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An Examination of Teacher Beliefs About the Emphasis of Sight Word Development in Early Literacy Instruction

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AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHER BELIEFS ABOUT THE EMPHASIS OF SIGHT WORD
DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY LITERACY INSTRUCTION

by

Alyssa B. Galicia

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHER BELIEFS ABOUT THE EMPHASIS OF SIGHT WORD DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY LITERACY INSTRUCTION

by

Alyssa B. Galicia

The University of Wisconsin, 2022
Under the Supervision of Professor Leanne M. Evans

In the following inquiry I discuss the beliefs educators have regarding the emphasis of sight words within their classroom. The findings of this qualitative study offer a perspective about the literacy development of students in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms. The data of this study was collected from a 45-minute individual interview. Documents with relevance were submitted by the teachers to bring further understanding to the discussion. The results of this study included 3 findings: a) fluency development was seen as an outcome of the development of more essential skills, b) there is more than one approach to instructing sight words, and c) the importance of students writing sight words correctly varied among the teachers. Based on the findings, I was able to conclude that teachers saw sight word development as important to literacy development as it impacted fluency and comprehension. The beliefs about students mastering sight words varied because of the ages of students and what is developmentally appropriate. The emphasis that is placed on sight words may be better suited for reading sight words in kindergarten, with a larger amount of time spent on writing in first grade. In addition, teachers may decide to create a transition from kindergarten to first grade when writing sight words to set students up for the highest level of success.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in a way that allows effective communication (National Literacy Trust, 2017). In the United States, the current literacy rate is 88% among adults; the rate of students challenged to meet grade-level reading proficiency by the time they reach fourth grade is 66% (Think Impact, 2022). Although reading proficiency varies from state to state, states benefit from the research and understanding of how students develop their literacy skills. This present study seeks to explore the beliefs of educators, those who are in the classrooms daily. It specifically explores the role of sight word instruction in literacy development and the perspectives of teachers regarding the centering of sight words in literacy instruction.

Problem Statement

In a review of scores from 2019 in the U.S., the percentage of students obtaining reading proficiency by fourth grade is a lagging 34% (Think Impact, 2020). Reading proficiency is characterized by how fluently children can read a text and how children think critically about what they read at every interaction with a text (Nixon, 2014). In the Midwestern state where this study occurred, 65% of third grade students scored below proficient in literacy (Hussar et al., 2020). Reading is fundamental as children go from “learning to read to reading to learn” (Abrams, 2019, para 3). This is important to consider as children begin to read across content areas in the intermediate elementary school grades. For example, children may need to read directions to complete an assignment or engage with stories that teach them about nonfiction topics.

One way for students to develop reading proficiency is to obtain fluency in reading. There are three key factors that impact how fluency skills are developed: rate, prosody, and

accuracy. Fluency development supports a child's comprehension of a text because it allows them to focus less on the fundamental skills of decoding and more on making meaning from what they are reading (Nieporent, 2021). Within the domain of fluency is the development of sight words. Sight words are words that “don’t follow the rules of spelling and have to be memorized because decoding them is really difficult” (Mulvahill, 2021, para 2). Students are taught to memorize the words, by sight, to recognize them immediately within text, without having to use decoding skills (Mulvahill, 2021). Sight words are part of the daily academic schedules of children with each grade level receiving lists of 75-100 words that need to be mastered during the academic school year. Writing is also affected by sight word development as students learn to use these easily accessible words in their daily writing (What Are Sight Words, 2014). With the knowledge that sight words are impactful for a child’s literacy development, this present study examined the significance of sight words in the classroom. Information from educators of young learners was the focus because these teachers work directly with the children, and they provide a valuable perspective.

Purpose

Although sight word instruction has been examined to understand its benefits (Hayes, 2016; Marzouk, 2008; Morin, 2021), this study will focus on the background of educators who teach sight words daily. A qualitative research approach was a match for this study because it examines a problem, where the variables are unknown, and explores it to develop a detailed understanding of the central phenomenon (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The participants included four educators teaching in an urban school district. Two of the educators teach kindergarten and two of the educators teach first-grade.

This study is important because it will broaden the perspective on early literacy through the lens of educators. While test scores and benchmark levels can inform the process of mastering sight words, discussions with educators can provide more knowledge about the ways students learn and what actually happens in the classroom.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study is the following: What are teachers' beliefs about the emphasis of sight word development in kindergarten and first grade literacy instruction? Exploring this question will contribute to the early literacy field through the understanding of how educators are currently providing sight word instruction and their beliefs about the centering of sight words in literacy teaching.

Significance

The importance of this present study lies in the approach of seeking the perspectives of individuals who provide the instruction and understand how students in their classrooms are learning. This gives a perspective beyond the checklists and test scores that are heavily relied on when considering data growth among students. This study will illustrate the trend of current daily sight word instruction that is taught to young children and applied across the content areas. What follows is a provision of key terms and their definitions that support engagement with this study.

Defining Terms

Throughout various articles and texts, words may be used in different ways or interchangeably. The following glossary provides terms and definitions to build a common understanding of the terminology used to allow the necessary engagement of this study.

Accuracy: Accuracy in reading focuses on the automatic process of interpreting and integrating appropriate expressions while reading, with minimal cognitive ability to allow readers to focus on the meaning of the text (Lynch, 2018). The acceptable levels of accuracy in reading should range from 95%-98% because students need to be able to read the test with few errors in order to comprehend what they have read (Learning Foundations, 2020).

Automaticity Theory: According to Houston (2019), automaticity in reading is being able to complete a skill without consciously thinking about it. Automaticity allows individuals to perform the skill quickly. This skill develops when individuals have spent time practicing a skill.

Balanced Literacy Approach: In the balanced literacy approach, a combination of whole language and phonics is used to instruct children (Richardson, 2016). Whole language, in the balanced literacy approach, is a belief that individuals learn to read and write as they engage with language in an undivided manner. Phonics, on the other hand, is the use of graphemes and letter-sound knowledge to write words (Richardson, 2016).

Comprehension: The comprehension of a text occurs when a reader can create meaning of what they read to better understand the story (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2013).

Decode: Decoding is the ability to apply the knowledge of letter-sound relationships to correctly pronounce written words (Reading Rockets, 2013).

Disability: According to the CDC (2020), a disability is a condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for an individual to participate in certain activities and/or interact with the world around them.

Emergent Literacy: Emergent literacy incorporates the reading and writing experiences of young children prior to instruction on conventional writing and reading practices (Janovsky, 2021).

Fluency: When an individual is able to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expressions of a text, they have developed fluency (Nieporent, 2021).

High Frequency Words: Words on a high frequency word list are words most commonly used in the English language. Since they are common, they are seen as essential because they occur in texts frequently. (Sedita, 2021). The term *high frequency words*, while having its own definition, is used interchangeably with the term *sight words* because there are many common words.

Literacy: According to the National Literacy Trust (2017), literacy is the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in a way that allows effective communication.

Literacy Development: According to Pate and Grote-Garcia (2011), literacy development is the on-going development of skills needed to successfully communicate.

Phonemic Awareness: The National Reading Panel (2000) report defines phonemic awareness as the study of phonemes to manipulate them in spoken words.

Phonemes: Phonemes are the smallest units that constitute the spoken language (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Phonics: The National Reading Panel (2000) describes phonics as instruction on utilizing letter-sound correspondences and their use to read and spell words.

Prosody: When a reader has developed prosody, they are able to use expression and emphasis on specific parts of a text as they read (De Ley, 2017).

Reading Proficiency: To be proficient in reading means that children have decoding skills they access while reading a text and they can make meaning from what they have read (Bureau, 2018).

Sight words: Words qualifying as sight words are words that are quickly recognized and identified without conscious effort (Sedita, 2021).

Speed: Reading speed describes the rate at which a person reads written text within a specific amount of time (Nordquist, 2020).

In the following chapter, I provide an overview of the existing literature related to sight word development. The first section includes background information on theories and theorists who have influenced literacy development of young children. It includes the five pillars of literacy as reported by the National Reading Panel. Next, I provide details on current early literacy practices and national-based programs and policies. Finally, I provide evidence on the importance of sight words. This includes a discussion on what sight words are, their benefits, different methods used for instructing children, and assessments to check for mastery. The literature in this area supports the notion that sight words are important in literacy development of young children, especially pertaining to fluency and comprehension. This key concept points to the importance of understanding how sight words are developed through the lens of the educator.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This study seeks to examine the beliefs of educators on students' sight word development in their respective classrooms. In this chapter, I explored early literacy theories that have made an impact on students' automatic reading at word level. I then presented the findings of the National Reading Panel (NRP) Report (2000) and the five pillars identified as the foundation to all early literacy instruction. The five pillars include phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. From there, I examined the resources offered by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the knowledge provided to educators on an international basis. The Head Start Program (1965) will also be examined to understand the response to the literacy gap. In addition, the No Child Left Behind (2001) act will be reviewed with its changes as it was

reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015). Then, to understand how educators plan for early literacy instruction, there will be a discussion on emergent literacy.

Finally, this literature review will approach the topic of sight words in the conversation of early literacy development. The automaticity theory will be reviewed to explain the importance of having automatic word recognition. The balanced literacy approach and sight word instruction will be reviewed to show how sight words can be taught in classrooms throughout the academic day, and sight words will be reviewed to understand what they are and how they are developed into a child's memory. From there, a discussion will take place regarding the purpose of sight word instruction in the classroom as it is related to fluency, the automaticity theory, and comprehension. The benefits of sight words to children will be explained in relation to fluency and comprehension. Sight word instruction and assessment will be described through the use of multiple resources and monitoring techniques.

This review of literature will conclude with a discussion of what current research shows about early literacy instruction, the instruction of sight words, and educators' beliefs on sight word instruction.

Historical Look at Early Literacy

The following section is an examination of the historical views of early literacy through the lens of multiple theories. First, I describe the constructivist theory as it was used by Piaget (1936) and the four stages of development, along with Frith (1986) and the three stages of acquiring reading abilities. I also provide an examination into sociocultural theory and the theorist Marie Clay (1966) with her theory on emergent literacy, and I present the use of Lev Vygotsky's findings on the zone of proximal development. Finally, this section reviews the behaviorist theory through the lens of Skinner's theory on language acquisition.

Theories can be used by educators and those within the educational system to make decisions on how to most effectively support the needs of the children they work with daily. Understanding the development of theories and how theorists use them is essential to understanding literacy advancement (Pegorraro Schull, La Croix, Miller, Sanders Austin, & Kidd, 2021). As new theories arose, theorists of the past were able to analyze them and arrive at a stronger understanding of the way children thought and learned. This process can determine best instructional practices within the educational system.

Constructivist Theories

A constructivist theory is a perspective that contributes to the understanding of how individuals construct knowledge; individuals use this theory to examine how people know what they know (Lamon, n.d.). While examining children and their development through a constructivist lens, there is an emphasis placed on the child and the stages of development that they will go through as they grow. As a child moves from one stage to the next, the examiner can see that the child has accomplished a milestone and will be able to predict the new growth the child will encounter based on the stages provided (Pegorraro Schull, La Croix, Miller, Sanders Austin, & Kidd, 2021). Piaget (1936) and Frith (1986) were both researchers who utilized the constructivist theory in their own work.

Piaget and Cognitive Developmental Theory. Piaget (1936) developed and wrote about the theory of cognitive development. He recognized that the intelligence of children differed from that of adults and sought to understand this difference (Piaget, 1926). In his work, Piaget thought that an individual went through four stages of development: sensorimotor (birth to 2 years old), preoperational (2 to 7 years old), concrete operational (7 to 11 years old), and formal operational (11 years on) (McLeod, 2020). Piaget believed that during the sensorimotor stage,

children would use physical actions to begin their literacy development; children would clap their hands, move around, kick their legs, etc. (Pegoraro Schull, La Croix, Miller, Sanders Austin, & Kidd, 2021). In this manner, children begin to develop skills of listening to oral language and responding to that language. In the preoperational stage, children begin their own language development by singing, talking, and listening to stories told by their caregivers (Pegoraro Schull, La Croix, Miller, Sanders Austin, & Kidd, 2021). Piaget also believed that children build on previous knowledge. What knowledge they gained in the sensorimotor stage would benefit them in the preoperational stage, which would then prepare them for further literacy acquisition in the concrete operational stage. Though much of Piaget's work was seen as relevant to math and science (Saracho, 2017), it also plays a role in understanding literacy development. Children develop through play, and early literacy skills can emerge during this time (Black & Pope, 2008). In Piaget's theory of building on previous stages, what children learn in the early years during play time (oral language, playing pretend, etc.) gives them the skills they need to be successful in the next stage of cognitive development and literacy.

