

**An Investigation of Teacher Training and Perceptions
Regarding Reading Assessment with Elementary Students**

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Running Head: Perceptions

Abstract

1. This purpose of this investigation was to examine the level of training and perceptions regarding reading assessment by elementary teachers in a suburban school district. The teachers were given an on-line survey to complete in the spring of 2011. While the response rate to the survey was fairly low, the teachers who did respond indicated that they did have some training in reading assessment and that they use the reading assessments in a meaningful way to help guide instruction. The results indicated that almost 70% of the participating teachers did have a specific class on assessment in their teacher preparation program (undergraduate or graduate). Eighty-one percent of the participating teachers felt that current reading assessments provided them with the information needed to adequately plan for the reading instruction of their students.

Introduction

Reading is vital to all academic areas. Reading proficiency serves as a prerequisite for other academic domains, as well as overall success in daily activities and future employment (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2011). “Reading is one of the most frequently measured abilities” (Smith, 2004). Therefore, it is important to know teacher’s trainings and perceptions regarding reading assessment to help make reading instruction more beneficial. Having information on the perceptions of teachers regarding their training and their perceptions regarding reading

assessment would be beneficial in determining if more training and materials need to be provided.

Two types of reading assessments that are typically used by educators are formal assessment and informal assessment. “Formal assessment strategies are structured assessment procedures with specific guidelines for administration, scoring, and interpretation of results. The most common example is standardized tests” (Mcloughlin & Lewis, 2008, pg. 9). “Informal assessment procedures are used in educational assessments to determine current levels of performance, document student progress, and direct changes in the instructional program” (Mcloughlin & Lewis, 2008, pg. 10). While there has been some research on which assessment tools are the most effective for measuring reading achievement in typically achieving students (Campbell, 2001), it would be beneficial for schools to know what type of training their staff members have participated in and what materials their staff members use to assess students’ reading abilities.

“To teach reading to at-risk students and students with learning disabilities, teachers need to have positive perceptions regarding the role of systematic, explicit instruction, as well as knowledge of English language structure” (Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001, pg. 1). To test this important aspect there have been several studies completed regarding teachers’ perceptions and knowledge regarding literacy and reading instruction.

Rationale

There has been limited research conducted regarding teachers’ perceptions and training in the area of reading assessment. One of these studies found that, “both pre-service teachers and in-service teachers had positive perceptions about the role and importance of implicit, holistic

instruction in reading development” (Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001, pg. 3). In this study pre-service teachers were working as student teachers and had completed preparatory course work to major in elementary education. The in-service teachers were teachers of grades kindergarten through third and had been teaching for at least three years. This study, however, were lacking the specifics of teacher’s perceptions on the “Big 5.” The “Big 5” consists of Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness, and Alphabetic Principle.

Reading is one of the most frequently measured areas in schools (McLoughlin & Lewis, 2005). Although McLoughlin and Lewis (2005) defined assessment as, “the systematic process of gathering educationally relevant information...” (p.3), reading assessments entail more than just gathering information (Campbell, 2001). When teachers assess the reading skills of their students they are recognizing and understanding patterns in reading behaviors. These patterns assist classroom teachers in making informed decisions regarding instruction (Campbell, 2001).

Another important aspect of reading and reading assessment is the “Big 5.” “In 1997, congress asked the NICHD, along with the U.S. Department of Education, to form the National Reading Panel to review research on how children learn to read and determine which methods of teaching reading are most effective based on the research evidence.” (University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning, 2011). The “Big 5” consists of Phonemic Awareness, Alphabetic Principle, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. The following is a summary of the panel's findings:

