators are used to determine progress made by a student receiving the RTI Tier II reading interventions? The progress of kindergarten Hispanic English learners receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention was reported to be mostly adequate and exceptional. There were 86 Hispanic ELL students who were identified as needing RTI Tier II. Only six students moved out of RTI Tier II reading groups during the school year. This indicated that 62% of the Hispanic ELLs stayed in RTI Tier II reading intervention groups for the entire school year. This is far longer than the suggested timeline of up to 10 weeks (Bender & Shores, 2007). Of the 80 students, 76% were reported as having adequate or exceptional progress. It is unclear why students continued to receive RTI Tier II reading intervention based on the reported progress. This could be due to teachers’ inability to distinguish between language difference and learning difficulty, as described by Klingner et al. (2006).
Qualitative Research Questions

What role do teachers’ beliefs about the reading ability of Hispanic kindergarten English learners play in identifying students and delivering RTI Tier II reading interventions? All teachers in the study indicated that their Hispanic students were not as prepared for kindergarten as other students. Three of the four teachers indicated that home support for their Hispanic ELL students was lacking. Only one teacher believed this was due to a lack of parental interest, but all felt that parents did not know how to help at home. In addition, for varying reasons, teachers felt their Hispanic ELL students progressed more slowly than their native English speaking peers.

What criteria are used to identify a student for RTI Tier II reading interventions? There was great variability in the reported assessments for placement in RTI Tier II reading interventions. The teachers used DIBELS, phonics inventories (including letter and sound identification), concepts about print, running records, and observations with anecdotal notes. Oddly, none of the teachers consulted the students ELP levels based on the WIDA-MODEL assessment. This data was consistent with the findings of the quantitative research phase. However, if students were placed in RTI Tier II reading interventions at the beginning of the year, running records could not have been consulted as they were not administered until December. Only one teacher actually documented her anecdotal notes from observations during lessons.

How do teachers plan and deliver RTI Tier II reading interventions in the classroom setting? There was great variability among the participants’ lesson plans.
Three of the four teachers created their own RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons. Katie was the only teacher who consistently used the scripted RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons provided by the district. Emily used the scripted lessons for the entire first semester, but created her own lessons second semester. However, during the second semester, the lesson plans were identical for weeks at a time. Beatrice created her own lesson plans for RTI Tier II, but did not consistently have RTI Tier II lesson plans documented.

All four teachers indicated planning with the ESL teacher. Some planned together on a weekly basis while others planned together when specific student needs arose. This contrasted with the quantitative data from this study which indicated only 25% of the larger sample population reported planning with the ESL teacher.

Three of the four teachers in the study indicated the instructional focus of RTI Tier II was mastering basic skills. At the beginning of the year, teachers reported focusing on letter identification and sound recognition. Later in the year, the focus changed to blending simple words and identifying high frequency words automatically. Routman (2003) cautioned against this approach because these basic skills begin to take precedence over comprehension. Zemelman et al. (2012) explained that phonics is included in reading instruction, but comprehension is the primary focus of reading. Beatrice was the only teacher who identified comprehension as the goal of her work with Hispanic ELL children who received RTI Tier II.

The skills-based approach was apparent in lesson plans and lesson observation for the teachers in this study. Antunez (2002) warned that this approach often leads to isolated instruction and a lack of exposure to authentic texts. This was observed as
teachers used alphabet dice, CVC word cards, skill-based games, and flashcards to teach isolated skills such as letter identification, blending words, and automatically reading high frequency words. However, even with this skills-based instructional focus, the vast majority of Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention did not meet benchmarks on skill-based assessments such as DIBELS.

Each teacher used the decodable text provided with Harcourt. These contrived texts often led to confusion and lack of comprehension with the Hispanic students receiving RTI Tier II. In fact, an instructional focus on comprehension was rarely documented or observed during RTI Tier II reading interventions. In one classroom, the students read the decodable book chorally and then moved to the next activity; there were no comprehension discussions about the text. Allington and Cunningham (2003) suggested the use of patterned text for reading instruction with ELLs. These text types were not seen in the RTI Tier II lessons provided in this study.

There was great variability among the group settings for RTI Tier II reading interventions. One teacher used mostly one-on-one instruction. Another teacher used flexible groups based on student needs. Two teachers’ reading groups consisted of three to five students; all of whom were ELLs. Fuchs and Fuchs recommended no more than three students in a group (2005). In addition, all teachers indicated that the ESL teacher provided extra small group lessons for their Hispanic ELL students.

The instructional sequence of RTI Tier II reading intervention lessons was very predictable within each case. Not all cases followed the same sequence, but they were all uniquely consistent. All teachers used repetition. Several of the teachers indicated that
repetition was important for their Hispanic students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention.

*What criteria are used to document and establish progress of a student receiving the RTI Tier II reading interventions?* Teachers indicated the use of assessments and observations to determine progress of Hispanic students who received RTI Tier II reading interventions. There were commonalities among the assessments used by the teachers in the study. The teachers used DIBELS, phonics inventories (including letter and sound identification), concepts about print, running records, and observations with anecdotal notes. By mid-year most children knew almost all letters, but teachers still had children recite the letters and sounds from an alphabet chart almost daily until the end of the year. For running records, teachers often omitted the comprehension portion of the assessment. This directly correlates to the lack of focus on comprehension in their instruction as well. In addition, many children were not taken to higher level texts for running records when their accuracy and comprehension scores warranted it. This could indicate that teachers held preconceived ideas about students reading ability and did not move beyond that level in assessing their reading. Oddly, none of the teachers consulted the students ELP levels based on the *WIDA-MODEL* assessment. All teachers indicated using observation as an assessment; however, only one teacher documented these observations. Overall, there was no mention of weekly progress monitoring, as suggested by Fuchs and Fuchs (2005). This could explain why the Hispanic students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention did not move out of the intervention group.
What is the scope of progress of students receiving RTI Tier II reading interventions? Student progress was mentioned by each teacher in the study. All teachers believed their Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II had made progress. Lucy believed her ELL students made more progress than native English speakers because they came in further behind thus had more to learn. Katie believed both of her students had made progress; one had caught up to native English speakers and the other student was very far behind. However, Katie mentioned that her Hispanic ELL students progressed more slowly than other students. Beatrice believed that her students made rapid progress the first half of the year, but slowed during the second semester due to their lack of vocabulary. Emily also indicated that vocabulary was important to the rate of progress for her Hispanic ELL students. Again, there was no mention of weekly progress monitoring.

In addition, even though teachers indicated all students made progress, they did not connect this progress to no longer needing RTI Tier II reading intervention. This was consistent with the findings from the quantitative phase of this study. Overall the teachers seemed to be unable to distinguish between language difference and reading difficulty.

This is consistent with the findings of Klinger et al. (2006).

Student assessment results indicated varying levels of progress. The DIBELS assessment results throughout the year indicated that the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention did not meet benchmarks overall. At the beginning of the year, five students did not take the DIBELS assessment. Of the seven who did take the assessment, six were identified as at-risk and one was considered some-risk. At mid-year, all students took the DIBELS assessment; 10 were considered at risk and two were identified as some-risk.
By the end of the year, one student had met the established benchmarks on all sub-tests and was considered to be low-risk. Three students were considered to be some-risk and eight were at-risk according to the DIBELS assessment. All students made progress throughout the year. The students’ overall poor performance on this assessment may have been due to the fact that DIBELS is a timed test.

Several sub-tests results were contradictory to classroom assessments given on the same skill. For example, 75% of the focus students were still identified as at-risk for letter naming fluency at the end of the year. However, seven of the students knew all letters and five knew between 50-51 letters. This indicated they did not have a deficit in this area. In addition, 75% (n=9) of the focus students were identified as at-risk in nonsense word fluency (correct letter sounds). However, 75% (n=9) of the focus students knew all of the letter sounds. The remaining 25% (n=3) knew between 23-25 letter sounds. This indicated that the focus students, in fact, did have a strong foundation in applying the alphabetic principle.

The inconsistencies between the classroom assessments and DIBELS may have been due to the fact that DIBELS is a timed test. The timed test does not allow sufficient wait time before responding that ELL students often need (Allington and Cunningham, 2003). At the end of the year, 67% (n=8) of the focus students were still considered at-risk for reading difficulties, 25% (n=3) were identified as some-risk, and only one was determined to be low-risk. Overall, 11 of the 12 students were identified as having deficits in basic early literacy skills; however, they all made progress on the DIBELS assessment at each testing point.
Running records were administered by the classroom teachers at multiple points during the year. All students made progress in their independent reading ability during the year as evident by their increase in reading level. The district set the end of the year benchmark level for independent reading at level C. Only two of the 12 focus students did not meet this benchmark. Three students met the benchmark level C by May. Seven of the focus students exceeded the benchmark set and read independently on level D or E by the end of the year. Overall, this indicated that 83% of the focus students met or exceeded the independent reading level benchmark set by the district. In addition, the accuracy rate and comprehension score indicated they could have been moved to a higher level text for another running record. This data showed that 10 of the 12 students were reading grade-level text independently. This indicated they did not have difficulty in reading; instead, could read grade level text independently with appropriate accuracy and comprehension.

At the beginning of the year, the majority of students, 92% (n=11) had an entering ELP level (Table 5.59) as indicated by the WIDA-MODEL. At the end of the year, the ACCESS for ELLs was given. Only four students remained at the entering level. Two of these four were from the same classroom. The instruction in this classroom focused solely on skills, with a void of comprehension and discussion of text during in RTI Tier II lessons. All students made some progress in English proficiency. 67% of students increased in proficiency level by the end of the year.

Overall, the only assessment that showed a lack of proficiency was the DIBELS assessment. Students’ letter and sound knowledge, writing ability, independent reading level, and language proficiency all showed exceptional growth. This indicated that
DIBELS may have been the most influential assessment in the placement and continuation of RTI Tier II reading interventions. The skills-based instructional focus aligned with the skills assessed on the DIBELS assessment.

Overarching Mixed Methods Question

What is the frequency of RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic kindergarten English learners and how are they implemented? Overall, 67% of Hispanic ELL kindergarten students received RTI Tier II reading intervention. These students remained in the intervention group for the entire school year. The 12 focus students from the qualitative phase spent the entire school year in the RTI Tier II reading intervention group. Teachers used both scripted and self-created lessons for RTI Tier II. The qualitative research data indicated that the focus of instruction was basic skills.

Even with a skills-based approach to instruction, the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention did not fare well on skills-based assessments. DIBELS assessment data indicated a majority of the Hispanic ELL students were still at-risk for reading difficulty at the end of the year. This contrasted with authentic classroom assessments which showed rapid improvements in the reading ability of the Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention.

The teachers in the quantitative phase of the study indicated 76% of Hispanic students in RTI Tier II reading intervention had made adequate or exceptional progress. Teachers in the qualitative phase of the study shared that all of their Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II had made progress. It is unclear why students continued to receive RTI Tier II reading intervention based on the reported progress.
Significance of the Study

Findings from this research are significant to the practice of implementing RTI Tier II reading intervention with Hispanic ELL kindergarten students. There are very few studies on this topic in the current body of research. One of the most significant findings was the high percentage of Hispanic students in kindergarten who are identified for needing RTI Tier II. A total of 67% (n=86) of kindergarten Hispanic ELLs were placed in RTI Tier II reading interventions.

Another important finding was the fact that 80 of the 86 students remained in RTI Tier II for the entire kindergarten school year. This indicated that 62% of the Hispanic ELLs stayed in RTI Tier II reading intervention groups for the entire school year. This is far longer than the suggested timeline of up to 10 weeks (Bender & Shores, 2007). Of the 80 students, 76% were reported as having adequate or exceptional progress. For the qualitative phase, 11 of the 12 students’ assessments showed exceptional gains. In fact, 83% (10 out of 12) met or exceeded independent benchmark reading levels set by the district. DIBELS was the assessment one which students did not fare well. This could indicate one of two things: that teachers used DIBELS assessment results as the main determinant for needing RTI Tier II reading intervention or that they were unable to distinguish between language difference and learning difficulty.