Frith and the Reading Acquisition Theory. Frith (1986) developed a model for how students learn to read within the alphabetic system (Frith, 1986). The three-stage model begins with the logographic stage. In this stage, children process words through a visual system. Children are able to recognize some letters and words by their visual shape. They instantly recognize symbols and familiar logos (Pegoraro Schull, La Croix, Miller, Sanders Austin, & Kidd, 2021). Common errors occur in this stage when children see words with similar spelling patterns and confuse them (i.e., them, they, there) (Messer, 2011). The next stage focuses on the alphabet. Children understand letter-sound relationships and the way phonemes are used to determine words. They use combinations of phonemes to decode words (Pegoraro Schull, La

Croix, Miller, Sanders Austin, & Kidd, 2021). Errors in this stage occur when letters in words do not follow the typical sound pattern to which children have been exposed (Messer, 2011). The final stage within this model is the orthographic stage. In this stage, children will read whole word sentences and break words apart to read them. At this point in development, children have a systemic approach to learning (Pegoraro Schull, La Croix, Miller, Sanders Austin, & Kidd, 2021). In this theory, reading is acquired within stages as children become more familiar with symbols and letters and the corresponding sounds. As they progress through the stages, students will endure trial and error, but as children grasp the changes, they are able to develop their literacy skills.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory studies the social interactions and culturally organized activities that influence psychological development in individuals (Scott & Palinesar, 2013). Within this theory, there is an emphasis on cooperation between individuals. In education and literacy this cooperation can be between educator and child as they work to find the methods that most effectively support the child's growth. This theory suggests educators should analyze the child's observable skills and behaviors (Pegoraro Schull, La Croix, Miller, Sanders Austin, & Kidd, 2021). The observations should show educators how the child interacts with written materials so the educator can understand what skills the child has currently mastered. From the observation, the educator is able to determine the best instructional strategies to meet the child's needs. Clay (1996) was a researcher who utilized the sociocultural theory in her work.

Marie Clay and Emergent Literacy. In a sociocultural context, Clay (1966) drew on the works of Lev Vygotsky (1978) to understand a child's zone of proximal development (ZPD) and how that can relate to a child in the context of literacy. The ZPD is the distance between a

child's level of development and the level of potential development through problem-solving with adult guidance (Vygotsky, 1978). With the use of ZPD, Marie Clay (1966) sought to use a child's social support to develop literacy skills. The term "emergent literacy" was used to describe the way that children process information and utilize strategies they have learned to solve the problems they encounter when working within literacy. Children receive support in the form of scaffolding with clear instructional approaches (Pegoraro Schull, La Croix, Miller, Sanders Austin, & Kidd, 2021). Clay believed literacy was developed at all ages and represented the youngest children working with literacy as emergent readers and writers. Emergent readers share the following characteristics: know what a book is and can hold it correctly, recognize the difference between the front and the back of the book, and turn pages correctly. These readers also use pictures to read their stories and have books memorized to the point of being able to retell them without reading the words. Emergent readers can sequence a story and make predictions about what might happen, know that spoken words can be put into print, and will be able to identify some letters (Slegers, 1996). As children advance through their understanding of books and print, the instruction around them should change to meet the needs of that individual child (Sleger, 1996). For this reason, it is important to have a balance between the educator knowing the child and working with the child to understand current skill level and the skills that are the next steps.

Behaviorist Theory in Literacy.

The behaviorist theory informs the understanding of behavior. In the behaviorism theory, behaviors are thought to be learned through interaction with the environment and through a process called conditioning (McLeod, 2020). Children who are learning about the world and all its possibilities watch and learn from those around them. In this sense, it is possible for them to

learn skills through behaviorism. A researcher who utilized the behaviorist theory in their work is Skinner (1988).

B. F. Skinner's Theory of Oral Language. In B. F. Skinner's theory of oral language, he thought that children learned to speak, not in an instructional manner, but because of the positive reinforcements they received (Skinner, 1988). The behaviorist theory of oral language suggests that infants learn language from the role models they interact with (Reutzel, 2015). This can be facilitated with caregivers in the home, in an educational setting, or any other individual that has an interaction with the infant. By interacting with the role model, the infant learns to imitate their behaviors, such as speaking by babbling. The role model then gives praise or rewards to the infant to encourage this behavior. In addition, if the child begins to imitate inappropriate behavior or language, the role model will respond with a negative consequence (Reutzel, 2015). This form of conditioning is called operant conditioning as the child receives reinforcement of their behavior (Lemetyinen, 2012). Through this conditioning, children can be encouraged to develop their literacy skills as they learn and understand the different rules of the language and apply them with the reinforcements of the role model.

The theoretical frameworks discussed have since provided a foundation for more current literacy work to be completed giving a better understanding of literacy development in children. More current literacy influences on literacy education have occurred through national efforts, such as the outcomes of The National Reading Panel Report.

The National Reading Panel Report

In 1999, Congress called for a panel of 14 individuals to collaborate in creating a report on the important factors influencing literacy development. This panel, called the National Reading Panel (NRP) consisted of school administrators, teachers that were actively working in

the field, and scientists that took part in reading research. Congress asked the panelists to examine research on how children learned to read and determine the most effective methods in reading instruction using evidence from over 100,000 studies. The panel was also tasked with describing the methods of reading instruction for classrooms and how this information could efficiently reach schools. Finally, they were to provide a suggestion for additional research for reading development and instruction (Child Development and Behavior Branch, 2019). The official report was published in 2000 and regarded the following as the five pillars for literacy development: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary instruction, fluency, and comprehension.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate the individual sounds within words. Phonemic awareness instruction should begin with a child before phonics instruction. In the NRP examination of 52 studies on the teaching of phonemic awareness, when children were taught to hear the separate sounds in words, it improved their ability to read text later. Phonemic awareness makes the best impact when it is taught to students in kindergarten and first grade (National Reading Panel, 2000). As a child is taught to manipulate words and their sounds when they are introduced to the physical letters in phonics instruction, they are able to transfer that knowledge. Children will vary in the amount of instructional time needed to become proficient in phonemic awareness. The NRP report found that at least 15 minutes a day was highly beneficial for students (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Phonics

Phonics is the name of the reading skill that emphasizes the relationship between letters and sounds to translate printed text into pronunciation. Children can read and write because they

know the relationship between letters and letter sounds. Phonics instruction has been shown to improve kindergarten and first grade children's word recognition and spelling skills while positively impacting their reading comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Vocabulary Instruction

Vocabulary skill development is the understanding of word-level meaning. The instruction of vocabulary occurs when children are taught the meaning of words. The NRP Report concluded that when there is word instruction, achievement in reading increases (National Reading Panel, 2000). When children are unfamiliar with a word, they have a harder time understanding what the text is about and this impedes their comprehension. Receiving vocabulary instruction supports children's background knowledge as they read texts with increasing complexity.

Comprehension

Comprehension in literacy development is understanding and interpreting information that an individual reads in a text (Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003). To comprehend text means to go beyond the literal comprehension that was previously accepted and moves further to an in-depth understanding of what is not explicitly stated on the page. The NRP Report concluded that there were seven comprehension strategies that would help readers be successful. The strategies that had the most evidence-based support include question asking, monitoring, summarization, question answering, story mapping, graphic organizers, and cooperative grouping (National Reading Panel, 2000). Comprehension is important because it allows children to actively engage with the text they are reading and make connections (Brandon, 2021) to their lives, the world, and other texts. When a child can create meaning from what they are reading, the text becomes more interesting to them, and they better understand what they are reading.

Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read the text aloud with accuracy, good speed, and proper expression (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Accuracy means that students are reading what is printed in the text correctly, and speed means that they are reading smoothly and at a rate that makes it easier to comprehend the text. Rate is measured by the number of words in the story times 60 (number of seconds in a minute), then divided by the time in seconds it takes a student to complete the story (Hughes, 2017). Proper expression, or prosody, matters because it allows a reader to understand how information is being portrayed within the text (De Ley, 2017). When a scholar reads with dysfluency, they concentrate on each and every word, using all their cognitive abilities to decode the text and spend less time understanding what the text is conveying (Adams, 2000; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). In an examination of 51 studies, the NRP Report found a pattern of evidence supporting the concept of fluency improving reading, no matter how it was measured. Fluency has an impact on children's decoding, word recognition, silent reading comprehension, and overall reading achievement (National Reading Panel, 2000). Sight word development is a factor in fluency; as students begin to recognize sight words, they can read it in connected text and then develop fluency (Simms & Falcon, 1987; Wooldridge, 2017). Sight words are important because they account for 50% of the words that students will encounter in texts (Children's Literacy Initiative, n.d.). Especially in early readers, where the majority of the words are sight words, mastering sight words allows the child then puts their cognitive energy into the decodable words.

NRP report: What's Missing?

After the publishing of the NRP Report there were critiques released as a precaution to readers. The summary given by NRP Report gives five core pillars as to what reading instruction

needs to include to be effective, but more research could be done within each of those pillars to address specific strategies for making them successful. In addition, some felt that the panel misinterpreted the studies they examined (Krashen, 2001) making them less applicable to the pillar they are representing. Krashen (2001) also stated that the NRP Report only included studies that were quantitative and not qualitative. This presented the critique that the studies used lasted less than a year. More qualitative studies could have been more revealing to the research report. After this report was published, it became a resource that individuals in literacy would use to develop current practices, policies, and programs.

Influences on Early Literacy

In considering the evolution of literacy development, it is important to also consider what literacy classrooms look like in the present, who influences literacy instruction, and how these decisions are made. In understanding present-day literacy instruction, it is important to consider significant organizations and policies that influence school districts, educators, and the instruction of young learners in the classroom.

International Literacy Association

The International Literacy Association (ILA) offers a variety of resources and influences to literacy classrooms around the world. Tierney (1956) founded the ILA, which was previously called the International Reading Association. The purpose of this global organization is to create global advocacy for literacy development and instruction. It sets the standard for how literacy is defined, taught, and evaluated. The ILA organization is purposeful in connecting research to practice and making literacy learning more respectful, responsive, and ethical for all learners (International Literacy Association, 2022). Setting a standard allows educators and those working in literacy to have a common understanding of what literacy development should look

like. The association also provides resources and access to the important work individuals are doing around the world. This knowledge can support educators in utilizing those practices in their classrooms.

Influential National Programs and Policies

Influences in early literacy classrooms are not just determined by those in the field, but those within the government who are fighting for all students to receive an equitable education. To lessen the achievement gap within literacy, early learning programs were created to expose children to literacy from an earlier age. For example, the Head Start program began in 1965 and has grown tremendously over the years. It provides support to children birth through five-years-old, from disadvantaged backgrounds access to educational programs. Head Start classrooms provide language and literacy development for students and opportunities for parents to learn and understand how to support the development of their children (ECLKC, 2020). Children need early literacy experiences because they are more likely to be successful in their academic careers with high literacy skills (Hein et al., 2013). The predictive skills for success include oral language, alphabetic code, and print knowledge and concepts. If students can master these skills early in life, they will be able to start their reading careers and develop high level literacy skills needed to be successful.

Another national influence is a policy that was created to close the achievement gap. This policy is the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that began in 2002 and continued through 2015, when it was reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) (Lee, n.d.). The fundamental principles of these policies are that all children have the ability to learn and should be expected to learn while schools show evidence of this learning (Korte, 2015). Many children are challenged with curriculum for various reasons and these policies, in their respective times,

worked to ensure that each student was accounted for. The challenge of the NCLB act is that it had a “one-size-fits-all” approach, which made it difficult for educators with limited resources to reach goals (Korte, 2015). The ESSA (2015) differed in that it provided more power to states to provide instruction in the way they believed necessary (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016) with the resources they had. Even with this power, states were still accountable to ensure student success through nationwide testing, which put pressure on educators to meet high test scores.

Emergent Literacy

The understanding of the way children develop and continue to learn is continuously changing as research progresses. When educators are able to discern how a child learns or what they can anticipate them to accomplish, they can begin to form their instructional practices around these findings. In the 1980s, the concept of emergent literacy gained traction in the U.S. and continues to be recognized in literacy today. Emergent literacy is a stage in the development of literacy where a child learns the crucial skills that lead to reading and writing (Roth, Paul, & Pierotti, 2006). Strategies for emergent literacy include rich teacher talk, story book reading, phonological awareness activities, alphabet activities, support for emergent reading and writing, shared book experiences, integrated, and content focused activities (Roskos, Christie, & Richgels, 2003). All of these strategies utilize the concepts from the pillars of early literacy that the NRP Report shared. Literacy continues to grow and shift as the need for stronger readers becomes imperative.

Sight Word Instruction in Early Literacy Development

Though all five of the pillars are considered essential to the success of literacy development, phonemic awareness and phonics tend to consume much of the instructional time in early childhood classrooms. Gaining perspective on fluency and comprehension can be

beneficial in leading children to success in literacy. Fluency and comprehension have been researched to develop an understanding of how they positively impact reading development (Rasinski, 2003; Therrien, 2004; Walczyk & Griffith-Ross, 2011). Within fluency, there is the development of sight words. This section will review the automaticity theory in relation to sight word development. A balanced literacy approach will be examined with regard to teaching sight words to children. Then, sight words will be defined and there will be a discussion on how sight words are used within the curriculum. There will also be a discussion on why educators should teach sight words and who explicitly benefits from them. In the benefits, the examination will take a closer look at students with disabilities and their ability to learn sight words. Finally, this section will give examples of different methods to teach sight words, such as high frequency word lists, Heart Words, and a method by Jan Richardson. The assessment of sight words will be reviewed to gain an understanding of how and when children have mastered sight words.