Concept	Description	Finding
<u>Phonemic Awareness</u>	Means knowing that spoken words are made up of smaller parts called phonemes. Teaching phonemic	The panel found that children who learned to read through specific instruction in phonemic awareness

	awareness gives children a basic foundation that helps them learn to read and spell.	improved their reading skills more than those who learned without attention to phonemic awareness.
<u>Phonics Instruction</u>	Phonics teaches students about the relationship between phonemes and printed letters and explains how to use this knowledge to read and spell.	The panel found that students show marked benefits from explicit phonics instruction, from kindergarten through 6th grade.
<u>Fluency</u>	Fluency means being able to read quickly, knowing what the words are and what they mean, and properly expressing certain words - putting the right feeling, emotion, or emphasis on the right word or phrase. Teaching fluency includes guided oral reading, in which students read out loud to someone who corrects their mistakes and provides them with feedback, and independent silent reading where students read silently to themselves.	The panel found that reading fluently improved the students' abilities to recognize new words; read with greater speed, accuracy, and expression; and better understand what they read.
<u>Comprehension: Vocabulary instruction</u>	Teaches students how to recognize words and understand them.	The panel found that vocabulary instruction and repeated contact with vocabulary words is important.
<u>Comprehension: Text comprehension instruction</u>	Teaches specific plans or strategies students can use to help them understand what they are reading.	The panel identified seven ways of teaching text comprehension that helped improve reading strategies in children who didn't have learning disabilities. For instance, creating and answering questions and cooperative learning helped to improve reading outcomes.

(University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning, 2011).

A study by Nelson & Macheck (2007) investigated the perceptions of training and competence in the area of reading assessment. Data was gathered from 496 practicing school psychologists. The survey consisted mainly of items from a survey by Fish and Margolis (1988). Nearly half of those surveyed were not required to take a class specific to reading. Despite a desire to be more involved in early reading intervention, self-reported knowledge of evidence-

based reading interventions was low. A considerable portion of participants also reported low knowledge and use of research-based reading assessment techniques. Over 90% reported that more training in reading assessment and intervention would be beneficial for them as practitioners. In regards to training and perceptions of competence and knowledge in reading assessment, over 40% of the school psychologist reported their knowledge to be moderately low to low, while 43% of participants were not required to take any graduate courses that specifically covered the areas of reading assessment. Participants reported that the amount of time dedicated to assessment and intervention of reading problems was minimal. Over 80% of the sample reported the need for more training in reading assessment and reading interventions and 92% of participants suggested that more training in the area of reading would be of great assistance to school psychologists.

Another studied examined the perceptions and knowledge of early literacy instruction of general educators at two professional levels (pre-service and in-service) (Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001, pg. 1). Pre-service teachers were teachers that had completed their elementary education majors and were student teaching. There were 293 pre-service teachers who participated in this study. In-service teachers were employed by the district and were teaching kindergarten through third grade. There were 131 in-service teachers who participated in this study. “Not surprisingly, the in-service teachers were, in general, more knowledgeable than the pre-service teachers. As one would hope, both pre-service teachers and in-service teachers had positive perceptions about the role and importance of implicit, holistic instruction in reading development (Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001, p.3). This studied also found however that a number of general education teachers lack essential knowledge for teaching children who struggle to learn.

Therefore, teacher preparation and professional development programs are critical for reducing the incidence of reading failure (American Federation of Teachers, 1999).

Another study “determined what teachers believe are the most effective reading assessment practices; ones that yield significant and appropriate information about student reading growth and progress, and help teachers to plan future instruction and make critical judgments about student performance” (Campbell, 2001).” Twelve elementary schools participated in this study. A cluster sampling design was used to randomly select the participating institutions from a population of 123 neighboring elementary schools. The settings were K-6 schools classified as urban or suburban, public or private, and were located in the greater Chicago area. There were a total of 312 questionnaires distributed to the full-time K-6 teachers. One hundred and sixty-three surveys were returned for a response rate of 53 percent (Campbell, 2001). Campbell began with the questions, “What do elementary teachers think are the most effective reading assessments to determine reading proficiency and growth, and to guide future instruction?” The results indicated that teachers perceived all reading assessments as having some degree of merit. There were no assessments that were identified as being ‘not effective’ and the majority of reading assessment practices were perceived to be ‘moderately’ to ‘highly’ effective. Neither the beginning teachers nor intermediate teachers judged any of the reading assessments as being “not effective.”

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the degree of importance on current reading assessment materials by practicing teachers. This study explored the following research questions:

1. What is teachers' degree of importance about using current reading assessment materials?
2. What kinds of training, courses or in-services regarding reading assessment have teachers had and do they consider this to be enough?
3. What are teachers' present practices regarding current reading assessments?
4. What is the degree of importance teachers place on "Big 5" Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness, and Alphabetic Principle?