The final significance noted was the over use of skill-based instruction for RTI Tier II reading intervention. Three of the four case study teachers used a skill-based approach. Only one teacher indicated that meaning making was the focus of her work with Hispanic ELL students who received RTI Tier II reading intervention.
Comprehension and vocabulary instruction was rarely noted in RTI Tier II lesson plans. Even with the skill-based approach, students did not perform well on the DIBELS assessment, which is a skill-based assessment. For Hispanic children learning English, instruction and intervention focused on oral language development and the meaning making process of reading would be most beneficial.

Implications

The research revealed four implications for implementing RTI Tier II reading intervention with Hispanic kindergarten ELL students. Implications for authentic assessments, distinguishing language learning from reading difficulty, instructional focus of intervention, and supporting Hispanic ELL parents were all identified.

First, authentic assessments revealed greater gains in the reading ability of the 12 focus students. DIBELS results indicated 92% of the focus students were still at-risk for reading difficulty at the end of the year. In contrast, classroom running records indicated that 83% of students met or exceeded independent reading level benchmarks set for the end of kindergarten. This implies that authentic assessments such as running records and analysis of writing should be used rather than large-scale, isolated skill-based assessments.

A large percentage of Hispanic ELL students received RTI Tier II reading intervention. This sub-group was over-represented in the intervention group. In addition, 62% of Hispanic ELL kindergarten students remained in the RTI Tier II reading intervention group for the entire school year, even though they had made progress on all but the DIBELS assessment. This implies that teachers were not able to differentiate
between language learning and reading difficulties. Teachers need more professional development and training in determining this difference.

Although a skills-based approach was most often used, students still did not fare well on the skill-based DIBELS assessment. Overall, teacher indicated they had made great progress in basic skills. However, teachers indicated vocabulary, comprehension, and communication were the main areas of difficulty for their Hispanic ELL kindergarten student. This implies language learning factors, not necessarily reading difficulties. In the state of Alabama, RTI Tier II can be for intervention or enrichment. This research implies that a language enrichment approach should be implemented for RTI Tier II with Hispanic ELL students in kindergarten. Instruction focused on meaning making and oral language development would be most beneficial for Hispanic children learning English.

Finally, the research implies that parents need more support in helping their children at home. This theme emerged from all case study teachers. They all indicated that parents did not know how to support reading at home. Teachers need to collaborate with parents to provide resources and strategies for supporting their children in reading at home. Classroom teachers need more training on forming effective partnerships with diverse parents.

Limitations

There were limiting factors in this research study. The first limitation was that this study was confined to one school district. This district has a high population of English language learners and offers professional development to teachers. The findings from this school district may not generalize to other populations.
There were limitations for the qualitative phase as well. For the observations, the case study teachers knew when I was coming to observe. This may not have provided an authentic view of the day to day implementation for RTI Tier II reading interventions. In addition, this research was limited to the assessments used by the teacher. Some assessments were incomplete. In addition, vocabulary and comprehension were not the focus of classroom assessments for kindergarteners in this district.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

There are several recommendations for future research based on this study. First, a larger scale study of RTI Tier II reading intervention practices for Hispanic English language learners is needed. It would also be important to identify if this skill-based approach is as prevalent in other primary grades. Future research with first through fifth grade Hispanic ELL students who receive RTI Tier II reading intervention could shed light on this issue. In addition, a longitudinal study on the long-term reading ability of Hispanic students who receive skills-based reading intervention would provide data on the effectiveness of this approach. Finally, research on implementing a language enrichment approach to RTI Tier II reading intervention is needed.
References


Alabama State Department of Education: AMAO, retrieved from www.alsde.gov


APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

UAB's Institutional Review Boards for Human Use (IRBs) have an approved Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The Assurance number is FWA00005960 and it expires on January 24, 2017. The UAB IRBs are also in compliance with 21 CFR Parts 50 and 56.

Principal Investigator: HILL, KELLY L
Co-Investigator(s):
Protocol Number: X130307804
Protocol Title: Exploring RTI Reading Interventions for Hispanic English Learning Kindergarten Students in Central Alabama: A Mixed Methods Study

The IRB reviewed and approved the above named project on 3-15-13. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. This Project will be subject to Annual continuing review as provided in that Assurance.

This project received EXPEDITED review.
IRB Approval Date: 3-15-13
Date IRB Approval Issued: 3-15-13

Marilyn Doss, M.A.
Vice Chair of the Institutional Review
Board for Human Use (IRB)

Investigators please note:

The IRB approved consent form used in the study must contain the IRB approval date and expiration date.

IRB approval is given for one year unless otherwise noted. For projects subject to annual review research activities may not continue past the one year anniversary of the IRB approval date.

Any modifications in the study methodology, protocol and/or consent form must be submitted for review and approval to the IRB prior to implementation.

Adverse Events and/or unanticipated risks to subjects or others at UAB or other participating institutions must be reported promptly to the IRB.
Dear Kindergarten Teachers,

This survey is part of a dissertation research study to examine the prevalence and practice in implementing RTI Tier II Reading Intervention to Hispanic kindergarten English learners. Your input is crucial to this important study. This survey will take 15-20 minutes to complete. Any data collected will be used for the completion of the dissertation research and will be kept confidential. This survey is voluntary, but your time and input are greatly needed and appreciated. You may return completed surveys to the reading coach at your school. Thank you for your time and input.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at the number or email below. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the Office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (OIRB) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) at (205) 934-3789 or 1-855-860-3789. If calling the toll-free number, press the option for “all other calls” or for an operator/attendant and ask for extension 4-3789. Regular hours for the Office of the IRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday. You may also call this number in the event the research staff cannot be reached or you wish to talk to someone.

Sincerely,
Kelly Leah Hill, EdS
205-936-9730
K2hill@shelbyed.k12.al.us or kltb@uab.edu
“Exploring RTI Reading Interventions for Hispanic English Learning Kindergarten Students in Central Alabama: A Mixed Methods Study”
IRB Protocol number: X130307004
Please provide your name and contact information if you are willing to allow me to contact you for further questions on this important topic; your input is valuable and greatly appreciated.

Name: ___________________________________________ Age: __________
School: _________________________________________________________
School email address: ____________________________________________

Years of Teaching Experience: ______
How many years have you taught kindergarten? ______
What other grade levels / areas have you taught and for what length of time (in years)?
(check all that apply)


☐ ESL teacher - How long? _____ ☐ Special Education teacher - How long? ______

What is your highest degree?
☐ BA ☐ MA ☐ AA/EdS ☐ PhD/EdD

In what area is the degree you hold? (check all that apply)

☐ Early Childhood ☐ Elementary Education

☐ Special Education ☐ English as a Second or Other Language

☐ Other: (please specify) __________________________________________

How many Hispanic kindergarten English learners are in your classroom now?__________
*If you do not have any Hispanic English learners in your classroom, you are finished with the survey. Please return the survey to your reading coach.

Do you have Hispanic kindergarten English learners in your classroom who are receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention?

☐ Yes - How many? __________

☐ No

*If you do not have any Hispanic English learners receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention, you are finished with the survey. Please return the survey to your reading coach.
How are students identified for RTI reading interventions? (check all that apply)

☐ Classroom assessments  ☐ DIBELS results  ☐ Report Card  ☐ PST plan

☐ Other: (please specify)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

For each of your current Hispanic EL students, how long has he/she been in Tier II?
(Student 1, 2, 3, etc. have been used so that no student names are given and confidentiality is protected.)
Student 1 _____________________
Student 2 _____________________
Student 3 _____________________
Student 4 _____________________
Student 5 _____________________
Student 6 _____________________
Add others if needed:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How do you plan RTI Tier II reading interventions? (check all that apply)

☐ I follow the Harcourt Strategic Intervention teacher’s manual and lesson plans

☐ I create lessons on my own based on student needs

☐ I use other resources: (please specify)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

☐ I plan independently  ☐ I plan with other kindergarten teachers  ☐ I plan with the ESL teacher

☐ I plan with ______________________ (please specify)

Who delivers the RTI Tier II reading interventions to students? (check all that apply)

☐ Myself  ☐ ESL teacher  ☐ Reading Interventionist

☐ Special Education teacher  ☐ Instructional aide

☐ Other: (please specify) _________________________________________________
How are RTI Tier II reading interventions delivered in the classroom setting?

☐ One-on-one with student  ☐ In small group with only EL students

☐ In small group with both EL students and native English speakers

☐ Other: (please specify) _________________________________________________

How many students are typically in a group for Tier II reading intervention?

_____

How do you evaluate the progress of a student receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention?

(check all that apply)

☐ Anecdotal notes  ☐ Classroom assessments  ☐ DIBELS assessment

☐ Other: (please specify) _________________________________________________

For each Hispanic EL student currently receiving RTI Tier II reading intervention, rate the overall reading progress they have made?

(Student 1, 2, 3, etc. have been used so that no student names are given and confidentiality is protected.)

Student 1 ____ no progress ____ minimal progress ____ adequate progress ____ exceptional progress

Student 2 ____ no progress ____ minimal progress ____ adequate progress ____ exceptional progress

Student 3 ____ no progress ____ minimal progress ____ adequate progress ____ exceptional progress

Student 4 ____ no progress ____ minimal progress ____ adequate progress ____ exceptional progress

Student 5 ____ no progress ____ minimal progress ____ adequate progress ____ exceptional progress

Student 6 ____ no progress ____ minimal progress ____ adequate progress ____ exceptional progress

Add others if needed:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Please provide any additional information about RTI Tier II reading interventions for Hispanic kindergarten English Learners that you think is important.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Dear Teacher,

You are invited to participate in an important and unique research study. The purpose of this study is to explore how RTI Tier II reading interventions are implemented in kindergarten with Hispanic children who are learning English. You have been purposefully selected because of your experience in providing RTI Tier II reading intervention to Hispanic English Learners. You will be able to provide information and insight that will aid in the success of this research.

If you decide to participate, I will conduct individual interviews with you that will last for approximately one hour in order to gain knowledge of your experience implementing RTI Tier II reading intervention. This interview will be scheduled at a time convenient for you. Prior to the interview, you will receive an outline of the questions you will be asked. This will help you prepare your thoughts and responses. There may be a need to have a follow-up interview if questions arise or if clarification is needed. In addition, I will observe you implementing three Tier II intervention lessons in the classroom setting. There will be one observation in each month, March, April, and May, lasting approximately 20-30 minutes each. There may be a need for follow-up interviews after the observations to ask questions or for clarifications. With your permission, I will collect your reading lesson plans and student assessment data. These data collection procedures have been pre-approved by the Superintendent. Your total time spent in this study will be no more than 8-10 hours. Through the interviews, observations, and document analysis, invaluable information about the implementation of RTI Tier II reading intervention with Hispanic kindergarten English learners will be gained. This information is much needed in the education field and you can play an important role in this process.

Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. If you voluntarily choose to participate in this study, you will not be compensated, and you can withdraw from the study at any time. Any data collected will be used for the completion of the dissertation research. The findings will be shared with you as well as professors from my university. Again, your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please reply to this email. If there are any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me via email. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the Office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (OIRB) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) at (205) 934-3789 or 1- 855-860-3789. If calling the toll-free number, press the option for “all other calls” or for an operator/attendant and ask for extension 4-3789. Regular hours for the Office of the IRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday. You may also call this number in the event the research staff cannot be reached or you wish to talk to someone.
Sincerely,
Kelly Leah Hill, EdS
205-936-9730
K2hill@shelbyed.k12.al.us or kltb@uab.edu

“Exploring RTI Reading Interventions for Hispanic English Learning Kindergarten Students in Central Alabama: A Mixed Methods Study” - IRB Protocol number: X130307004
Dear Parent,

My name is Kelly Hill; I am a teacher in the school district. I am working on my Doctorate degree at UAB. I am working with your child’s teacher to complete my research study. I am asking for your permission to include your child in this important research study. The purpose of this study is to explore how reading interventions are implemented in kindergarten with Hispanic children who are learning English.

