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A Comprehensive Evaluation of the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project Balanced Literacy Instructional Framework and the Reading Proficiency of Economically Disadvantaged Students

LaTonya Elise Gaines-Montgomery

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A Comprehensive Evaluation of the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project
Balanced Literacy Instructional Framework and the Reading Proficiency of Economically
Disadvantaged Students

By
LaTonya Gaines-Montgomery

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by LaTonya Gaines-Montgomery under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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I dedicate this doctoral study to God, my husband, Jeremy and my children Jeniah and Jeremy Jr., whose support, inspiration, and encouragement throughout the years have challenged me to stretch my faith in ways I could have never imagined. As I completed this research study I was reminded of a quote that was displayed in the Gardner-Webb University atrium for several years that resonated with my focus. "What you are is God's gift to you, what you become is your gift to God" by Hans Urs von Balthasar. I pray that my work from this moment forth pleases God.

Abstract

A Comprehensive Evaluation of the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project Balanced Literacy Instructional Framework and the Reading Proficiency of Economically Disadvantaged Students. Gaines-Montgomery, LaTonya, 2017: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Balanced Literacy/Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project/Program Evaluation/Reading/Children of Poverty/Economically Disadvantaged Students/CIPP Evaluation Model/Reading Proficiency/Student Achievement

This dissertation was designed to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) and its impact on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. TCRWP was implemented at two high poverty schools (over 80% economically disadvantaged students) in southeastern North Carolina. Stufflebeam's (2003) revised CIPP evaluation model was used to evaluate the program along with a convergent mixed-methods design.

The data analysis revealed that TCRWP as well as the schools' strategic plans were aligned to the schools' assessed needs. Additionally, the analysis showed that implementation of TCRWP aligned to the schools' initial implementation designs. The study utilized a paired samples *t* test between all fourth and fifth grade students' predicted scores and corresponding actual scores after implementation to determine if a statistically significant difference existed. Both study sites had a statistically significant difference between students' predicted and actual reading scores after the first year of implementation. Further, both study sites had a statistically significant difference in fifth grade but did not have a statistically significant difference in fourth grade after the second year of implementation.

Although the findings of the current study suggest that TCRWP shows promise with economically disadvantaged students, the data analysis identified goals and professional development for working with specific subgroups of students as a possible area of improvement. Additionally, teacher and leadership turnover and training for new hires should be considered during the planning phase of TCRWP implementation. These findings can be used by educational leaders in program selection, strategic planning, and implementation of TCRWP and other literacy instructional frameworks.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Nature of the Problem

Possessing the ability to read is a fundamental skill that is necessary for success in school and daily life. “Children who fail to learn to read will surely fail to reach their full potential” (Hall & Moats, 1999, p. 6). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2014), only 35% of fourth-grade students in the United States were proficient or above proficient in reading based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test given in 2013. Even more disturbing is the fact that the 2009 and 2011 NAEP test results showed that only 33% and 34% respectively of fourth-grade students were proficient or above in reading. These alarming statistics show that our nation is in a reading crisis. This ghastly and dismal statistic is one that is concerning to all stakeholders in education. Even more concerning is the huge disparity in the reading proficiency of African-American and Hispanic students versus their Caucasian counterparts. NAEP data show that 52% of Caucasian students were at or above proficient in reading in contrast to their African-American and Hispanic peers with 15% and 24% respectively. Additionally, in 2011 there was an average 29 point gap nationally between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students who were proficient or above in fourth-grade reading (NCES, 2011).

The reading crisis is not just a problem nationally; it is a local and state issue as well. The achievement gap in North Carolina based on the NAEP reading test results revealed a 23-point scale score gap between African-American and Caucasian students. Moreover, this assessment also showed a 22-point scale score gap between Hispanic and Caucasian students. Likewise, economically disadvantaged students in North Carolina also averaged a score that was 27 scale score points lower than non-economically

disadvantaged students (NCES, n.d.).

As a result, there is a persistent need for research, development, and implementation of effective literacy instruction for economically disadvantaged elementary school students. The United States Department of Education has worked with Local Education Agencies (LEAs) for many years to find initiatives and reforms to narrow the achievement gap. In 1997, Congress, along with the Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) with consultation from the Secretary of Education, formed a panel that would research and provide a report on effective reading instruction. This panel was given the task of collecting and analyzing the research, drawing conclusions, and identifying strategies to assist schools with providing more effective literacy instruction. Thus, the National Reading Panel was formed and *The Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read* was published (Lonigan, & Shanahan, 2009).

The National Reading Panel report posited that effective reading instruction includes “phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies” (National Institute of Child Health & Human Development, 2000, pp. 1-2). This research became part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and was included in the Reading First legislation. This legislation provided funding to assist State Education Agencies (SEAs) with increasing student reading proficiency to at or above grade level by the end of third grade (Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008). The Reading First School Improvement grant provided a \$1 billion per year award for 5 years to SEAs that presented proposals with the highest potential to raise student achievement and effective reading instruction implementation in the classroom (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.b). SEAs had to ensure that materials,

practices, and professional development were used for scientifically research-based reading intervention and instruction. Additionally, the Reading First School Improvement grant required the inclusion of the five components of effective reading instruction as outlined by the National Reading Panel's Report. These components which were phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension were required mandates to receive the Reading First funding. A team of researchers formed the Reading First Impact Study Team to conduct "a congressionally mandated evaluation of the federal government's \$1.0 billion-per-year initiative" (Gamse et al., 2008, p. xv). The evaluation results showed that there was a positive statistically significant impact on the amount of time spent on the five essential components of effective reading instruction and a statistically significant influence on instructional practice; however, there was no statistically significant impact on student reading comprehension (Gamse et al., 2008). The sample used in this study was inclusive of 97.6% of schools eligible for free and reduced price lunch meals. This is significant considering that historically students who were eligible for free and reduced priced meals have had substantially lower academic performance, as these students are challenged by factors that impede their academic achievement.

Poverty and the effects of poverty on student academic performance have plagued our national education system for many years. Defining poverty is very difficult as there are varying levels of poverty, and previous publications regarding poverty used varying operational definitions to support a specific purpose. There are numerous studies that demonstrate relationships between poverty and other variables qualitatively; however, there is still not a clear definition of poverty (Milner, 2013). The Current Population Survey 2013, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement report stated there were

80,529 total families living below the poverty rate in 2011 and 80,944 families living below the poverty rate in the United States in 2012. Additionally, Aud et al. (2013) reported that “approximately 21% of school-age children in the United States were in families living in poverty” (p. 26).

Over the years in research, poverty has been synonymous with terms such as impoverished, economically disadvantaged, and low socioeconomic status. These terms all indicate a level of financial deficit indicative of other interrelated challenges faced by those, including children, who are encumbered in this way of life. Economically disadvantaged children are more likely than peers of higher socioeconomic status to start school with poor readiness skills and low achievement (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Burchinal, Roberts, Zeisel, & Rowley, 2008; Gutman, Sameroff, & Cole, 2003; Heckman, 2006; Luster & McAdoo, 1996). This is mainly because often economically disadvantaged children are born into environments that are characterized by social disorganization and other factors that negatively impact their cognitive development. These factors include prenatal disadvantages; residential instability; and lack of educational resources and parental attention as well as attendance in poor quality, if any, preschool centers (Blazer, 2009). The American Association of School Administrators (2008) stated that “addressing each nonschool factor is critical to eliminating the achievement gap” (p.2) that exists between economically disadvantaged students and their peers (Blazer, 2009). The federal government under the presidency of President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Office of Education, 1969). This legislation included a program called Title I which provides funding to schools to specifically address the educational needs of impoverished children and to assist financially with addressing these nonschool factors

that impact the students and their achievement in school (Office of Education, 1969). The ESEA Title I program enabled low-income families the opportunity to access educational opportunities and resources they may not have otherwise been able to access. Schools with a student population of 40% or more who receive free or reduced meal prices are Title I schools and subsequently receive the additional funding under this legislation. The quantity of Title I schools in the United States has increased from 23,563 in 2002 to 53,684 in 2014 (NCES, 2015). These schools are receiving funds to implement research-based instruction in an effort to improve student achievement, particularly the achievement of impoverished students.

Funding public education can be a copious and costly task; but according to Jones (2003), the problems associated with poverty include illness, illiteracy, and homelessness and can have an equally taxing fiscal effect. Cree, Kay, and Steward (2012) stated that there are societal costs associated with illiteracy including a loss of nearly \$40 billion annually by U.S. companies, and a \$224 billion-dollar cost to tax payers for welfare payments, crime, job incompetence, lost taxes, and remedial education. For this reason and others, society cannot afford to continue the cycle of illiteracy and allow more generations of illiterate students to progress through school, drop out of school, and result in an increase in the aforementioned societal cost.

Poverty and other factors associated with poverty have been linked in several studies to ethnicity and race. Table 1 illustrates Munin's (2012) statement that in an equitable society, if Whites constitute 65% of the total population, they should also make up 65% of those in the low-income bracket. But this group is actually 23.6 percentage points lower in representation in the low-income family category. Conversely, Blacks make up a larger percentage than their overall size

in the low-income population by 9.8 percentage points. The same is true for Hispanics, who constitute a greater share of the low-income group compared to their population size by 14.6 percentage points. (pp. 4-5)

Table 1

Race and Low-Income Family Percentages

Race	Percentage of Low-Income Families	Percentage of U.S. Population
White	42	65.6
Black	22	12.2
Hispanic/Brown	30	15.4
Total percentage for Black and Brown	52	27.6

Note. Munin (2012); Simms, Fortuny, and Henderson (2009).

This data collection report indicates an inequitable percentage level of impoverished minority families in the United States. Consequently, within these families are students who attend schools in the local communities where negative external factors impact their daily academic performance. Milner (2013) also stated that the

educational attainment level matters in terms of the amount of money most people earn and consequently their ability to acquire material possessions. The home and quite frankly school district parents are able to afford for their children, because property taxes fund school systems across the United States, can be correlated with the buyers' (parents) educational level. (p. 4)

That is to say that students in each community or municipality are divided into a two-class system, the have and the have nots. Within these areas, students are geographically grouped and are therefore subject to attend schools that are composed of students who have similar demographics. In other words, the process of schooling is largely completed by minority and economically disadvantaged students being grouped together in schools, and their counterparts who are not economically disadvantaged being grouped together in

schools. Saporito and Sohoni (2007) found that

unlike the typical white child who attends a public school in which most of the children are above the poverty line, the typical black or Hispanic child attends a public school in which most of the children are below the poverty line. (p. 3)

Concentrated schools of poverty are usually associated with minority underachieving students due to the likelihood of having inadequate resources, funding, and less-qualified staff (Bankston & Caldas, 1996, 1997). These underachieving students represent a significant portion of national education statistics, especially in reading. As a result, many school districts and schools have employed different reading frameworks to address the five essential components of effective reading instruction as defined by the National Reading Panel. Throughout the United States, schools have implemented many different literacy frameworks to address the academic achievement gaps in reading. One such program is the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), implemented at a small urban school in North Carolina in 2012. This school is a Title I school that had an economically disadvantaged population of approximately 86% in the school years of 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015.

TCRWP is a balanced literacy framework that includes the five components of phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension as outlined by the National Reading Panel's Report (Lonigan, & Shanahan, 2009). Balanced literacy is defined as a framework for literacy learning which includes structured classroom plans and use of activities such as read-alouds, guided reading, shared reading, and independent reading and writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The TCRWP balanced literacy framework has not been evaluated in a research study with respect to its impact on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged

students. Therefore, the current study was established to evaluate the effectiveness of this reading framework based on the student achievement data collection and analysis for economically disadvantaged students.

This program includes a minimum 2-hour literacy block which includes a 1-hour reading workshop and 1-hour writing workshop. These main two components are fluid in that within this 2-hour timeframe, the teacher and students may move in and out of each component seamlessly through integration. The reading workshop block of time includes word study (phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary components), guided reading, interactive read-alouds, independent reading, and shared reading (reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension). The writing workshop block includes a mentor text, response to text, guided writing, and independent writing (TCRWP, n.d.a).

The criterion for evaluating the TCRWP framework is based on student proficiency on state assessments of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts (ELA), teacher and principal interviews, and an analysis of quantitative survey data. This study evaluated the effectiveness of TCRWP implemented at a school that serves a high population of students who are economically disadvantaged. To fulfill the purpose of the study, Stufflebeam's (2003) revised Context Input Process and Product (CIPP) design was employed as the evaluative tool. The CIPP model encompasses four components within the evaluation including context, input, process, and product. This program evaluation engaged all four components in an effort to determine the value of this program as a reading instructional model for economically disadvantaged students.

Impact of the problem. At the time of the current study, TCRWP lacked a substantial amount of qualitative and quantitative research data that validates its value as an effective reading instructional model specifically for economically disadvantaged

children. The lack of research on this instructional framework diminishes its credibility and generates uncertainty of impact on student achievement by educational systems that are employing this instructional model, especially those implementing the framework with high populations of economically disadvantaged students. There are some studies on balanced literacy frameworks and diverse student populations, but the focus of many of those studies are other balanced literacy programs that include the Four Block literacy model. The Four Block literacy model is framework that incorporates the different components of beginning reading daily (Cunningham & Hall, 1998). The literacy components used in the Four Block literacy framework include the following: Guided Reading, Self-Selected Reading, Writing, and Working with Words (Cunningham & Hall, 1998). An action research study was conducted on the Four Block instructional framework and student achievement in reading. A noteworthy point from that study is that schools with a high population of minority and economically disadvantaged students did not perform as well as their non-economically disadvantaged peers after the intervention of the balanced literacy framework (Johnson, Dunbar, & Roach, 2003).

Soto Kile (2006) studied balanced literacy with five essential components of balanced literacy in Title I schools and found that there were varying results from school to school with the implementation of balanced literacy. Some sites in that study saw a decrease in the first year of implementation with significant gains after subsequent years of implementation, and some sites saw immediate increase after implementation. Further, these studies did not yield statistically significant results that were solely based on the performance of economically disadvantaged students.

The current study will yield qualitative and quantitative data after being evaluated to glean the impact of TCRWP on the reading achievement of economically

disadvantaged children. “Evaluation’s most important purpose is not to prove but to improve” (Stufflebeam, 2004, p. 262), and this study will add to the body of work on literacy frameworks which is valued by all educational stakeholders, especially those who work with economically disadvantaged students.