Methodology

Setting

The setting for this investigation was a Suburban School District in a large metropolitan area. There are six elementary schools in the district which serves 3,643 students. Participants in this investigation were contacted by email and there was no direct contact with participants.

Participants

A total of 115 Elementary-level Teachers and Interrelated/Special Education Teachers were targeted to participate in this study. The number of teachers was determined by reviewing the six school websites. This number represents all teachers in the six elementary schools but did not include related services staff such as Speech Pathologists, School Psychologist, and Instructional Coaches. All of the teachers were employed by the suburban school district in Topeka, Kansas. Teachers were not randomly selected for this study. The list of teacher names

and email addresses were created only to monitor who and who had not responded to the survey. Every effort was made to maintain the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of this information. Participants were not identified by name in the results and only the principal investigator knows the names associated with the teacher email addresses. A breakdown of teachers by building is described in Table 1.

Table 1 Potential Study Participants

Elementary School	Number of Teachers
School 1 Non-Titled School	14 Teachers and 2 Interrelated/Special Education Teachers.
School 2 Title 1 School	24 Teachers and 6 Interrelated/Special Education Teachers.
School 3 Non-Titled School	16 Teachers and 3 Interrelated/Special Education Teachers.
School 4 Non-Titled School	16 Teachers and 1 Interrelated/Special Education Teacher.
School 4 Non-Titled School	13 Teachers and 2 Interrelated/Special Education Teachers.
School 6 Non-Titled School	15 Teachers and 2 Interrelated /Special Education Teachers.

Procedures

Approval for this research was obtained by contacting the Superintendent of the school district to obtain approval for doing the research amongst staff members. A copy of the approval can be found in the appendix (Appendix A). Approval for conducting the research was also obtained after a review of the research proposal by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Washburn University. The IRB is responsible for overseeing all research involving human subjects.

A list of 15 survey questions regarding the teachers' perception and training in reading assessment were compiled and reviewed. An attempt was made to keep the number of survey questions to a minimum while at the same time addressing all the research questions. A copy of the research survey questions is included at the end of this document.

A pilot survey was sent to three teachers who serve as instructional coaches in the district and are not participants in this investigation. The purpose of the pilot survey was to determine if any changes needed to be made to the format of the survey or the survey questions before sending out the survey. These three teachers were asked to provide feedback on the questions as well as respond to the survey. Their feedback was positive and did not include any changes to the survey questions.

The teachers participating in the study were teachers and interrelated/special education teachers. Each teacher was contacted by email by the principal investigator. An initial email was provided to the participants with an introduction about the survey. "A survey research involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people, perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences, by asking them questions and tabulating their answers. The research poses a series of questions to willing participants;

summarizes their responses with percentages, frequency counts, or more sophisticated statistical indexes; and then draws inferences about a particular population from the responses of the sample” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, pg. 183-184). In order to examine these questions 112 individual consent letters were sent to teachers. The consent email was sent out individually by email. In the consent email it stated, “You can show your consent by responding to this email with a “Yes” to indicate that you are willing to participate.” Then the survey link was sent by email. The consent email was sent out a second time to those that had not indicated that they were willing to participate in the survey. The consent email was sent out a third time several weeks later to those that had not indicated that they were willing to participate in the survey. The consent email was sent out a fourth time several weeks later to those that had not indicated that they were willing to participate in the survey. Another month later the survey was closed. The survey included demographic questions (teaching position, grade level, years of experience), and several questions regarding trainings, courses, in-services, reading assessment materials, and types of assessments. Three questions gave teachers the opportunity to respond with specific assessments and training, courses and/or in-services. Of the 112 consent emails sent out 39 responded yes and only 31 completed the survey, resulting in a 27.6% response rate. The majority of respondents were classroom teachers (75%) with 19 or more years of teaching experience (31%).

Data for each research question was analyzed in aggregated form and teachers were not identified by name. Descriptive statistics was used for the data analysis.