Please read the attached informed consent. If you agree to allow your child to participate, please sign and return it to your child’s teacher. If you have any questions, feel free to call or email me and I will have the county translator answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Kelly Leah Hill, EdS
205-936-9730 or 682-5299
K2hill@shelbyed.k12.al.us or kltb@uab.edu
Parent Informed Consent Document

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Exploring RTI Reading Intervention for Hispanic English Learning Kindergarten Students in Central Alabama: A Mixed-Methods Study

IRB PROTOCOL: X130307004

INVESTIGATOR: Kelly Leah Hill

SPONSOR: University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Education

Explanation of Procedures

I am asking for permission to include your child in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore RTI (Response to Instruction) Tier II reading interventions provided for Hispanic kindergarten students learning English. Tier II reading lessons are an extra instruction time to support students struggling in reading. If you choose to allow your child to participate, I will get your child’s birthday and review your child’s reading assessments. Assessments collected will include: phonics inventory (tests knowledge of letters and sounds), running records (tests for a child’s reading level and comprehension), concepts about print (tests what students know about books), ACCESS data (test for level English Language knowledge), DIBELS scores (Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills, tests for reading readiness), writing samples (copies of student writing), and other classroom assessments (such as teacher notes, and report cards). These will show your child’s reading progress. I will also observe reading intervention lessons your child’s teacher is providing in the classroom. I will take notes that include your child’s interactions during the lesson. All information I collect will be confidential; I will not use your child’s real name in the research. I will not be doing any additional work with your child, nor will they miss any class time by participating.

Risks and Discomforts

Anticipated risks for participants for participants in this study are no greater than those of everyday life. Steps will be taken to protect confidentiality. I will store information on a password protected computer or a locked filing cabinet; however, there is a risk of loss of confidentiality if these security efforts fail.

Benefits

You will not benefit directly from this study. This research may add to the body of knowledge on the effectiveness of RTI Tier II (extra instruction for struggling readers) reading intervention for Hispanic kindergarten children learning English. This study may potentially improve practices in teaching reading to English Learners.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout this research. I will give your child a pseudonym that I will use to reference him/her in this study. However, research information that identifies you may be shared with the UAB Institutional Review Board (IRB) and others who are responsible for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations related to research, including people on behalf of University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Education; and the Office
for Human Research Protections (ORHP). All data will be stored on password protected computers or locked file cabinets. All assessment data collected will be destroyed one-year after the completion of the research project.

**Refusal or Withdrawal without Penalty**

Whether or not you allow your child to take part in this study is your choice. There will be no penalty if you decide not to allow your child to be in the study. If you decide not to allow your child to be in the study, you will not lose any benefits you are otherwise owed. You are free to withdraw your child from this research study at any time with no effect on your child’s class standing or grade. Your choice to leave the study will not affect your relationship with your child’s school. Taking part in this study is not part of your child’s class work. You and your child will not receive any special consideration for taking part in this research.

**Cost of Participation**

There will be no cost to you for taking part in this study.

**Payment for Participation in Research**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research study.

**Alternatives**

Your alternative is to not participate.

**Questions**

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Kelly Hill. She will be glad to answer any of your questions. Kelly Hill’s number is 205-936-9730.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the Office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (OIRB) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham at (205) 934-3789 or 1-800-822-8816. If calling the toll-free number, press the option for “all other calls” or for an operator/attendant and ask for extension 4-3789. Regular hours for the Office of the IRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday. You may also call this number in the event the research staff cannot be reached or you wish to talk to someone else.

**Legal Rights**

You are not waiving any of your legal rights by signing this informed consent document.

**Signatures**

Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of this signed document.

Signature of Participant  
Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Date

Page 2 of 2
Version Date: 03/14/13
APPENDIX E

Parent Informed Consent Document (Spanish)

Carta de Consentimiento

Padres:

Estimados padres,

Mi nombre es Kelly Hill, soy una profesora en las Escuelas del Condado de Shelby. Estoy trabajando en mi doctorado en la UAB. Estoy trabajando con la maestra de su hijo para completar mi estudio de investigación. Le estoy pidiendo su permiso para incluir a su hijo en este estudio de investigación importante. El propósito de este estudio es explorar cómo las intervenciones de lectura se llevan a cabo en la escuela con niños hispanos que están aprendiendo inglés.

Por favor, lea el consentimiento informado adjunto. Si está de acuerdo para permitir que su hijo participe, por favor firme y devuélva a la maestra de su hijo. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta, no dude en llamar o enviarle un correo electrónico y voy a tener el traductor condado responder a cualquier pregunta que usted pueda tener.

Atentamente,

Leah Kelly Hill, EdS
205-936-9730
K2hill@shelbyed.k12.al.us o kltb@uab.edu
Carta de Consentimiento Para Padres

Título de la investigación: Explorando intervención RTI de Lectura para estudiantes hispanos que están aprendiendo inglés en kindergarten en Alabama central: un estudio de métodos mixtos
PROTOCOLO DE IRB: X130307004
INVESTIGADOR: Kelly Leah Hill
PATROCINADOR: Universidad de Alabama en Birmingham, la Escuela de Educación

Explicación de los Procedimientos
Pido permiso para incluir a su hijo en un estudio de investigación. El propósito de este estudio es explorar RTI (Respuesta a la Instrucción) Nivel II y las intervenciones de lectura para los estudiantes de niños kindergarten aprendiendo inglés. Lecciones de nivel II de lectura son un tiempo de instrucción adicional para apoyar a los estudiantes con dificultades en la lectura. Si opta por permitir que su hijo participe, voy a revisar las evaluaciones de lectura de su hijo. Las evaluaciones recopiladas incluyen: inventario fonético (conocimiento de las letras y sonidos), registros de lectura (las pruebas para medir el nivel de lectura y la comprensión de un niño), conceptos sobre la escritura (pruebas de lo que los estudiantes saben de los libros), resultados de ACCESS (prueba de conocimientos de la idioma de inglés), resultados DIBELS (indicadores dinámicos de habilidades básicas de alfabetización, pruebas de lectura), muestras de escritura, y otras evaluaciones de la clase. Estos proporcionarán documentación de progreso de su hijo en la lectura. También voy a observar las lecciones de intervención de la maestra de su hijo. Voy a tomar notas de las interacciones de sus hijos durante la lección. Toda la información que recopilamos será confidencial, no voy a usar el nombre real de su hijo en la investigación. No voy a hacer ningún trabajo adicional con su hijo, ni van a faltar a la hora de clase por participar.

Riesgos y Molestias
Riesgos previstos para los participantes en este estudio no son mayores que las que se encuentran en la vida cotidiana. Se tomarán medidas para proteger la confidencialidad. Pueda almacenar información en una computadora protegida con contraseña o un archivador con llave, sin embargo, existe el riesgo de pérdida de confidencialidad si estos esfuerzos de seguridad fallarán.

Beneficios
No se beneficiarán directamente de este estudio. Esta investigación puede contribuir al acervo de conocimientos sobre la eficacia de la intervención RTI Nivel II (instrucción adicional lectores para los niños que tiene dificultades) de lectura para los niños hispanos de kindergarten aprendiendo inglés. Este estudio puede potencialmente mejorar las prácticas en la enseñanza de lectura para estudiantes de inglés.

Confidencialidad
Se mantendrá la confidencialidad larga de esta investigación. Voy a darle a su hijo un seudónimo que voy a utilizar para hacer referencia a él / ella en este estudio. Sin embargo, la búsqueda de información que le identifique puede ser compartida con la Junta de Revisión Institucional de la UAB (IRB) y otros que se encargan de velar por el cumplimiento de las leyes y reglamentos relacionados con la investigación, incluidas las personas en nombre de la Universidad de Alabama en Birmingham, la Escuela de Educación; y la Oficina de Protección de Sujetos UAB-IRB

Consent Form Noted 3-15-13
Not Valid On 3-15-14
Humanos de Investigación (OHRP). Todos los datos se almacenan en los ordenadores protegidos con contraseña o bloqueado archivador. Todos los datos de evaluación recopilados serán destruidos de un año después de la finalización del proyecto de investigación.

**Denegación o retirada sin Pena**
Si usted permite que su hijo participe en este estudio es su elección. No habrá penalidad si decide no permitir que su hijo participe en el estudio. Si decide no permitir que su hijo participe en el estudio, usted no perderá ninguno de los beneficios que de otra manera se debe, sin efecto sobre la posición de clase de su hijo o de grado. Usted es libre de retirar a su hijo de este estudio de investigación en cualquier momento. Su decisión de retirarse del estudio no afectará su relación con esta institución ni con la instrucción de su hijo. La participación en este estudio no es parte del trabajo de la clase de su hijo. Usted no recibirá ninguna consideración especial por participar en esta investigación.

**El costo de participación**
No habrá ningún costo para usted por participar en este estudio.

**El pago de la participación en la investigación**
Usted no va a ser compensado por su participación en este estudio de investigación.

**Alternativas**
Su alternativa es no participar.

**Preguntas**
Si usted tiene alguna pregunta, duda o queja sobre la investigación, por favor póngase en contacto con Kelly Hill. Ella estará encantada de responder a sus preguntas. Número Kelly Hill es 205-936-9730.
Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante de una investigación, o preocupaciones o quejas sobre la investigación, puede comunicarse con la Oficina de la Junta de Revisión Institucional de Uso Humano (OIRB) de la Universidad de Alabama en Birmingham, al (205) 934-3789 o 1-800-822-8816. Si llama al número de teléfono gratis, pulse la opción de "todas las otras llamadas" o por un operador y pida la extensión 4-3789. Las horas regulares de la Oficina de la IRB es de 8:00 am a 5:00 pm CT, de lunes a viernes. También puede llamar a este número en caso de que el personal de investigación no pueda ser alcanzado o si desea hablar con alguien más.

**Derechos Legales**
Usted no renuncia a ninguno de sus derechos legales al firmar este documento de consentimiento.

**Firmas**
Su firma indica que usted acepta participar en este estudio. Usted recibirá una copia de este documento firmado.

- Firma del participante
- Fecha

- Firma del Investigador Principal
- Fecha
APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol

Exploring RTI Reading Interventions for Hispanic English Learning Kindergarten Students in Central Alabama: A Mixed Methods Study

Time of interview: ______________________________
Date: _________________________________________
Place: ________________________________________
Interviewer: ____________________________________
Interviewee: ____________________________________
Position of interviewee: _________________________

Introduction:
(Participant name), I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Everything we say is on the record unless you request otherwise during the interview. The purpose of the study is to explore how RTI Tier II reading interventions are implemented with Hispanic kindergarten children learning English. Remember, I am audio and video-taping as well as taking notes during our discussion. Audio will be transcribed in their entirety for review and analysis. You will have the opportunity to review the transcription for accuracy. You will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym that will be used in order to protect confidentiality.

Interview Questions:

Icebreaker: Please tell me about your educational and professional experience?
   Probe: Tell me about your education.
   Probe: Tell me about your experience in teaching reading.
   Probe: Tell me about your experience working with children learning English.

1. What is your experience in teaching reading to children who are learning English?
   Probe: How do you think children learning English best learn to read?
   Probe: How do you perceive learning to read different for children who are learning English?

2. In general, in your opinion, how prepared for learning to read are Hispanic kindergarten English learners as compared to other English learning students in your classroom?
   Probe: As compared to other kindergarten English learners, how do Hispanic English learners progress in reading ability during the school year?
Probe: As compared to other kindergarten English learners, what is the need for reading interventions for Hispanic English learners?

3. How are students identified for RTI reading interventions?
   Probe: Are assessments used? Which ones?
   Probe: Who decides which assessments are used?

4. How are RTI reading interventions planned?
   Probe: Who decides what interventions are needed?
   Probe: What is the instructional focus of the intervention? Who decides this?
   Probe: Who provides the intervention?
   Probe: What resources are used for planning?

5. How are RTI reading interventions delivered in the classroom setting?
   What is the nature of student engagement during the lesson?
   What materials are used during the lesson?
   How long are students in Tier II reading intervention?

6. How is student progress of students receiving the RTI reading interventions evaluated?
   Probe: What happens if the student does/does not make progress?
   Probe: How are the interventions connected to student assessments?
   Probe: To what extent did students catch up to their native English speaking peers?

7. Is there anything else you would like to share with me today about how RTI Tier II reading interventions are implemented with Hispanic kindergarten children learning English?