Background of the Problem

Setting of the problem. This study includes two urban Title I schools located in a school district in southeastern North Carolina. School A is an urban prekindergarten through fifth grade traditional public school located in southeastern North Carolina. This school offers traditional curriculum and instruction in mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, and the arts. The school made expected growth in the North Carolina accountability model program in 2011-2012, but did not meet the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) target goals under NCLB (2002) guidelines. The kindergarten through fifth grade TCRWP was implemented in August 2013 as School A’s sole literacy instructional model to address these deficiencies. School B is also a prekindergarten through fifth grade traditional urban public school and offers traditional curriculum and instruction in mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, and the arts. The school made high growth in the North Carolina accountability model program in the 2011-2012 school year; but dissimilar to School A, School B exceeded the AMOs target goals under NCLB (2002) guidelines in 2013-2014 and met their targets in 2014-2015. Additionally, School B was recognized as a Title I reward school in 2013-2014 by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Reward school selection is based on assessment data from each school year and is defined by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as

“highest-performing school” which is a school among the top ten percent of Title

I schools in the State that have the highest absolute performance over a number of years for the all students group and for all subgroups on the statewide assessments. Also, defined as a high-progress school which is a school among the ten percent of Title I schools in the State that are making the most progress in improving the performance of the all students group over a number of years on the statewide assessments. (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.b, para. 1)

The kindergarten through fifth grade TCRWP was implemented in August 2013 as School B's sole literacy instructional model.

This study was designed to collect and analyze student growth data using predicted student reading data from the North Carolina Department of Education's Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) and actual student reading data from the required North Carolina READY end-of-grade (EOG) standardized reading test. Third-grade students were not included in the data collection due to the fact that the EVAAS system uses a predictive model that requires a "minimum of 3 prior test scores is required for each student" and third-grade students have two prior test scores which include the third-grade beginning-of-grade (BOG) test score and the third-grade EOG test score (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.k, sl. 17). Therefore, fourth and fifth grade predicted and actual student reading data from the 2013-2014 and the 2014-2015 school years were collected as a part of this four component CIPP, comprehensive evaluation of TCRWP.

The CIPP evaluation model allowed for a full examination of the implementation and outcomes of TCRWP. The results from this study rendered a comprehensive evaluation of this instructional model which gave insight to the areas for improvement and strengths of the program, especially regarding the effectiveness with economically

disadvantaged students.

Staff classification. School A is comprised of 55 certified instructional staff members including 41 certified teachers, 10 paraprofessionals, one instructional support coach, one assistant principal, and one principal. Additionally, 39% of the certified teachers hold advanced degrees and 29% hold National Board certification. The paraprofessionals at this site are also considered part of the instructional staff, and 50% of the paraprofessionals have a bachelor's degree or equivalent.

During the 2 years of TCRWP implementation, there were some staffing changes in School A that are noteworthy. Prior to the 2014-2015 school year, there was a slight transition in the principal role. The school was co-led by two principals, with the current principal continuing to lead with an additional principal counterpart. Also during the 2012-2013 school year, this site had two instructional support staff members (instructional coaches); however, at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, the instructional support personnel was reduced to one. There was also a small amount of turnover as evidenced by the small decrease in the percentage of experienced teachers.

Table 2 illustrates years of experience for teachers and the changes in years of experience during the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015 school years at School A. The most frequent range of experience at this site for the most part was 0-3 years with the exception of the 2013-2014 school year where there were more teachers 4-9 years of experience. This was most likely because the teachers with 0-3 years of experience after teaching their third full year moved to the 4-9 years of experience category (see Table 2).

Table 2

Years of Experience School A

Years of Experience	0-3	4-9	10+
2014-2015 School Year Percentages (%)	32	41	27
2013-2014 School Year Percentages (%)	13	63	24
2012-2013 School Year Percentages (%)	20	54	26

School B is comprised of approximately 45 certified instructional staff members including 42 certified teachers, 11 paraprofessionals, three instructional support coaches, one assistant principal, and one principal. Additionally, 47% of the certified teachers hold advanced degrees and five teachers hold National Board certification. The paraprofessionals at this site are also considered part of the instructional staff and all of them are certified to work as “highly qualified” assistants in a Title I school.

There were also notable staffing changes at School B during the implementation of TCRWP in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. Prior to the 2014-2015 school year, there was a transition in the principal role. The assistant principal of the school became the principal. There was also a large amount of turnover in 2013-2014 when the school leadership changed as evidenced by the 20% teacher turnover rate in 2013-2014 and a 15% teacher turnover rate in 2014-2015.

Table 3 illustrates years of experience for teachers and the changes in years of experience during the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015 school years at School B. The most frequent range of experience at this site for the 2 earlier years was 0-3 years of experience and the 2014-2015 school year having more teachers with 4-6 years of experience. This was most likely because the teachers with 0-3 years of experience after teaching their third full year moved to the 4-9 years of experience category (see Table 3).

Table 3

Years of Experience School B

Years of Experience	0-3	4-9	10+
2014-2015 School Year Percentages (%)	33	36	31
2013-2014 School Year Percentages (%)	39	34	27
2012-2013 School Year Percentages (%)	48	23	30

Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the highest percentage of teachers at Schools A and B being teachers with 0-10 years of experience. This aligns with the statement Gagnon and Mattingly (2012) made as they stated that the average school district has 16.8% of their students living in poverty and that

poverty is modestly, though statistically significantly, correlated with the concentration of beginning teachers in a district. In the less poor districts (top quartile), only 8.4 percent of teachers are new, while in the poorest districts (bottom quartile), 11.0 percent are new. (p. 2)

Student demographics. School A is an urban large size elementary school in North Carolina that has approximately 700 students in Grades Prekindergarten through 5. This site has an historically high population of economically disadvantaged students and minority students and has maintained similar student demographics for several years. As of the 2014-2015 school year, this population is inclusive of 86% economically disadvantaged students, with the 2 preceding years being between 84% and 86%. Additionally, during the 2014-2015 school year, the African-American student population was 64%, the Hispanic population was 24%, and the Caucasian population was 10%, with the remaining 2% of the population consisting of other races including multiracial students. School B is an urban medium size elementary school in North Carolina that has approximately 540 students in Grades Prekindergarten through 5. This

site has an historically high population of economically disadvantaged students and minority students and has maintained similar student demographics for several years. As of the 2014-2015 school year, this population is inclusive of 81.8% economically disadvantaged students, with the 2 preceding years being between 80% and 81.8%. Additionally, during the 2014-2015 school, year the African-American student population was 35%, the Hispanic population was 50%, and the Caucasian population was 10%, with the remaining 5% of the population consisting of other races including multiracial students.

School A and School B both have a large minority population and a high free and reduced meal population. Additionally, although Schools A and B have large minority populations, School A's highest minority population is African-American students. In contrast, School B's highest minority population is Hispanic students. Both schools experienced a shift in their leadership staff prior to the 2013-2014 school-wide implementation year; however, the principal at School B had been the assistant principal at the school for several years and was also a teacher at the school for several years prior to accepting the role as principal.

Program description. TCRWP is an instructional model that seeks to engage students in reading and writing instruction that incorporates the five essential components of an effective reading program. TCRWP, also considered as a balanced literacy approach, has been implemented in several states including but not limited to New York, Chicago, and Seattle. The TCRWP framework of balanced literacy includes a 1-hour reading workshop and 1-hour writing workshop block that incorporates the five essential components as outlined by the National Reading Panel. The reading components of the reading workshop include shared reading, read-alouds, guided reading, word work, and

independent reading. The writing components of writing workshop include interactive writing, modeled writing, guided writing, independent writing, and the use of mentor text to support student writing development. The reading workshop time gives students the opportunity to select books that are of interest to them on their reading level which increases their fluency, comprehension, and motivation to read. Motivation, fluency, and comprehension are key in developing a love of reading in students and creating connections in reading so student reading proficiency and comprehension levels increase. An action research study conducted by Johnson et al. (2003) found a close correlation between fluency and comprehension and posited that while motivation varied from student to student, “it continues to play a role in student achievement in schools today. When learning is difficult, students need to put forth greater effort and be more persistent than when learning is easy” (p. 32).

Another influential key to increasing student achievement in reading is teacher knowledge and the monitoring of individual student progress. TCRWP encompasses guided instruction in both reading and writing which allows teachers to address the needs of many learners based on teacher observation and reading assessment data. Instruction is modified as the year progresses and as the teacher employs assessment data to meet the needs of the learners in a particular classroom (Mackh, 2003). Within the balanced literacy instructional framework, educators also have the opportunity to monitor individual student progress during the conferencing and guided reading components of the framework. Additionally, the writing workshop block gives students the opportunity to receive targeted writing instruction through conferencing with the teacher regarding their individual progress on a consistent basis.

The data released by the Teacher’s College from 31 project schools that

consistently implemented the TCRWP balanced literacy framework revealed that students scored significantly higher than their peers who attended non-project schools. More specifically, New York schools that implemented TCRWP had 11% more students who were at or above standard on the state test than schools that did not implement this balanced literacy model (TCRWP, n.d.b). Additionally, the ELA proficiency rate of students New York City schools working with the TCRWP framework increased by 10% during the 2013-2014 school year; however, these data are void of statistical data conducted by an external evaluator to support its effectiveness with students who are economically disadvantaged.

Program goals. The goal of TCRWP is to “prepare kids for any reading and writing task they will face or set themselves, to turn them into life-long, confident readers and writers who display agency and independence in their future endeavors” (TCRWP, n.d.a, para. 2). The implementation objective of TCRWP in this study is defined by student proficiency in mastering CCSS in ELA as measured by the state reading assessments in Grades 3, 4, and 5. The state required reading EOG assessment data for third- through fifth-grade students will measure the outcomes of the current study. More specifically, students should be able to read and comprehend text that is on grade level by the end of each grade level using the skills and competencies outlined in CCSS.

The EOG reading assessment data are measured by student proficiency levels of mastery of CCSS for ELA, adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education in June 2010 (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.c). Table 4 shows the student performance data from the ELA EOG state assessment for third- through fifth-grade students from School A and School B in comparison to the school district and the state of North Carolina for the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years (Public Schools of North

Carolina, n.d.c).

Table 4

Student Proficiency on the North Carolina State EOG Assessment

2011-2012 School Year		
Student Population	Subject	Percent Proficient
School A	Reading Grades 3-5	55.1
School B	Reading Grades 3-5	61.6
School District	Reading Grades 3-5	71.1
State of North Carolina	Reading Grades 3-5	71.2
2012-2013 School Year		
Student Population	Subject	Percent Proficient
School A	Reading Grades 3-5	27.0
School B	Reading Grades 3-5	27.5
School District	Reading Grades 3-5	45.5
State of North Carolina	Reading Grades 3-5	43.9

As shown in Table 4, students at Schools A and B in Grades 3-5 underperformed on the ELA EOG test during the 2012 and 2013 school years in comparison to other students in the school district and the state of North Carolina. Although the state assessment was renormed in 2012-2013, these data still show a disparity in student performance between the current study school sites, the district, and the state. More specifically, School B's and School A's student performance on the ELA EOG test respectively was approximately 9 and 16 percentage points lower than the proficiency levels for the same grade levels of students in the district and state. In 2013, both School A and School B third- through fifth-grade students underperformed by approximately 17 percentage points in comparison to third- through fifth-grade students in the district and state. Likewise, it is important to the current study to analyze the performance of economically disadvantaged students in comparison to their non-economically disadvantaged counterparts on the ELA EOG assessment.

Table 5 illustrates comparative performance data of economically disadvantaged

students versus non-economically disadvantaged students on the ELA EOG test for the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years.

Table 5

Economically Disadvantaged Student Proficiency, North Carolina State EOG Assessment Third through Fifth Grade

2011-2012	Economic Status	Percent
Student Population		Proficient
School A	Economically Disadvantaged	52.4
School A	Non-Economically Disadvantaged	72.5
School B	Economically Disadvantaged	60.2
School B	Non-Economically Disadvantaged	73.1
2012-2013		Percent
Student Population	Subject	Proficient
School A	Economically Disadvantaged	27.5
School A	Non-Economically Disadvantaged	23.8
School B	Economically Disadvantaged	25.1
School B	Non-Economically Disadvantaged	45.2

Table 5 shows that in 2012, both School A and School B had a gap in student achievement between the economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students. There was an approximate 13-14 percentage point disparity in the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students versus non-economically disadvantaged students at both study sites. In 2012-2013, new assessments were implemented and even though the gap narrowed, all reading scores were increasingly dismal. Data in these tables are notable because they reveal the achievement gap in student reading proficiency between economically disadvantaged students and their non-economically disadvantaged counterparts and the overall poor reading achievement of all students.

Further, to gauge the depth of the achievement gap of economically disadvantaged students, it is important to examine student reading growth data. Table 6

illustrates growth data of economically disadvantaged students in Schools A and B as well as in the district and the state of North Carolina.

Table 6

Economically Disadvantaged Student Growth on the North Carolina EOG ELA

Student Population	Economic Status	2011-2012 to 2012-2013 Growth Percentage	Economic Status	2011-12 to 2012-2013 Growth Percentage
School A	Economically Disadvantaged	-24.9	Non- Economically Disadvantaged	-48.7
School B	Economically Disadvantaged	-34.8	Non- Economically Disadvantaged	-27.9
School District	Economically Disadvantaged	-29.6	Non- Economically Disadvantaged	-20.9
State of North Carolina	Economically Disadvantaged	-30.4	Non- Economically Disadvantaged	-23.9

As shown in Table 6, student reading growth declined for all student populations including Schools A and B, the school district, and the state after the state test was re-normed in 2012-2013. Although all populations had a decrease in proficiency percentages, approximately 7-8 percentage points, excluding School A, there is an obvious disparity in the growth differential between non-economically disadvantaged students and economically disadvantaged students.

Program model. The school sites in this study are both located in urban areas and serve prekindergarten through fifth-grade students in North Carolina. The school district in which School A and School B are had a literacy instructional framework that yielded low achievement literacy assessment scores based on the ELA EOG test scores from previous school years. The ELA EOG student proficiency percentages for third-

through fifth-grade students for School A at the end of the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years were 55.1% and 27% respectively. The ELA EOG student proficiency percentages for third- through fifth-grade students for School B at the end of the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years were 61.6% and 27.5% respectively. The scripted literacy instructional model previously used by these two sites had not yielded high academic performance as evidenced by the 27% and 27.5% proficiency percentages for third- through fifth-grade students at the end of the 2012-2013 school year (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.c).

The TCRWP model was implemented with the goal of increasing student achievement and reading proficiency through a restructuring of literacy instruction. The TCRWP model required a change in literacy instructional time for students which school leaders proposed would assist students with developing the necessary skills and practice to increase reading proficiency. This would be a change from a 1-hour and 15-minute block of time to a 2-hour block of time for literacy instruction.

This TCRWP literacy instructional model includes a 1-hour reading workshop block and a 1-hour writing workshop block. Within this 2-hour literacy block, teachers are permitted to interchange reading and writing instruction without the constraint of having to keep writing and reading separate. Within this 2-hour block, teachers incorporate reading workshop which includes independent reading, guided reading, and strategy groups. Independent reading is a time when students build reading fluency, develop comprehension skills, and increase their vocabulary acquisition using a text that they can read independently and comprehend without scaffolding. Teachers use guided reading time to coach and scaffold students in a small group to support them in building reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development (TCRWP, n.d.a).