Sight Words Defined

Sight words are words children learn to read by simply looking at them; they do not necessarily employ the rules of spelling or the six types of syllables. Some sight words have to be memorized because decoding them is more difficult (Mulvahill, 2021). Often children are introduced to sight words while at school. Then, they are asked to study those new words at home. Educators begin by providing words that are simple with regular letter-sound correspondences for children who are new to word recognition (Samuels & Farstrup, 2011), and they continue to introduce the words in ways that will not confuse the children (Ferrell, Hunter, & Osenga, 2019). According to literacy researchers, words with similar spelling patterns should be taught during different weeks, giving children a better chance at recognizing them. In recognizing words, children activate different parts of the brain specific to the type of word that

they are reading (Devlin, Jamison, Matthews, & Gonnerman, 2004; Rodd, Davis, & Johnsrude, 2005; Vandenberghe, Nobre, & Price, 2002), however, the *visual word form* area in young children is not developed in pre-readers, it develops throughout their experiences and as they grow. The *visual word form* area is located in a region of the cortex that specializes in recognizing visual stimuli that require close viewing and are distinguished by subtle detail (Samuel & Farstrup, 2011). This area develops as teachers instruct on phonemic awareness, letter recognition, and letter-sound correspondence (Samuels & Farstrup, 2011). To increase the memory of a word's pronunciation and its meaning, children should be able to visually see the word (Rosenthal & Ehri, 2008). According to Farrel et al. (2019), teachers should introduce a set of 10-15 sight words that are not easily decodable but are essential and common before they begin any phonics instruction that focuses on the vowel-consonant or consonant-vowel-consonant patterns.

There are two types of sight words: decodable and irregular sight words. Decodable sight words are words that can be read sound by sound but are so common it is better for children to learn to read them automatically when they see them. Irregular sight words are words that have uncommon spellings, not following the typical letter sounds (i.e., there, are, my, etc.) (Hinzman & Reed, 2018). The two most common sight word lists were created by Edward Dolch (1936), the Dolch list and Edward Fry (2000), the Fry list. Teachers can adapt these lists based on the books they will have children read or in the order that children will most commonly see them in stories. Lists can include 75-100 sight words and begin for students starting in kindergarten.

Importance of Sight Word Instruction. As students learn sight words, they spend less time trying to decode them in stories and focus more on the words that are more challenging or can actually be decoded. Having a huge base of sight words helps students become faster and

more fluent readers when they spend less time segmenting and blending letter sounds together (Rawe, n.d.) to decode words. Sight word recognition also allows young readers to increase comprehension because their reading becomes automatic as suggested by the automaticity theory (Logan, 1977). Sight word instruction has been shown to improve students' overall reading abilities and their confidence in reading (Hayes, 2016). Every book has sight words in it and if students can open a book and see words that they are already familiar with, it can make them feel more comfortable as they practice their other literacy skills.

The Benefits of Sight Words. Students with disabilities can learn to read by developing their sight word knowledge, and they can learn to identify printed words. This is even the case for students who have limited oral language and no prior reading instruction (Spector, 2020). Sight word instruction is also beneficial for students with autism who are able to increase acquisition, accuracy, fluency, and retention of mastered sight words (Higgins, McLaughlin, Derby, Long, 2012). Programs, like Edmark (2022), introduce common sight words and everyday words to students with disabilities and help them to read those words. Sight words also help students who are better with memorization but challenged with decoding to feel more confident. If learners approach a text already familiar with some of the words, the text will not be too difficult, and they are less likely to be frustrated. For some children, if they do not gain fluency in the early elementary years, they become challenged with fluent reading when they enter the upper elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Fluency in these upper grades is focused on less because it is the expectation that students are fluent by upper elementary. If students reading is not automatic, then the complexity of the higher-level texts they read will be more difficult as they are challenged to fluently read and comprehend a text (Samuels & Farstrup, 2011). Another benefit of sight words is the automaticity and rate with which children

begin to read words, which allows them the cognitive ability to focus on decoding the more complex words in a text, as well as the opportunity to comprehend the text they are reading (Brandon, 2021; Hughes, 2017; Samuels & Farstrup, 2011).

Automaticity and Word Recognition

Automaticity is the ability to quickly and accurately perform complex skills with minimal attention (Samuels & Flor, 2006). The automaticity theory is the ability for children to identify letters, letter sounds, and isolated words to read a text (Houseton, n.d.) quickly and accurately. When students are not focused on word recognition, they can begin to focus their attention on improving comprehension of a text (Samuels & Flor, 2006). In the instance theory (Logan 1997), all the encounters that an individual has with a word is an “instance”, a moment, with that word, will create a trace representation in memory of that word (Samuel & Farstrup, 2011). This theory provides an understanding into how automaticity is developed. In the beginning, children encounter the word and determine the word they see requires cognitive processing. Then, as they continue to encounter the word, their knowledge of it increases, and it becomes easier for them to process the word (Samuel & Farstrup, 2011). Practicing the word is important because it will increase the amount of time needed to recall that word the next time the child sees it (Logan, 1988). As children recognize the word more quickly, it becomes more automatic for them. Automaticity brings children close to developing fluency of a text, but it has to work with prosody to be effective (Samuel & Farstrup, 2011). Instruction on the prosody of a text allows children to understand intonation, expressions, punctuation, and how the words impact the meaning of the story (Samuels & Farstrup, 2011). Together, prosody and automaticity allow children to become fluent in reading. It is important to encourage children to understand that a fast rate, being able to recognize words quickly, does not mean they will be fluent readers. If

they read too quickly, they will find it challenging to comprehend the text. The reader will have read through it without taking the time needed to understand what the story was about or what it was trying to teach them (Samuel & Farstrup, 2011). The automaticity theory also shows when students are not fluent in reading or do not have good comprehension of the text, because they are spending too much of their time attending to the foundational skills to think about what they are reading.

Sight Words and a Balanced Literacy Approach

The balanced literacy approach means that educators can take all the strategies presented by the NRP Report and utilize them in their instruction (Richardson, 2016) of sight words. This combination of instruction allows students to see reading and writing being modeled by the teacher, share in the modeling, be coached, practice what they have learned independently, and actively engage in word study (Richardson, 2016). In the balanced literacy approach, word recognition is acquired to allow students to spend less time decoding words that frequently appear in texts and words with irregular spellings. In this approach, students can not only recognize words automatically, but they can identify word chunks. By becoming familiar with word chunks, children are able to apply the knowledge of those words to similar words and read those words when they encounter them (Pressley & Allington, 2015). For example, if they learn the word pattern -ake from the word *make* then they can apply that knowledge when they see the words *bake*, *cake*, *take*, etc. In the balanced approach, students experience read alouds, and through the teacher modeling of the book, they are continuously exposed to the sight words that are read correctly (Pressley & Allington, 2015). The repeated exposure of the sight word would allow students to master sight words in isolation and in context. Students can also transfer knowledge to obtain word recognition. For example, after practice in phonemic awareness,

students can utilize the skills they have acquired into phonics (Pressley & Allington, 2015) and begin reading words as they process them into their memory.

Teaching Sight Words

The instruction of sight words is important because all students learn differently. Although there are many activities that educators can utilize to give students practice with sight words, there are also programs that are research-based. Educators can follow high frequency word lists, heart word strategies, or methods provided by reading researchers, like Jan Richardson.

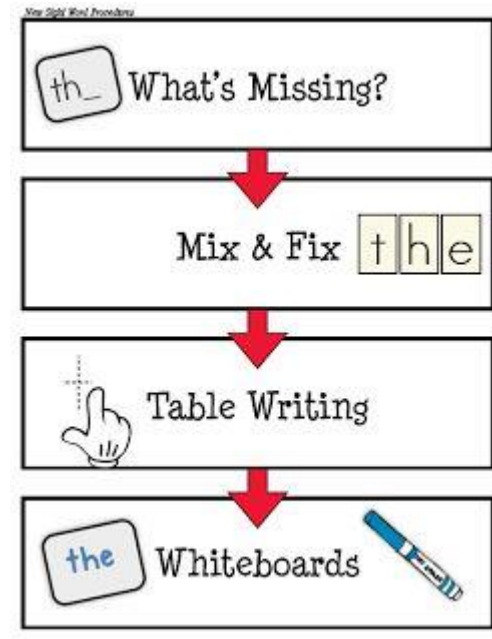
High Frequency Word Lists. One strategy for teaching sight words is to use a high frequency word list (HFWL). A HFWL is used interchangeably with the term sight words, except HFWLs are organized by the way words commonly show up in a text (Foster, 2017). Some researchers say that using HFWL is an effective way to learn sight words (Morrisette & Gierut, 2002; Storkel & Morrisette, 2002). Foster (2017) looked at the growth in scores in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade of students who received instruction based on a HFWL compared to those who did not. In this study, the results showed that there were no statistical differences in the average score. However, HFWL are still commonly used. The Dolch and Fry list is commonly used in schools because there are so many words offered and teachers can choose which list to use based on the children's text and the HFWs that will be seen in the text (Farrell, Osenga, & Hunter, 2013). Lists are easy to use in instruction because it is easy to keep track of which words students have mastered and those of which still need work. It is also easy to send lists home to families to encourage them to practice sight words with their children.

The Heart Word Method. Another strategy is the Heart Word Method. In this method, students are taught to use irregular letter patterns rather than repeatedly copying the words

(Orphi, 2021). With the Heart Word method teachers have taught which part of the word is phonemic based and which is the part you have to remember by heart because it is irregular. For example, with the word *like*, students are taught that they can say /l/ for the letter l, but they have to remember that the magic e makes the i say the long sound. Then the letter k says /k/ and the e is silent. In this word, there are parts that can be sounded out, but it is easier if the reader tries to remember it “by heart.” To use this method, educators need to choose a curriculum that utilizes it or organize a HFWL of their own. In addition, teachers should introduce words with similar spelling patterns when possible (Farrell, Hunter, and Osenga, 2019). Similar word patterns help students to remember the words more easily when they can transfer their knowledge.

Jan Richardson’s Method for Teaching Sight Words. Jan Richardson (2019) also proposed a four-step method to supporting students in their sight word development. Her hands-on approach allows students to work with the word verbally and by physically manipulating the letters. The teacher introduces the word and shows students how to build it letter by letter. Then, the teacher erases one letter and ask, “What’s Missing?” over several of the letters. Next, they use magnetic letters to “mix and fix” the given word; essentially, the word is scrambled, and children put the letters in the correct order. Then. The children use their fingers to write the word on the table. Finally, students write the word on a dry erase board, erase it, and write it again to practice retrieving it. In this approach, students should not sound out the words (Richardson, 2016) as the purpose is to recall them upon sight. Figure 1 demonstrated the method described by Richardson (2016).

Figure 1: A Sample of the Method of Teaching Sight Words According to Jan Richardson.



Assessing Children's Mastery of Sight Words

Assessing sight word development is important because it allows educators to understand which words present students a challenge. Assessments also allow teachers to see if they need to provide intervention of the strategy that they are currently using. There are many ways to assess sight word development. Educators can assess with checklists they create themselves or they can utilize resources that exist. Examples include Richardson's monitoring method and ReallyGreatReading's assessment that can be given three times a year.

ReallyGreatReading Method. In ReallyGreatReading's (RGR) assessment (2005), the creators provide children with both decodable and irregular sight words. The assessment scores children based on the number of words read correctly. The process also monitors whether students read the words automatically, with effort, or not at all. There are also sections for children to read the sight words in isolation and within context (ReallyGreatReading, 2017).

Figure 2 is a visual of what part of the assessment looks like when graded.

Figure 2: An example of ReallyGreatReading's Sight Word Assessment with Teacher Coding.

EXAMPLE 1

The student read the sentence "They walk." accurately. The word "they" was read automatically (A), and the word "walk" was read with effort (E). Place a checkmark (✓) next to each word in the appropriate box.

EXAMPLE 2

The student misread the word "funny" as "fun" and did not self-correct. Write "fun" on the line provided to the right of the target word.

EXAMPLE 3

The student misread the word "so" as "such" and then self-corrected. Write "such" on the line provided to the right of the target word "so," and then circle the target word and write SC to the right of the word to indicate a self-correction.

Sight Word Fluency Survey Recording Form		PP	P	1st
Check appropriate box below. Circle target word for self-corrections (SC).				
1-2	They <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> NT _____ walk <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> NT _____ .		they	walk
3-6	I <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> NT _____ am <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> NT _____	I, funny	am, so	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SO <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> NT such SC funny <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> NT fun _____ .			
7-10	We <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> NT _____ like <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> NT _____	we, to, play	like	
	to <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> NT _____ play <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> NT _____ .			