Instruments/Materials

The instrument used to administer the survey was an on-line survey tool called Zoomerang. Zoomerang is a survey tool that has been available since 1999. Zoomerang provides a powerful, self-service alternate for accomplishing accurate comprehensive online surveys with minimal effort and cost. Data can then be analyzed by creating customized charts. The Zoomerang survey tool is available for use by school employees in the school district where the investigator is a currently a staff member. The principal investigator worked with the technology advisor in the district to enter the research survey questions into Zoomerang and to determine how the results will be obtained when the surveys are completed. Participants were provided with a link that directed them to the Zoomerang website where they were to complete the survey information.

Results

This study examined educators' training and perceptions regarding reading assessment. The present study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. What is teachers' degree of importance about using current reading assessment materials?
2. What are teachers' kinds of training, courses and/or in-services, regarding current reading assessment?
3. What are teachers' past and present practices regarding current reading assessments?
4. What is the degree of importance teachers place on Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness, and Alphabetic Principle?

Tables 2, 3 and 4 provide information on the current grade level position of the participants, the current teaching level of participants and the number of years of teaching of the

participants. The participants who responded crossed all elementary grade levels and had a range of teaching experience.

Table 2

Current Grade Level Position of Participants (Select all that apply)

<u>Position</u>	<u>Individual Responses</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Kindergarten	7	22%
First	6	19%
Second	9	28%
Third	6	19%
Fourth	8	25%
Fifth	8	25%
Sixth	8	25%

Table 3

Current Teaching Position of Participants

<u>Position</u>	<u>Individual Responses</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Classroom Teacher	24	75%

SPED Teacher	8	25%
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Table 4

Years of Teaching Experience of Participants

<u>Years</u>	<u>Individual Responses</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0-2	5	16%
3-5	2	6%
6-9	5	16%
10-13	6	19%
14-18	4	12%
19 or more	10	31%

Research question number one asked, “What is teachers’ degree of importance about using current reading assessment materials?” From the survey question, “Do you use a commercially available formal and/or informal reading assessment instrument?” Participants were given the option of listing the commercially available formal and/or informal reading assessment instruments with this question. 62% of the participants said, “Yes” and 38% said, “No.” Some of the commercially available formal and/or informal reading assessment

instruments participants used include: Core Basal Series-Houghton Mifflin, DIBLES, Silvaroli, Read Naturally, Scholastic's 3 Minute Reading Assessment, MAPS, IRI, Running Records, IRA's, PLC Assessment Guidelines, Core Reading Series, Dolch Word List, EasyCBM, Quick Phonics Screener (QPS), and Woodcock Johnson III (WJ-III). Another one of the survey questions was, "Is there a more recent edition of this classroom reading-based assessment available?" 16% said, "Yes" and 6% said, "No" and 78% said, "Don't Know." This is alarming because the most recent edition of reading-based assessments should be used to stay up to data with the validity and reliability of the assessment.

The next question in the survey was "Have you received any specific training on this classroom reading-based assessment?" Participants were given the option of listing the commercially available formal and/or informal reading assessment instruments with this question. 25% of participants said, "Yes" and 75% said, "No." Some of the participants have received specific training in Houghton Mifflin, Read Naturally, Running Records, Harcourt Brace Reading Series Assessment, DIBELS, Silvaroli, Curriculum Assessment, and Progress Monitoring. One participant responded, "I had to answer 14 and 15 to submit the survey. But, they are not accurate answers because I'm not sure what you mean by classroom reading based assessment. Are you talking about the assessment that comes with our Basal Series? Then no."

Research question number two asked "What are teachers' kinds of training, courses and/or in-services, regarding current reading assessment?" It is evident by the responses of the participants that the majority (47%) has attended between 3-5 reading trainings or in-services in the last three years. The next largest group of participants that have attended reading trainings or in-services in the last three years is between 0-2. This is more alarming because reading is

taught in every elementary classroom. Table 5 shows the number of reading trainings or in-services attended in the last three years.

Table 5

Number of Reading Trainings or In-Services Attended in the Last Three Years of Participants

<u>Number of Trainings or In-Services</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0-2	38%
3-5	47%
6-9	9%
10-13	6%
19 or more	0%

Another important aspect of the training and in-services are how beneficial the materials are being presented. Participants ranked the training sessions or in-services from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The majority of the teachers found the trainings and in-services to be some-what beneficial. Table 6 shows how beneficial the training sessions or in-services were to the participants.