Teachers support students by selecting a text that is on the instructional reading level of all students in the small group and coaching them on specific reading strategies. Strategy groups are another component of the reading workshop block and are small student groups facilitated by the teacher who is used to scaffold students in reading strategies (phonics, phonemic awareness, reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development). Furthermore, strategy groups focus on one skill in isolation which does not require students to be on the same instructional reading level, as the focus is on a strategy or skill being used to support student reading and comprehension. There is also whole group reading instruction where teachers also incorporate interactive read-alouds, vocabulary, word study, and shared reading to encourage skill development in the following areas: phonics, phonemic awareness, reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development (TCRWP, n.d.a).

Within the writing workshop block, teachers use mentor text along with interactive shared writing, modeled writing, and guided writing to deliver writing instruction to students. The writing instruction includes skills and strategy introduction, modeling, and practice that support development with the five components of effective literacy instruction as outlined by the National Reading Panel. Students use and develop their phonics and phonemic awareness skills, build their reading fluency and comprehension skills, and increase their vocabulary development in different writing exercises (TCRWP, n.d.a). Additionally, teachers use mentor texts, literature pieces that teachers can return to again and again to “help young writers learn how to do what they may not yet be able to do on their own” (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2007, p. 2). In other words, mentor texts are used to model writing strategies so students can have a visual representation of the writing skill they are currently developing. In a later publication,

Dorfman and Cappelli (2009) further defined mentor texts as “pieces of literature you and your students can relate to, fall in love with, and return to and reread for many different purposes. They are the books whose words resonate in the minds and hearts of our writers” (p. 2). That is to say that mentor texts provide models for many different writing practices that teachers use to support student writing development. According to Pytash and Morgan (2014),

For students, studying mentor texts provides an opportunity to learn firsthand from other writers, to become aware of the multiple decisions writers make in crafting their texts. We believe students become better writers as they have more opportunities to read quality writing. (p. 95)

Thus, students can use these texts to study and subsequently imitate the skills and practices needed to move forward as writers. Interactive shared writing can also be used during this time so students are modeling and practicing writing simultaneously as a scaffolding tool in teaching writing. Modeled writing can also be used during writer’s workshop where the teacher is writing and thinking aloud while writing to model the writing process for students. Additionally, guided writing can be used during writer’s workshop to support students as they write independently. Teachers can reinforce through coaching the writing skills and strategies in groups or individually during guided writing. The various writing instructional tools used depend on the students’ level of ability in previous writing samples to employ the writing skills previously taught (TCRWP, n.d.a).

Program research prior to implementation. Prior to implementation of TCRWP at the current study sites, the administrative and instructional leadership staff reviewed several literacy frameworks and programs. This was an important decision, as

there was a desire to select a language arts curriculum that would increase student achievement in the core content area of language arts. The administrative staff selected TCRWP after reading several testimonials from schools that had similar demographics and the positive impact this program had on their student performance. Among these testimonials were the Clara T. O'Connell elementary school data as well as the Burnet Hill Elementary school data.

Clara T. O'Connell elementary school in Bristol, Connecticut was one of the schools that TCRWP hails as proof that the framework is effective. For 3 years, Clara T. O'Connell was on the "need of improvement" list under NCLB (Gordon, 2006). After signing on with TCRWP, student reading scores improved drastically from 44% to 61% in just 2 years, and their third-grade writing proficiency was at 90%. Houston County School of Georgia also experienced an increase in their writing proficiency scores overall. The Houston County School System of Georgia writing scores were at 86% in 2010 and increased to 91% in 2012 after implementing TCRWP. It is also important to note that this school district also surpassed the region and state in writing proficiency scores from 2010 to 2012 (TCRWP, n.d.d). More notable was the student achievement and growth at Burnet Hill Elementary in Livingston, New Jersey where third-grade students who scored proficient or above on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge Language Arts Literacy improved from 88.8% to 96% after implementing TCRWP. Additionally, fourth-grade students who scored proficient or above on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge Language Arts Literacy increased from 88.8% to 92%. Students in the special education program also saw a significant increase in proficiency scores, including an increase from 49.4 % to 80% proficiency (TCRWP, n.d.c).

Program implementation. The school district in which School A and School B are a part had a high percentage of students who were performing below grade level as measured by the state EOG tests 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. As a result, principals and district literacy support personnel explored balanced literacy models by forming a professional learning community (PLC) to examine the implementation of balanced literacy. There was an exploration of several different balanced literacy programs, but the district literacy personnel and administrators chose TCRWP after researching and gaining data on the impact of the program in other schools and school districts as reported in the previous section.

TCRWP was implemented at both School A and School B in August 2013; however, each school's implementation was designed based on each school administrator's strategic plan.

TCRWP Implementation, School A

School A began the implementation phase by sending a team of eight teachers across various grade levels to New York in November 2012. This team visited the Teacher's College of Columbia University. During their visit, this team of teachers attended a free workshop lead by Lucy Calkins, the founder of TCRWP, and toured a school that was currently implementing the project. During their visit to the school, they were able to see the TCRWP framework being implemented with students. The teachers returned to the school ready to implement this program because they felt empowered as they had observed students with similar demographics to their students engaged in and loving reading.

These catalysts returned to the site and because many of them had previous experience with one or several components of balanced literacy, they were able to

become a pilot group. This team of eight teachers then joined the TCRWP PLC with the school's principal and literacy facilitator. Once a month this team gathered and discussed the implementation phases, resources, and the fidelity check system. This PLC discussed different trainings and school-wide implementation phases as well as student reading data from this pilot group. They also began to discuss the amount of growth in reading achievement they were seeing with their students during grade level team planning sessions. These teachers received additional support in the classroom and were designated as model classrooms for school-wide implementation. This support included modeling and additional observations and feedback during implementation in their pilot classrooms. These catalyst cohort teachers also became additional support for the other teachers when school-wide implementation began in the 2013-2014 school year.

Additionally, in middle of 2012-2013, the school began to purchase a large quantity of books to strengthen classroom libraries and the school library with high interest books and leveled those libraries based on the Fountas and Pinnell (1996) text level gradient. The strategic implementation plan included school-wide implementation of TCRWP which began in August 2013. The implementation began with a focus on building the reader's workshop mini-lesson implementation in conjunction with independent reading and small-group instruction. The second year conferencing was the focus of the implementation.

TCRWP Implementation, School B

School B began implementing balanced literacy components in general in the fall of the 2012-2013 school year by introducing their staff to interactive read-alouds. This component was their beginning step in changing from the scripted literacy program to a more balanced form of literacy instruction. Additionally, the leadership team and a team

of teachers from School B attended the Teacher's College Homegrown Institute at Columbia University in New York in the middle of 2012 to learn more about the TCRWP balanced literacy framework. During their visit, this team also attended a free workshop lead by Lucy Calkins and toured two schools that were implementing the project with students who had student populations similar to their student population. Dissimilar to School A, School B did not have a catalyst cohort that returned to implement TCRWP. School B continued their work on implementing interactive read-alouds and established their strategic implementation plan to implement the TCRWP balanced literacy framework. School B's administrative team did, however, join with several other administrative instructional teams including School A's administrative team to discuss the implementation phases, resources, and the fidelity check system of implementing TCRWP. This PLC discussed different trainings and school-wide implementation phases as well as student reading data collection. The strategic implementation plan at School B included continued implementation interactive read-alouds and, similar to School A, the building of classroom libraries and the school library. In the fall of 2013-2014, comparable to School A, School B implemented additional TCRWP components slowly by adding word study and then guided reading and strategy groups in 2013-2014, and then adding shared reading and conferring to the school-wide implementation of TCRWP in 2014-2015. Both School A and School B implemented each TCRWP component slowly with continuous support to maintain each component as the implementation process progressed. The central difference in implementation between School A and School B was the introduction to instructional staff. School A began in 2012-2013 with a catalyst cohort that included teachers from various grade levels that became model classrooms of TCRWP for the school-wide implementation in 2013-2014. In contrast,

School B began school-wide implementation of interactive read-alouds, which is a component of balanced literacy, including the TCRWP framework of balanced literacy during the 2012-2013 school year and began to add the TCRWP balanced literacy components to school-wide implementation in 2013-2014.

Significance of the Problem

The poor reading proficiency scores as measured by the NAEP assessments in the United States, especially for children who are economically disadvantaged, have plagued our nation for many years (Blank, 2011). Casey (2014) reported that 80% of low-income fourth-grade students were not proficient in reading based on the NAEP reading test administered in 2013. Furthermore, the results from the North Carolina 2014-2015 EOG ELA test showed that only 41.2% of third through eighth grade economically disadvantaged students were proficient in reading in the state of North Carolina (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.f).

School A and School B had documented instances of unsafe student behavior incidents in the classroom prior to the implementation of TCRWP in 2013, and the literacy proficiency and growth scores were declining at this site (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.g). As a result, the principal and instructional support staff decided there was a critical need for change in the literacy instructional model used for these students. After reviewing the student performance data in reading and reviewing different literacy curriculum programs, the decision was made to employ TCRWP. This program was selected because it encompassed all five of the research-based components for an effective reading program including, fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness, text comprehension, and vocabulary. This study will provide an opportunity for all instructional staff to improve the quality of literacy instruction as Stufflebeam (2004)

emphasized, “Evaluation’s most important purpose is not to prove but to improve” (p. 262). This study’s review of the balanced literacy framework will add to the vast amount of literature on reading and interventions that impact literacy instructional practices in the United States; however, this study will focus on TCRWP’s impact on reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students.

Further, Bryan, Fawson, and Reutzel (2003) found that giving students sustained reading time daily did not guarantee engagement during reading. In another study by Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2006), the researchers found that students were choosing books either above or below their reading levels which was causing them to become disengaged in reading. They also found that some students were pretending to read and were unable to stay engaged during sustained silent reading because they did not have the strategies they needed to comprehend the text. TCRWP is an intervention that addresses some of the concerns about engagement as it seeks to give students books on their level to address their level of engagement. This framework also involves the teacher modeling good reader strategies and targeted comprehension instruction on grade level through interactive read-alouds and shared reading. Lastly, despite the vast amount of literature on the necessary components of successful reading programs, there is a very limited body of research on TCRWP and its effectiveness with economically disadvantaged students.

Program Evaluation

A program evaluation is a systematic method used to assess the worth and value of a program. “Operationally, evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining, reporting, and applying descriptive and judgmental information about some object’s merit and worth in order to guide decision making, support accountability, disseminate effective practices and increase understanding of the involved phenomena” (Stufflebeam,

2003, p. 10).

In this study, TCRWP was evaluated to gain and obtain a report on the effectiveness of this program specifically with the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. A program evaluation is the process of measuring the value of a specific program and is rooted in the outcome(s) of the evaluation. According to Stufflebeam (2000c), “The value provides the foundation for deriving the particular evaluative criteria. The criteria, along with questions of stakeholders, dictate information needs. These, in turn, provide the direction for selecting/constructing the evaluation instruments and interpretation standards” (p. 305).

As with any evaluation, there must be standards or principles that are used to guide the process and deem the evaluation as valid. “They are principles commonly agreed to by specialists in the conduct and use of evaluations for the measure of an evaluation’s value or quality” (Stufflebeam, 2000c, p. 280). These standards were written by The Joint Committee of Educational Evaluation in 1975, published in 1981, updated in 1994, and called The Program Evaluation Standards. “The Joint Committee is accredited by the American National Standards Institute as the only body recognized to set standards for educational evaluations in the U.S.” (Stufflebeam, 2000b, p. 440).

Context, input, process, product (CIPP) evaluation model. This program evaluation used the CIPP evaluation model. This model is an accountability-oriented evaluation model that is a comprehensive framework and directly aligns to the purpose of this program evaluation. The CIPP model was introduced by Daniel Stufflebeam in 1966 to guide mandated evaluations of U.S. federally funded projects (Stufflebeam, 2003). Stufflebeam (2003) stated,

This model’s core concepts are context, input, process, and product evaluation.

By employing the four types of evaluation, the evaluator serves several important functions. Context evaluations assess needs, problems, and opportunities within a defined environment. They aid evaluation users to define and assess goals and later reference assessed needs of targeted beneficiaries to judge a school program. Input evaluations assess competing strategies and the work plans and budgets of approaches chosen for implementation; they aid evaluation users to design improvement efforts, develop defensible funding proposals, detail action plans, record alternative plans that were considered, and record the basis for choosing one approach over the others. Process evaluation monitor, document, and assess activities. They help evaluation users carry out improvement efforts and maintain accountability records of their execution of action plans. Product evaluations identify and assess short-term, long-term, intended, and unintended outcomes. They help evaluation users maintain their focus on meeting the needs of students or other beneficiaries; assess and record their level of success in reaching and meeting the beneficiaries' target needs; identify intended and unintended side effects; and make informed decisions to continue, stop, or improve the effort. (pp. 31-32)

Program Theory is used in the evaluation to highlight program information that is critical in defining the effectiveness of the program. The program theory will answer research questions that will evaluate the outcomes of the program, support the collection of information for further study, and provide enduring values that demonstrate the performance of a program (Rogers, 2000). Program theory is vital to future studies that are connected to the initial program evaluation to protect the fidelity of research around this program. Additionally, program theory is also described as "making explicit the

underlying assumptions about how programs are expected to work-the program theory- and then using this theory to guide the evaluation” (Rogers, Petrosino, Huebner, & Hacs, 2000, p.1). The program theory in this current study is defined by the participants based on their expected outcomes with the use of TCRWP. These outcomes will be measured by qualitative and quantitative data collection to strengthen the validity and reliability of this study.

Accountability model involved. In North Carolina where the current study took place, there are several accountability models that are being used to measure student achievement. These models are the North Carolina READY Initiative which includes the state required BOG and EOG assessments, EVAAS, and federal AMOs. The READY initiative which was initially implemented in the North Carolina public schools in the 2012-13 school year focuses on student growth, grade-level proficiency, and career and college readiness standards in core content areas. The initiative also includes a teacher effectiveness component, EVAAS, which focuses on student growth (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.e). EVAAS was adopted by the State Board of Education-to measure student achievement growth and the effectiveness of educators (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.e).

EVAAS. EVAAS also uses a predictive model to project student performance based on their historical test performance. In order for EVAAS to yield a predicted score, students must have taken at least three assessments. As a result, third-grade students are not included in the predicted scores due to the fact that third-grade students in North Carolina are only administered two assessments, the BOG test and the EOG test. EVAAS uses

the historical testing performance of student A along with Students with Similar

Expected Score Testing History to Student A and then compare that to the average performance of all students like Student A, and that yield the expected score for student A. (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.k, sl. 19)

Additionally, EVAAS presents a rating scale for educators, administrators, school districts, and the state of North Carolina. The rating scale includes a three-tiered rating scale of does not meet expected growth, meets expected growth, and exceeds expected growth (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.h). These ratings are connected to the educators and administrators through the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES). NCEES is

a tool used for the evaluation of teachers in the state, as well as to target professional growth for educators. While the expectation is that all teachers will meet basic levels of proficiency, the system also identifies those teachers who excel in the classroom and school community. (Public Schools of North Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.l, p. 1)

NCEES is an evaluation tool that encompasses six standards for educators and eight standards for administrators. The sixth and eighth standards were added to NCEES in 2011. These standards include an evaluation of the educator's contribution to student academic success through the use of the student growth data from EVAAS. Per the North Carolina Department of Public School Instruction website, there are three methods that are used to determine the effect of each educator on student growth that include the analysis of student work model, the pretest and posttest test growth model, and the EVAAS growth model. The first method, the Analysis of Student Work Model is used with "courses and grades/subjects that do not have an End-of-Grade assessment" (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.h, p. 2). The second method, the Pre and Post Test Model

is used with “courses and grades where statewide assessments are in place but EVAAS cannot be used” (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.h, p. 3). Finally, the third method, the EVAAS Growth Model is used with “courses and grades where there are statewide assessments and a prediction model has been determined” (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.h, p. 3). The EVAAS Growth Model’s ability to make predictions about future student performance is the basis for determining student growth on the North Carolina EOG standardized assessments.