Jan Richardson's Method. In her writing, Richardson (2019) stated that educators should monitor the number of times a child writes the sight word correctly on different days. When a child has written the word correctly on six occasions, they have mastered the sight word (Richardson, 2019). This is because the word has been stored in their long-term memory and the child is able to access it when they need it.

Beliefs About Sight Words in the Classroom

Many educators have been teaching sight words for years, but it seems as though the push for acquiring sight words has increased the past several years (Learning Without Tears, 2020) . It is thought that high frequency word instruction should be taught by visual rote memory—by sight. Current sight word instruction encourages educators to drill words into their students until they can recognize them almost immediately (Moats, 2020). Although most educators receive direction from their district on how to instruct the learning of sight words, some students do not easily grasp the words. Teachers then use their own discretion to find new ways to excite their

young learners and, hopefully, support them in developing their bank of sight words. Although there is research on the importance of literacy, the five pillars of literacy, and sight words, (Chall, 1989; Hook, & Jones, 2004; Wimmer, Landerl, Linortner, & Hummer, 1991) there appears to be an absence in research on how educators view the instruction of sight words.

An Understanding of the Educator's Perspective

In understanding the research that is present, it is important to note that there have been studies to determine the belief of educators. A study in one study (Fern & Jiar, 2014) on preschool teachers' beliefs asked early literacy educators about the content focus of their literacy program, their instructional strategies, and their perceived opportunities and challenges in literacy instruction. The researchers found they held conventional literacy beliefs and practices, lacked having a variety of developmentally appropriate instructional strategies, and faced many challenges (Fern & Jiar, 2014). While this is insightful, it provides little information into the beliefs of specific practices, like sight words. In addition, the study focused on one group of educators in one region. In another study on the perceptions and knowledge of preservice and inservice teachers about literacy instruction (Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001), the researchers found that many general education teachers were not adequately prepared for teaching students at-risk for reading failure. Again, this is insightful information, but does not get into the depth of sight words that is desired in this study.

In broadening the search on best instructional practices in early literacy there are many studies that reemphasize the importance of the five pillars developed by the NRP Report (Anderson, 2019; Garan, Shanahan, & Henkin, 2001; Nai-Cheng, 2016). While beneficial to instructional practices, this does not give the perspective of the educator and their belief on the specific role of sight word instruction.

In trying to understand what educators' beliefs are, individuals can search online and find many articles and blogs posted. Some articles, like *Sight word: An evidence-based literacy strategy* (Lyon, n.d.), are written with research references, but also include the writer's personal opinions on how sight words should be taught to children (Lyon, n.d.). Beyond this, you will find many articles on the most effective manipulatives to use in instruction, worksheets being offered as resources, and additional activities. The common aspect that is consistently unavailable in all the searching is a direct understanding of educator's beliefs on the role of sight word instruction in early literacy classrooms.

With the knowledge that sight word development is important for fluency and comprehension, sight words instruction has value (Rasinski, 2003; Therrien, 2004; Walczyk & Griffith-Ross, 2011). The study on educators' beliefs is the next step in understanding sight word development. As educators interact with students on a daily basis, they have personal knowledge gained from these experiences on how children are learning. Educators utilize methods of learning sight words and can see the benefits or challenges of teaching sight words in an early literacy classroom. For these reasons, this current study has focused on the perspective of teachers with regard to sight word instruction.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this present study is to explore the emphasis of sight words in classroom instruction to further understand the literacy development of children. Examining this topic is necessary as it contributes to the research of sight words by providing the perspective of the educators. The question this study seeks to examine is "What are teachers' beliefs about the emphasis of sight word development in kindergarten and first grade literacy instruction?" A qualitative research approach was a match for this study because this inquiry is an exploration of

teachers' daily work. The qualitative approach allows me to document their experiences through conversation that will lead to new discoveries. This inquiry approach also allows for interviews to be conducted to gain knowledge from educators currently working in classrooms (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). By conducting the interviews, I can develop a detailed understanding of sight word instruction in the classroom. This study was conducted under the guidelines of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and pseudonyms are used for all location and teacher names.

Setting

The study takes place at North School, which is an urban, public elementary school. North School is located in a Midwestern state and is known as the 13th most diverse school in its state (Niche, n.d.). The school consists of an estimated 650 students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). The student demographic breakdown is 5.2% African American, 16.9% White, 16% Asian, 11.8% Hispanic, 9.9% two or more races, and .2% American Indian (School Digger, 2022). In this school, there are an estimated 50 educators with a 14:1 student teacher ratio (Niche, n.d.).

Participants

The participants in this study were chosen as a sample of convenience (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This sampling method was chosen because I had to choose participants that were easily accessible in the timeframe of this study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2015). Purposeful sampling (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2015) was also chosen as it allowed me to identify participants that would be best suited for this study (i.e., educators who work in kindergarten and first-grade).

Below is a demographics chart of the four teacher participants in this study. It lists the grade level they currently teach, the number of years they have taught for, and their current teaching assignment location. This information is valuable as it shows they are in the grades focused on in this study and have been teaching for at least two years to better discuss the content of this study. The participants' race and gender information was collected to allow for an understanding of who is giving their perspective. To extend off this knowledge, there are brief sections on each teacher.

Figure 3: The Demographics of the Four Teacher Participants.

	Grade Level Currently Teaching	Number of years as an educator	Current School	Race	Gender
Anne	1st	2 years	North School	White	Female
Belle	1st	3 years	North School	White	Female
Cora	Kindergarten	9 years	North School	White	Female
Dawn	Kindergarten	15 years	North School	White	Female

Participant Profiles

A brief profile of the teachers is presented below to present the context of the teachers within their North School environment.

Anne. Anne is a first-grade teacher at North School. She currently has 20 students in her classroom. In her classroom, they review sight words after morning breakfast. There is 15 minutes in the schedule for this practice. She uses the Jan Richardson method of teaching sight words. She also teaches word attack skills for decoding sight words. Her reading instruction occurs before lunch; during this time, she pulls small groups. During this time, she

accommodates her students by instructing them on skills they need support with. She also reviews sight words in her small groups.

Belle. Belle is a first-grade teacher working at North School. She has 17 students in her classroom. Just like Anne, her students practice sight words as the first academic lesson of the day for 15 minutes. She also gives more explicit instruction in her strategy groups using the Jan Richardson method. Belle has experience being a 5th grade educator as well as the experience and knowledge she has in first grade.

Cora. Cora is a kindergarten teacher who works at North School. She currently has 22 students in her classroom. Reading instruction is the first academic lesson of the day. During this time, she pulls students for small groups and supports their sight word development using the Jan Richardson method. After morning recess, students return to practice sight words for 15 minutes. She utilizes the Jan Richardson method for this as well. Sight word instruction occurs prior to writing where students will naturally use sight words to write stories.

Dawn. Dawn is a kindergarten teacher who works at North School. She currently has 22 students enrolled in her room. Like Cora, sight word practice is done during small groups to accommodate the needs of her students. She gives 15 minutes of instruction on new or reviewing sight words using the Jan Richardson method. Sight word instruction occurs prior to students writing their own stories.

Recruitment

The recruitment of participants was through an email sent (see Appendix A) to the individuals with criteria needed for this study. Educators were asked to participate if they had been teaching for two or more years because this gave them the experience and time to engage with sight word development and instruction in their classrooms. Another criterion was for

teachers to have a kindergarten or first grade placement, because the research question is currently focused on educators' beliefs within those grades. Recruitment was done through purposeful sampling (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) because it gave me the most convenient access to participants within the limited timeframe of the study. A challenge within recruitment was that I also had a teaching placement at North School. Beyond the study, I have relationships with the participants, and this could have influenced their responses during interviews. Another challenge was the timeline of the study; I needed to conduct all interviews within a two-week span. Although my participants were flexible in their availability, we often found ourselves rearranging schedules to work for everyone. The participant consent form (see Appendix B) was given prior to the interview via an email. This consent form gave participants clear expectations for the study including information on the study being completely voluntary. During that time, I also set up a time to interview the participants interested in the study.

Data Collection

For this study, I collected data from individual interviews and reviewed documents that provided additional information shared by the participants.

Interviews

As part of the primary data collection approach, participants were asked to join an interview that did not exceed 45-minutes. The interviews were individual to allow me the opportunity to most effectively learn the views of each participant. The interview was guided with open-ended questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This approach worked well for the study because it allowed participants to give more meaningful and in-depth responses, thus allowing me to have a sufficient amount of information about their perspective. The interview consisted of four topics surrounding the participants' views on their literacy development. These

topics included the participants background in literacy, literacy instruction, how fluency is developed, and on sight word development. The topics were created to develop a solid understanding of each individual teacher. The questions created for literacy development allows educators to share their background on learning the necessary skills for teaching literacy. There was a focus on literacy instruction to develop a better understanding of how literacy is taught in their classroom. Although the study focused primarily on sight words, the literacy knowledge gives insight to how educators learned to teach and instruct them. Participants were asked how fluency developed among their students because it connected to their overall knowledge about fluency and how students become more fluent when reading. The purpose of focusing on sight words was to gain an inside perspective of their current knowledge and beliefs. As educators in the early primary grades, they could provide insight to the use of sight words in the classroom and how students responded in reading and writing when they mastered sight words.

When setting up the interviews, I made sure to get all consent forms signed to ensure they were willing to participate. I met with each participant individually throughout the workday to set up a time for the interview. Anne, Belle, and Dawn all met with me before school because they were able to come in before their workday started and have the full 45 minutes to participate. Cora needed after school hours to give time to complete the full interview, because it was more convenient for her family life. I met with each participant in their classroom because I wanted them to have access to any documents or materials they were going to discuss during the interview. In addition, I wanted the participants to feel comfortable in their space where they could talk more openly.

Document Collections

The collection of documents is used as a means of triangulation. It allows the researcher “to draw upon multiple (at least two) sources of evidence to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources of evidence” (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). I used documents to understand the materials the participants used for teaching and assessing sight words. It also allowed me to understand the differences and commonalities among the participants in different grade bands. This is important as it lends knowledge to the experiences and beliefs they shared. The documents consisted of a 75 word checklist used in kindergarten and a 100 word list used in first grade. These checklists allow the participants to track students’ growth in both the mastery of reading and writing sight words. I was also provided with tools used to teach fluency and sight words. The fluency activity allows students to practice reading with different prosody. The sentence stays the same so students are not challenged with having to read a new sentence each time but can focus on changing their expression. Their expression changes based on the positioning and use of punctuation marks and capitalization of words. The sight word tool is to support students understanding of how to decode sight words instead of memorizing them. Below is Table 1 which includes a list of the documents given to me during the interviews:

Tabel 1

Documents Submitted During Interviews

Document	Description
F & P High Frequency Words (75)	A checklist of the 75 sight words students should master in kindergarten. This list was created by the instructional coaches and organized to match the sight words that would appear in benchmarking texts starting with Level A and going to Level G (see Appendix C).
F & P High Frequency Words (100)	A checklist of the 100 sight words students should master in kindergarten. This list was created by the instructional coaches and organized to match the sight

	words that would appear in benchmarking texts, starting with Level A and going to Level K (see Appendix D).
Pizza Reading Fluency Activity!	This is a tool used by Belle. It was utilized to support students' development of fluency. It has the same sentence written six time, but each sentence is written for students to read with a different expression. The sentence is "I love cheese pizza." Students roll a dice and read the corresponding sentence. The sentences are changed to include different punctuation in various places and capitalization (see Appendix E).
Student Growth Form	This chart shows the results of students assessed in November, January, and March. It analyzes whether students are on-level, approaching grade level, or are above grade level. It reviews students reading level, sight word knowledge, and phonics skills. It then calculates the total percentage of students on or above grade level during each assessment (see Appendix F).

Data Analysis

Through a qualitative data analysis approach, I took steps to code the information that I gathered. In doing so, patterns emerged with and between participants. Throughout the study, I engaged in practices of rigor and bias checks to ensure the most accurate findings were being represented. I also included an exploration of the limitations of this study.

Procedures for Analyzing

When analyzing the participants' 45-minute interviews, I began by transcribing the audio recordings taken from each session. After transcribing, I took a holistic approach to reading each interview to give me a better understanding of how the participants connect to one another (Kendra, 2019), as I analyzed the words they used to describe their experiences. I was able to review documents provided, tools utilized, and words spoken by participants to create a greater understanding. The details of the phases of analysis are presented below.

Phase One. During Phase One of the study, I took notes in the margin of the transcriptions to begin creating categories of the topics that represented the study most effectively. I began by inductively coding the interviews. Inductive coding allowed me to code sections of the interviews that are “close to the data without being predicated on any theory, construct, or concept” (Chandra & Shang, 2017. P. 101). Each category had its own color code to allow me to easily find the correct information. As I made one category in Anne’s interview, I read until the material no longer fit that category and switched to Belle. I switched participant data after each category was made so I could gather a complete idea of each participant’s views for that topic. I created five common categories across each transcription. The categories included: personal literacy skill development, a variety of instructional strategies used by the participants, their knowledge on fluency development of children, the assessments given for fluency, and sight word knowledge and beliefs.