Table 6

How Beneficial Were the Training Sessions or In-Services to the Participants?

<u>Ranking</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
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1=low	6%
2	3%
3	47%
4	25%
5=high	19%

One of the survey questions was “Did you have a specific class on assessment in your teacher preparation program (undergraduate or graduate)?” 69% of the participants said, “Yes” and 31% said, “No.” 31% of the 32 participants responded no which is frustrating because assessments are very beneficial to being a professional educator.

One of the survey questions was “Did you have a specific class on reading assessment in your teacher preparation program (undergraduate or graduate)?” 56% of the participants said, “Yes” and 44% said, “No.” 44% of the 32 participants said no which is frustrating because reading assessment is very beneficial to being a professional educator that plans to their students needs.

Another one of the survey questions was, “Have you had a specific training within the district or attended an in-service on reading assessment within the last three years?” 53% of the participants said, “Yes” and 47% said, “No.” Some of the trainings within the district or in-services participants have attended for specific training on reading assessment within the last three years were DIBELS, Common Assessments, Informal Reading Assessments, Professional Learning Community (PLC) Meetings, Guided Reading, Core Reading Series, and Read

Naturally. The fact that 47% of teachers responded no to have a specific training within the district or attended an in-service on reading assessment within the last three years is shocking because assessments are continuously changing and so are the abilities of students.

Informal and formal reading assessments are important in being an excellent professional educator in planning to your individual student needs. One of the survey questions was, “Do you feel that you have had enough training in formal reading assessments (i.e. DIBELS)?” 66% said, “Yes” and 34% said, “No.” Another one of the survey questions was, “Do you feel that you have had enough training in administering informal reading assessments (i.e. IRI’s and/or Silvaroli Reading Inventory)?” 56% said, “Yes” and 44% said, “No.” Additionally, the survey had a question that asked, “Do you know the difference between formal reading assessments and informal reading assessments?” 97% said, “Yes” and 3% said, “No.”

Research questions number three is, “What are teachers’ past and present practices regarding current reading assessments?”

The investigator felt it was important to know teacher’s opinions of how important the “Big 5” (Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness & Alphabetic Principle) are in assessing reading to determine teachers’ past and present practices regarding current reading assessment. The participants were asked to rank each component of the “Big 5” from 4 (high) and 1 (low). It is very encouraging that none of the participants ranked any of the five components as low. Table 7 shows participants’ opinions of how important these areas are in assessing reading.

Table 7

Participants Opinion of How Important the Big 5 are in Assessing Reading

<u>The Big Five</u>	<u>4(high)</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1(low)</u>
<u>Vocabulary</u>	75%	19%	6%	0%
<u>Fluency</u>	69%	28%	3%	0%
<u>Comprehension</u>	97%	3%	0%	0%
<u>Phonemic Awareness</u>	66%	25%	9%	0%
<u>Alphabetic Principle</u>	59%	28%	12%	0%

As students' abilities are continuously changing it is important to know how often participants completed classroom-based reading assessments. Participants were asked how often they gave classroom-based reading assessments. Table 8 shows how often participants completed classroom-based reading assessments. The majority of the participants were giving their students classroom-based reading assessments weekly or monthly.

Table 8

How Often Participants Complete Classroom-Based Reading Assessments

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Daily	6%
Weekly	34%
Monthly	34%

Quarterly 25%

Another one of the survey questions was “Do you feel that current reading assessments provide you with the information needed to adequately plan for the reading instruction of your students?” 81% said, “Yes” and 19% said, “No.”

Research question number five asked “What is the degree of importance teachers place on Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness, and Alphabetic Principle? The participants were asked to rank each component of the “Big 5” from 4 (high) and 1 (low). It is very encouraging that none of the participants ranked any of the five components as low. Table 9 shows the opinions of participants on how important the “Big 5” is in assessing reading.