Thank you for your time. We will meet again in the next couple of weeks after the lesson observation to discuss the reading interventions you provide. Please be assured that confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study and the reporting process.
_________________________ will be the name that I use when I reference you in the study.
Informed Consent Document

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Exploring RTI Reading Intervention for Hispanic English Learning Kindergarten Students in Central Alabama: A Mixed-Methods Study

IRB PROTOCOL: X130307004

INVESTIGATOR: Kelly Leah Hill

SPONSOR: University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Education

Explanation of Procedures

I am asking that you to take part in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore RTI Tier II reading interventions provided for Hispanic kindergarten students learning English. If you choose to participate, you will be interviewed for approximately one hour. The interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed to find common themes. The interview will be conducted at a time and place convenient for you. You will also be observed implementing three Tier II intervention lessons, for approximately 20-30 minutes each. Follow-up questions and clarifications will be conducted through additional interviews that may last for one to three hours total. I will also collect your reading lesson plans and student assessment data. Student assessment data will include: phonics inventory, running records, concepts about print, ACCESS data, DIBELS scores, writing samples, and other classroom based assessments. Your total time participating in this study will be no more than eight to ten hours, much of which will be during the school day. There will be 4 participants all of whom will be kindergarten teachers from Shelby County who are providing RTI Tier II reading intervention to Hispanic students learning English.

Risks and Discomforts

Anticipated risks for participants for participants in this study are no greater than those encountered in everyday life. Steps will be taken to protect confidentiality. I will store information on a password protected computer or a locked filing cabinet; however, there is a risk of loss of confidentiality if these security efforts fail.

Benefits

You will not benefit directly from this study. This research may add to the body of knowledge on the effectiveness of RTI Tier II reading intervention for Hispanic kindergarten children learning English. This study may potentially improve practices in teaching reading to English Learners.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout this research. You will choose a pseudonym that I will use to reference you in this study. I will also assign a pseudonym to your school site in order to protect the location identity. However, research information that identifies you may be shared with the UAB Institutional Review Board (IRB) and others who are responsible for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations related to research, including people on behalf of University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Education; and the Office
for Human Research Protections (OHRP). All data will be stored on password protected computers or locked file cabinets. The audiotapes will be destroyed one-year after the completion of the research project.

**Refusal or Withdrawal without Penalty**

Whether or not you take part in this study is your choice. There will be no penalty if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide not to be in the study, you will not lose any benefits you are otherwise owed. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time. Your choice to leave the study will not affect your relationship with this institution.

**Cost of Participation**

There will be no cost to you for taking part in this study.

**Payment for Participation in Research**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research study.

**Alternatives**

Your alternative is to not participate.

**Questions**

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Kelly Hill. She will be glad to answer any of your questions. Kelly Hill’s number is 205-936-9730.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the Office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (OIRB) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham at (205) 934-3789 or 1-800-822-8816. If calling the toll-free number, press the option for “all other calls” or for an operator/attendant and ask for extension 4-3789. Regular hours for the Office of the IRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday. You may also call this number in the event the research staff cannot be reached or you wish to talk to someone else.

**Legal Rights**

You are not waiving any of your legal rights by signing this informed consent document.

**Signatures**

Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of this signed document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature of Principal Investigator</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 2 of 2

Version Date: 03/07/13
APPENDIX H

Observation Protocol

Exploring RTI Reading Interventions for Hispanic English Learning Kindergarten Students in Central Alabama: A Mixed Methods Study

Time of observation: _______________________ Duration: _______________________
Date: _________________________________ Place: __________________________
Observer: ___________________________ Observee: __________________________

How many students are participating in the Tier II reading intervention lesson?________

The intervention lesson is: Teacher planned _______ Scripted lesson _______
Description:

What is the focus of the intervention lesson?
___ letter recognition
___ phonological / phonemic awareness
___ language development / vocabulary
___ sight word recognition
___ concepts about print
___ phonics
___ comprehension

Description:

What materials are used for the lesson?

How are students engaged in the lesson?

What is the nature of student interaction?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
Diagram of Classroom Layout
APPENDIX I

Interview Transcripts

Time of interview: ______3:45 pm______
Place: __Ivey Elementary School________
Interviewer: __Kelly Hill_______________
Interviewee: __Beatrice________________
Position of interviewee: __Kindergarten Teacher__

Interview Questions:

R - Please tell me about your educational and professional experience?

B- I graduated from the University of --. This is my first year teaching. I have had some opportunities to go out and volunteer I did a summer reading camp. I also did the ESL camp for “Shelter County” last year, and that is really about it.

R- Is yours a traditional certification or fifth-year?

B- It is just an Elementary Ed Bachelor’s degree.

R - Tell me about your experience in teaching reading.

B- Kindergarten was another whole beast for me. I had never been in a kindergarten classroom before and I had never experienced kindergarten at all, so this was a whole new learning experience for me because upper grades do things totally different from what the younger ones in kindergarten did. It was a learning experience. I had a reading coach come in and help me along the way, which was extremely beneficial. I picked up things here and there. I've made changes where I felt like I needed to make changes to help my kids and to better myself. But, overall, I’ve been very pleased with reading. I feel out of all of the subjects, I am a better reading teacher than anything else.

R – What do you think is most important in teaching reading?

B- Umm, a lot of modeling, being explicit… for me, I go back over things. I repeat myself three or four times with my kids, and some of them, it may drive them crazy, but the other ones really need that help, like the ELs. I feel like it helps them because they are hearing it over and over and over again and they are getting that experience over and over and over again.

R- So, I know this is your first year; but thinking back to ESL summer camp and specific experience with the ELs in your classroom this year. Tell me about your experience working with English language learners.
B- I realized that, not just from working with them, but from my own background as a Hispanic and growing up around a lot of Hispanics. They don't put a lot of, not all of them, but a majority of them, do not put a lot of emphasis on education. A lot of them feel like 'I'm doing well for myself now and I don’t have an education so why should I enforce it.' They may not have the education themselves or they just may not care for it. So, I've noticed that for them it's hard to get them motivated and get them engaged and want to really feel a passion for learning, and for learning something new and being good at something like this. I see a lot of my kids and they are so smart, so smart, and they can do it, I know that they can do it, but they do not have that internal: ‘Yes I'm good at this! Yes, I can do this!' type of motivation and really that's been one of my struggles this year; trying to get my kids motivated and letting them know that they are a good reader and that they can do this!

R- Okay, I have to ask… With your own personal background of being bilingual and Hispanic yourself; has that impacted how you work with your English learners?

B- Yes, it has! Definitely! Because I don't give up on them! I am very like, ‘No, we are not going to be stubborn. We are going to do this.’ And sometimes I'll even pull out my Spanish with my kids and say, ‘Come on, this is not a game. You can do this and were going to do this!’ I remember when I was younger and I was going through school, my grandmother would come in and say ‘Why are you doing all of this? Why do you need to do this? Just go get a job and take care of your mother. That's all you need to do.’ If I get on their level and let them know that we have the same background and I speak the same language as you, and look where I am today. I hope that sparks something in them and makes them think that they can be something more and do something with their life.

R – Tell me about your experience in teaching reading to children who are learning English?

B - It is very difficult. It is a learning experience. This was my first year teaching, but still, I had never been in a classroom that had English learners. I had been in all special ed classrooms, so this is a whole new experience for me. I find that during whole group time, it is hard to keep their attention. It's hard to get them to want to come out and participate and be engaged in the lesson.

R – Do you think that has anything to do with the language barrier?

B- Yes, and I think more than anything, it has to do with the kids. Those who are on top of it and know it and understand everything I'm saying, they jump at it. And so the other kids start spacing out, especially my ELs start spacing out and they are just doing their own thing in their head. But at the same time, I realize that even in small group, I find myself talking slower to them, I'll take my time more. I'm using more of the Tier I language with them, like I will still use the vocabulary and comprehension, such as inferring, or talking about the characters and setting, so we still use that vocabulary. I just
don't talk as fast as what I am even now. I try to slow it down for them to make sure that they understand. I find myself articulating everything more when I am around them to make sure they hear it.

R- Even when I was watching you teach that intervention group, I heard you always go back and ask questions. What does that have to do with them learning to read?

B - I want them to understand. The goal was to make sure that they knew some of that vocabulary and if they understood it all the way. I wanted to clarify. For example, with the tub; I wanted to make sure K knew the difference between the tub and a cub and I wanted to know that the whole story made sense. I wanted him to be able to differentiate the tub and cub in the pictures. I wanted to make sure that they better understood the story, not just reading the words, but to actually know what was going on.

R: How do you perceive learning to read different for children who are learning English than those who speak English?

B – Gosh, there are so many steps they have to go through. It is not even just knowing two different sounds for each letter, but they know the English sound and the Spanish sound for them it is figuring out which sound they're going to give me the English one or the Spanish. And then they are translating in their head and trying to make sense of it. A word could mean one thing in Spanish and something else totally different in English, with the vocabulary even how you say things. For example, when we say things like, ‘when pigs fly,’ idioms, for them, they would have no idea what that means! For example, when I would speak to my grandmother in Spanish, I would translate things very literally. My grandmother would be like, ‘No, that is not what that means! That means something totally different and that is not what I was talking about!’ So for them, they are having to look at the sounds, look at the meanings, translate it in their head; whereas the kids who already speak English, they only have to do the one. And then they're [ELs] putting all these words with the different vocabulary, vocabulary that they know in Spanish but don't know in English. It is just so much going on in their brain that they have to think of and connect it all the make sense for them!

R- In general, in your opinion, how prepared for learning to read are Hispanic kindergarten English learners as compared to other English learning students in your classroom?

B- They are not prepared; they're not. From my experience, knowing so many Hispanic families, a majority of these families are coming from Mexico, many haven't been into the US very long. They may work one job that takes all day long or two jobs. They are just trying to keep their families safe, alive, healthy, and well taken care of. The parents either don't speak English or don't have time. They don't even know how to put in the time or effort to help their kids. They're coming from backgrounds where they have never experienced it. In Mexico, the way it is in a small town, you have a little house and that's where all the kids go for school. All the kids are in one room and that's the way the school is in a small town in Mexico. If you're looking at the Hispanics who are coming
from bigger cities, they probably already speak English; they already speak it, but their
kids are still coming in as lower English-speakers because many of our children of
Mexican descent don't have a lot of background because they haven't had that experience
or their parents just don't know how to help them. I've even had some of them [parents]
tell me ‘I don’t know how my kid with their homework; I don’t even have the English
words. I don't even know she or she is saying these words correctly.’

R - As compared to other kindergarten English learners, how do Hispanic English
learners progress in reading ability during the school year?

B - This year is the only year I can look at because it’s the only year I’ve been teaching.
But at the beginning of the year there was a huge jump. My Hispanic kids got their letters
and they were getting them quick, but come December, they slowed down a bit. I don't
know if it was the break or what. But it's like hurdles, they jump hurdles, at this point
they're getting so much better! As time goes on, some of my kids who didn't have a clue
what an ‘A’ was, now they're giving me the sounds, giving me a letter. They can read and
they can blend all of those sounds together. It's a huge progression where I see my kids
who are not even English learners, they're progressing a lot slower. I think for English
learners, they've never been exposed to it so this is such new information, they are like
sponges and they’re soaking it up because they’ve never experienced it ever and now
they're getting this first experience and they are like ‘Yes! This is awesome! I am loving
this! This is wonderful! I can do this!’ and they're just taking it all in!

R – You said once they got all of their letters and sounds, they seemed to slow down.
What do you think, in reading, would cause that?

B – I think the vocabulary is the reason. With the tub for instance, for them ‘What is a
tub?’ For them, it is just a bathroom. They don’t really understand that the tub, yes, it’s in
the bathroom, but it is where you actually take baths and showers. It could be also, the
fact that once they start blending it… like my sweet little girl; she was changing up the
‘P’ and making it a “B.” She could do it, right when you gave her a letter and say: “What
letter is it?” ‘It’s a ‘p.’ ‘What sound does it make?’ ‘/p/’ and then she puts it with all
of the other letters and all of the sudden it changes and it is something different. And I am
like, ‘You just said it, it’s ‘p’ and it says the /p/ sound, but now you are giving me the /b/
sound.’ It is just putting it all together, and the interference from what do the sounds do in
Spanish.