Phase Two. In Phase Two, I created a table to represent each of the five categories and placed all the direct quotes from each teacher into their own sections to provide all the data in one place. Organizing the data in this way, helped me to view the information systematically. This allowed me to look at all the data per category and look for themes that emerged between participants.

Phase Three. In Phase Three I looked over each table and determined the findings from reviewing all four participant interviews. I moved into deductive coding where I used the pre-existing categories to create codes “based on established concepts” (Chandra & Shang, 2017, p. 101) I found in the categories. As I coded this data, themes began to emerge surrounding the development of fluency and sight words within each classroom to address the research question of this study.

Triangulation of the Data

During this process triangulation is used to validate the accuracy of the findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The credibility is the trustworthiness and believability of the study (Noble & Heale, 2019). This is important because if the results are not trustworthy, it does not accurately lend itself to further develop knowledge on the development of sight words. The validity of the study is when the study accurately reflects or evaluates the concept that has been investigated (Noble & Heale, 2019). The importance of validity in this study is to make sure the knowledge presented by the participants is accurately represented and it matches the concept of sight word development.

Rigor-Bias Check

Checking for rigor throughout a study means that I am establishing the consistency of the methods I have used to collect and interpret data. Rigor provides confidence in the findings of the research study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). As I read through the categories, prior to entering them into the table, I looked for commonalities and differences about the specific category. For example, if I looked at the assessment of fluency, I pulled quotes from each interview that detailed their assessments. Anne and Belle utilized fluency rubrics, however, Cora and Dawn were less concerned with fluency as they were with the foundational skills. Instead of leaving out the responses of Cora and Dawn, I pulled their perspectives as to why they believed fluency assessments were not always appropriate for their students. As the researcher, I had to examine the study for any bias based on my own beliefs on sight word instruction in the classrooms and my understanding of the data collected. I reflected on my own beliefs prior to each interview because I am also a kindergarten teacher at North School. I have my own beliefs on sight word development that I had to acknowledge when I reviewed the interview questions. Understanding

my own biases allowed me to participate in the study as an active listener rather than allow the participants to feel more open to sharing (Weger Jr., Bell, Minei, & Robinson, 2014).

Limitations

Limitations of a study examine possible challenges with the study that create boundaries that potentially impact outcomes. (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Within this study, one limitation was the time allotted to conduct the study. The study had parameters within a graduate program of study. Because of this, there was a discrete time period in which the collection of data could occur. This impacted the depth of conversation and the design of how many participants could be included. The sample size is a limitation because it included only four participants. With four participants, generalizations of the findings could not be made. Because of this, I focused on what could be learned through the particularities of each participant.

Of the four participants, all were female and white, which points to a lack of diversity in the pool of participants regarding both race and gender. Having a more diverse group of participants would expand the perspectives of sight word development and how various student groups are impacted. In the future, this type of study could expand across more school districts with diverse populations. In addition, this study only focuses on development in the first two years of children being introduced to sight words. Research should extend to upper elementary grades to inform the more complex development of sight word and fluency instruction.

Researcher Positionality

I am a first-generation college student, and when I decided my major, it was heavily influenced by the desire to learn more about human development. I was especially curious about the development of children and received my bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Studies in 2018. When I decided to go back to school for my teaching license, I knew

that I wanted to work with a hands-on approach with our youngest learners. I received my post-baccalaureate certification in Early Childhood Education in 2021. Then, I received a kindergarten teaching position at North School for the 2021-2022 academic school year. It was my experience during the first few months of teaching that lead me to my research question.

During my time studying early childhood education, I felt that many of the literacy skills I learned surrounded phonological awareness and phonics, as these are foundational skills for young students. I was given instruction on vocabulary development, comprehension, and fluency, but not to the same extent. After working in my own classroom, I was surprised at the emphasis placed on sight word development, given I had a huge base of phonological awareness and phonics knowledge, and less on fluency. When I experienced the method of instructing and assessing sight words, I understood how and why they were important. What I saw across my classroom as students began mastering sight words and possibly moving into reading leveled text independently, made me more curious about how other students were doing in other classrooms and what beliefs their teachers may have regarding sight word instruction.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine and highlight teacher experiences and beliefs about sight words in kindergarten and first grade classrooms. The question guiding this inquiry was focused on understanding sight word development through the lens of each educator. A qualitative approach was used in this study to allow educators the opportunity to verbalize their experiences with open-ended questions. The data was collected through an interview that allowed me to gain an understanding of the daily lives of educators in literacy (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Interviews were the primary source of data utilized in this study to provide educators with a voice regarding their experiences. Participants were asked to answer questions about their literacy backgrounds, how they taught literacy, fluency development, and sight word instruction. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked to share anything else they believed was important about sight words to allow them to share details they found particularly important.

This chapter is organized by providing insight into the major findings of all the interviews that emerged during the analysis of data. After analyzing the data, three findings emerged. The findings include teachers' perceptions of a) fluency as an outcome, not an essential skill; b) how there is more than one way to approach sight word instruction; and c) the importance of students being able to write their sight words. Subthemes within several of these findings are also discussed. Each theme was created through an analysis of the evidence of the teacher participants' interviews, emphasizing the importance of teacher perspective within this inquiry.

Fluency Development as an Outcome: “Not the Skill I Focus on Quite as Much”

In the first finding, I learned that fluency development was important to the teachers, but it was seen as an outcome of the development of more essential literacy skills. For example, the kindergarten teachers described fluency as secondary to other foundational skills. Cora stated,

In kindergarten I'm more focused on can you read...can you use these strategies that we're teaching you, like *pointer power* or *stretching out your words*. Can you use those strategies to read the book? Great! Yes, if you can fluently read it, great, but at the end of the day are you using those strategies to figure out challenging words that we've been teaching you?

When Dawn was asked how fluency instruction was delivered in her classroom, she explained,

I will say it's probably not the skill I focus on quite as much. Until more the midyear, end year. Just because I don't want them to try to feel that they have to read fast versus actually learning how to decode. At this age I feel that if they're trying to read fast that's when they start skipping words and add words.

The first-grade teachers understood fluency as important but describe it as a supportive skill for other literacy development. Belle commented, "We have our interactive read aloud and our shared reading time and every Wednesday we focus on that fluency piece." She added, "Fluency impacts comprehension and my kids who are on grade level, but don't read so fluently are struggling with the comprehension." Additionally, Anne revealed,

Truthfully, I have not done a lot of work with fluency specifically. I really kind of focused my instruction on those foundational skills of phonics and phonemic awareness. I do think reading fluency is important. I think with how crunch mode things have been over the past two years, it's been like, "Okay, where can I get the most bang for my buck?" Like where am I going to focus my instruction? I have found myself tending towards those foundational skills.

Further, all the teachers described fluency as valuable in other ways, such as its relationship with comprehension and assessment.

Fluency and Comprehension

The teachers perceived the value of fluency particularly in relationship to comprehension. When talking with Cora, she explained her perspective on how fluency impacts comprehension. She stated,

I think when you become a fluent reader you have a better understanding of what the book is about. Sometimes when you are worried about a word, trying to figure out each

and every single word, you forget about what the actual book is about. [As a smooth] reader, you can begin to understand what's going on in the book and have a better idea of what's happening in the beginning, what's happening in the middle, what's happening in the end, if it's fiction. Or be able to tell your friends, "Oh in my nonfiction book this is what I've learned," versus just reading it to read it. It's being more of a fluent reader that helps you develop your comprehension for that book.

In addition, when Dawn discussed her knowledge of fluency impacting comprehension, she explained, "I do think fluency does help the comprehension piece of it just because if they're [students] reading, I think they might forget what they're reading about or what is fully in the story." Dawn continues by explaining how fluency and comprehension look in her kindergarten classroom when her students begin to read versus when they are ready for more complex texts. She states,

The level of the stories are what makes it kind of OK. I think being in kindergarten, the books are a little easier. They're [students are] able to go back and look at the pages and really know what they read and be able to tell what the story is about versus the higher readers. If they [the higher readers] were reading like that, there isn't that much detail in the book but there is a lot more words or parts to the story. So, in that way they would be leaving out some of the story when they go to retell it or answer the comprehension questions.

In understanding how fluency impacts comprehension, the teachers' words describe their consideration of the age group that they are assisting. The teachers also focused a great deal on fluency assessments in our conversations.

Fluency Assessments

Each first-grade teacher discussed the use of fluency assessments in their classrooms. The fluency assessment allows the teacher to identify the aspects of fluency students need more support to develop. The rubric they use is on a three-point scale and assesses the accuracy, rate, and prosody of the stories students read. Anne clarified the purpose and how to utilize the assessment. She explained,

We use a fluency rubric, and we do all of our scoring to what the end of the year goal is. Kind of like standards-based, where this is the end of the year goal [shows interviewer paper] and we use the same rubric throughout the whole year. It's like they're [students] not going to be a three when they come in because that's where they're expected to be at the end of the year. Then you know you can use the same rubric and put them side by side by side and see how it's changed [Continues to show the rubric].

Anne continued to describe this process as the assessment of accuracy, rate and expression to get a combined score. She added that this assessment happens every quarter. She described what she experienced following several student assessments,

I was telling you about my kid who reads at 91% accuracy but they're reading at 69 words per minute which is a 1 [on the rubric]. You get something like this where it's like, whoa [shows student sample] their rate. They are reading it accurately, but their rate is slow compared to where it should be as a fluent first grade reader.

Belle, who also applies this assessment to the knowledge of where her students currently are, maintains the purpose of the rubric is to give, “an accuracy grade, a rate grade, and an expression grade.” However, she goes more in depth on how they judge each area. She stated,

We have it broken down into, are they able to read this amount of words in one

minute for their rate? For expression, do they use their punctuation, do they change their voice with a dialogue? Then accuracy, are they able to read their words correctly and under 1 minute? And so not only does it help us with the fluency grade, but it shows us where in fluency they need to work on.

Understanding students' ability to read fluently through assessments has supported these teachers in determining the best method of instruction when they have whole and small group time.

More Than One Way to Approach Sight Words

In the second finding, the method of approaching sight word instruction is the primary focus. I learned that the teachers described that there are many ways to approach sight word instruction. For her kindergarten class, Cora discusses the Jan Richardson approach versus the Heart Word strategy and how her students engage in both activities. She said,

Heart words are taught in phonics, with the *Look! Think! Say!* and the *Pop-Up*. I think that's helped. The kids have fun with it, but I also think Jan Richardson is having them more engaged. They're doing something with the word instead of just seeing the word on the board. They're physically manipulating the word on their board. They're writing the word, or they're coming up to my board. I'm mixing the word up, and they're coming to fix it. They're manipulating it so they're having to look closely at that word.

Cora also reflected,

Whereas, I mean don't get me wrong, phonics [with Heart Words] does a great job, it's more of just staring at a screen and saying the words they see. Which is fun for some of the kids that like those competitive games. We always tell them "You don't need to be fast as long as you're correct," for *Pop-Up*. I think that the way Jan Richardson does it,

it's more hands on for the kids, more engaging for the kids, and it sticks better.

While Dawn also uses the Heart Words in her phonics curriculum, she reflected more on her use of Jan Richardson and the impact it had on her students' sight word development,

This year we started using the Jan Richardson approach. I introduced the word, we clap it out, so I'll say, '*for*, F O R, *for*.' When I do a missing letter, I'll take off one of the letters say 'What letter is missing?' and then they tell me the letter that's missing. Then we mix it all up and they have to put it back together with magnet letters. We go to our tables and we write the word with our magic pencil on the table. Then they write the word with the whiteboard.

After describing her process, Dawn talked about the student outcomes of this process. She stated, "At first, I was like 'OK this is a lot of stuff, they're gonna be bored with it.' They have not been bored with it. They have really picked it up." She reflected on whether or not she would have had students from previous years writing the sight words as they are this year. She concluded,

As far as knowing the words, I do have more kids that know the words this year than I did last year but writing them has definitely been improved as well from last year. I really, really like that approach and plan to continue to do that. Even if as a grade level we might not decide on that.

Belle, who also teaches sight words with Jan Richardson's steps, discusses her experience stating the details of the lesson, similarly to Dawn. In her words, she mentioned, "That's what we do with 15 minutes of our instruction time and that's what we do at the back table [small groups] as well." She continued to explain, "The entire [first-grade] team follows this model. I think it really helps."

However, in Anne's classroom, she begins with the Heart Word method that provides her students with word attack strategies. Anne discussed her perspective on utilizing this approach,

I think that it [sight word instruction] needs to be a more well-rounded way. If you want to teach them this way [memorization] that's fine but when you're teaching give them word attack strategies. So, when they're reading, they can also read this word and also read this word with the same word attack skills that you're giving them to read the word *like*.