Table 9

Participants Opinion of How Important the “Big 5” are in Assessing Reading

<u>The Big Five</u>	<u>4(high)</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1(low)</u>
<u>Vocabulary</u>	75%	19%	6%	0%
<u>Fluency</u>	69%	28%	3%	0%
<u>Comprehension</u>	97%	3%	0%	0%
<u>Phonemic Awareness</u>	66%	25%	9%	0%
<u>Alphabetic Principle</u>	59%	28%	12%	0%

Overall Findings

2. More general education classroom teachers (75%) than special education teachers (25%) answered the survey questions.
3. 31% of the participating teachers have been teaching for 19 years or more.
4. 62% of the participating teachers used commercially available formal and/or informal reading assessment instruments.
5. Over 75% of the participating teachers did not know if there was a more recent edition of the classroom reading assessment instrument.
6. Three-fourths of the participating teachers received specific training in the classroom reading-based assessment they use.
7. Almost half of the participating teachers have attended 3-5 reading trainings or in-services in the last three years.
8. Only 19% of the participating teachers found the training sessions or in-services to be highly beneficial.
9. Almost 70% of the participating teacher did have a specific class on assessment in their teacher preparation program (undergraduate or graduate).
10. A little over 50% of the participating teachers had a specific class on reading assessment in their teacher preparation program (undergraduate or graduate).
11. 53% of the participating teachers have had specific training within the district or attended an in-service on reading assessment within the last three years.
12. Almost 70% of the participating teachers felt that they have had enough training in formal reading assessments.

13. 10% less, 56%, of the participating teachers feel that they have had enough training in administering informal reading assessments.
14. 97% of the participating teachers knew the difference between formal reading assessments and informal reading assessments.
15. The participating teachers ranked how important the “Big 5” is in assessing reading in order from most important to least important: Comprehension, Vocabulary, Fluency, Phonemic Awareness, and Alphabetic Principal.
16. The majority of the participating teachers completed classroom-based reading assessment weekly or monthly.
17. 81% of participating teachers felt that current reading assessments provided them with the information needed to adequately plan for the reading instruction of their students.

Discussion

The first research question posed was: What is teachers’ degree of importance about using current reading assessment materials?”

Three questions directly related to the importance of using current reading assessment materials. The first survey question chosen was: “Do you use a commercially available formal and/or informal reading assessment instrument?” 62% of the participating teachers said yes and 38% said no. This was an open response question for the participants to provide the name of the formal and/or informal reading assessment instruments. Some of the commercially available formal and/or informal reading assessment instruments participants use are, Core Basal Series-Houghton Mifflin, DIBLES, Silvaroli, Read Naturally, Scholastic’s 3 Minute Reading Assessment, MAPS, IRI, Running Records, IRA’s, PLC Assessment Guidelines, Core Reading

Series, Dolch Word List, EasyCBM, Quick Phonics Screener (QPS), and Woodcock Johnson III (WJ-III). Another survey question chosen was: “Is there a more recent edition of this classroom reading-based assessment available?” There were 78% of the participants that said they don’t know, 16% that said yes, and 6% that said no. The third question chosen was: “Have you received any specific training in this classroom reading-based assessment?” 25% of participants said, “Yes” and 75% said, “No.” This question also, allowed participants to provide the names of specific trainings in classroom reading-based assessments they currently use. Some of the participants have received specific training in, Houghton Mifflin, Read Naturally, Running Records, Harcourt Brace Reading Series Assessment, DIBELS, Silvaroli, Curriculum Assessment, and Progress Monitoring. One participant responded, “I had to answer 14 and 15 to submit the survey. But, they are not accurate answers because I’m not sure what you mean by classroom reading based assessment. Are you talking about the assessment that comes with our Basal Series? Then no.”

The data from this study can be compared to the results of other studies. One study examining educators’ perceptions of training and competence in the area of reading assessment was completed. Data was gathered from 496 practicing school psychologists. The study was published in, “School Psychology Review,” in 2007. The survey consisted mainly of items from a survey by Fish and Margolis (1988), but items were added based on research advances in the field. Nearly half of those surveyed were not required to take a class specific to reading. Despite a desire to be more involved in early reading intervention, self-reported knowledge of evidence-based reading interventions was low. A considerable portion of participants also reported low knowledge and use of research-based reading assessment techniques. Over 90% reported that more training in reading assessment and intervention would be beneficial for them as