Reading benchmarks and proficiency levels used in the accountability model.

There are a myriad of literacy assessments that are used to measure the proficiency and growth levels of student achievement in reading. In the state of North Carolina, benchmark proficiency scores are a “definitive discrimination for student achievement reporting . . . and will identify students who are prepared for the next grade . . . and will also enable more accurate identification of students who need additional instruction and assistance” (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.i, para. 1).

Benchmark proficiency scores are also used to gauge student reading comprehension proficiency levels on the North Carolina READY ELA assessment. This assessment has two parts in the third grade: a BOG assessment administered at the beginning of the school year and an EOG assessment administered at end of the school year (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.i, para. 1). In all other grade levels, Grades 4-8, the students are assessed by the EOG assessment only. “In October 2013, the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted college and career readiness Academic Achievement Standards and Academic Achievement Descriptors for the EOG and End-of-Course (EOC) tests and their alternate assessments” (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.i, para. 1). These descriptors are benchmark student achievement scores that identify

students who are prepared for the next grade but do not meet the college and career readiness standards as well as students who do meet college and career readiness standards. These descriptors give teachers and other instructional staff more accurate information in order to identify students who need additional instructional support (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.i, para. 1).

In North Carolina, there are five proficiency levels measured by the North Carolina EOG tests in core content areas. On a student performance continuum of proficiency, with level one denoting limited command and level five denoting superior command of knowledge and skills, students who are a level four or five are deemed consistently ready to engage in grade-appropriate vocabulary and are academically prepared in the tested content area (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.i, para. 1). Students who do not meet the benchmark score of three are considered nonproficient in reading, meaning the student performance score was a level one or two indicating limited or partial command of grade-appropriate knowledge and skills. These students will likely need strong instructional support as they are not on track for college and career readiness or grade-level proficiency. Students who meet the benchmark score of three are considered grade-level proficient in reading but not on track for college and career readiness in the tested content area. These standardized tests are also used to calculate student growth from 1 school year to the next based on each student's scale score from year to year and the predicted scale score for the next school year (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.i, para. 1).

Table 7 describes the achievement levels for each student achievement level for the EOG tests in North Carolina.

Table 7

Achievement Level Descriptors on the North Carolina READY EOG Assessments

Achievement Level	Meets On-Grade-Level Proficiency Standard	Meets College-and-Career Readiness Standard
Level 5 denotes Superior Command of knowledge and skills	Yes	Yes
Level 4 denotes Solid Command of knowledge and skills	Yes	Yes
Level 3 denotes Sufficient Command of knowledge and skills	Yes	No
Level 2 denotes Partial Command of knowledge and skills	No	No
Level 1 denotes Limited Command of knowledge and skills	No	No

Note. Public Schools of North Carolina (n.d.m).

These benchmark rankings are important because they allow school systems to measure the proficiency levels of students in ELA, mathematics, and science which allow the use of these data to guide instructional practices. These assessments are incredibly important to developing successful readers because data from these “assessments of learning and for learning are essential” (Stiggins, 2002, p. 758).

Evaluator’s role in relation to the organization. The evaluator is an objective evaluator and is not a staff member at this site. The evaluator was an employee until December 2014 in this site’s school district and received training in TCRWP. The evaluator is no longer an employee in this school district and is not vested in this study as a resource contributor in any capacity; therefore, the evaluator has no conflict of interest

in this evaluation.

Definitions of Terms

Balanced literacy instruction. A framework for literacy learning “which includes the following components: Reading Aloud (reading to children), Shared Reading (reading with children), Guided Reading (reading by children), Independent Reading (reading by children), Responses, Shared Writing, Modeled Writing, Language Experience, and Children's Writing” (Batzle, 1994, p. 17).

Economically disadvantaged students. Students determined to be eligible for free or reduced school price meals under the National School Lunch Program (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d.).

EVAAS. A customized software system that is used as a tool by teachers, principals, and the North Carolina State Board of Education to measure educator effectiveness and improve student learning (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.h, p. 3).

Five Components of Effective Reading

Phonics. The identification of the relationship between the sounds and letters in the spelling of words used in speech. Although the relationships are not absolute in all words in the English language, the relationships are consistent for the majority of words so they can be used to decipher unfamiliar words in text (Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998; Learning Point Associates, 2004).

Phonemic awareness. The understanding that words that are spoken are composed of individual separate sounds that are blended together. It is also hearing words that sound alike, segmenting phonemes, and blending sounds to make words (Learning Point Associates, 2004).

Fluency. Recognizing words in text rapidly and accurately using expression to read the text as naturally as in spoken language (Learning Point Associates, 2004).

Vocabulary. “Words we need to know to communicate with others” (Learning Point Associates, 2004, p. 22).

Text comprehension. Building a reasonable and accurate meaning by relating the text read to a reader’s schema to create understanding, which is the overall goal of reading instruction (Learning Point Associates, 2004).

Reading proficiency. Reading at or above grade level by the end of the school year as measured by the results of the North Carolina state-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to students in Grades 3-8 (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.i).

Title I school. Public schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families receive Title I funds. Unless a participating school is operating a school-wide program, the school must focus Title I services on children who are failing or most at risk of failing to meet State academic standards. A school must enroll at least 40% of children from low-income families to use Title I funds for school-wide programs. These funds can be used to improve their educational programs in an effort to increase achievement for all students, particularly the lowest achieving students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Teaching students to become proficient readers is not just as simple as teaching the alphabet and having them recite words. Teaching students to read is a very complex task that takes time and builds on prerequisite skills. Reading must be a constructive process; and within that process, readers learn to create meaning and link new vocabulary to their schema (Kaufmann, 2000). Reading is also fluent and strategic as it builds on developmentally appropriate comprehension and other cognitive skills. Building reading skills requires motivation and is a continuously developing skill (Kaufmann, 2000).

Given that reading is a multifaceted skill that encompasses a myriad of other skills, reading instruction must address each of the necessary skills in order to create proficient readers. Moreover, reading instruction must also meet individual student needs and abilities. In all grade levels, there are different levels of reading fluency and comprehension. These levels are based on reading assessments that yield a benchmark level to indicate the level of readability and comprehension of a text (Learning Point Associates, 2004). Throughout the last 2 centuries, many educators have sought to teach reading to students of many diverse abilities through several “one-size-fits-all” methods, which merged between skills-based and meaning-based instruction (Babbitt, 1992; Mackh, 2003). Educators have seen the pedagogy shift from whole language instruction to a phonics-based model to replications of the two with modifications of each. Unfortunately, as different reading models were implemented, educators often observed a decrease in student achievement in certain aspects of reading assessments. For example, when whole language instruction was the model being implemented in California, the reading scores plummeted from being in the top 20% in reading on national assessments in 1987 to next to last in 1993 (Mackh, 2003). Illinois experienced similar results as their

sixth graders showed a drop of 8% in just 1 year with a combined drop of approximately 18% over the time they adopted and implemented whole language instruction (Hall & Moats, 1999).

The following literature review encompasses a summary of quantitative and qualitative literature, dissertations, and other research. The theoretical design of this study was built on previous evaluative studies of similar instructional models and the outcomes and implications of those studies. This review of literature is divided into three parts comprised of poverty and the impact of poverty including societal and extraneous factors on our current educational system. The second part is an examination of achievement gaps and the continuous underachievement of minority and economically disadvantaged students historically, inclusive of causes of gaps, teacher professional development, teacher quality, and teacher turnover. Finally, a review of the TCRWP balanced literacy instructional framework and the historical impact of the framework with diverse populations and in different settings is provided.

Reading Instruction

Reading is a multifaceted concept in which proficiency varies depending on the situation, the demand of text, reader characteristics, and the reading purpose (Lesaux, 2012). According to the National Reading Panel, being able to read is a concept that involves the ability or skill to break apart and manipulate the sounds in words (phonemic awareness), understand that sounds are represented by letters that can be blended together to form words (phonics), and apply strategies to guide and improve reading comprehension. These skills are improved through practice and by applying reading skills learned in reading instruction (International Reading Association, 2002).

History of reading instruction. Reading is a skill that constantly develops over

time (Kaufmann, 2000). The history of reading instruction and the approaches to teaching reading in the United States are constantly changing, developing, and evolving (Mackh, 2003). The history of reading instruction in America dates back to Colonial America during the mid-1600s when it was believed that reading the Bible was required for salvation. As a result, children were mandated by the first law in 1642 to be taught to read (Santa, Silver, Valencia, & Barrentine, 2002). During the 1600s into the early 1700s, students were taught using the “alphabet method where children were taught to spell aloud the letter names of a word in sequence, syllable by syllable, and then pronounce the entire word” (Santa et al., 2002, pp. 224-225). During this time period, the literature that students read included the “hornbook, primer, Psalter, New Testament, and then the entire Bible” (Santa et al., 2002, p. 225). Additionally, for much of the late 1700s, “American reprinted versions of the Thomas Dilworth’s speller, *A New Guide to the English Tongue*, dominated the market” (Santa et al., 2002, p. 225).

In the mid-1800s, Edward Austin Sheldon proposed a new method of teaching reading which influenced the way reading was taught around the country. His method was the use of whole words via the labeling of physical objects used on a daily basis (Santa et al., 2002). The whole word method aligned very well with the progressive education theory of John Dewey during this time period. This progressive education theory was based on Dewey’s belief that “schools should reflect society and that schooling should proceed from the child’s interest” (Santa et al., 2002, p. 227). During this movement, the use of printed text was minimal in teaching reading, as the focus was on students writing and the use of their writing as their text for reading (Santa et al., 2002).

The progressive education movement was the most prominent educational method

of reading instruction until the early 1900s when Edward Lee Thorndike's work appeared and became a challenger of the progressive education movement (Santa et al., 2002). Thorndike's work, which was based on John Broadus Watson's behaviorism theory, established what is known as the measurement movement. Along with Thorndike, the work of Arthur Gates and William Gray on inherent phonics instruction through sight words and vocabulary acquisition respectively were a part of the measurement movement. Documenting student progress in acquiring these skills had a significant impact on the approaches to teaching reading (Santa et al., 2002). Students began reading printed text unlike the progressive education movement and were reading texts such as Williams Gray's *Dick and Jane* series books (Santa et al., 2002).

In the mid-1900s, there was a shift in the measurement movement that included the use of basal and basic text as well as a more direct approach to systematic phonics instruction. The ESEA of 1965 was enacted during this time and that legislation provided billions of dollars for school programs. Meanwhile, the measurement movement continued with the use of systematic phonics and basic text use for reading instruction. Noam Chomsky's theory that language acquisition was instinctive instead of learned through direct instruction was developing during the mid-1900s (Santa et al., 2002). This sparked the federal government's funding of research on the brain and how it understands text. These studies resulted in skill-based reading instruction which had its foundation in inquiry-based instruction. Skill-based instruction was a method whereby teachers used literature to generate their reading instruction. During the late 1900s, multiple choice testing was introduced, the use of text in classroom instruction increased, and teachers began student reading progress evaluations through observation of student reading with miscue analysis (Santa et al., 2002). Additionally, during this time, critics

of whole language learning posited that although language is developed naturally, literacy is not; and as a result, some states such as California, Alabama, and Ohio passed legislation that required systematic explicit phonics instruction (Santa et al., 2002).

Since the late 1900s, many theorists and educators have merged the previously implemented approaches and have created what is called a balanced approach to literacy instruction. Balanced literacy instruction is defined as a framework for literacy learning “which includes the following components: Reading Aloud (reading to children), Shared Reading (reading with children), Guided Reading (reading by children), Independent Reading (reading by children), Responses, Shared Writing, Modeled Writing, Language Experience, and Children's Writing” (Batzle, 1994, p. 17). Balanced literacy addresses student literacy needs with differentiated instruction and literature offerings in each component.

Poverty and Student Achievement

When studying the reading proficiency of impoverished students, it is important to explore the impact of poverty on a child’s cognitive development and academic achievement. Developing reading skills to become a proficient reader is a complex process. Reading, reading comprehension, text complexity, and the ability to synthesize information is different at every age; and it is important that at every age a reader keep pace with the changing demands of text and the purpose for reading (Lesaux, 2012). The literacy development of a child is an indicator of future reading and writing success (Wang, 2000). Therefore, it is important to build a positive foundation in reading and cultivate positive attitudes about reading as early as possible to create lifelong readers. Many children begin to learn some of the foundational skills for being a successful

student in childcare centers and preschools they attend; however, this is not the case for many students who are economically disadvantaged. Economically disadvantaged children begin school on average with significantly lower academic skills than more affluent students even with benefits of early intervention; however, they are not as low as they would be without the early educational intervention (Bryant, Burchinal, Lau, & Sparling, 1994; Goldenberg, Reese, & Gallimore, 1992; Griffin, Case, & Siegler, 1994; Jordan, Huttenlocher, & Levine, 1992; Starkey & Klein, 1992).

Poverty has been and continues to be a debilitating condition in our society today. Housing, the growing income gap, providing an affordable education, services for the poor, and even how those services are delivered are factors found in the continuous cycle of poverty. These are complex and costly issues that must be addressed in an effort to decrease the number of families living in poverty (Burnett, n.d.). In the United States, President Lyndon Johnson sought to address poverty through the creation of the Great Society programs in the 1960s as a declaration of war on poverty. President Reagan declared war on drugs, and both adult and juvenile prisons became a key tool for controlling impoverished people (Alexander, 2010). Regardless of the approach that any president or government agency utilized in an effort to intervene and combat poverty, poverty continues to plague the United States because of its complex structure.

Payne (2005) attempted to explain poverty by conjecturing that poverty can manifest itself in two different ways: as generational and situational, with each being very different. Payne defined generational poverty as having been in poverty for at least two generations; however, the patterns begin to surface much sooner than two generations if the family lives with others who are from generational poverty. Situational poverty is defined as a lack of resources due to a particular event, “i.e., a death, chronic illness,

divorce, etc.” (Payne, 2005, p. 3). According to Payne, there are 20 characteristics of generational poverty; and they include background noise, importance of personality, significance of entertainment, importance of relationships, matriarchal structure, oral-language tradition, survival orientation, identity tied to lover/fighter role for men, identity tied to rescuer/martyr role for women, ownership of people, negative orientation, discipline, belief in fate, polarized thinking, mating dance, time, sense of humor, lack of order/organization, and lives in the moment.