Anne continued to explain the misconception about sight word development. She said,

I think that so often people think that sight words are weird that you just have to memorize. The reality is and I can't tell you the exact name, but X percent of sight words can all be decoded. Then more will continue to be able to be decoded when you know certain spelling patterns. I think that shifting the focus from memorizing them to really the skills of how to decode them is an important piece.

Although Anne utilizes this method, she still incorporates the Jan Richardson steps after this instruction to align with the routine her team has.

Organization of Sight Words

With the multitude of ways sight words can be organized, the teachers explained the process and purpose of the distribution of their sight words. In first grade, students are expected to master 100 words in addition to words they did not master in kindergarten, totaling 175 words by the end of the school year. Belle provided me on the distribution of those 100 words stating,

At the beginning of the school year our instructional coaches gave us a scope and sequence. They [students] learned four words a week, one word a day. Then that fifth school day is a review day of those four sight words. The next week we have those four

new words, the fifth day being a review. After three weeks of learning those 12 new words we have a whole week of reviewing those 12 words.

When Cora discussed the distribution of the 75 sight words in kindergarten, she gave insight to the thought process by stating,

I think we talked as just a grade level thinking three was a good number for them to get started. We didn't want to just do two, but we also didn't want to do four or five. Three is enough where we could have three days of it [new sight words] and then two days to review.

Cora described how the teachers looked at the books that students will be assessed on, and they identified key words to move toward the beginning of the lessons. She said the teachers focused on common words the students will see at the beginning of the school year, so that the students can feel more success. She provided the example of the word *yes* that doesn't come up in an early book, so it doesn't need to be taught at the beginning of the year. Whereas, words like *the*, *we*, *a* are important early words for students to know.

Dawn reinforces Cora's notion on sight word distribution, stating, "We started from level A. Sight words that we would see in a level A reader and then we went all the way down to the I think it's [level] F." Dawn also added where she believes the sight words were chosen from,

I know that we looked at the Fountas and Pinnell sight word list. I know that we looked at the benchmarking sight words like per level. What words are in the level A books, what words are in the level B books. And I believe it came from the Fryers list as well, but that was established before I came to North School. I'm not sure where it actually originated from.

Anne provided her opinion on this topic, stating that the organization of sight words by

book level is, “great if you want your data to look great for that moment.” She added,

I think that when you get kids reading other books. it's not going to show as naturally. I think that if you're teaching it in this order and with the memorization way, are they going to probably naturally move up in the F&P [Fountas and Pinnell] levels? Yeah sure, but if you give them any other book and these are not the exact words that are in that book, then no.

After discussing the multiple methods for instructing sight words, I focused on sight word assessment. This led to an exploration of the teachers’ opinions on the testing of writing sight words.

The Importance of Writing Sight Words Varies

As part of the 75 and 100 sight word checklist, the four teachers identified whether students have mastered reading and writing each word. This compelled me to understand their beliefs on instructing and assessing the writing of a sight word. In Anne’s interview, she discussed the benefits of students mastering the written aspect of sight words. She stated that she agrees that if a word is “stored in your brain,” a student should be able to write it. She doesn’t necessarily believe that the number of sight words being read, matches what is written by students, She expressed her personal views,

Even when you and I read, we use context clues all the time. We can look at the first few letters of a word and know what it is because of what we read three words prior. Also, there are people who are great readers and are not great spellers, you know what I mean? We are teaching kids reading and writing go hand-in-hand. Especially with how we use Blast where they have to write and every fifth lesson it's spelling. I think that it's important, but it's not the end all be all.

Belle, who tests students weekly, also gave a perspective on ensuring students knew how to write their sight words stating,

Not only do they [students] read their sight words, but they have to use their sight words in their writing. Especially right now when we're writing fictional stories. A lot of it is dialogue, and words like *said* or *answered* are our sight words...it's kind of giving them more vocabulary to use when they're writing.

Although Anne and Belle reflected on the benefits of being able to write sight words in first-grade, Cora and Dawn had a mixed perspective on assessment for their kindergarten students. When Dawn was asked about how writing sight words impacts a student's literacy development, she explained, "That's a hard one for me. I go back-and-forth on that; assessing them isn't appropriate at this time with kindergarten." Dawn also reflects on the effects of students not being able to write a sight word stating,

It doesn't hurt them. I haven't seen a child where they're like, "Oh my goodness I can't write this word" and be upset or discouraged from it. Which is hard for me because we test a lot and I just know the pressure that puts on some of the children to actually test.

That part of the sight word testing is hard for me. But as far as like teaching it and doing it, it's not going to hurt them to learn it.

She also added her beliefs on the benefits to her students, mentioning,

The benefit is that I do know some kids, if they can write it, then they can read it. I definitely go back-and-forth with it, I really do. I feel like if they are confident and like, "I can write that word," then I'm seeing it and they're writing that. Not all the children, I don't think they're all ready for that yet. It's definitely my higher students that can really

show me they're ready to write their sight words. They have the concept that, "Oh that is the word I need to write."

Cora also discussed the appropriateness of students writing their sight words. She reflected, "I don't feel the writing of the sight words is appropriate for a 5-year-old. If you can read that word, that's what's important. She provided an example,

You can see the word *you* and know it's the word *you* in your book. I mean yes practicing spelling so that you can see that word and if you're physically manipulating or writing the word, that helps you remember the word *you*. I don't necessarily think you should have to know how to spell every single sight word on sight to become a good reader.

When questioned further on knowing how to write sight words for the purpose of writing literacy development, Cora then reflected,

For writing literacy, knowing how to write them [sight words] correctly, it's important, but I also think they're 5 years old. At the end of the day if they write the word *you* wrong, is that the most important thing? Or is it the fact that they're writing something on paper and using the tools that we have in a classroom?

Cora describes her instructional approach,

If some of my kids don't know how to spell the word *you*, well [she tells them], "You know which one is the word *you* up there [points to word wall], go look at it because it's a tool that you can use." Even as adults we use spell check; I don't know how to spell all my words perfectly. I get it, yes, not to write just the letter U for the word but like I think at the end of the day, they're only 5 years old.

Cora felt that the larger task of kindergarten is to expose children to the sight words. She believes the focus should be the exposure, and not necessarily the correct spelling. She continued, "Some

of these kids came into kindergarten and couldn't even write a letter on their paper. Now we're expecting them to be able to write all of their sight words perfectly...I'm just happy if you can write a beginning sound."

Overall, all the teachers recognized the benefits of students knowing how to correctly spell their sight words, but there was a divide on the concept of assessing students related to the grade level in which the participants were teaching.

In this chapter, I have identified three findings that are significant in this inquiry. By listening to the perspective of the educators, I have gained knowledge not only into their literacy background, but their personal beliefs as they relate to the literacy development. In the following chapter, I will discuss these findings as they relate to the research question.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The first chapter of this study began with a discussion about the importance of students mastering sight words as evidenced through research and its effects on early literacy development. The overall purpose of this inquiry is to take what is known about sight word development and examine sight word instruction through the perspective of educators in kindergarten and first grade classrooms. As described by the teacher participants, sight words are necessary for fluency, and developing sight word skills allows students to be successful in early reading. The four teacher participants responded to questions about fluency and sight word development while reflecting on their own backgrounds, methods of teaching, and overall opinions on how sight word instruction is being delivered.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of this inquiry in relationship to the research question. I consider the meaning of the findings as they relate to existing literature in the fields of fluency, comprehension, and sight word development. The implications for educators and those

in the field of literacy will also be discussed. Finally, I conclude by providing an overview of the significance of this study.

The inquiry at the center of this qualitative study was focused on the educators' perspective of sight words and the role these words play in their classrooms. This study was guided by the following question: What are teachers' beliefs about the emphasis of sight word development in kindergarten and first grade literacy instruction? This question is part of the discussion of each finding and is reviewed for an overall interpretation.

Fluency Development: “Not the Skill I Focus on Quite as Much”

The first-grade teachers describe fluency as a skill that supports other essential literacy skills. In these classrooms, fluency was developed through teacher interactive read alouds, shared reading, and direct instruction on specific days of the week. When a teacher is able to model fluency, there are key approaches to building competency with this skill. For example, Skinner (1988) developed the theory of oral language. In this theory, infants acquire language through operant conditioning. When babies begin to babble or mimic sounds from someone modeling them, they receive praise. While older learners do not develop fluency through operant conditioning, the process of fluency development is similar to infants with regard to the theory of oral language. The concept of repeated exposure to sight words and students' ability to read smoothly, followed by praise when students performed well, is a way to motivate and support students developing fluency in their own reading (Dweck, 2002).

The National Reading Panel (NRP) Report considered fluency to be an important skill for students to obtain and included it as one of five pillars for literacy development (National Reading Panel, 2000). However, when examining the data of this inquiry, it became clear from the teachers' perspective that fluency was secondary to phonemic awareness and phonics.

According to the teachers, students first have to build a foundation of phonological and phonetic skills to endure the texts they are reading. As students become more confident in these skills, fluency develops.

The kindergarten teachers of this study, however, discussed fluency as an outcome to acquiring other skills. These other skills include one-to-one correspondence, phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding. According to the NRP Report, phonics improves word recognition in kindergarteners. Phonics is necessary as it connects students' development of letter sounds that are established in phonological instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000). As students progress in these skills in kindergarten, fluency follows. In addition, students are in the emergent stage of their reading development. Related to fluency, Clay (1966) described the development of concepts of print in emergent readers. In the development of concepts of print, students learn how to interact with a book and what differentiates a letter from a word and a word from a sentence. This supports their one-to-one correspondence. As children make progress in this area, they are becoming more comfortable with stories, and this can happen even before their knowledge of phonemes becomes connected. Then, as learners continue with phonics instruction, they can participate in shared readings and content-focused activities (Roskos, Christie, & Richgel, 2003). The teachers of this study understood that fluency was important, but they recognized their students to be in the emergent literacy stage of their development. They believed students needed to spend time developing their foundational skills and concepts of print to engage with a text fully. Without these primary skills, students would have difficulty reading, much less reading fluently.

In all the interviews, when discussing fluency, teachers tended to focus on either accuracy, rate, or prosody to define characteristics of being a fluent reader. However, there was a

lack of focus on automaticity, even with the knowledge that sight words were important to literacy development. In the automaticity theory, students develop their foundational skills to a level of automatic recall (Houseton, n.d.). Furthermore, Samuels and Floor (2006) recognized that with the ability to recognize letters, letter sounds, and sight words quickly and accurately, students would be able to focus their cognitive energy on enhancing their comprehension skills. With the evidence that teachers tended to focus less on automaticity, care was taken to look more closely at the teachers' beliefs about the impact sight words have on fluency.

Fluency and Comprehension

Kuhn and Stahl (2003) note that fluency skills contribute to students reading by providing a sufficient amount of accuracy and prosody, as well as at a rate that allows students to comprehend the text. Adams (2000) identified that when students are not reading fluently, they spend less time comprehending. Cora reflected on the importance of fluency for comprehension development and discussed the difference between students reading to decode versus reading to understand a story. Dawn also mentioned that fluency leads to comprehension of texts. This aligns with Brandon (2021) who states that comprehension occurs with fluency and allows students to be more engaged with the text.

However, there may be flexibility within this understanding. Dawn and Cora reflected on the texts their students read and how the text can be at varying levels of difficulty. A more simplified level of text allows for students to make meaning without necessarily reading fluently. This can be impacted by the picture cues and personal background knowledge that students incorporate into their understanding of the text. With these supports, students can read dysfluently and still have the ability to respond to questions about what was read. In addition, the

simple texts focus on familiar topics that students in this age group have been exposed to (i.e., playing at home or park, having a friend, etc.).

Although, there is always a possibility that students from different backgrounds interpret the pictures differently than what was intended. For example, a student might say the girl has a “baby” instead of a “doll.” This example connects back to the development of foundational skills that both kindergarten teachers emphasized in their interviews. If students were to spend sufficient time on practicing fluency, they would have to incorporate that skill with the other foundational skills. A cognitive load, such as this, can be demanding on students who are just beginning to read or who are acquiring English as a second language. This concern was illuminated by Dawn in her decision to focus less on fluency because she believed fluency would develop naturally when the other essential skills become more developed.

In addition, when discussing students who can read higher level texts, Cora mentioned that she would begin to focus more on fluency. The approaches to fluency that have been described by the teachers has value when the instruction meets students where they are academically. Some students develop their foundational skills in the beginning of the year and are ready to begin reading the words accompanied by pictures. Some students are ready to read without heavily relying on picture cues. Still, some students become proficient in letter knowledge toward the end of the year. What stands as important is not the fluency, but the knowledge an educator has about their students to appropriately scaffold and differentiate the learning of all necessary skills.