practitioners. Results are discussed relative to historical roles, current service delivery reformulations, and the school psychologist's role in future professional activities, particularly within a response to intervention model (Nelson & Macheck, 2007). Nelson and Macheck (2007) examined school psychologists' perceptions regarding training, practice and competence in reading assessment and intervention. Four hundred and ninety-six participants responded to the 42 item survey. In regards to training and perceptions of competence and knowledge in reading assessment, over 40% of the school psychologists reported their knowledge to be moderately low to low, while 43% of participants were not required to take any graduate courses that specifically covered the areas of reading assessment. Participants reported that the amount of time dedicated to assessment and intervention of reading problems was minimal. Over 80% of the sample reported the need for more training in reading assessment and reading interventions and 92% of participants suggested that more training in the area of reading would be of great assistance to school psychologist.

Another studied was completed to, "examine the perceptions and knowledge of early literacy instruction of general educators at two professional levels (pre-service and in-service) (Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001, pg. 1). Pre-service teachers were students that had completed their elementary education majors and were student teaching. "Not surprisingly, the in-service teachers were, in general, more knowledgeable than the pre-service teachers. As one would hope, both pre-service teachers and in-service teachers had positive perceptions about the role and importance of implicit, holistic instruction in reading development"(Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001, p.3).

The second research question posed was: What kinds of training, courses or in-services regarding reading assessment have teachers had and do they consider this to be enough?

There were seven questions that relate directly to the kinds of trainings, courses or in-services regarding reading assessment that teachers have had and do they consider them to be enough. The first question chosen was: “Number of reading trainings or in-services attended in the last three years.” There were 5 different categories to pick from. The categories were 0-2 trainings or in-services, 3-5 trainings or in-services, 6-9 trainings or in-services, 10-13 trainings or in-services, and 19 or more trainings or in-services. 38% of the participating teachers have attended 0-2 trainings or in-services, 47% have attended 3-5 trainings or in-services, 9% have attended 6-9 trainings or in-services, 6% have attended 10-13 trainings or in-services, and 0% have attended 19 or more trainings or in-services. The next question chosen was: “In general, how beneficial were the training sessions or in-services?” These answers were ranked with 1 being low and 5 being high. The lowest ranking, one, received 6% of the participant’s votes, 2 received 3%, 3 received 47%, 4 received 25%, and 5, the highest, received 19%. The third question chosen was, “Did you have a specific class on assessment in your teacher preparation program (undergraduate or graduate)?” Fortunately, 69% of the participating teachers did take a specific class on assessment in their teacher preparation program. The other 31% did not take a specific class on assessment in their teacher preparation program. Another question chosen was, “Did you have a specific class on reading assessment in your teacher preparation program (undergraduate or graduate)?” There were 56% of the participants that had taken a class on reading assessment in their teacher preparation program and 44% that had not taken a class on reading assessment in their teacher preparation program. The next question chosen was: “Have you had a specific training within the district or attended an in-service on reading assessment within the last three years?” 53% of the participating teachers have had a specific training within the district or attended an in-service on reading assessment within the last three years. The other

47% have not had a specific training within the district or attended an in-service on reading assessment within the last three years. Some of the trainings within the district or in-services participants have attended for specific training on reading assessment within the last three years were, DIBELS, Common Assessments, Informal Reading Assessments, Professional Learning Community (PLC) Meetings, Guided Reading, Core Reading Series, and Read Naturally. The last two questions chosen were: “Do you feel that you have had enough training in formal reading assessment and do you feel that you have had enough training in informal reading assessment?” 66% of participants feel they have enough training in formal reading assessment and 56% in informal reading assessment. 34% of participants feel they have not had enough training in informal reading assessment and 44% in informal reading assessment.

The findings in this study suggest that the participants did have a significant amount of training and/or attended in-services regarding reading assessments. However, some participants did not know the difference between formal and informal assessments.