Payne (2005) also proposed that attitude is key in determining whether generational poverty is at work in the life of a person. In generational poverty, the attitude is often one of entitlement. In situational poverty, the attitude is often one of pride and refusal to accept charity. This is important in understanding the role of poverty in the educational setting because often students who live in generationally impoverished environments develop these same attitudes and feelings about life. Consequently, these children can be very difficult to motivate in educational settings as it is very difficult to motivate students who believe that they are destined to live the way that they currently live without hope for a better future.

Generational poverty is impacted by many factors that enable the cycle to continue, including negative thoughts about one’s ability to perform as well as others who are not economically disadvantaged or thoughts of being “less than” because of their inability to financially access resources. These negative and doubtful thoughts of incapability and inability are nurtured and fed by everyday experiences, conversations, and observations by impoverished students and others around them (Payne, 2005). Gassama (2012) proposed that a child’s first exposure to the world is facilitated by parents; therefore, children replicate what is modeled by their parents, guardians, and

close relatives behaviorally, cognitively, and socially. As a result, any negative effects that parents encounter due to factors related to poverty will transfer into their impoverished child's belief system and negatively affect their growth and development. Moreover, students learn to place personal value on experiences, people, and material things based on the daily experiences, parental modeling, and society influence.

Furthermore, Kaiser and Delaney (1996) posited that

for many children that live in poverty, their parents' demonstrate a smaller capacity to be supportive and consistent in their parenting, provide less vocal and emotional stimulation, are less responsive to their children's needs and model less sophisticated language. In fact, their parenting style is more punitive and coercive and less consistent. Overall, parental support and involvement in school activities is lower among poor parents. (p. 9)

The lack of parental support may not necessarily indicate a lack of interest but a result of factors related to poverty. Low parental involvement and support in school may also stem from possible negative personal schooling experiences of the parents while growing up (Kaiser & Delaney, 1996). Many students living in impoverished homes are inclusive of single parent households with the mother as the sole supporter of the children. "For many of these students their mother's education is a strong and consistent predictor of their educational outcomes" (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Haveman & Wolfe, 1995, p. 4). Payne (2005) also outlined that the structure for many impoverished families is heavily dependent on the mother, as often the mother is the only parental member who is consistent in the life of impoverished children.

Impoverished families endure a myriad of hardships associated with poverty including a lack of adequate healthcare, low birth weight, and premature baby births

(Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Gershoff, 2003). Many economically disadvantaged families also live in poor environments that contain a substantial number of health risks including corollaries to adulthood obesity as well as exposure to substantial environmental toxins such as lead that are deleterious to children's cognitive functioning (Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & García Coll, 2001). Likewise, poor urban environments have high levels of violence and social support services such as childcare which is many times of very poor quality (Phillips, Voran, Kisker, Howes, & Whitebook, 1994; Sander-Phillips, 1996).

There are a myriad of factors that impact the lives of impoverished children, and it becomes difficult to decipher the most influential. Although money seems as though it would be the most influential, Mayer (1997) posited that money was not the most significant factor in enabling families to help their children escape poverty. Payne (2005) supported this belief by positing that there are many other factors outside of money that contribute to the cycle of poverty in the lives of the impoverished. Leroy and Symes (2001) deemed poverty to be a major risk factor but suggested that other known factors that are related to poverty are likely to promote academic failure. These factors include unemployment, homelessness, mobility, exposure to inadequate educational experiences, substance abuse, living in dangerous neighborhoods, malnutrition, poor health, exposure to environmental toxins, inadequate childcare, lead poisoning, television watching, and birth weight (Gassama, 2012). Milner (2013) theorized that many of these factors are not just connected to socioeconomic status but are also associated with race and ethnicity.

Milner (2013) described the inequity of poverty in our society with the following example: "in an equitable society, if Whites constitute 65% of the total population; they should also make up 65% of those in the low-income bracket" (pp. 4-5). In other words,

in an equitable society, the percentage of a race and the percentage of impoverished people in that race should align; however, this is not true in our society. African-Americans and Hispanics account for over 50% of the impoverished population and only comprise 27.6% of the U.S. population. Table 8 shows the disparity among the races in the population percentages of low-income families.

Table 8

Low-Income Families by Race

Race	Percentage of Low-Income Families	Percentage of U.S. Population
White	42	65.6
Black	22	12.2
Hispanic/Brown	30	15.4
Total percentage for Black and Brown	52	27.6

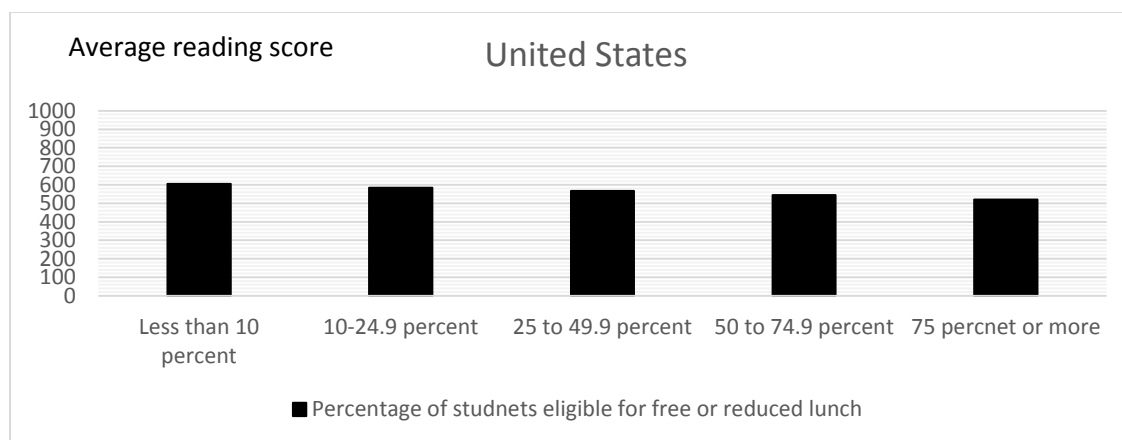
Note. Munin (2012); Simms et al. (2009).

Although a substantial number of poor families in the United States are Caucasian (Proctor & Dalaker, 2003), African-American as well as more and more Latino families represent a significant portion of the urban poor (Alaniz, Cartmill, & Parker, 1998; Massey & Fischer, 2000; Rank & Hirschl, 1999).

The effect of poverty on student outcomes has been researched and well documented as a huge challenge to the development of students especially in the early years of their lives (Duncan et al., 1994; Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn, & Smith, 1998). The hardships experienced by children of poverty, especially minority students, have been linked in several research studies to poor academic achievement in school. In fact, consistent with the results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study data, U.S. White, Asian, and multiracial fourth graders scored higher on average, while U.S. Black and Hispanic fourth graders scored lower on average (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, Trong, & Sainsbury, 2009; Thompson et al., 2012, p. 15). Moreover,

in comparison to the U.S. national average score, fourth-grade students enrolled in schools that have very low to moderate poverty student populations (from less than 10 percent to almost 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) scored higher, on average, while students in those in schools with higher proportions of poverty (50 percent to 75 percent or more of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch) scored lower, on average. (Thompson et al., 2012, p. 15)

Figure 1 displays the PIRLS student achievement data inclusive of students in the United States after the 2011 administration of the fourth-grade reading assessment and the decline of scores as the percentage of free or reduced lunch students increased in schools.



International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), PIRLS (2011).

Figure 1. PIRLS Fourth-Grade Assessment Results and School Poverty Rates.

Poverty and the influences of the accompanying variables are consistently associated with the disparity in student achievement data. Although progress has been made toward equity of educational experiences for economically disadvantaged students, equity has yet to be attained. Figure 1 shows that as the percentage of free and reduced lunch students increased, the proficiency scores decreased. Although the PIRLS

assessment showed a decrease in the proficiency scores of economically disadvantaged students, NAEP (2012), showed that African-American and Hispanic students made larger gains in both reading and mathematics since the assessment administered in the early 1970s. In 2012, the average fourth-grade reading proficiency scores on the NAEP test were reported for Caucasian, African-American, and Hispanic students and were 229, 206, and 208 respectively. Although there is still a substantial achievement gap between African-American and Hispanic students and their Caucasian counterparts, the gap has narrowed since the 1975 administration of the NAEP. Additionally, since the 1975 NAEP test, the achievement scale score gap between African-American students and their Caucasian peers has narrowed from 36 to 23 points as of 2012. Likewise, the achievement scale score gap between Hispanic students and their Caucasian peers from 1975 to 2012 has narrowed from 34 to 21 points.

Achievement gaps. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled against racial segregation in public schools for both elementary and secondary schools. The 1954, *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision made all students direct beneficiaries of its educational mandate for equal public education for all students regardless of race (Warren, 1954). The Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation was a violation of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution (Jackson, 2004). Thus, African-American students were legally able to attend schools with their Caucasian counterparts. Even though this ruling was made, the Caucasian population had a general willingness to obey the law instead of violating it, and eventually the basic right to school access became a reality for African-American students. This equal access to school, however, has not brought about equal student achievement (Barton, 2004). Schools have been a primary focus for work on equity for all children; nonetheless, there are still

several minority school children who do not receive equal access to quality education like the majority of Caucasian children (Weinstein, Gregory, & Strambler, 2004).

NAEP defines an achievement gap as two groups having a statistically significant difference in achievement scores (Aud et al., 2013). In an effort to eradicate or counteract many issues that separate impoverished minorities from accessing quality educational opportunities and resources, ESEA was enacted by President Johnson in 1965. The original act was focused primarily on delivering federal aid to help level the educational playing field for poor and minority children (Robelen, 2005). Since this time period, NCLB and The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 have been implemented and continue to provide funding for underachieving schools. Even with the onset of the different laws and acts including *Brown vs. Board of Education* and ESEA, minority students are still performing on a much lower level in reading than their Caucasian peers, hence defining the “race gap” (Bali & Alvarez, 2004; O’Brine & Kritsonis, 2008).

There is a significant body of research regarding the achievement gap in the United States between Caucasian students and students of other ethnicities. According to a special analysis by NCES in 2009 and 2011, African-American and Hispanic students lag behind their Caucasian peers by 20 or more test score points on the NAEP math and reading assessments at fourth and eighth grades. Although the score differential between African-American and Caucasian students narrowed between 1992 and 2007 in fourth-grade math and reading, in eighth-grade math the achievement gap remained (Aud et al., 2010). The NAEP assessment data also highlight the disparity within specified ethnicities with the basis of economically disadvantaged students. Hemphill and Vanneman (2011) reported that

white not eligible (not qualified for free or reduced price meals) students had an average score of 235, while white eligible (qualified for free or reduced price meals) students had a score of 215 resulting in a gap of 20 points. Hispanic not eligible students had an average score of 217, while Hispanic eligible students had a score of 200, resulting in a gap of 16 points (using unrounded numbers), smaller than the gap between White students. (p. 40)

These data show that underachievement in this student population is linked not only to ethnicity but poverty as well. The continuous underachievement of economically disadvantaged students created what Jackson (2005) called “educational malpractice” which she deemed as “a chronically debilitating systemic illness that is crippling the educational system” (p. 1).

Studies regarding the achievement gap have led to inquiries about school composition, race, and ethnicity and the impact these factors have on the achievement gap. Southworth (2010) stated that when comparing North Carolina schools with similar middle levels of poverty but differing racial compositions, student achievement varied. For example, students attending schools that are imbalanced with a high population of Caucasian students had higher EOG test scores than racially balanced schools. Subsequently in this study, students attending schools that had a high number of minority students had lower EOG predicted scores. The imbalance of school population compositions based on race, poverty, and ethnicity in neighborhood schools could be seen as a form of continued inequality in education. The data from this particular study revealed that schools that had a high population of minority students, which usually occurs in neighborhood school settings, are contributing to the achievement gap of minority students. Consequently, the impact of the extraneous factors is substantial

especially when there is a concentrated volume of impoverished students in one educational setting.

More recent research on educating students in urban schools and districts has examined the effect of external and internal factors on student achievement and the subsequent achievement gap. There are several external factors that have proven to affect the achievement of economically disadvantaged students such as low or no motivation, dysfunctional family settings, and poor neighborhood safety and conditions (Whitaker, Graham, Severtson, Furr-Holden, & Latimer, 2012). Armor (2006) also found that there are several other factors that impact the achievement of students prior to enrolling in kindergarten including genetic influences, home and community experiences, cognitively stimulating experiences, and poverty status. Genetic influences are natural influences that are irreversible such as parental IQ, birth weight, and mother's age during child birth (Armor, 2006). Poverty status, home and community experiences, and genetic influences are factors that schooling cannot diminish; however, many early education programs have been established to address the cognitively stimulating experiences of students.

The educational experiences of a child can be improved with early interventions that can alter the impact of poverty on a child's achievement. These programs expose impoverished students to stimulating cognitive experiences through social interactions, vocabulary, and literature rich experiences. One of the major interventions that many school districts have established to alter the experiences of students of poverty is the implementation of early childhood education programs. Early childhood education programs such as "Head Start, the national preschool education program, are designed to prepare children from disadvantaged backgrounds for entrance into formal education in primary grades, tries to bridge the achievement gap" (Anderson et al., 2003, p .2). This

early intervention program and other state-funded programs such as North Carolina's More at Four program are being used to address the various needs of disadvantaged 4-year-olds. High quality early childhood programs for low-income children have common characteristics such as small class sizes, well-trained teachers, a parental involvement component, an age-appropriate curriculum, and a combination of services that address multiple needs of young children and families in poverty (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, & Palacios, 2012). According to Reynolds, Magnuson, and Ou (2006), high quality early childhood education is important because research results have shown that it improves the outcomes and reduces educational achievement disparities, especially for culturally and racially diverse children and low-income children.

For many students of poverty, the impact of high quality early childhood education programs can have a counteracting effect as it can increase positive influences that can overshadow the negative environmental factors that they experience daily. Unfortunately, many impoverished children are more likely to attend programs with teachers who lack subject content knowledge, have lower academic achievement, and are inexperienced (Peske & Haycock, 2006). To combat inequitable educational experience at an early age, many school districts in the United States are using some form of school readiness program specifically to target economically disadvantaged students. Within these programs, economically disadvantaged students enter a school environment early in a prekindergarten program as a strategy to increase the probability of academic success (Conn-Powers, Cross, & Zapf, 2006). As previously mentioned, the state of North Carolina funds a More at Four prekindergarten in an effort to "provide a high quality, comprehensive educational program for at-risk children during the year prior to kindergarten entry" (Peisner-Feinberg & Schaaf, 2007). In order for students of all

backgrounds to enter school ready and prepared to learn, the early intervention programs such as More at Four establish and promote learning achievement especially for students who are economically disadvantaged. The qualifications for children to be eligible for the More at Four early intervention program are “based on family income (up to 300% of Federal poverty status) and other risk factors including LEP, identified disability, a chronic health condition, and developmental educational need” (Peisner-Feinberg & Schaaf, 2007, p. 5).