Fluency Assessments

Fluency is often thought of as being synonymous with assessment. In many classrooms, fluency is perceived as an assessment means that provides benchmark progress. Belle and Anne

discussed the fluency rubrics they utilize when they are tracking a student's ability to read accurately, at a good rate, and with expression. Although a rubric may not be necessary in kindergarten, students in first grade are exposed to trickier texts and need the ability to read more fluently. The rubric is based on end-of-the year expectations and allows students to see their growth. The students in classrooms with a high focus on fluency, benefit from the rubrics if they are at a point in their learning where they have proficiency in the foundational skills. Though the teachers utilize fluency rubrics, they also have a benchmarking system through Fountas and Pinnell. This assessment system provides educators with a fiction and a nonfiction text that offers a tool to assess accuracy, rate, and comprehension, while also marking any student miscues. Anne observed that students who can read a higher-level text, could also read at an incredibly slow rate, but the way the assessment tool is set up, students prior to level J are not recorded on their fluency. It is possible with the limited number of texts in the Fountas and Pinnell assessment, there are limited sight words and decodable words that a student could recognize while at the same time not read fluently. The student, in this case, would still be moved to the next level. I suggest assessing students on multiple books to get a better understanding of their fluency from text to text. If students struggle with one classroom given level C text, but pass the assessment of a level C text, then they are moved up without the emphasis of needing to read fluently. Assessing and reflecting on fluency can prepare students for success in the proceeding grades where they are expected to read more complex texts, have discussions with peers, or reflect on their own understanding of the story.

More Than One Way to Approach Sight Words

The Children's Literacy Initiative (1988) acknowledged that sight words make up 50% of the words students encounter in daily activities. In understanding vast amount of sight words

students are exposed to, the teachers in this study reflected on their instructional strategies for sight words. The teachers utilized a balanced literacy approach that exposed students to the sight words multiple times a day. Interactive read alouds, shared readings, and small groups offered times for the students to incorporate sight word knowledge. Pressley and Allington (2015) discussed these activities as continuously exposing students to the correct reading of sight words. Students who are challenged with reading independently benefit from read alouds because they are able to hear the sight words and see them within the text. Furthermore, those students also benefit from shared readings because students and teachers work together to identify sight words within the text. The teachers also demonstrate the proper ways to engage with the text to notice and recall sight words when students read on their own. Students who are challenged with learning sight words in a whole group will be more successful as they are instructed in a small group setting. In this setting, students receive more personalized instruction to support their needs. When teachers are flexible in the instruction of sight words, it gives students the ability to interact with the sight words and appeals to the different learning styles of each student.

One approach implemented by the school for the teachers to follow is from the work of Jan Richardson (2019) and her method of instructing sight words. This method provides students the chance to interact with each sight word in both verbal and physical manipulation of the word (Richardson, 2019). Though all teachers in the study incorporated this approach into their daily routines, Anne differed because she offered word attack strategies to her students using the Heart Word method. Heart Words introduces students to similar word patterns (Farrell, Hunter, & Osenga, 2019). This method identifies chunks and blends as well as those letters that made different sounds than the consonant sounds with which students are familiar. By doing this, Pressley and Allington (2015), state that students apply that knowledge to other words.

Through utilizing a combination of strategies, students are interacting with sight words in a multitude of ways. Logan (1997) describes these encounters in his instance theory. The more often students are working with these words, the more likely they are to remember them. In identifying all the methods used to teach sight words, there was one consistent ideology: students needed to learn their sight words. While beliefs differed on when to utilize methods, it is clear the teachers believed in the importance of having multiple approaches to offer students, as they do not all learn the same. While some students will thrive with Richardson's (2019) approach because it involves memorizing words and their spellings, others might benefit from the Heart Word method where they break a word apart to notice the tricky spelling sounds. To be successful with all learners, teachers should develop an understanding of how their students learn and apply the most effective method.

Organization of Sight Words

Most often, students are introduced to sight words by an organized system created and used by members of the school. In this study, it was observed that words were chosen from the benchmarking leveled texts and phonics curriculum. They were organized by the timeline in which the words appeared in the texts to ensure students had exposure to the sight words before the benchmarking assessments were conducted. Anne viewed this as teaching to the test; this can be problematic when students begin to read additional books on that same level. For example, while students are learning specific sight words for a level C text, they may find themselves struggling with other level C texts that utilize a wide range of sight words. If a teacher observes that a student can read a specific level text, they may supply the student with books at that level from which they can practice. The student may have difficulty and become frustrated with this challenge. When assigning books, the teacher should know their students' abilities to most

accurately provide them with the books that are appropriate to their actual reading level. Other teachers did not share this thinking because they saw it as a way to support students. There are a limited number of words that can be taught within a week, and when students needed to master 75-100 words per academic school year, it was clear that there needed to be a system. This system in particular allowed students to become familiar with words prior to assessments. This approach provides students with an advantage when they are reading and provides them with a fighting chance to be successful. If children can pick up a book and recognize words, they will feel more confident. This process can reinforce their love of reading as they see themselves developing as independent readers.

How are students presented with all the words they need to know and all the strategies they need to practice if they learned words like *play* at the end of the school year. They might not pass the early benchmarks at the beginning of the school year without that specific word knowledge. While *play* is common enough in their vocabulary, some students may have a harder time visualizing it until they receive explicit instruction. Anne commented that it should not solely be the common words in the benchmark books, but rather the words that are found within all books. This insight brought me an understanding of why there are so many lists of sight words and why they are often used but reorganized. As teacher's attempt to rationalize the best way to organize their lists, they are constantly faced with opposition, because there is more than one efficient way to organize the words.

One factor that an educator can take into consideration is the students' perspective. Providing students with autonomy in their own learning can support them in understanding their interests. Students are often given the chance to select the texts that are placed in their personal book bins. During this time, educators can support students in recognizing and learning the sight words that

are in those books of interest. Students can also keep journal or list of words from which they choose to focus. This can be an approach used during small group time, allowing students to explore and develop extensive sight word knowledge.

The Importance of Writing Sight Words Varies

Writing sight words can be a challenge for students. They work to incorporate different strategies to write words and they may begin to apply those strategies to sight words as well. Belle and Anne understood and clarified the importance of knowing how to spell sight words. Accurately writing sight words allows their first-grade students to complete writing assignments with more accurate spellings, leading to their writing being easier to read. Students who struggle with writing the words, may still exhibit misspellings, and feel less confident when they are challenged with accurately writing the words. Richardson (2019) believed that students should write the sight word correctly on six separate occasions and days. In contrast, students in the classrooms of the teachers of this study engaged in an approach where they marked students' knowledge of words after only one official check. This type of assessment may not be accurately providing information on students' abilities, if they are only required to produce the word in one instance.

Cora and Dawn also understood the importance of writing sight words, but as teachers of five-year-olds, they did not agree with assessing students on spelling sight words. Part of emergent literacy is the writing that begins to emerge (Roskos, Christie, & Richgels, 2003), but with the variance at kindergarten level, assessing sight word writing can be premature. Reflecting on all the skills students are learning to use in their writing, like stretching out words to hear their sounds, listening to beginning, then end, then middle sounds, utilizing environmental print, and having correct punctuation, etc., students may begin to use these skills

to merge into spelling sight words. For example, a student who is taught to sound out words may spell the sight word *can* correctly, but struggle with *the* as it incorporates digraph *th* and the *e* makes the /u/ sound. This can get quite tricky for emergent writers when they are assessed.

An aspect of learning to consider is the skill development of students from diverse backgrounds. Students who speak another language other than English at home, may not have the same type of rehearsal opportunities as children from monolingual English homes. By expecting students to accurately write each word, we do not respect the learning environment of each child when they are away from school. As mentioned by Dawn, some students are ready for spelling sight words, but some students may not be at any given point. Even if students are practicing at home, they may still be challenged because, as Dawn and Cora point out, the students are young, and they are still learning how to become scholars. Though sight words are important and benefit their overall writing, there may be a need to identify how and when students in kindergarten are assessed.

Findings Relationship to Research Question

This inquiry focused on the emphasis of sight words in the classroom with the perspective of the educator highly intertwined. Overall, there was a consensus that students need to master sight words to read in both kindergarten and first grade classrooms. Sight word knowledge impacts fluency which then impacts comprehension. However, the educators' beliefs were not aligned with regard to writing sight words. This disconnect appears to result more from the age groups with which the educators are working. Although sight words are important, the emphasis in kindergarten might be better placed on the reading of sight words and methods that most effectively support that development. The writing of sight words should also include a

transition from kindergarten to first grade with beginning to spell sight words accurately to set students up for success when they reach first grade.

Implications

All the findings presented in this inquiry demonstrate the beliefs educators have surrounding the emphasis of sight word instruction in the classrooms. To become fluent in reading, students need to know the sight words at a young age to spend less time decoding those words and more time on the complex words (Adams, 2000; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). There are differences in perspectives on strategies to be used and methods of assessment to provide students with the most valuable learning experiences. The findings of this study suggest implications for educators and other individuals within the literacy community.

Educators

Since findings of this study concluded that sight words are important, and there are multiple ways to attack these words, it is important for educators to have this knowledge. With this knowledge, educators can work collaboratively to provide their students with the most effective instruction. When students are given the chance to utilize Richardson's (2019) approach or the Heart Word method in ReallyGreatReading (2005) they are given multiple ways to work with the words. They are also being sent a message about the importance of sight words, as educators look for multiple ways for students to master them. If students received one method of recognizing sight words, then there are bound to be students who are not successful. When we want students to be successful in mastering sight words, the equitable solution is to present them with a multitude of strategies to work with these words. As educators begin to understand the learning styles of their students, they are able to organize them into groups and work with select students with the most flexibility. Educators should also be aware of the findings on assessing

both the reading and writing of sight words. If educators become more aligned in their perspective on whether to assess the writing of sight words, they can determine a way to track student knowledge of those words without it being reported out to parents.

There would also be less of a focus on the actual assessment with a fixed deadline for students to have mastered those words. Though it is not required for students to master the writing of sight words by the end of the academic year, the emphasis placed on acquiring this skill puts pressure on both the student and educators as students progress into the school year with limited mastery. As mentioned by Belle, students not only have to master the 100 first-grade sight words, but they must become competent with any words missed in kindergarten. With so much focus and time designated to assessment, there becomes a lack of time for the teaching and reteaching of sight words students have difficulty mastering. If students need the individualized time small groups offer, but those small groups are interrupted by test of writing sight words, educators lose valuable time in supporting those students.

Other Individuals within the Literacy Community

Other individuals within the literacy community may include administrators, instructional coaches, and workers of the school district. As curriculums and methods are influenced by the individuals mentioned, it is important for them to not only reflect on sight words and their importance, but to understand what educators are noticing in their classrooms. As educators give perspective on the methods of instructing sight words, it gives the other individuals the opportunity to see what methods are most effective beyond the checklist scores they review. This can allow for decision makers to make changes as to how they implement new strategies or make current ones more effective. This awareness might also change other stakeholders' emphasis on what needs to be assessed when students are mastering sight words. Furthermore, if there is

going to be an emphasis placed on obtaining sight words, teachers should be given more training on how to most effectively support their students. When Jan Richardson's method was implemented, there was a discussion on utilizing this method, but no follow up in ensuring teachers understood the use of this approach. In addition, when the school is planning for professional development, teachers can focus time on approaching sight words and supporting students who have not mastered sight words by the end of each quarter.

Recommendations for Further Study

The implications offered by this study present opportunities for further research in the field of sight word methods and sight word assessments. This inquiry contains a small number of participants per the time frame to write this thesis. Thus, there are several ways to extend this inquiry into further research.

As the number of participants is limited, a replication of this study could occur to provide further insight on the teacher perspectives. In addition, the sample could be more diverse if it included people of different ethnicities and from different cultural, linguistic, and ability backgrounds.

The study could also be altered in several ways. One way to adjust the study is to expand the grade band. While kindergarten and first grade are the earliest years children learn sight words, it would be beneficial to include other grades that teach sight words. This perspective could give insight into the way older learners learn and master sight words. It could also provide insight into how students have continued to learn sight words that were not mastered in previous grades.

Another way to adjust this research is to include other school districts. North School is currently the only elementary school within its district. Allowing members of other school

districts to join could provide further information on different methods utilized as well as assessments given to track proficiency.

In sum, further inquiry is needed and can be extended in several ways to determine a true understanding of educator's beliefs on sight words being emphasized in classrooms.

Final Reflection

The purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs of educators surrounding the emphasis placed on sight words. The qualitative study design of this research allows the views of educators to be interpreted in understanding sight words, their effects, and how to utilize them in classrooms. The necessity to master sight words to produce fluency has been a common theme throughout this thesis and it is understood that there are multiple ways to implement the knowledge of sight words. Much has changed in the history of education to incorporate more of what students are capable of achieving in each academic year. As students' repertoire of sight words grow, they will become more successful in all aspects of literacy. Chapter 5 closes with the knowledge on how educators believe sight words should be instructed and assessed and why sight words are important. Today's educators have the ability to help students succeed in reading and writing with the benefits that sight words offer. Knowing their importance is not enough if sufficient instruction is not implemented and if educators are not cohesive in their understandings of mastering sight words.