R - As compared to other kindergarten English learners, what is the need for reading
interventions for Hispanic English learners? (repeated question for clarification)

B- I haven’t had a lot of experience with other English learners. But I feel like, if you
look at the families that are coming in: your Japanese, your Chinese, your Arabic, you
have in their culture, much more of a focus on education. So those parents are going to
try to find ways to be more on top of everything. They are making sure their kids get
practice. But, your Hispanic English learners are not given those opportunities at home.
They go home and either their parents are still at work or they go with Grandma, they
don’t even look at homework. I can’t even tell you how hard it is to get homework completed by my Hispanic English learners. I don’t get homework back from them that is completed, except for those families who have been in the United States for a while and have already have experienced it with other children. Those that are coming in with their very first young kids, I don’t think they know where to start, how to begin, or how to do it. And those who are not Hispanic English learners, they are already coming from a culture who are very focused on education, just in general.

R- How are students identified for RTI reading interventions?

B- We did assessments.

R – Which ones?

B – We did DIBELS, and Show Me Book [concepts about print assessment], and the phonics inventory. And the majority of it was just my personal observations. Seeing what they did know, what they didn’t know, and seeing what they could do independently versus with my help. All of that guided me to where they needed to be.

R - Who decides which assessments are used?

B – The county… does that work?

R – I guess so! How are RTI reading interventions planned?

B – I look at the different needs. What I try to do is, the entire week, I try to hit on everything that I am teaching. I look at the phonological, the phonemic, and the comprehension and I try to incorporate that into the RTI. And then I am looking at what I am doing in whole group and bringing it in and connecting everything back for them in RTI. And then I am looking at their own personal needs on top of that. So maybe, I know that this is what we are doing in whole group I will focus on that the last 5-10 minutes, but the first 5-10 minutes I will be doing something very quick to focus on a need that they have. Like, I saw that issue they had with the ‘b’ and ‘d’ the next time I go back and plan for my next lesson I include that in the beginning. We looked at a ‘b’ and a ‘d’ and we looked and talked about the differences. We even did an activity sorting the ‘b’ and ‘d’ and then we’ll go back into the purpose of the main lesson.

R - Who decides what interventions are needed?

B- Me. Me, myself, and I!

R – Do you use the Tier II Script that the county made?

B – I use it to help give me ideas and to guide me to what they need to be doing. I do not use it explicitly. I want my lessons to fit my kids. Because this is my first year, I do look
at it to get an overall view of what my outcomes are and where my kids need to be. But I do not use it in a scripted way.

R - Who provides the intervention?

B – I do.

R – Do you use the ESL teacher? Does she ever do the intervention?

B – We get together once a week during a planning time. We will discuss things. If I ever have any questions, we will get together and discuss it. Now she pulls them too. She pulls them every day; minus one of them to do another small group. I pull them twice in one day. They get pulled in their regular group, they are being pulled with me again, and she pulls them; so they get pulled three times.

R – What materials do you use to plan your intervention lessons?

B- I use Harcourt. I use the ‘Red Bible,’ *Locating and Correcting Reading Difficulties*. I use a few websites that have a lot of phonological games on it. Anything that the county provides, I have and will refer back to every once and a while.

R - How are RTI reading interventions delivered in the classroom?

B – At my small group table. I have something out for them. As I am getting the rest of my kids situated, they will be reading or practicing an activity that we have done before. They come to the table and do that, I get everyone situated and then we start the lesson.

R - What is the nature of student engagement during the lesson?

B – I ask them a lot of questions. I try to keep it at a quick pace. We start off with some kind of fun activity to reinforce something and then go into our reading. Then, we wrap it up with an overview of what my kids know. There are also days, at the end of the lesson; like today, I go back to the book and maybe we will do some type of stretching and writing in our journal.

R - What materials are used during the lesson? I have books, journals for writing, what other materials?

B – We use magnetic letters on a cookie pan. They LOVE the letters on the cookie pan! I have other letters that we pull out. It’s cool because I leave dry erase markers in the chair pockets too so they can use the letters to build a word and then write it too. We use CVC building cards, where we build with the letters. We use games, phonological games. We use pointers, highlighters, highlighter tape, wands, the list goes on and on.

R - How long are students in Tier II reading intervention?
B – 15- 20 minutes

R – And how about throughout the year?

B – Umm Hmm… There were 2 students who were in Tier II, but they moved out.

R – So the 4 you are meeting with now, they have been in Tier II since the beginning of the year?

B – Yes, minus one of them. I had to move one into Tier II.

R – So some have moved out and one has moved in?

B – Yes

R - How do you evaluate their progress?

B- A lot of it is by observation. Again, we have the scoring we do, the constant running records and phonics inventory. We also have checklists that we have come up with. As a group of teachers, we made a checklist of all the standards that we have to teach and I go in and check it off.

R - What happens if the student does/does not make progress? So if they do make progress, what happens?

B- If they do make progress, I try to see where and how much progress they have made, and if they are able to move out of the group. I have had 2 that have moved out of the group, because it wasn’t something they needed anymore. They are now in a higher group with higher reading levels and they are right where they need to be by the end of the year… which is great!

R – And what happens if they don’t make progress in Tier II?

B – Back track, I have to back track and make sure they are understanding. I want them to at least understand the basics before they leave me. I don’t want to push them to the point that they are getting frustrated. That is what I see a lot with my kids too, I can just tell it in their face if I am pushing them too much to the point they are getting frustrated. So we will slow down, back track, and try to make it fun for them so they are engaged in it and they want to learn and want to be at my small group table. I don’t want them to come to my table and be like, “Ugg, I don’t want to read with this lady again!”

R – I heard you say that you use the checklist and you take that back to small group and you look at their assessments. Can you think of any other way that the interventions are connected to their assessments?
B – Other than what I have to do; the phonics inventory and running records; I take notes. I have not been as diligent as what I would like to be, but a lot of it is observation and what I get from my kids. I can tell what they are getting and what they are not getting.

R - To what extent did students catch up to their native English speaking peers?

B – It’s hard to say because it is split 50/50. I have 2 who can have full-out conversations and I am sure that, for the most part, they understand everything they are saying. I still have 2, who if you didn’t know them, it would be hard to understand them. They still speak a lot of “Spanglish.”

R – Do you predict they will catch up to their English speaking peers?

B – I think they will. It is just them going at their own pace and having a drive to want to learn more. If they have those teachers who are passionate and show them that passion, and show them love for wanting to learn, and who are patient with them, I think they will catch up. They need to go at their own pace. I am not saying they will catch up in 3 years; it may take a little longer than that. Eventually the will; they can do it. They can; they just need the foundations first, then they can.

R - Is there anything else you would like to share with me today about how RTI Tier II reading interventions are implemented with Hispanic kindergarten children learning English?

B – Patience; lots of patience. I think that is the one thing I have learned is to have patience. That’s it…
R - Please tell me about your educational and professional experience?

E – I am elementary education certified, working on ESL certification. I have taught kindergarten, this will be my second year; second grade for 1 year. Last year I had a majority ESL, so this is a ‘light’ ESL load this year.

R – About how many did you have last year?

E – 12

R – And how many were in your class?

E – 16

R – 12 of 16; wow!

E – Yes!

R - Can you tell me more about your experience with children learning English?

E – I have had them in my classroom. When I was in college, I tutored a little boy from the Ukraine, so he was the one who got me interested. He had just been adopted. He got me interested and then I pursued it more.

R - What is your experience in teaching reading to children who are learning English?

E – That has been my focus for the past 3 years. A lot of them, you find, have the math skills so the focus really is reading. It has been in my classroom doing Tier II and Tier I and then I have also had ESLs on the side, tutoring them outside of school.

R - How do you think children learning English best learn to read?

E – I think it is just through that scaffolding and that modeling and breaking things apart and making sure they have those concepts of print. Especially with the younger ones, you find that their biggest struggle is learning what a book is. It is a matter of breaking down into the words and the sentences and taking them through it. It is building their vocabulary and building their English so they can then make connections to the stories.
R - How do you perceive learning to read different for children who are learning English?

E – My non-ELL, it’s more of just building concepts of print; whereas with the ELLs, it is the concepts of print, and the language, and the confidence, and just their basic communication. When they don’t feel comfortable talking in general, I found that they are even less comfortable reading. If you can strengthen their social skills, then it helps with the reading and their confidence and then they can make the predications and connections that the non-ELs can already do.

R – How do you go about strengthening their social skills?

E – Just making sure that they are allowed to do clarifications in Spanish, and not just make them be English-only all the time. Allow them interactions with ESL kids and non-ESL kids; because a lot of times they will speak in English without you forcing it. When they use the Spanish it is to get clarifications of what exactly is going on, if they don’t have that clarification in Spanish they are not going to use their English.

R - In general, in your opinion, how prepared for learning to read are Hispanic kindergarten English learners as compared to other English learning students in your classroom?

E – I would say, in general, I think they are less prepared. I don’t think it is because the parents do not care, but I’ve found the parents always say ‘We want to help, but we don’t know what to do.’ Whereas the English-speaking parents know how to read with their kids in English and know what to expect, but lot of them have never been in the American school system and don’t know what to do. As soon as you can bridge that gap, they will start working with them at home. Letting them know that it is fine to read with them in Spanish, because it is still building the concepts of print and that will jump start them.

R - As compared to other kindergarten English learners, how do Hispanic English learners progress in reading ability during the school year?

E- I think as soon as you build that confidence and that vocabulary, they progress just the same. They may be slower at the beginning, but once the concepts of print click and they build vocabulary, they can progress just as quickly as the rest.

R - As compared to other kindergarten English learners, what is the need for reading interventions for Hispanic English learners?

*long hesitation from participant - for clarification – Do you find that Hispanic English Learners often need intervention more so than other English learners?
E – No, because I think they all still need the same. Even within my classroom last year I had a Vietnamese; this year I have Japanese and it is the same thing of building their vocabulary and building those kinds of skills. You still have a few that are a little bit lower than that, who need to build the alphabetic principle. But I don’t think they are any different.

R - How are students identified for RTI reading interventions?

E – Just through my assessments and listening to them read and me noting errors and going back to see which ones are common and which ones are gaps and through DIBELS and their benchmarks that we have through the county.

R – Which assessments are used? You said DIBELS...

E – DIBELS, running records and just my basic ones…

R – Concepts about print?

E – Yes and phonics inventory.

R - Who decides which assessments are used?

E – Some of them are told to us by the county. Other ones, if I see something on DIBELS or in the phonics inventory, then I pull other things to see if they can do it. Then I work with different things within that to see what they are missing. Like with phonics inventory, are they missing consonants? Are the missing vowels? Are they missing similar letters? Or is it just they couldn’t do the assessment and they really can do it.

R - How are RTI reading interventions planned?

E – I plan them through using what the county gives us. I use that at the beginning of the week to see how they do on that and based on how they can perform on that, I will adjust it. A lot of times, I have found the plans we get from the county are almost too high for them or just aren’t geared toward exactly what they need. I then talk with the ESL teacher and get her opinions on what she is observing and pull ideas from her as well from the resources she has.

R - Who decides what interventions are needed?

E – Really, the ESL teacher and I.

R - What is the instructional focus of the intervention?

E – I focus more on letter names and sounds and that blending of the words and applying what they know. A lot of them have it in their head, it is just a matter of getting them
comfortable enough to where it’s a second nature so they do not just sit there and think about it.

R - Who provides the intervention?

E – I provide it and then the ESL teacher will pull them during our reading block. It is just those lower ones who need more communication and basic things. She pulls them as well for a rotation.

R - What resources are used for planning?

E – I use the Harcourt, the county stuff, games.

R – What else do you use at your table?

E – We pull letters, CVC word cards, stamps, games that they have in word work to reinforce word families, building words, working on sight words through flashcards and incorporating it through games.

R - How are RTI reading interventions delivered in the classroom?

E – It is 3-5 students depending on the exact skill we are working on. I use flexible grouping. Maybe one day we are working on the alphabetic principal and I will pull those kids but not all, not the ones who really have it. The next day we may work on blending where I have all of those kids who are Tier II.

R - Do you see your Hispanic students coming most often even to the flexible groups.

E – Yes, my lower Hispanic students come every day.

R - What is the nature of student engagement during the lesson?

E – They LOVE it. It is seen as a special treat to come here so they are excited. They are listening and paying attention. I try to disguise things as games, so they don’t see it as, ‘I have to go to the teacher table again!’ They see it as a time when they get to come and play games with me.