It is especially important for English Language Learners (ELLs) to experience quality early childhood education intervention as it has the potential to change the tradition of language-minority students performing poorly on literacy assessments (Abedi, 2004; Carlisle, Beeman, Davis, & Spharim, 1999; Garcí'a-Va'zquez, Va'zquez, Lo'pez, & Ward, 1997; Chiappe, Siegel, & Wade-Woolley, 2002; Goldenberg, 2008; Thomas & Collier, 2002). ELLs benefit from high quality early education intervention because it helps them gain vocabulary and general language proficiency, which in turn assist with reading comprehension. A barrier that also challenges the academic achievement of ELLs is the influence of their first language. When an ELL student's first language is extremely different from the English language, especially when their alphabet is very different the English alphabet, the task of learning the second language becomes even more difficult. Consequently, fluency, which is a crucial skill for becoming a proficient reader, also becomes a challenge because in order to build fluency in reading, a student must be able to identify letters and sounds with automaticity (International Reading Association, 2002).

Gormley and Gayer (2005) examined the impact of the Oklahoma pre-k program on students in Tulsa by comparing the test scores of kindergarten students who

participated in the pre-k program in the school year prior to the test and the test scores of students just entering the pre-k program. The results of their study indicated “an increase in cognitive knowledge scores of approximately 0.39 standard deviation, an increase in language scores of approximately 0.38 standard deviation, and an increase in motor skills scores of approximately 0.24 standard deviation” (Gormley & Gayer, 2005, p. 552). Further, Gormley and Gayer found that the Oklahoma pre-k program had the greatest positive effect for Hispanic children, followed by Black children, indicating a potential connection to the purpose of early childhood education which is to minimize the effect of external influences on impoverished minority student achievement.

In another study of the impact of early childhood education programs, Carroll (2012) found a statistically significant difference in the level of kindergarten readiness skills of students who attended a prekindergarten intervention program. In this study, 62.1% of the students who attended the prekindergarten intervention program were deemed “ready” for kindergarten based on the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL-4) school readiness screening. In contrast, 48.5% of the students who did not attend the prekindergarten intervention program were deemed “ready” for kindergarten based on the DIAL-4 assessment. Additionally, Duncan et al. (2007) found that these beginning of school data are important because “math and reading skills at the point of school entry are consistently associated with higher levels of academic performance in later grades” (p. 20).

On the other end of the educational continuum, Swanson (2008) found that high school graduation rates were 15 percentage points lower in the nation’s high poverty schools. Twelve cities, including nine in the Northeast and Midwest, had graduation gaps that exceeded 25 percentage points between Whites and

historically disadvantaged minority groups. Additionally, the contextual effects of concentrated poverty were detrimental to impoverished central city schools as they were more likely to have inadequate resources and funding as well as a less qualified teaching staff compared with schools in suburban school systems (Eaddy et al., 2003; Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003). The continuously underachieving students in these schools struggle to overcome multifaceted barriers even though federal funding is allocated to each school. Southworth (2008) suggested that “although per-pupil expenditures were higher in low-income schools, the additional funding was not used to hire more licensed teachers, teachers with advanced degrees, or to pay the salaries for more experienced teachers” (p. 22). In fact, when compared to schools with less poverty, the schools with higher poverty rates had fewer teachers with advanced degrees and licensed teachers, and they had more beginning teachers. All of these factors including school district expenditures, school district size and geographical location, and teacher quality have been linked to studies that show these factors as contributors to poor student achievement (Southworth, 2010).

Resources or the lack of resources have also surfaced as a factor in the achievement gaps. The lack of sufficient and engaging literature for students has also been included as a factor that hinders positive student achievement in minority students, especially male students. Schwartz (2002) suggested that because the current educational system is composed of a high percentage of female educators, the literature offerings are more engaging and of higher interest to female students. Subsequently, male interest preferences are not taken into consideration, which leaves male students with literary experiences to which they are unable to connect and respond. Thus, many male students

tend to disengage and disconnect from the literary experience, which has a negative effect on their reading proficiency. Consequently, as students disengage and disconnect emotionally from the literary experience, their reading proficiencies and reading attitudes plummet. This theory could create the student perspective that school and education are not relevant and breed boredom and contribute to the collapse of reading motivation for students. This disconnect from educational experiences causes students to dislike school and begin to earn failing grades, subsequently establishing a path to dropping out of school (Gentry, 2007).

Unfortunately, there are several schools in the United States that have not addressed these negative factors in the school setting and as a result have had a large number of students drop out of school. Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, and Fox (2012) labeled schools such as these “drop-out factories” which they defined as “a high school in which twelfth grade enrollment is 60 percent or less of ninth grade enrollment three years earlier” (p. 53). Moreover, this idea of drop-out factories echoed a myriad of concerns that many critics of public education have asserted regarding the lack of preparation of productive societal students. Further, Bridgeland, DiIulio, and Morison (2006) reported that “dropouts are much more likely than their peers who graduate to be unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison, on death row, unhealthy, divorced, and ultimately single parents with children who drop out from high school themselves” (p. 2). Student underachievement as well as other complex factors increases the potential for students to enter the path to prison also known as the “cradle-to-prison” pipeline (Edelman, 2007, para. 3). A step in the right direction in combating some of the external and internal negative factors that affect student achievement in reading for economically disadvantaged students includes implementing innovative approaches for

at-risk students including integrated connections with community partnerships, mentoring, and other relevant world experiences (Edelman, 2007). Aligning these interventions with student needs, both financially and academically, can support student success in reading, a fundamental skill needed for overall success in school (Finkel, 2010).

Teacher Quality

Just as poverty has a large impact on the disparities in the achievement of racial groups and economically disadvantaged students, teacher quality impacts the student achievement gap (Alvarez, 2008). There is an abundance of research on student achievement and within this research there are several factors that influence student achievement including per pupil expenditures, class size, teacher salaries, and teacher quality (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Studying student achievement focuses on measuring the impact of these variables on the achievement or underachievement of students. Darling-Hammond (1999) conducted a multi-state study that examined the impact of teacher qualifications on student achievement. The conclusion of this study was that a full certification and a major in the teaching field was the most significant factor in student achievement outcomes than any other factors including per pupil spending, class size, and teacher salaries. “Research shows that teacher expertise can account for about 40 percent of the variance in students’ learning in reading and mathematics achievement—more than any other single factor, including student background” (Rhoton & Stiles, 2002, p. 1). As previously discussed, student backgrounds and home environment factors can have a significant impact on their life and focus; however, according to Rhoton and Stiles (2002), teacher effectiveness accounts for almost half of the disparity in student achievement. Furthermore, Hanushek (2002) found that students can lose or gain a full

level of achievement in 1 school year based on teacher quality. NCLB addressed teacher quality by ensuring that every child is taught by a highly qualified teacher (Birman et al., 2007). This legislation also required states to set standards for all teachers to be considered highly qualified. The requirements apply to all teachers of core academic subjects and to teachers who provide instruction in these subjects to students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and students with disabilities (Birman et al., 2007).

Teacher quality and the instruction that teachers provide are a crucial part of the school improvement process. To assist with school improvement and reform efforts, NCLB also provides funds that can be used by SEAs for obtaining and retaining qualified teachers (NCLB, 2002). Staffing schools with a high number of minority students and a high number of impoverished students can be challenging, and often these schools are staffed by teachers who are not qualified (Peske & Haycock, 2006). In a study by the Education Trust, students who face more challenges to their educational success are taught by a large number of inexperienced and less qualified teachers (Peske & Haycock, 2006). Inexperienced and less qualified teachers can negatively impact student achievement and is a factor in the continuous achievement gap in the United States. Haycock (1998) concluded that by taking “the simple step of assuring that poor and minority children have teachers of the same quality as other children, about half of the achievement gap would disappear” (p. 2). For this reason, NCLB not only requires “highly qualified” teachers in Title I schools but also allocates funds to assist states with conducting ongoing professional development for all teachers to ensure they are continuously improving in the craft of teaching.

Gagnon and Mattingly (2012) completed an analysis of beginning teachers in different geographical locations, and the findings in this analysis supported Miles and

Baroody's (2011) conclusion regarding the connection between poor student achievement and teacher experience. According to Gagnon and Mattingly, districts that had a high concentration of poor and diverse students also had a higher probability of having a critical percentage of beginning teachers (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012). Additionally, beginning teachers are more common in high poverty and racially diverse schools. Likewise, large urban districts were the most likely to have a high percentage of teachers new to the profession when districts had a diverse and average impoverished population (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012). Further, having a large number of beginning teachers may also result in having little to no resources to meet beginning teacher instructional and professional development needs, thus creating high turnover rates in an already fragile educational environment where students have negative environmental factors that lessen their academic progress.

Teacher turnover is also a major concern in schools with a high number of minority and economically disadvantaged schools, not just with beginning teachers but with experienced teachers as well. Teacher turnover rates can be high, particularly in schools serving economically disadvantaged students, minority students, and low achieving student populations (Guin, 2004). Within the United States, many studies have confirmed that about 30% of new teachers leave the teaching profession within 5 years, and the rate is 50% higher in high-poverty schools as compared to more affluent ones (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1999). Teacher turnover has been linked over the last few years as having a negative influence on student achievement. In a study conducted by Guin (2004), 66 elementary schools in a large urban district were studied to determine the relationship between teacher turnover and the achievement of students in reading and math. This study clearly indicated that

schools with higher turnover also had lower student achievement.

Teacher Professional Development

There is a considerable amount of research on teacher quality as well as the professional development and training received by teachers, especially in the beginning years of teaching. Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) reviewed several studies and conducted a meta-analysis to determine the effects of professional development on student achievement and the results were profound. This report examined over 1,300 studies that theoretically addressed the impact of teacher professional development on student achievement. This report confirmed that schools with a large amount of professional development that included follow-up sessions to support teachers showed a positive and significant effect on student achievement (Yoon et al., 2007). Professional development can have a positive impact on student achievement when it is designed, implemented, and evaluated to meet the needs of specific teachers and their educational setting (Guskey & Huberman, 1995).

According to Kedzior and Fifield (2004), there are 10 characteristics of high quality teacher professional development including “content-focused, extended, collaborative, part of daily work, ongoing, coherent and integrated, inquiry-based, teacher-driven, informed by student performance, and self-evaluative” (p. 2). Reeves (2003) and his work with 90/90/90 schools has given the educational system hope in the fact that effective teaching professional development and implementation of learned teaching practices can negate many of the extraneous factors that affect the achievement of minority and economically disadvantaged students. The 90/90/90 schools, a term coined by Reeves, is one that refers to schools that have 90% or more of the students eligible for free and reduced lunch, 90% or more of the student population consisting of

ethnic minority groups, and 90% or more of the student population meet the district or state academic standards in reading or another area. This term has been used in more recent studies involving high poverty schools and high student achievement, but the “suggestion that effective teaching practices can mitigate the impact of poverty remains controversial” (Reeves, 2003 p. 1). In other words, there are critics that question whether quality teaching practices can diminish the impact of poverty on student achievement. Even though there is controversy over the 90/90/90 research results, it is difficult to ignore the results found in this research study which showed that high poverty, high minority population schools achieved success with 90% or more of their student population at or above proficiency in reading. This research by Reeves included “more than 130,000 students in over 228 buildings in the inner city, suburban, and rural areas” (p. 1). The common characteristics of these high achieving schools were

- clear curriculum choices,
- a focus on academic achievement,
- frequent assessment of student progress with multiple opportunities for improvement
- a focus on academic achievement,
- an emphasis on nonfiction writing,
- collaborative scoring of student work. (Reeves, 2003, p. 3)

Reeves’s (2003) research regarding 90/90/90 schools also included the importance of professional development and application of acquired knowledge from the professional development to positively impact teaching and learning in the classroom. The 90/90/90 school case study has been a driving force of evidence that schools with

high minority and impoverished populations can have successful academic performance. Within this case study, Reeves clarified that there is no one special and perfect reading program that will ensure student achievement; it is “the professional practices employed by teachers and leaders in the building” (p. 19).

Additionally, the West Virginia Department of Education studied the effects of professional development on 30 schools that historically had a high percentage of underachieving and economically disadvantaged students. This study reviewed the impact of Closing the Achievement Gap Professional Development Demonstration Schools (CAG schools) on the academic achievement of their students. This study began in 2004 and continued through 2008. This study was a demonstration project and the purpose was to develop and implement strategies that would increase student achievement. The program used a school improvement coaching approach which assigned experienced educators, called CAG liaisons, and they worked to establish standards developed by the West Virginia Department of Education. These standards included “bringing focus, leading change, developing accountability, building capacity, creating community, and growing professionally” (White, Hixson, Hammer, Smith, and D’Brot, 2010, p. 6). These standards guided the professional development of this study and were used in coaching teachers to improve the instructional practices of teachers in CAG schools. This study concluded in finding that “all groups under examination in CAG schools (i.e., all groups combined and the Black, economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities subgroups), exhibited higher mean scale scores at the conclusion of the program than at its inception in 2004” (White et al., 2010, p. v).

The growth in this study was ascertained in both reading and math and most of the CAG schools exhibited a steady upward gain in average scale scores while the non-

CAG comparison schools exhibited erratic or plateaued performance. Moreover, in the review of studies regarding teacher professional development and student achievement, the Institute of Educational Sciences found that “teachers who received substantial professional development, an average of 49 hours per year can boost their student’s achievement by about 21 percentile points” (Yoon et al., 2007, p. 1). These findings have a huge implication for all stakeholders involved in increasing student achievement especially for economically disadvantaged and minority students.

Balanced Literacy

The history of previous reading instructional frameworks and models are consistent points of evidence that there is not one perfect way to teach students to read. According to Cunningham and Allington, (1999), the paradigm shift continuously swings back and forth because there is a search to find one specific solution to teaching children to read. Subsequently, this school of thought refutes a known fact which is doing the same thing for every child and expecting the same result will be unsuccessful because human beings are innately different and possess different abilities and personalities (Cunningham & Allington, 1999). Accordingly, addressing individual student needs in reading instruction is suggested to be the key to creating proficient readers (Valencia & Buly, 2004). As a result, many educators are shifting their language arts curriculum focus to the balanced literacy framework.

According to Blair-Larsen and Williams (1999), balanced literacy is a framework that encompasses components that address individual student needs to promote student reading success. Balanced literacy is an approach through which the teacher combines individual and whole group instruction, genuine children’s literature on student reading levels, writing, and student selected reading. It is not just a balance of phonics and whole

language but of many components that have been part of both ways of teaching. In other words, balanced literacy combines previous reading and writing research with practice to provide the best possible literacy instruction (Blair-Larsen & Williams, 1999). The balanced literacy instructional framework uses reading instruction to build on the writing instruction and vice versa. Mackh (2003) proposed that literacy is most successfully taught when reading and writing skills are meaningful and interconnected and not taught separately.