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APPENDIX A

Email Recruitment Email Teacher Participants

Dear _____

As a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, I am working on a master's thesis to explore the beliefs of teachers regarding the emphasis placed on sight words. I would like to invite you to participate in this study that I have titled *An Examination of Teacher Beliefs About the Emphasis of Sight Word Development in Early Literacy Instruction*.

As a participant, you will be asked to complete one 45-minute individual interview. The interview may include you sharing your sight word materials if you choose. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, your identity will remain confidential.

I appreciate your time and I am happy to provide you with more information about this project. Please let me know if you are interested by responding to me at agalicia@uwm.edu or feel free to call me at (414)-207-1541. I look forward to talking with you about this work that I believe will broaden the conversation about early literacy development.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Allie Galicia
Graduate Student
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
agalicia@uwm.edu

APPENDIX B



Informed Consent for Research Participation

IRB #: [Click here to type](#)

IRB Approval Date: [Click here to type](#)

Study title	An Examination of Teacher Beliefs About the Emphasis of Sight Word Development in Early Literacy Instruction
Researchers	Leanne M. Evans, PhD, Assistant Professor in Department of Teaching and Learning Allie Galicia, Graduate Student, Curriculum and Instruction

We're inviting you to participate in a research study. Participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate now, you can always change your mind later. There are no negative consequences, whatever you decide.

Overview

Purpose: The objective of this research is to examine the beliefs that teacher's have on the emphasis placed on sight word instruction in early literacy instruction. The research will offer implications for the best practices in early literacy and the role of fluency and sight words. The work is based on the need to examine how sight words heavily promoted in schools. Students are expected to learn anywhere from 75-100 sight words per academic school year. This study examines teachers' perspectives on providing sight word instruction.

Procedures: This qualitative research will examine the experiences of 4 teachers in kindergarten or first grade. The researcher will collect data through one 45-minute individual interview. The researcher will also collect any necessary documents that the teachers are utilizing to support sight word development and literacy in their classrooms. The researcher will audio-record each session and transcribe the recordings. The researcher will code and analyze the data to allow themes to emerge. Based on the themes that have emerged, the researcher will shape the findings.

Time Commitment: The time commitment includes one 45-minute individual interview.

Primary risks: The potential risks for participating are minimal. Measures will be taken by the student Principal Investigator to ensure that each participant remains anonymous. If at any point you feel discomfort, you may discontinue participation in the interview session. Your participation in this study will have no bearing on your continued relationship and decisions regarding employment with the current school.

Benefits: One benefit of this study to the participant is the opportunity to engage in conversation with the researcher that allows them to reflect on their own teaching practices. Participants will also be given an opportunity to share their perspective on fluency development that will broaden the conversation about early literacy development.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to understand teachers' beliefs regarding the emphasis placed on sight word development in early literacy.



Give a copy of this form to the research participant 1

Informed Consent for Research Participation

IRB #: [Click here to type](#)

IRB Approval Date: [Click here to type](#)

What will I do? You will be asked to participate in one, 45-minute individual interview session with the researcher. This interview will allow you to talk in-depth about your experiences with early literacy, fluency development, and sight word development.

Risks

Possible risks	How we're minimizing these risks
Breach of confidentiality (your data being seen by someone who shouldn't have access to it)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All identifying information is removed and replaced with a study ID. • We'll remove all identifiers after the interview session. • We'll store all electronic data on a password-protected, encrypted computer. • We'll store all paper data in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. • We'll keep your identifying information separate from your research data, but we'll be able to link it to you by using a study ID. We will destroy this link after we finish collecting and analyzing the data.

There may be risks we don't know about yet. Throughout the study, we'll tell you if we learn anything that might affect your decision to participate.

Other Study Information

Possible benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One benefit of the study is to have the participants' voices be heard in a field they have experience in. • Another benefit is the opportunity to take part in research that will broaden the conversation on early literacy development.
Estimated number of participants	• 4 Teachers
How long will it take?	The time commitment includes one, 45-minute individual interview.
Costs	There are no known costs associated to this study.
Compensation	There is no compensation associated with this study.
Future research	De-identified (all identifying information removed) on all interviews.
Recordings	We will audio record you. The recordings will only be used for the Student Principal Investigator to review the conversations and create transcripts.
Funding source	There is no funding for this project.

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Confidentiality and Data Security

We'll collect the following identifying information for the research: Your name and email. This information is necessary for any follow-up questions we may have related to the focus group, interview or needs assessment data.

Where will data be stored?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We'll store all electronic data on a password-protected, encrypted computer.• We'll store all paper data in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. We'll keep your identifying information separate from your research data, but we'll be able to link it to you by using a study ID. We will destroy this link after we finish collecting and analyzing the data.
How long will it be kept?	The data will be deleted up to five years after the data collection period.

Who can see my data?	Why?	Type of data
The researchers	To conduct the study and analyze the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interview data de-identified with coded named (names removed and labeled with a study ID)• Additional documents de identified with coded named (names removed and labeled with a study ID)
The IRB (Institutional Review Board) at UWM The Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) or other federal agencies	To ensure we're following laws and ethical guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interview data de-identified with coded named (names removed and labeled with a study ID)• Additional documents de identified with coded named (names removed and labeled with a study ID)
Anyone (public)	If we share our findings in publications or presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All data will be de-identified with coded names.• If you are quoted, we will use a pseudonym (fake name).

Mandated Reporting

We are mandated reporters. This means that if we learn or suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, we're required to report this to the authorities.

Conflict of Interest

There are no known conflicts of interest.



Give a copy of this form to the research participant 3

Informed Consent for Research

Participation IRB #: Click here to type

IRB Approval Date: Click here to type

Contact information:

For questions about the research	Allie Galicia	414-207-15-41 agalicia@uwm.edu
For questions about your rights as a research participant	IRB (Institutional Review Board; provides ethics oversight)	414-229-3173 / irbinfo@uwm.edu
For complaints or problems	Allie Galicia	agalicia@uwm.edu
	IRB	414-229-3173 / irbinfo@uwm.edu

Signatures

If you have had all your questions answered and would like to participate in this study, sign on the lines below. Remember, your participation is completely voluntary, and you're free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Name of Participant (print)

Signature of Participant Date

Name of Researcher obtaining consent (print)

Signature of Researcher obtaining consent Date

APPENDIX C **F & P High Frequency Words (75)**

Name _____

School Year _____

Directions: There are four columns of Read/Write for each of the four quarters as needed. Once a student has demonstrated success reading and writing a word, the boxes should be highlighted yellow and do not need to be reassessed. This assessment should be given individually as an entire list in one sitting or broken into smaller parts as you see fit.

Read Words: Ask the student to read each word. Record correct responses with a check mark and incorrect responses with an 'X.' If a student reads the word correctly within 3 seconds check mark it as automatic. If no response is given within 3 seconds, say the word, mark an 'X' and move on.

Write Words: Write a check each time a student writes the word without any help. If you prompt a student to fix the spelling, do not put a check mark. When a student has 3-6 check marks for writing the word, it is considered mastered. This portion is best to do during small group time using only three to five words a week.

Coding: Yellow - Countdown, Orange - Blast, Red - FastBridge, (Letter)- F&P Benchmark book

	Q1 Read	Q1 Write	Q2 Read	Q2 Write	Q3 Read	Q3 Write	Q4 Read	Q4 Write
can (A) *								
we (A) *								
like (A) *								
I (A) *								
to (A) *								
me (B) *								
he (B) *								
a (B) *								
the (B) *								
my (B) *								
play (B)								
and (C) *								
so (C) *								

	Q1 Read	Q1 Write	Q2 Read	Q2 Write	Q3 Read	Q3 Write	Q4 Read	Q4 Write
on (C) *								
in (C) *								
up (C) *								
it (C) *								
she (C) *								
was (C) *								
by (C) *								
put (C)								
get (C)								
mom (C)								
went (C)								
is (D) *								
go (D)								
at (D) *								
this (D)								
too (D) *								
him (D) *								
of (D)								
then (D)								
read (D)								
us (D)								
you (E) *								
see (E)								
are (E) *								
come (E)								

	Q1 Read	Q1 Write	Q2 Read	Q2 Write	Q3 Read	Q3 Write	Q4 Read	Q4 Write
did (E)								
not (E)*								
now (E)								
out (E)								
they (E)								
will (E)*								
had(E)								
her (E)								
look(E)								
day (E)								
eat (E)								
yes (F)								
am (F)								
do (F)								
boy (G)								
girl (G)								
be **								
all *								
saw								
say								
no *								
an								
as								
for *								
has								

	Q1 Read	Q1 Write	Q2 Read	Q2 Write	Q3 Read	Q3 Write	Q4 Read	Q4 Write
his								
how								
if *								
or *								
ball								
ran								
jump								
man								
sit								
run								
sat								
got								

APPENDIX D

F & P High Frequency Words (100)

Name _____

School Year _____

Directions: There are four columns of Read/Write for each of the four quarters as needed. Once a student has demonstrated success reading and writing a word, the boxes should be highlighted yellow and do not need to be reassessed. This assessment can be given individually as an entire list in one sitting or broken into smaller parts as you see fit. It can also be used as a formative check during small groups.

Read Words: Ask the student to read each word. Record correct responses with a check mark and incorrect responses with an 'X'. If a student reads the word correctly within 3 seconds check mark it as automatic. If no response is given within 3 seconds, say the word, mark an 'X' and move on.

Write Words: Write a check each time a student writes the word without any help. If you prompt a student to fix the spelling, do not put a check mark. When a student has 3-6 check marks for writing the word, it is considered mastered. This portion is best to do during small group time using only three to five words a week.

Coding: Yellow - Countdown, Orange - Blast, Red - FastBridge, (Letter)- F&P Benchmark book

	Q1 Read	Q1 Write	Q2 Read	Q2 Write	Q3 Read	Q3 Write	Q4 Read	Q4 Write
love (A)								
with (B)								
little (D) *								
what (D) *								
our (D)								
write (D)								
help (D)								
from (E)								
have (E)								
said (E)								

but (E) *								
want (E)								
after (E)								
their (E)								
	Q1 Read	Q1 Write	Q2 Read	Q2 Write	Q3 Read	Q3 Write	Q4 Read	Q4 Write
big (E)								
them (E)								
very (E)								
time (E)								
your (E)								
one (F) *								
new (F)								
mothe r (F)								
don't (F)								
about (G)								
just (G)								
over (G)								
somet hing (G)								
can't (G)								

fish (G)								
books (G)								
much (G)								
away (H)								
because (H)								
were (H)								
here (H)								
going (H)								
room (H)								
sleep (H)								
there * (I)								
	Q1 Read	Q1 Write	Q2 Read	Q2 Write	Q3 Read	Q3 Write	Q4 Read	Q4 Write
that (I)								
down * (I)								
when (I)								
back (I)								
cat (I)								
take (I)								
anythi ng (I)								
under								

(I)								
use (I)								
place (I)								
stay (I)								
where (J)								
any (J)								
ride (J)								
across (J)								
dog (J)								
home (J)								
door (J)								
make * (K)								
who * (K)								
could (K)								
know (K)								
five (K)								
three (K)								
world (K)								
	Q1 Read	Q1 Write	Q2 Read	Q2 Write	Q3 Read	Q3 Write	Q4 Read	Q4 Write
dad (K)								
almost (K)								

top (K)								
let (K)								
sky (K)								
two								
good								
came								
into								
before								
give								
both								
than								
been								
I'm								
four								
able								
bad								
today								
week								
bus								
year								
tell								
hide								
become								
	Q1 Read	Q1 Write	Q2 Read	Q2 Write	Q3 Read	Q3 Write	Q4 Read	Q4 Write

end								
behind								
why								
car								
city								
fast								
hill								
name								
paper								
rain								
fun								

APPENDIX E

Name _____

Pizza Reading Fluency Activity!

Directions: Students roll a dice and whatever number they get, they must read the sentence that goes with it. :)



I love cheese pizza.



I LOVE CHEESE PIZZA!



I love cheese pizza?



I. Love. Cheese. Pizza.



I. Love. CHEESE PIZZA!!



I love? Cheese, pizza.

APPENDIX F

November Data:

Level	Reading Level	Sight Words	Phonics
On- Level	5/18	7/18	6/18
Approaching	12/18	7/18	12/17
Above	1/18	4/18	
On or above grade level:	33%	61%	33%

January Data:

Level	Reading Level	Sight Words	Phonics
On- Level	8/18	1/18	7/18
Approaching	8/18	7/18	11/18
Above	2/18	9/18	
On or above grade level:	56% 23% growth	61% 0% growth from Approaching	38% 5% growth

March Data:

Level	Reading Level	Sight Words	Phonics
On- Level	7/17	2/17	10/17
Approaching	7/17	6/17	7/17
Above	3/17	9/17	
On or above grade level:	59% 3% growth	65% 4% growth	59% 21% growth