The third research question posed was: What are teachers’ present practices regarding current reading assessments? There were three questions that directly relate to this question. The first question chosen was: “In your opinion how important is each of the following (Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness, and Alphabetic Principal) in assessing reading (1=low, 4=high)?” They were ranked in the following order, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, phonemic awareness, and alphabetic principal. None of the “Big 5” had a low ranking of 1. The next question chosen was: “How often do you complete classroom-based reading assessments?” Six percent of the participating teachers performed classroom-based reading assessments daily. 34% of the participating teachers perform classroom-based reading assessments weekly and monthly. Quarterly 25% of the participating teachers perform

classroom-based reading assessments. The last question chosen was: “Do you feel that current reading assessments provide you with the information needed to adequately plan for the reading instruction of your students?” 81% of teachers reported that current reading assessments provide them with the information needed to adequately plan for reading instruction of their students.

From the findings it is apparent that teachers’ present practices are beneficial. The majority of the teachers are assessing student weekly and monthly. The materials they collect from these assessments are used to create lessons for the students.

The fourth research question posed was: What is the degree of importance teachers place on Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness, and Alphabetic Principle?

There was one question that related to this research questions. The question chosen was: “In your opinion how important is each of the following (Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness, and Alphabetic Principal) in assessing reading (1=low, 4=high)?” They were ranked in the following order, Comprehension, Vocabulary, Fluency, Phonemic awareness, and Alphabetic Principle. None of the “Big 5” had a low ranking of 1. However, the importance of the “Big 5” is different for every grade level.

In general, the results of this investigation are consistent with the results of other studies. Teachers do feel that reading assessments are important and use this information to make decisions regarding instruction. From the data collected in this investigation, it appears, teachers have been provided a significant amount of training and/or in-services during their teacher preparation courses, or through their work in the schools. It is evident from the responses on several questions that more training could be provided within the schools on the basics of formal and informal assessments. Also, more procedures that go along with formal and informal

assessments need to be discussed. These data also shows that the participating teachers see the importance in assessing reading with the “Big 5.” However, depending on the grade you are teaching the significance of each domain could change drastically.

Limitations

The first, and most significant, limitation of the study relates to the response rate of the survey questions. Only 32 of the potential 112 participants completed the survey, resulting in 27.6% response rate. The majority of respondents were classroom teachers (75%) with 19 or more years of teaching experience (31%). The limited sample size reduces the generalizability of the results. The initial email was sent out at the end of the year and the final email was sent out the beginning of the year. These are two times that tend to be busy for teachers. To increase the return rate, the survey should have been sent out closer to the middle of the year.

If this research were conducted again, it would be beneficial to have each survey questions data categorized by years of experience and whether or not teachers were serving in general education or special education. This would be helpful in analyzing how newer teachers or more experienced teachers answered each survey question.

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Survey Questions

Current grade level you are teaching _____

Regular Classroom Teacher _____ Special Education Teacher _____

Years of teaching experience:

__0-2 __3-5 __6-9 __10-13 __14-18 __19 or more

Did you have a specific class on assessment in your teacher preparation program? __Y or __N

Did you have a specific class on reading assessment in your teacher preparation program? __Y or __N

Have you had a specific training within the district or attended an in-service on reading assessment within the last 3 years? __Y or __N If so, what training?

Number of trainings or inservices attended in the last three years _____

How beneficial were the training sessions or inservices? 1 2 3 4 5 (1 is low; five is high)

Do you know the difference between formal reading assessments and informal reading assessments?
__Y __N

Do you feel that you have had enough training in formal reading assessments (i.e. DIBELS)? __Y or
__N

Do you feel that you have had enough training in giving informal reading assessments (i.e. IRI's and/or
Silvaroli Reading Inventory)? __Y __N

Do you feel that you have had enough training in analyzing informal reading assessments (i.e. IRI's
and/or Silvaroli Reading Inventory)? __Y __N

In your opinion how important is each of the following in assessing reading (4 high, 1 low)?

Vocabulary 4, 3, 2, 1

Fluency 4, 3, 2, 1

Comprehension 4, 3, 2, 1

Phonemic Awareness 4, 3, 2, 1

Alphabetic Principle 4, 3, 2, 1

Do you use a commercially available formal and/or informal reading assessment instrument? Y or N

If yes, which do you use?

How often do you complete classroom -based reading assessments? daily weekly monthly quarterly

If so, which do you use?

Have you received any specific training in this assessment? Y N

Is there a more recent edition of this assessment available? Y N Don't Know

Do you feel that current reading assessments provide you with the information needed to adequately plan for the instruction of your students? Y N