R - What materials are used during the lesson?

E – Text materials, I use Reading A-Z and Harcourt books.

R – Which ones?

E – The leveled ones that come with our curriculum. I use the decodable ones… sometimes. The books that I pull for them in their small groups, they range from level A to level C. A lot of times it is different for each kid, it’s not necessarily the same book for
each one. The decodable books, the leveled readers, the Reading A-Z, I pull some word family books. Sometimes I make my own books, because when you get to the end of the year, what I find out there is too difficult so I take books that I find and make my own version that is more their level.

R - How long are students in Tier II reading intervention?

E – Daily? They are with me 15-20 minutes depending on the lesson. Then they are pulled by the ESL teacher about 20 minutes a day.

R – What about during the year?

E – These have been in it the whole year.

R - How is student progress of students receiving the RTI reading interventions evaluated?

E – Through the same assessments that we use to see if they should be in Tier II. Through DIBELS, the phonics inventories, my assessments, the concepts about print.

R - What happens if the student does not make progress?

E – Then the ESL teacher and I will meet with parents to dig deeper with them to see what they are doing. What else can we do for them? What are the gaps? We will bring it up to the reading coach. We will bring it up to the PST team. We will get a team of people looking at it.

R - How are the interventions connected to student assessments?

E – I take the assessments; that is how I plan. I try to do assessments regularly just to see how they are making progress. That is how I plan my flexible grouping and decide; who is getting pulled on what day and how many days I am focusing on alphabetic principle, how many days I am focusing on blending, and sight words; based on how many need it and how far behind they are.

R - To what extent did students catch up to their native English speaking peers?

E – Most of them are pretty close. They are reading on grade level, but it is still a matter of building their confidence. Most of them are right where I want them. I still have 2 Hispanic students who are just trying to put everything together, so they are still a little bit behind.

R - Is there anything else you would like to share with me today about how RTI Tier II reading interventions are implemented with Hispanic kindergarten children learning English?
E – It is just a lot of repetition, repetition, repetition. Doing the gradual release of watch me do it, watch how I do it, now you do a little of it, and gradually release them until they are independent. Especially with the Hispanics, and all ELs, I have found that confidence is the biggest thing and it can so easily be crushed. You just have to be very careful to make sure they are ready, you’ve given background and have given them the knowledge to be successful. So, just focusing on breaking apart the sentences and not giving them those full sentences that they’ve never seen and doing it over and over and over.

R – When you say ‘breaking apart the sentence’ can you tell me more about what you mean? What might that look like?

E – I take a book, most of them are on text that repeats throughout the whole story. So I take the sentence and the vocabulary of the words that are going to change and we talk about the sentence and what the book is going to tell us about. I tell them, “this book is going to tell us a lot of ‘The cat runs to the…’ and it is going to tell us where the cat runs.” So let’s make this sentence, let’s put these words together, we read the sentence, then we cut up the sentence into individual words. Then we mix them up and think about the sentence we are going to see a lot, okay let’s try to put it back together, and ask them, ‘What was the first word?’ ‘What does that word look like?’ Just to get them picturing the words in their head so when they get to the book they recognize it, they see it, they are thinking about it and putting it into memory.

R – So a lot of front-loading?

E – Yes.
Interview Questions:

R - Please tell me about your educational and professional experience.

K – I have my Bachelor’s from Auburn and my Master’s from Montevallo. Both are in Early Childhood. And then, I have taught public kindergarten for 17 years, and half day church kindergarten for 6. It has all been in kindergarten… and I am still living!

R - Tell me about your experience working with children learning English.

K – I started that 6 years ago when I came to ‘Heights.’ And it is different every year because the children are different every year, and their amount of English is different. [Student 3-1] is the first one, this year, that only Spanish is spoken in the home.

R – So, this is your first time for that?

K – Yes. I have always had them that had a little bit of English; he had none and the parents still have none. They do not speak any English so that has been interesting. But, I have seen so much growth and it just takes time. That is the big thing with him, is just time… And exposure, constant exposure, like with a 2 year old. That is what it makes me think of.

R – About how many have you had in your class every year?

K – The most I had was 5. This least is this year, with 2. Two students tested out before they got in ESL this year.

R - What is your experience in teaching reading to children who are learning English?

K – First, they’ve got to learn the alphabet. Just basic, basic letter ID; what a letter is and what it looks like. It is like you are starting with a 2 year old and teaching them to talk. Just so much repetition and exposure, as much as I can get; and with the other children, getting them to talk to him. And just repetitive practice daily.

R - How do you think children learning English best learn to read?

K – Over and over, hearing and being read to; so he can hear the English language. We have worked with him a lot on the computer, listening to books, just so he can hear the
English language. For him, I am just thinking, that is what has worked most. It has taken him until now to figure it all out and put it all together himself.

R – On the computer, are those books leveled emergent books or picture books?

K – Both; we’ve done both emergent books and picture books. We did a lot of just looking at the pictures and talking about the pictures. Just talking! Just trying to have conversations; just trying to get him used to hearing and making words.

R - How do you perceive learning to read different for children who are learning English?

K – First, they’ve got to learn the language and then figure out how it works and how to apply it to their life and to their learning.

R – Can you think of anything specific you do maybe in Tier II with English learners as opposed to native English speakers.

K – I think just showing lots of pictures, lots of pictures and talking about the pictures. Whereas with the… I guess, ‘regular’ intervention kids it’s just trying to get them to do it. They know their letters, they know their sounds; it’s just putting it together. But these, it is trying to get them to figure out how it all works.

R - In general, in your opinion, how prepared for learning to read are Hispanic kindergarten English learners as compared to other English learning students in your classroom?

K – The ones that I have had have not been prepared. They have not gone to a preschool or a daycare. They have mainly been in the home around other Hispanic children and Hispanic adults, so they have not heard the language. It is all brand new to them. Also, just socialization; they are not used to being in and around and playing in big groups. They have just stayed in their family unit.

R - As compared to other kindergarten English learners, how do Hispanic English learners progress in reading ability during the school year?

K – It seems to take a little longer for them. I have only had Vietnamese and Korean and just based on that, it has taken the Hispanics a little longer. They seem to be more immersed in their Spanish culture and language than to be open to learning the English language.

R - As compared to other kindergarten English learners, what is the need for reading interventions for Hispanic English learners?

K – They just still need the extra practice. They need more practice.

R – So, do you think they more often need to get intervention that the other EL kids?
K – Yes.

R - How are students identified for RTI reading interventions?

K – A lot of it is based on their DIBELS scores and just teacher observations. Meeting with the ELL teacher and seeing how they interact throughout the day.

R – What assessments do you use?

K – We use the phonics inventory, we do use DIBELS. We use running records: the Rigby running records. Other school assessments, which we have 10 million-gazillion, that I don’t have the right names for… just school-wide assessments.

R – Concepts about print?

K - Yes

R - Who decides which assessments are used for identifying Tier II, RTI needs?

K – Umm… the teacher? The teacher.

R – So you feel like you have ultimate control over the assessments? It’s not just, DIBELS says these children, so they are in RTI Tier II.

K – Exactly

R - How are RTI reading interventions planned?

K – I mainly plan them on my own. I do sometimes meet with the ELL teacher if she and I are both noticing something that needs to be addressed more either with her or myself. If I notice something, I will ask, ‘Can you work with them on this?’ and she is good about saying ‘Okay, this is what we did and he could not do this or…’ so she and I work well like that.

R - What is the instructional focus of the intervention?

K – At the beginning of the year it is mainly just letter ID; that is truly what it was. As time progressed, we were working on sounds and blending and just recognizing words.

R – Like high frequency words?

K – Yes. And he struggled with that. He can blend CVC words really well; but just knowing, automatically, sight words… we struggle.

R - Who provides the intervention? Who does the Tier II with them?
K – Umm… Mrs. B [the ESL teacher] does some, but it is mainly me.

R – Does she get them daily or a couple of times per week?

K – Mainly, daily with [Student 3-1] and with [Student 3-2] it is just a couple of times a week… this year. It just depends on the child and the schedule that works.

R - What resources are used for planning?

K – I do use the Harcourt, I do use that. And also, I just use what I think he needs.

R – And where do you get that?

K – From my brain! From my brain [laughing]… seriously, that is the real answer. I use my brain! I see what he needs and there we go! I’m like, ‘Y’all it’s not hard and y’all make it hard.’ I see they need this, so we go!

R – I love it, I love it! [laughing]

K – [laughing] Sometimes my brain is all I have to use!

R - How are RTI reading interventions delivered in the classroom?

K – Through meeting with me one-on-one daily, during intervention time.

R – So, today, you had 2 and you just went back and forth.

K – Some days, I just do [Student 3-1] but today I thought he would do better having someone else because he can be kind of shy. But some days it is just him by himself. And some days I also pull [Student 3-2] some with him.

R - What is the nature of their engagement during the lesson?

K – I want to get them talking as much as possible. And so, even if it is not focused on what they are supposed to do, but if they will say something about something else! Any kind of verbal words we are happy to get!

R - What materials are used during the lesson?

K – I do use the decodable books from Harcourt, and then I use the ELL book from Harcourt. They are not great pictures, but for him… I’ll be honest; I did not use them last year because the ones I had because it didn’t suit their needs. But for him, it has been good just to see a picture and a word and to go from there. And trying to get him to talk more about those things he sees.

R – And, I saw you use whiteboards, and the alphabet chart…
K – And I use the alphabet dice.

R – Is there anything else you use often?

K – Sometimes we use the CVC word sliders, but that is about it.

R - How long are students in Tier II reading intervention?

K – He’s been in it all year since school started. [Student 3-2] is in and out. When we were starting blending, she was with me just to build her up with it. Then she could be out for a while until we added a new vowel or consonant; I would bring her back in it.

R – How long are they in Tier II daily?

K – It is supposed to be 20, but really they can’t make it 20. Really, it is 10-15; that is the honest truth. Some days, 5 is about all they can handle on top of all the other things they do.

R – The hour and a half reading?

K – Yes! When really they need to go play; because that is what I am pulling them from, free-choice time. I am like, he just needs to go build with blocks or go play in the loft. Honestly, 10-15.

R - How is student progress of students receiving the RTI reading interventions evaluated?

K – In the assessments, and in the DIBELS scores, and in the running records. Even in their writing, I can see growth.

R - What happens if the student doesn’t make progress?

K – We just keep working. We don’t give up! We just go back, take a few steps back and start again.

R – And, what if they do make progress?

K – I’m thrilled! [laughs]

R – [laughing] Well, there you go!

K – [laughing] You know I am happy! I mean, we keep moving on and see if we can go even further and dig a little deeper. I don’t want [Student 3-1] to get frustrated. He can get frustrated really easy, so I don’t want to frustrate him with overwhelming him with too much information that he can’t do. So it is like we are doing baby steps.
R - How are the interventions connected to student assessments?

K – They should all go together and I am hoping that it does. I just think that it does all go together with what we are teaching them in whole group and small group and intervention and that is what I am assessing.

R - To what extent did students catch up to their native English speaking peers?

K – [Student 3-2] has almost caught up. [Student 3-1] has not caught up; he is about 3 nine-weeks behind. He is where some of the other students came in August; that is where he is just starting to be.

R - Is there anything else you would like to share with me today about how RTI Tier II reading interventions are implemented with Hispanic kindergarten children learning English?

K – I mean, they do need it. It does benefit. It is helpful, and I just meet them where they are and go with what they can do and build on that.

R – Why do you think they need it so much?

K – I think, for him, he was just so lacking; he needed one-on-one. He cannot get it in a small group when there are 3 or 4 other children, because he needs one-on-one instruction to focus on me, to hear and to concentrate. There are not as many distractions as there are in small group. That’s it.
Interview Questions:

R - Please tell me about your educational and professional experience?

L – I have been teaching for 28 years. I have a master’s degree. I have taught Kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, and 4th grade.

R - Tell me about your experience in teaching reading.

L – Well, I have taught reading every year. My main experience and where I really learned the most about teaching reading was with Project Child in Florida. I taught some of the same children for several years, so I really got to see them grow.

R - Tell me about your experience working with children learning English.