Balanced literacy is defined as a framework for literacy learning "which includes the following components: reading aloud (reading to children), shared reading (reading with children), guided reading (reading by children), independent reading (reading by children), responses, shared writing, modeled writing, language experience, and children's writing" (Batzle, 1994, p. 17). There are several different balanced literacy frameworks and one specific balanced literacy framework is TCRWP. The TCRWP framework of balanced literacy components include shared reading, read-alouds, guided reading, word work, and independent reading. Within the TCRWP framework of balanced literacy, there are two 1-hour instructional time periods which include a reading workshop and writing workshop block. Another framework is the Four Block balanced literacy model. The Four Block balanced literacy model encompasses the five components outlined by the National Reading Panel as the essential components of effective reading frameworks which are phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2009). The Four Blocks literacy model is a framework that incorporates the different components of beginning reading daily (Cunningham & Hall, 1998). The literacy components used in the Four Block literacy framework include the following: guided reading, self-selected

reading, writing, and working with words (Cunningham & Hall, 1998). Within this instructional framework, educators also have the opportunity to monitor individual student progress via individual and group conferencing. Likewise, students also receive different types of writing instruction and confer with the teacher regarding their individual reading and writing progress on a consistent basis. These two frameworks are very similar in nature but the overall structure is different. TCRWP allows for fluid transitions in and out of each component, whereas the Four Block model has separate times sectioned for each component of literacy.

An urban school district in Illinois compared three school sites that embodied three different groups of students with varying ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and student proficiency levels in reading. These schools implemented balanced literacy, the Four Block model, within these sites with various demographic data. Site A “was predominantly Caucasian with Asian, African-American, and Hispanic backgrounds represented by approximately 3% of the student population. Site A was a parochial school in a Midwest community” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 7). The economically disadvantaged student population at Site A was 17%. The students at Site B were “81% African-American, 10% Caucasian, 9% Hispanic, and .3% Asian Pacific” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 10). The percentage of low-income students was 99%. The percentage of Limited English Proficient students was 6%. Site B had an attendance rate of 93%, with 40% student mobility and 8% of the students were chronically truant. The student population at Site C consisted of 498 students in kindergarten through fourth grade. The ethnicities included were “80% African-American, 18% Caucasian, 1% Hispanic, 1% Asian Pacific” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 12). The mobility rate of the students at Site C was 45%, and the truancy rate was 4%. This site received Title I funding to support the

school with additional staff, materials, and resources due to the high population of economically disadvantaged students. Although the study did not give specific information regarding the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, the study shared that the community that surrounded Site C includes family populations where 60% of households earned less than \$25,000.

After an intervention of the Four Block balanced literacy instruction at all three sites as action research in this study, the student performance results varied both in reading levels and comprehension levels. The reading levels are categorical readability stages that modulated as reading skills developed. Students were given a pretest and posttest in reading and comprehension to gauge the growth in both areas. Site A experienced a mean increase of six reading levels, Site B eight reading levels, and Site C seven reading levels (Johnson et al., 2003, pp. 49-51). Additionally, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) comprehension test that students were given was assessed by a two-category scale: adequate comprehension and very good comprehension (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 52). Totaled scores of 16-21 were considered “adequate comprehension,” and totaled scores of 22-24 were considered “very good comprehension” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 52). Although, all three sites experienced mixed results in each category, Site A was the only school that experienced an increase of students who progressed from adequate comprehension to very good comprehension. Moreover, Site A had 13% of their tested student population score in the very good comprehension category on the posttest, while Site B and Site C had no students to score in this category on the posttest. Johnson et al. (2003) stated that when analyzing the improvements in student reading abilities, additional benefits were noted qualitatively that were not displayed in the quantitative data. Researchers noted while observing that “students were much more

motivated to read” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 56). They attributed much of this to the “high level of success students obtained by reading books at their independent level” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 56). Johnson et al. proposed that by

teaching additional reading and comprehension strategies the students began to feel more successful which led them to be more motivated to read increasingly difficult material. Exposure to various genres on a daily basis increased their familiarity with the world of words and the confidence in their own ability to learn to read. (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 56)

It is also important to note that the researchers concluded that “shared reading and writing activities provided valuable modeling for teaching reading and writing strategies.

Individual and small group reading time gave students an opportunity to practice their new independent reading skills” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 56).

Data from this action research study indicated that the schools with high minority and economically disadvantaged student populations, Sites B and C, experienced an increase in student average reading levels, but their student comprehension levels were lower than their counterparts. Figures 2, 3, and 4 show the growth index of each site. It is evident that although there was overall growth at each site with the balanced literacy implementation, Site B and Site C schools with high minority and economically disadvantaged populations had a considerably smaller amount of growth in comparison to Site A which was a school that had a low minority and economically disadvantaged population.

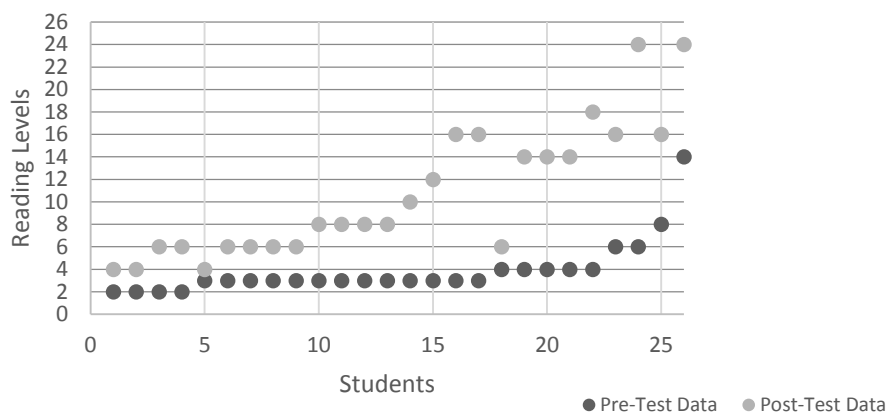


Figure 2. Site A Reading Levels. Adapted from Johnson et al. (2003, p. 49).

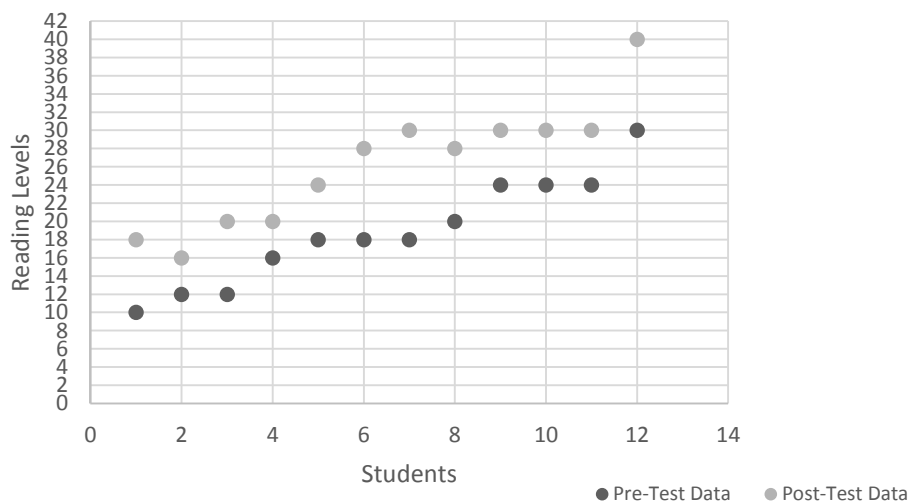


Figure 3. Site B Reading Levels. Adapted from Johnson et al. (2003, p. 50).

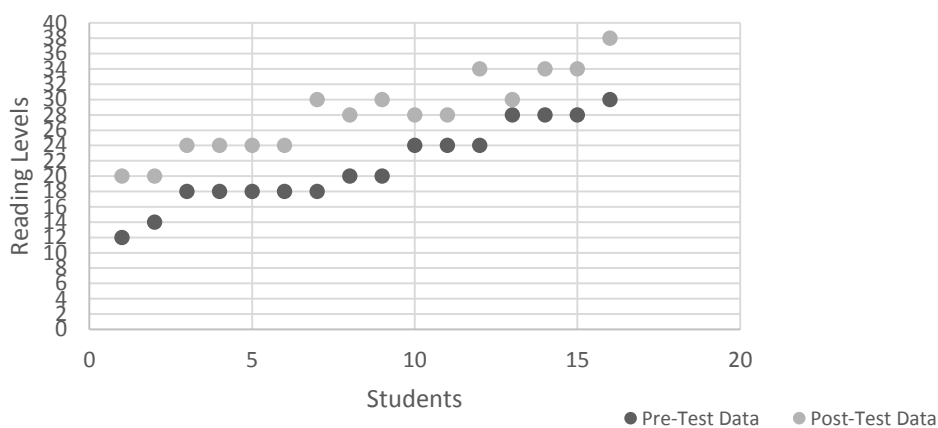


Figure 4. Site C Reading Levels. Adapted from Johnson et al. (2003, p. 51).

This action research study by Johnson et al. (2003) and its findings serve as a basis for this study on the impact of the TCRWP balanced literacy model on the reading proficiency levels of students who are economically disadvantaged.

TCRWP Framework of Balanced Literacy

Balanced literacy is a framework that combines the five essential components outlined in the National Reading Panel Report: Teaching Children to Read in a deliberate way (Kirzenbaum, 2002). The TCRWP framework of balanced literacy includes shared reading, read-alouds, guided reading, word work, and independent reading. There are several different variations of the balanced literacy framework, and the current study specifically focuses on the TCRWP framework of balanced literacy.

The shared reading component of TCRWP is reading that takes place with the students and the teacher reading aloud together from a shared text. During this component, emergent readers have the opportunity to learn and practice proficient reader skills simultaneously (Elsea, 2001). The interactive read-aloud is the “lifeblood of the TCRWP classrooms” (TCRWP, n.d.a, para. 15). During this time of literacy instruction,

teachers model proficient reader strategies through the think-aloud strategy. Ariail and Albright (2005) found that reading aloud to students increased student accessibility to text, increased motivation and engagement in learning, promoted positive attitudes toward reading, and increased fluency and background knowledge in content.

The guided reading component is what Soto Kile (2006) proposed as “the heart of reading instruction” (p. 6). This component is the portion of literacy time where the teacher meets with a small group of students who have common reading behaviors and usually share a reading level range. During guided reading groups, teachers support readers in transitioning to new levels of text complexity, and this small group time allows each classroom teacher to be responsive to individual student needs (TCRWP, n.d.a, para. 52).

Within the TCRWP framework of balanced literacy, there is a block of time called independent reading when students select books that are of interest to them that are also on their reading level which increases their fluency and motivation to read. Motivation and fluency are keys in developing a love of reading in students and creating connections in reading so that student reading proficiency and comprehension levels increase (Mackh, 2003, p. 62). Within the TCRWP framework, students are given access to texts that they can read independently without frustration and scaffolding. Reading fluently means that the student has at least 96% fluency, comprehension, and accuracy within that level of text prior to moving to the next level (TCRWP, n.d.a).

Additionally, students also engage in word work during the other components of TCRWP. There is not a specific direct instruction phonics component taught as a stand-alone component. Students have several opportunities to acquire the reading foundational skills during times such as word work, during guided reading, writing, and

other times during the 2-hour literacy block. The foundational skills are the concepts that children must learn to become proficient in decoding words through the blending of sounds in words. Over the years, researchers have studied and established a general development of how children cultivate these skills (Adams, 1996; Ehri & McCormick 1998; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Vandervelden & Siegel, 1995).

Historically, foundational reading skills have been taught through direct explicit instruction; however, the TCRWP philosophy for student acquisition of foundational skills is through literary experiences such as word work. Kasten and Clarke (1989) conducted a study regarding the implementation of phonics instruction with reading activities (word work) versus direct instructional practices in phonics. This study included word work as its sole foundational skill acquisition method, and the results of this study showed that the experimental classes of students who acquired foundational skills via word work performed better than the direct instruction implementation group. In fact, not only was their knowledge base much greater, they also demonstrated a greater level of enthusiasm for books and stories (Kasten & Clarke, 1989).

Within the balanced literacy instructional framework, educators have the opportunity to monitor individual student progress during the conferencing and guided reading components of the framework. Another influential key is teacher knowledge and monitoring of individual student progress. Lessons in both reading and writing, guided by the teacher, address the needs of many learners based on teacher observation and reading assessment data. This instruction is modified as the year progresses and as the teacher employs assessment data to meet the needs of the learners in a particular classroom (Mackh, 2003).

Writing is also a major component of TCRWP. Within the literacy block, students also receive different types of writing instruction and conference with the teacher regarding their individual reading and writing on a consistent basis. Teachers begin writing workshop lessons with a mini lesson that teaches a writing strategy that will help students move independently through the writing process. Within this framework, writing stamina is of great importance; and as a result, there are long periods of time where students are engaged in writing at least 4 days a week for a minimum of 45 minutes. The TCRWP curriculum is inclusive of units of study in both reading and writing, and each unit of study provides students with opportunities to move through the different stages of the reading and writing process (TCRWP, n.d.a).

There is limited research on the TCRWP balanced literacy model and the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. The current study was a program evaluation of the TCRWP balanced literacy framework and has added to this body of work through an examination of the impact of the TCRWP framework on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students.

Program Evaluation Design

Program evaluation is an evaluative study that is designed and conducted to assess an object or program's merit and worth (Stufflebeam, 2003). A program evaluation is a critical component of developing and evaluating a program because of the level of inquiry and findings. Stufflebeam (2003) suggested that a program evaluation includes (a) determining relative or absolute standards that would determine quality based on specified criteria and standards; (b) collecting relevant information; and (c) applying the standards to determine the value, usability, and effectiveness. Program evaluations tend to lend themselves to endorsing and heightening the usefulness of the evaluated program

in connection with its envisioned purposes (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011).

Program evaluation standards. The Joint Committee on the Standards for Education Evaluation issued a set of 30 standards that were considered to be a guide to conducting evaluations and judge the reliability of educational programs, projects, and materials. These Standards for Evaluations of Educational Programs, Projects, and Materials were issued in 1980 and published in 1981 by the McGraw-Hill Company (Stufflebeam & Madaus, 1983). The Joint Committee aligned the 30 standards based on the four components of utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. The utility component establishes the probability of the evaluation serving the informational need of users. Feasibility establishes the expectation that the evaluation will be realistic, sensible, and frugal. The propriety component institutes the expectancy that the evaluation will be conducted ethically, legally, and with regard to all parties involved in the study. The final component of accuracy establishes the prospect that the evaluation will contain and deliver enough information to empower stakeholders to establish the worth and merit of the program or object being evaluated (Stufflebeam & Madaus, 1983).

Additionally, Stufflebeam (1999) suggested the approach endorsed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation which is to evaluate the program based on accuracy, propriety, utility, and feasibility. The Joint Committee on the Standards for Education Evaluation recommended the CIPP model for use in conducting program evaluation, as this model aligns well with the evaluation standards of accuracy, propriety, utility, and feasibility (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004, 2011; Stufflebeam, 2003).

TCRWP was guided by the CIPP evaluation model which provided a framework for implementation and replication of components (Rogers, 2000).