L – I have had a lot of ELs here at MVES. The one thing I can say is that I have always had very supportive parents. They want the best for their children. They are willing to help at home and work with their children. They do not always know what to do or how to help, but they are always willing. I think that makes a big difference in my students.

R - What is your experience in teaching reading to children who are learning English?

L – We have to start with letters and sounds. They have to know that before they can read. So we spend most of our time on learning letters and the sounds they make. Then we move on to blending words. I just really focus on the basics with them.

R - How do you think children learning English best learn to read?

L – I think a print rich environment helps. In the classroom, there is print everywhere. We have print on the walls and ceilings. We have books all over the room… all kinds of books. They have places they can read and places they can write. A community is another important part. I try to foster a community of learners. I want them to feel safe. I want them to help each other and feel comfortable, that makes them more confident. It is also important to just start where they are. I figure out what they know and build from there.

R - How do you perceive learning to read different for children who are learning English?
L – I don’t think it is different. I think they learn to read the same as any other child.

R - In general, in your opinion, how prepared for learning to read are Hispanic kindergarten English learners as compared to other English learning students in your classroom?

L – I think it is the same. They come with what they have and we just go from there. I do not think they are any more or less prepared.

R - As compared to other kindergarten English learners, how do Hispanic English learners progress in reading ability during the school year?

L – I think they make more progress. They come in farther behind so they have farther to go. They have to learn English and learn to read at the same time, because they have more to learn, they progress more.

R - As compared to other kindergarten English learners, what is the need for reading interventions for Hispanic English learners?

L – I do have mostly Hispanic English learners, so more of them are in my intervention group. But I do not think they need it more than others… it is just the same.

R - How are students identified for RTI reading interventions?

L – At the beginning of the year they do the ACCESS to see where their English is. I also use observations and the benchmark assessment, running records. I also use the observational survey; the concepts about print.

R - Who decides which assessments are used?

L – The teacher. There is a ‘watch list’ of students from the DIBELS. That is just those who scored low enough for us to keep an eye on and make sure they are progressing. The teacher decides who actually needs the intervention.

R - How are RTI reading interventions planned?

L – I use the decodable books from Harcourt and the sight words for the week. I use those now, to make sure they can blend and decode words and read the sight words automatically. At the beginning of the year, I focused just on learning the letters and sounds. Now, they are putting those sounds together to read the words.

R - Who decides what interventions are needed?

L – I do, along with the ESL teacher. We talk to make sure they are getting all they need.

R - What is the instructional focus of the intervention? Who decides this?
L – I do. Mostly it is just building and reading words. I want to make sure they can read and write CVC words.

R - Who provides the intervention?

L – Me, the classroom teacher and the ESL teacher. I actually teach reading to both kindergarten classes. I team teach and the other teacher does all of the math and science. So I do all of the reading intervention and the ESL teacher pulls them too.

R - What resources are used for planning?

L – The decodable books from Harcourt and the turning cubes. We use the cubes to build CVC words and change the letter cubes to make different words. I also use writing, I have them stretch the CVC word and write it. Then they read it back.

R - How are RTI reading interventions delivered in the classroom setting?

L – They are normally in a small group of 4 or so. Sometimes I will pull a student at the end to work individually if they need it.

R - What is the nature of student engagement during the lesson?

L – They use the SmartBoard a lot. They read CVC words and sight words. They build the CVC words on the SmartBoard too. They write the CVC words on the table and read them off. Each child gets to read a word and the others have to listen and then find the word the child read and erase it from their list of words. They are also peer helpers, they help each other a lot.

R - How long are students in Tier II reading intervention?

L – Until they can blend. That is what they have to be able to do to get out of the intervention group. They are in the group daily for about 15 minutes. The ones in this group have been in all year.

R - How is student progress of students receiving the RTI reading interventions evaluated?

L – Benchmark, Running Records and DIBELS and my own observation.

R - What happens if the student does/does not make progress?

L – They do make progress, they all do.

R - To what extent did students catch up to their native English speaking peers?
L – They are just spread out like the native English speakers. Some do catch up, some do not; they are at different levels just like the kids who speak English.

R - Is there anything else you would like to share with me today about how RTI Tier II reading interventions are implemented with Hispanic kindergarten children learning English?

L – It just has to be repetitive. They have to do it over and over before they can get it on their own. So we do a lot of the same thing over and over again. I also send home books every week. I send home 5 books for them to read at home. And they have a homework journal to go with it where they write what book they read and do their homework.
**APPENDIX J**

Data Coding Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beatrice – Data Coding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home support</td>
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“I can’t even tell you how hard it is to get homework completed by my Hispanic English learners. I don’t get homework back from them that is completed, except for those families who have been in the United States for a while and have already have experienced it with other children. Those that are coming in with their very first young kids, I don’t think they know where to start, how to begin, or how to do it.”

| School Readiness | “They are not prepared; they're not.”
|                 | “They're coming from backgrounds where they have never experienced it [school readiness expectations].”
|                 | “Our children of Mexican descent don't have a lot of background”

| Social-Emotional Well-being | **Self-Confidence:**
|                            | “That's been one of my struggles this year; trying to get my kids motivated and letting them know that they are a good reader and that they can do this!”

|                | **Frustration:**
|                | “I don’t want to push them to the point that they are getting frustrated. That is what I see a lot with my kids too, I can just tell it in their face if I am pushing them too much to the point they are getting frustrated.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Planning</th>
<th>Documented Lesson Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher’s Reflections:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Welcoming and student friendly environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Positive and encouraging with students during lessons: smiled, praised, gave high-fives, and encouraged students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-In one lesson, a student had written two letters backwards when writing ‘cab’, the teacher only asked her to look at the letter ‘b.’ She then asked the student if that looked correct. When the child responded that it did, she smiled and said, “Good, it’s better!” She did not push the student too hard or too far.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-In one observed lesson, the student who finished first announced, “Ha, Ha! I won.” Beatrice smiled and responded we are just writing our words, there was no winner, and that everyone could take their time to write the sounds they heard.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher’s Reflections:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Most lessons were skilled based, one day a week was</td>
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</table>

“I use it [scripted RTI Tier II plans] to help give me ideas and to guide me to what they need to be doing. I do not use it explicitly. I want my lessons to fit my kids.”
Kindergarten EL Reading Intervention

| Connecting Tier I and Tier II | “I'm using more of the Tier I language with them, like I will still use the vocabulary and comprehension, such as inferring, or talking about the characters and setting, so we still use that vocabulary.”

“I try to hit on everything that I am teaching. I look at the phonological, the phonemic, and the comprehension and I try to incorporate that into the RTI. And then I am looking at what I am doing in whole group and bringing it in and connecting everything back for them in RTI. And then I am looking at their own personal needs on top of that.”

Researcher’s Reflections:
For the Tier II lesson plans completed and the lessons observed, there was a clear match between Tier I and Tier II outcomes. The teacher had a different instructional focus for each day of the week. Even if plans were not written, the instructional focus was listed on the lesson plan.

| Collaboration with ESL teacher | “We get together once a week during a planning time. We will discuss things. If I ever have any questions, we will get together and discuss it. Now she pulls them too.” |
| Lesson Delivery | Small Group | “at my small group table” |
| | Materials | “I use Harcourt.” “We use games, phonological games.” |

**Researcher’s Reflections:**
- Decodable texts were used in all observed lessons.

**Student Engagement**

**Whole Group Lessons:**

“I find that during whole group time, it is hard to keep their attention. It’s hard to get them to want to come out and participate and be engaged in the lesson.”

“My ELs start spacing out and they are just doing their own thing in their head.”

**Small Group Tier II Lessons:**
“we will do some type of stretching and writing”
“try to make it fun for them so they are engaged”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehensible Input</th>
<th>Repetition:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I repeat myself three or four times with my kids.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“It helps them because they are hearing it over and over and over again and they are getting that experience over and over and over again.”</td>
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</table>

**Speech:**

“ I find myself talking slower to them”

“I try to slow it down for them to make sure that they understand. I find myself articulating everything more when I am around them to make sure they hear it.”

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

- Picture support (documented in lesson plans)
- Teacher often restated or reframed questions during lessons
- Teacher used a slower rate of speech with students during lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Making</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I want them to understand. The goal was to make sure that they knew some of that vocabulary and if they understood it all the way.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I wanted to know that the whole story made sense.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
“I wanted to make sure that they better understood the story, not just reading the words, but to actually know what was going on.”

“I ask them a lot of questions.”

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

Teacher asked many questions as children were reading to her. Not only did she ask questions to make sure they comprehended, she also had students explain their thinking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Language Acquisition</th>
<th>Language Learning and Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“There are so many steps they have to go through. It is not even just knowing two different sounds for each letter, but they know the English sound and the Spanish sound for them it is figuring out which sound they're going to give me the English one or the Spanish. And then they are translating in their head and trying to make sense of it. A word could mean one thing in Spanish and something else totally different in English, with the vocabulary even how you say things.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“So for them, they are having to look at the sounds, look at the meanings, translate it in their head; whereas the kids who already speak English, they only have to do the one.”</td>
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</table>
**Researcher’s Reflections:**

The teacher made a note on her lesson plans about one of the students receiving RTI Tier II. The student was having difficulty differentiating and producing /v/ and /b/; she made a note to herself, “Speech problem?”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Assessments used</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>“We did DIBELS, and Show Me Book [concepts about print assessment], and the phonics inventory. And the majority of it was just my personal observations. Seeing what they did know, what they didn’t know, and seeing what they could do independently versus with my help. All of that guided me to where they needed to be.” “A lot of it is by observation. Again, we have the scoring we do, the constant running records and phonics inventory. We also have checklists that we have come up with.” “I can tell what they are getting and what they are not getting.”</td>
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| Student Progress | “My Hispanic kids got their letters and they were getting them quick, but come December, they slowed down a bit.” “It's a huge progression where I see my kids who are...” |
not even English learners, they're progressing a lot slower.”

“I think for English learners, they've never been exposed to it so this is such new information, they are like sponges and they’re soaking it up because they’ve never experienced it.”

“If they do make progress, I try to see where and how much progress they have made, and if they are able to move out of the group.”

\textit{In response to catching up to their native English peers:}

“It’s hard to say because it is split 50/50. I have 2 who can have full-out conversations and I am sure that, for the most part, I understand everything they are saying. I still have 2, who if you didn’t know them, it would be hard to understand them. They still speak a lot of ‘Spanglish.’”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Participant Quotes / Researcher’s reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent Engagement</td>
<td>Home support</td>
<td>“I don’t think it is because the parents do not care, but I’ve found the parents always say, ‘We want to help, but we don’t know what to do.’ Whereas the English-speaking parents know how to read with their kids in English and know what to expect, but lot of them have never been in the American school system and don’t know what to do. As soon as you can bridge that gap, they will start working with them at home. Letting them know that it is fine to read with them in Spanish, because it is still building the concepts of print and that will jump start them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Readiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I think they are less prepared.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social-Emotional Well-being</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Self-Confidence:</strong></td>
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<td>“When they don’t feel comfortable talking in general, I found that they are even less comfortable reading.”</td>
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<td>“If you can strengthen their social skills, then it helps with the reading and their confidence and then they can make the predications and connections that the non-ELs can already do.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
“Especially with the Hispanics, and all ELs, I have found that confidence is the biggest thing and it can so easily be crushed. You just have to be very careful to make sure they are ready and that you’ve given background and have given them the knowledge to be successful.”

**Lesson Planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documented Lesson Plans</th>
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| “I plan them through using what the county gives us. I use that at the beginning of the week to see how they do on that and based on how they can perform on that, I will adjust it.”

“A lot of times, I have found the plans we get from the county are almost too high for them”

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

For the entire first semester, all RTI Tier II lesson plans only referred to the scripted RTI Tier II plans provided by the district.

Lessons were very often the exact same for weeks in a row.

There were no RTI Tier II plans for the month of May.

“I focus more on letter names and sounds and that blending of the words and applying what they know.”
### Researcher’s Reflections:

Lessons typically focused on skills in isolation. Children read the alphabet chart chorally almost daily. Flashcards were used for letter speed drills and reading high frequency words. Games were used to teach skills: bean bag for letter identification, letter dice for blending CVC words, popsicle sticks with words written on them for automatic reading practice.

| Collaboration with ESL teacher | “I talk with the ESL teacher and get her opinions on what she is observing and pull ideas from her as well from the resources she has.”
“[The scripted plans] just aren’t geared toward exactly what they need.”
“No, because I think they all still need the same.”
“My lower Hispanic students come every day.”
“Really, the ESL teacher and I.” – who decides the intervention
“[The scripted plans] just aren’t geared toward exactly what they need.”
“The books that I pull for them in their small groups, they range from level A to level C. A lot of times it is different for each kid, it’s not necessarily the same book for each one.” |
| Student needs |
| |
“Then the ESL teacher and I will meet with parents to dig deeper with them to see what they are doing. What else can we do for them? What are the gaps? We will bring it up to the reading coach. We will bring it up to the PST team. We will get a team of people looking at it.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Delivery</th>
<th>Flexible Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It is 3-5 students depending on the exact skill we are working on.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I use flexible grouping.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Maybe one day we are working on the alphabetic principal and I will pull those kids but not all, not the ones who really have it. The next day we may work on blending where I have all of those kids who are Tier II.”</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
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<tr>
<td>“I use the Harcourt, the county stuff [scripted Tier II lesson plans], games.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We pull letters, CVC word cards, stamps, games that they have in word work to reinforce word families, building words, working on sight words through flashcards and incorporating it through games.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| “The decodable books, the leveled readers, the Reading A-Z, I pull some word family books. Sometimes I make my own books, because when you get to the end of the year, what I find out there is too difficult so I take books
that I find and make my own version that is more their level.”

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

The teacher used mostly games to teach skills in isolation.

The use of real books was rarely noted in RTI Tier II lesson plans.

The students read books during lesson observations, but it was only for a small portion of the lesson.

| Student Engagement | “They LOVE it. It is seen as a special treat to come here so they are excited. They are listening and paying attention. I try to disguise things as games, so they don’t see it as, ‘I have to go to the teacher table again!’ They see it as a time when they get to come and play games with me.”

| **Researcher’s Reflections:** | During observations it was noted that children were often not engaged. Children were looking around the room or had their head down on the table.

During one observation, a child was supposed to be reading and rereading a short book. She read it once and
then sat and looked around the room for three minutes until the teacher got to her.

During another lesson one student stated that he did not want to read the book.

**Second Language Acquisition**

“It is building their vocabulary and building their English so they can then make connections to the stories.”

“With the ELLs, it is the concepts of print, and the language, and the confidence, and just their basic communication.”

“Just making sure that they are allowed to do clarifications in Spanish, and not just make them be English-only all the time. Allow them interactions with ESL kids and non-ESL kids; because a lot of times they will speak in English without you forcing it. When they use the Spanish it is to get clarifications of what exactly is going on, if they don’t have that clarification in Spanish they are not going to use their English.”

**Assessment**

Assessments used

“Just through my assessments and listening to them read and me noting errors and going back to see which ones are common and which ones are gaps and through DIBELS and their benchmarks that we have through the county.”
“Some of them are told to us by the county. Other ones, if I see something on DIBELS or in the phonics inventory, then I pull other things to see if they can do it. Then I work with different things within that to see what they are missing. Like with phonics inventory, are they missing consonants? Are the missing vowels? Are they missing similar letters? Or is it just they couldn’t do the assessment and they really can do it.”

“DIBELS, running records, concepts about print, and the phonics inventory”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Progress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I try to do assessments regularly just to see how they are making progress.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think as soon as you build that confidence and that vocabulary, they progress just the same. They may be slower at the beginning, but once the concepts of print click and they build vocabulary, they can progress just as quickly as the rest.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“These have been in it the whole year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They are reading on grade level, but it is still a matter of building their confidence. Most of them are right where I want them. I still have 2 Hispanic students who are just trying to put everything together, so they are still a little bit behind.”</td>
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</table>
### Katie – Data Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Participant Quotes / Researcher’s reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social-Emotional</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>“When really they need to go play; because that is what I am pulling them from, free-choice time. I am like, he just needs to go build with blocks or go play in the loft!” “I don’t want [Student 3-1] to get frustrated. He can get frustrated really easy, so I don’t want to frustrate him by overwhelming him with too much information that he can’t do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Planning</td>
<td>Documented Lesson Plans</td>
<td>“I do use the Harcourt.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

Very warm and caring environment.

It was evident through our conversations that Katie cared about her students and wanted them to do well.

Not all lesson plans provided; only one from the beginning of the year and the three from the end of the year (for weeks I observed).

Scripted Tier II lesson plans used. Katie wrote anecdotal notes on her lesson plans to document students’ ability
Instructional Focus  
“First, they’ve got to learn the alphabet. Just basic, basic letter ID; what a letter is and what it looks like.”
“At the beginning of the year it is mainly just letter ID; that is truly what it was. As time progressed, we were working on sounds and blending and just recognizing words.”
“he struggled with that. He can blend CVC words really well; but just knowing, automatically, sight words… we struggle.”

**Researcher’s Reflections:**
Although the lesson may have included basic skills; all lessons revolved around discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaboration with ESL teacher</th>
<th>“Meeting with the ELL teacher and seeing how they interact throughout the day.”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I do sometimes meet with the ELL teacher if she and I are both noticing something that needs to be addressed more either with her or myself. If I notice something, I will ask, ‘Can you work with them on this?’ and she is good about saying ‘Okay, this is what we did and he could not do this or…’ so she and I work well like that.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lesson | One-on-one | “Through meeting with me one-on-one daily, during
| Delivery | "I think, for him, he was just so lacking; he needed one-on-one. He cannot get it in a small group when there are 3 or 4 other children, because he needs one-on-one instruction to focus on me, to hear and to concentrate. There are not as many distractions as there are in small group."

| Materials | "I do use the decodable books from Harcourt, and then I use the ELL book from Harcourt. They are not great pictures, but for him… I’ll be honest; I did not use them last year because the ones I had because it didn’t suit their needs. But for him, it has been good just to see a picture and a word and to go from there. And trying to get him to talk more about those things he sees."

| Researcher’s Reflections: | Whiteboards
Alphabet chart
Alphabet dice
CVC word sliders
Word family wheels

| Repetition | "And just repetitive practice daily."

|  | "They just still need the extra practice. They need more
“Over and over, hearing and being read to.”

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

Observed lessons all followed a similar repetitive pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Language Acquisition</th>
<th>“It is like you are starting with a 2 year old and teaching them to talk.”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“hearing and being read to; so he can hear the English language. We have worked with him a lot on the computer, listening to books, just so he can hear the English language. For him, I am just thinking, that is what has worked most.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We did a lot of just looking at the pictures and talking about the pictures. Just talking! Just trying to have conversations; just trying to get him used to hearing and making words.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“First, they’ve got to learn the language and then figure out how it works and how to apply it to their life and to their learning.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I want to get them talking as much as possible.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Assessment | Assessments used | “A lot of it is based on their DIBELS scores and just teacher observations.” |
“We use the phonics inventory, we do use DIBELS. We use running records: the Rigby running records. Other school assessments, which we have 10 million-gazillion, that I don’t have the right names for… just school-wide assessments.”

“They should all go together and I am hoping that it does. I just think that it does all go together with what we are teaching them in whole group and small group and intervention and that is what I am assessing.”

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

Evidence of teacher observation was recorded on RTI Tier II reading intervention plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Progress</th>
<th>“In the assessments, and in the DIBELS scores, and in the running records. Even in their writing, I can see growth.”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I have seen so much growth and it just takes time.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“It seems to take a little longer for them. I have only had Vietnamese and Korean and just based on that, it has taken the Hispanics a little longer. They seem to be more immersed in their Spanish culture and language than to be open to learning the English language.”</td>
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<td>“[Student 3-2] has almost caught up. [Student 3-1] has”</td>
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</table>
not caught up; he is about 3 nine-weeks behind. He is where some of the other students came in August; that is where he is just starting to be.”
**Lucy – Data Coding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Participant Quotes / Researcher’s reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Engagement</strong></td>
<td>Home support</td>
<td>“I have always had very supportive parents. They want the best for their children. They are willing to help at home and work with their children. They do not always know what to do or how to help, but they are always willing. I think that makes a big difference in my students.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I also send home books every week. I send home 5 books for them to read at home. And they have a homework journal to go with it where they write what book they read and do their homework.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Readiness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>“They come with what they have and we just go from there. I do not think they are any more or less prepared.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“They come in farther behind so they have farther to go.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher’s Reflections:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lucy’s comments about students’ school readiness were contradictory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social-Emotional Well-being</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Environment:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I think a print rich environment helps. In the classroom, there is print everywhere. We have print on the walls”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and ceilings. We have books all over the room… all kinds of books. They have places they can read and places they can write.”

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

The classroom was very child-friendly and inviting. There were play areas all around the classroom. The classroom had games, a loft, and a playhouse. There were small, relaxing chairs all around the room for children to sit and read.

**Self-Confidence:**

“A community is another important part. I try to foster a community of learners. I want them to feel safe. I want them to help each other and feel comfortable, that makes them more confident.”

“It is also important to just start where they are. I figure out what they know and build from there.” (avoiding frustration)

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

Lucy was very kind to all of her students. She used a soft, encouraging tone. She praised her students often during RTI Tier II reading intervention. She encouraged
students to work together. There were many pairs of
students around the room partner reading and listening
to books and on the computer together. If students were
off task, Lucy encouraged another student to go over
and help them get back to reading or listening to
reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Planning</th>
<th>Documented Lesson Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher’s Reflections:</strong></td>
<td>Lucy only provided lesson plans for the weeks during which I observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very repetitive. Tier I small group and Tier II small group lessons were almost identical.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RTI Tier II lesson plans indicated a focus on phonics and sight words.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We have to start with letters and sounds. They have to know that before they can read. So we spend most of our time on learning letters and the sounds they make. Then we move on to blending words. I just really focus on the basics with them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“At the beginning of the year, I focused just on learning the letters and sounds. Now, they are putting those sounds together to read the words.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mostly it is just building and reading words. I want to make sure they can read and write CVC words.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“It just has to be repetitive. They have to do it over and over before they can get it on their own. So we do a lot of the same thing over and over again.”

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

Lessons typically focused on skills in isolation.

Same lesson sequence for all three observations.

There was no comprehension component documented in the lesson plans. Comprehension instruction was not observed during any of the three lessons. They students choral read the book, closed it and moved on to the next skill-based activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaboration with ESL teacher</th>
<th>“We talk to make sure they are getting all they need.”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I do all of the reading intervention and the ESL teacher pulls them too.”</td>
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</table>

| Materials                     | “I use the decodable books from Harcourt and the sight words for the week. I use those now, to make sure they can blend and decode words and read the sight words automatically.” |
|-------------------------------| “The decodable books from Harcourt and the turning cubes. We use the cubes to build CVC words and change the letter cubes to make different words. I also use writing, I have them stretch the CVC word and write |
"They use the SmartBoard a lot. They read CVC words and sight words. They build the CVC words on the SmartBoard too. They write the CVC words on the table and read them off. Each child gets to read a word and the others have to listen and then find the word the child read and erase it from their list of words. They are also peer helpers; they help each other a lot."

**Researcher’s Reflections:**

The students were actively engaged during the RTI Tier II lessons observed. They were all happy; smiles and giggles permeated the small group table. Students talked to Lucy and to each other throughout the lesson. Most of the discussions focused on the correctness of the CVC words written as well as the reading of those words.

"At the beginning of the year they do the ACCESS to see where their English is. I also use observations and the benchmark assessment, running records. I also use the observational survey; the concepts about print."

"There is a ‘watch list’ of students from the DIBELS. That is just those who scored low enough for us to keep an eye on and make sure they are progressing."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Progress</th>
<th>“I think they make more progress. They come in farther behind so they have farther to go. They have to learn English and learn to read at the same time. Because they have more to learn, they progress more.” “They are in the group daily for about 15 minutes. The ones in this group have been in all year.” “They do make progress, they all do.” “They are just spread out like the native English speakers. Some do catch up, some do not; they are at different levels just like the kids who speak English.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The teacher decides who actually needs the intervention.” “Until they can blend. That is what they have to be able to do to get out of the intervention group.”</td>
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