CIPP evaluation model. The main focal point and purpose of the CIPP

evaluation model is to discover value. The value provides the foundation for developing the specified evaluative criteria for a program. The criteria coupled with stakeholder questions create the informational needs of the study. This criteria and questioning provide a guide for selecting evaluation instruments and interpretation standards (Stufflebeam, 2000b).

The CIPP evaluation model is a comprehensive framework for conducting and reporting findings of an evaluation. Stufflebeam (2000c) indicated the following about the CIPP evaluation model:

CIPP model's core concepts are context, input, process, and product evaluation.

Context evaluations assess needs, problems, and opportunities as bases for defining goals and priorities and judging the significance of outcomes. Input evaluation assesses alternative approaches to meeting needs as a means of planning programs and allocating resources. Process evaluations assess the implementation of plans to guide activities and later to help explain outcomes.

Product evaluations identify intended and unintended outcomes both to help keep the process on track and determine effectiveness. (p. 279)

Stufflebeam (2000b) stated that the main purpose of employing four interrelated types of evaluation is to allow evaluators the opportunity to conduct evaluations that will initiate, develop, and implement quality programs.

The CIPP model is categorized as an oriented evaluation model that is used as an accountability model and suggests impartial bearing in the process of evaluation.

Stufflebeam (2000c) also suggested that “fundamentally, objectivist evaluations are intended, over time, to lead to conclusions that are correct—not correct or incorrect relative to an evaluator's or other party's predilections, position, preferences, standing, or

point of view” (p. 281). This creates an unbiased evaluative environment to gain the purest information regarding a program or object.

The CIPP model is designed to provide both formative and summative evaluation which assists as a strategy for improving and proving (Stufflebeam, 2000a, 2003).

The CIPP evaluations are formative when they proactively key the collection and reporting of information to improvement. They are summative when they look back on completed project or program activities or performances of services, pull together and sum up the value meanings of relevant information, and focus on accountability. (Stufflebeam, 2003, pp. 34-35)

The CIPP model provides the opportunity to generate several key questions to examine and identify recommendations for modifying and improving all parts of a program that is being evaluated (Stufflebeam, 2003). Once the CIPP model has been employed, there are four determinations that are made. The first determination is the identification of needs and defining objectives that are pertinent to the program. This is where planning decisions can be made. The second is the identification of accessible resources and effective strategies. This is the phase where structuring planning takes place. Third, determining the efficacy of implementation including any barriers that may exist and possible revisions for strengthening the program are also evaluated. Implementation decisions take place at this phase. Last, recognition of the degree to which the evaluation results impact all parties involved can be evaluated. This is where the decision to continue the use of the program should be made (Stufflebeam, 2003).

The strength of each of the four components and the suggested purity of results impacted the application of the CIPP evaluation model selection for the TCRWP evaluation. In this study, TCRWP is complex in nature as it includes the different

components of reading and writing; and thus, a program sequence model was utilized. A model of the program sequence and its connection CIPP evaluation model was used to support the description of the study and allows for replication of this study (Rogers, 2000).

Mixed study methodology in program evaluation. This program evaluation was conducted as a mixed-methods evaluation comprised of quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data includes semi-structured interviews of administrative staff and teachers at each study site as well as unidentifiable observation data. Semi-structured interviews were utilized to get additional insight into the implementation process of this framework (McNeil, Newman, & Steihauser, 2005; Wengraf, 2001). A semi-structured interview is when an interview is conducted with several different individuals, one-on-one, and the questions are the same for each individual, but the evaluator may vary the questions or explore them in more detail, depending upon answers given by the participant (Lichtman, 2006; Roybal, 2011). The balanced literacy survey was collected and analyzed to gain information regarding the implementation of TCRWP at each site. The quantitative data included the predicted student reading scores and actual student reading scores on the ELA EOG assessment from EVAAS. These scores were from the 2013-2014 school year through the 2014-2015 school year. TCRWP's effectiveness was evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively to measure and understand the level to which this program impacts the reading skills of economically disadvantaged students.

TCRWP has not had an external evaluative research study completed to assess its effectiveness on the achievement of students who are economically disadvantaged. As a result, there is minimal information on the effectiveness of this program's impact on economically disadvantaged student reading achievement and the impact of

implementation on student performance. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of TCRWP using the CIPP model now provides additional information for all stakeholders, especially schools with a large number of economically disadvantaged students (Stufflebeam, 2003).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of TCRWP, specifically as it relates to increasing reading proficiency for economically disadvantaged students. Stufflebeam's (2003) revised CIPP design was used to evaluate the impact of TCRWP on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged third-grade students at two different schools by evaluating the program with four separate components: context, input, process, and product. This program evaluation utilized all four components of the CIPP model and will be evaluated based on the checklist form Stufflebeam (2002). The program was evaluated with respect to student mastery of fourth- and fifth-grade CCSS for ELA. This mastery level was evaluated based on the state-required READY ELA EOG assessment.

Evaluation Questions

1. To what extent did the program goals address the assessed needs? (context)
2. How well aligned were the strategic plan components to the assessed needs?
(input)
3. To what extent was the program implemented based on the initial design?
(process)
4. To what extent is the reading proficiency of economically disadvantaged students impacted by TCRWP? (product)

Chapter 3: Methodology

Statement of the Problem

There is a limited amount of research on TCRWP especially in settings with a large population of minority and impoverished students. TCRWP was fully implemented at two urban K-5 schools in North Carolina in 2013; however, it had not been evaluated until this program evaluation was conducted. Qualitative data were obtained by using guiding questions from fourth- and fifth-grade teachers of the tested students and the administrative staff at each school. A TCRWP balanced literacy survey was utilized in the quantitative data collection. Quantitative data from fourth- and fifth-grade students based on student growth indicated by each student's predicted reading score versus their actual reading score on the state-required ELA EOG assessment were also utilized.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of TCRWP, specifically as it relates to increasing reading proficiency for economically disadvantaged students. Additionally, this study examined the implementation of TCRWP and the fidelity of the program implementation on student outcomes. Stufflebeam's (2003) revised CIPP design was used to evaluate the impact of TCRWP on economically disadvantaged students by evaluating the program with four separate components: context, input, process, and product. To evaluate the output of the program, a dependent t test was used to see if there was a statistically significant difference in fourth- and fifth-grade student predicted scores and actual scores on the state-required ELA EOG assessment. These data were used as the growth measure for evaluating the output of the program after the first and second year of TCRWP implementation. To evaluate the context, input, and process components, interviews were conducted and a Likert-scale

literacy survey was administered to teaching staff and school administrators. The criterion used to determine agreement was set at 70% for both the interviews and the survey results and was used in the current study to evaluate the context, input, and processes of TCRWP implementation. The 70% criterion was chosen as an overall agreement since TCRWP does not have a prescriptive implementation tool; however, this criterion would allow for an overall commonality based on the number of participants. Nunnally (1978) is often associated with the assertion that instruments used in basic research should have reliability of .70 or better (p. 245). To address the goals and objectives of the program, resource acquisition and use (human and capital), and implementation and fidelity of TCRWP, the CIPP components were analyzed through mixed-methods data analysis.

The mixed-methods study design is noted by several prominent researchers as a design that unites two powerful approaches to data collection and analysis (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006; Creswell, 2003, 2009, 2012; Greene, 2006). The use of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis offers an intense and vivid eye into this evaluation that will be strengthened through the inclusion of narrative language (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). To ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the TCRWP program and to contribute to the body of work regarding effective instructional practices of reading instruction with economically disadvantaged students, the mixed-methods design was employed.

The research evaluation questions are based on the four main components of the evaluation from the CIPP model. These questions are listed below with the corresponding CIPP component and were the basis of the current program theory which is the theoretical framework. In order to determine the impact of TCRWP on the

economically disadvantaged student population at School A and School B, the following questions were established to examine the implementation and evaluate the overall program.

Evaluation Questions

1. To what extent did the program goals address the assessed needs? (context)
2. How well aligned were the strategic plan components to the assessed needs?
(input)
3. To what extent was the program implemented based on the initial design?
(process)
4. To what extent is the reading academic performance of economically disadvantaged students impacted by TCRWP? (product)

Procedures

This mixed-methods program evaluation is inclusive of several pieces of data that were analyzed and triangulated to better understand the impact of the research problem. The TCRWP Evaluation Strategy Chart (see Table 9) was established to present a visual display of the components of this program evaluation (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011).

Table 9

TCRWP Evaluation Strategy Matrix

Evaluation Question	Type of data to collect	Method of data collection	Information Source	Analysis Procedures	Interpretation procedures and criteria
1. To what extent did the program goals address the assessed needs (Context)	Qualitative	Semi-Structured Interviews	Teachers Administrators	Thematic Content Analysis	At least 70% of the participants would agree that the program goals met the assessed needs.
	Quantitative	Survey	Administrators Teachers	Frequency Distribution Table	
2. How well aligned were the strategic plan components to the assessed needs? (Input)	Qualitative	Semi-Structured Interviews	Teachers Administrators	Thematic Content Analysis	At least 70% of the participants would agree that the strategic plan met the assessed needs.
3. To what extent was the program implemented based on the initial design? (Process)	Qualitative	Semi-Structured Interviews	Teachers Administrators	Thematic Content Analysis	At least 70% of the participants would agree that the balanced literacy components were implemented with fidelity.
	Quantitative	Survey	Administrators Teachers	Frequency Distribution Table	
4. To what extent was the reading proficiency of economically disadvantaged students impacted by the TCRWP? (Product)	Quantitative	Student Achievement Data	Accountability database	2 paired samples t-tests with descriptive statistics for 4 th and 5 th grade students at School A using the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 data. 2 paired samples t-tests with descriptive statistics for 4 th and 5 th grade students at School B using the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 data.	The null hypothesis in this study for both School A and School B is that as a result of the implementation of the TCRWP, there will not be a statistically significant difference in students' predicted scores versus actual scores in ELA.

Evaluation design. A mixed-method, more specifically a convergent mixed-method, design was employed in this study and was selected for the purpose of obtaining a better understanding of the research problem. The rationale for this design was “that one data collection form supplies strengths to offset the weaknesses of the other form, and that a more complete understanding of a research problem results from collecting both quantitative and qualitative data” (Creswell, 2012, p. 540). Neither quantitative nor qualitative approaches alone would be sufficient in explaining the impact of TCRWP on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students because of the multifaceted factors of poverty that influence the overall achievement of economically disadvantaged students. The convergent mixed-methods design is the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously with each dataset analyzed separately. The results of each dataset were then compared to determine if the dataset results support or contradict one another (Creswell, 2012). In the current study, there was a dual comparative analysis in that there was an analysis of economically disadvantaged student performance prior to and after the implementation of TCRWP based on their predicted and actual reading achievement scores. There was also a comparative analysis of the qualitative data gained from the semi-structured interviews, quantitative data from a Likert TCRWP balanced literacy survey, and the quantitative economically disadvantaged student performance data to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of TCRWP on economically disadvantaged students.

Data Collection Instruments and Analysis

Quantitative. For the quantitative portion of the study, fourth and fifth grade economically disadvantaged student predicted performance data and actual performance data from the state-required READY reading EOG assessment were collected and

analyzed. The analysis conducted was a paired *t* test of fourth- and fifth-grade students' predicted versus actual reading achievement scores after the first and second year of TCRWP implementation. The analysis of these data was utilized to determine if there was a statistically significant difference ($p=.05$) in student reading achievement data in ELA prior to and after 1 and 2 years of implementation of TCRWP. More specifically, two paired sample *t* tests with descriptive statistics were conducted using fourth and fifth grade predicted and actual student achievement data for School A and School B for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. The quantitative data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Packaging for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Additionally, administrators and teachers participated in the collection of quantitative data through a Likert TCRWP survey (Appendix A) about balanced literacy, and these data were analyzed to assess whether the implementation was aligned to the initial design by gaining frequency information and teacher beliefs regarding the balanced literacy model based on a rating scale. The Likert survey data were analyzed and interpreted to answer evaluation questions 1 and 3, and the paired samples *t*-test data were analyzed and interpreted to answer evaluation question 4. These data were collected and analyzed by the researcher to gather information about the context, process, and product of TCRWP.

Qualitative. For the qualitative portion of the study, administrators and teachers participated in the collection of data through semi-structured interviews. These data were collected and analyzed by the researcher. The semi-structured interview questions were asked by the evaluator to the administrative staff (see Appendix B) and teachers (see Appendix C) who were implementing TCRWP to gather information about the context, input, process components of TCRWP. Semi-structured interviews were conducted one on one to provide an environment for authentic qualitative data collection regarding the

implementation process. Ryan, Coughlan, and Cronin (2009) posited that one-on-one interviews offer

the researcher the opportunity to interpret non-verbal cues through observation of body language, facial expression and eye contact and thus may be seen to enhance the interviewers understanding of what is being said. To this end it permits the researcher to probe and explore hidden meanings and understanding. (p. 310)

Kaplowitz and Hoehn (2001) proposed that “individual interviews do lead to participants sharing socially sensitive information with the enumerator that participants in focus groups do not reveal” (p. 245). This instrument was designed to collect narrative data from the administrative staff and teachers as they were involved in the planning and implementation of the program. A thematic analysis was conducted to disaggregate core themes. The coding methods are “analytic types and . . . do not necessarily follow that the researcher moves from open through axial to selective coding in a strict, consecutive manner” (Pandit, 1996, p. 10). Further, the semi-structured interview data analysis followed Strauss and Corbin’s (1988) approach of repeatedly reading the data until themes are obtained. The core themes from the semi-structured interviews addressed Research Questions 1, 2, and 3.

Participants. This study sought to understand the effect of TCRWP balanced literacy instruction on the reading proficiency of economically disadvantaged students. Therefore, a representative sample, a subset of a statistical population that appropriately reflects the total participant population of fourth- and fifth-grade students during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, were used to represent the economically disadvantaged population of School A and School B. School A had a total economically disadvantaged student population of approximately 86%. School B had a total

economically disadvantaged student population of approximately 82% based on their free and reduced price meal status from the school district database. There was no student contact in this study, as student participation is strictly via economically disadvantaged student reading proficiency assessment data collection. Since it was reported that the current study sites, School A and School B, have an approximate 86% and 82% population of economically disadvantaged students, the sample size is relatively representative of this population. The sample included economically disadvantaged student data from fourth- and fifth-grade students after the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years at School A and School B.

Administrative and teacher participants were selected based solely on their implementation of TCRWP from 2013-2014 through the 2014-2015 school year. The administrators and teachers who completed the informed consent (see Appendix D) indicated their willingness to participate in this study. The principal signatures on the site-based research approval form (see Appendix E) confirmed the research site participation. The participation of the teachers and administrators in the semi-structured interviews yielded narrative data to add qualitative support to this mixed-methods evaluation. A 70% agreement criterion was chosen as an overall agreement since TCRWP does not have a prescriptive implementation tool; however, this criterion would allow for an overall commonality based on the number of participants. The participants were offered a \$5 gift card for their time and participation in the semi-structured interview and in the TCRWP balanced literacy survey.

Summary

TCRWP was implemented at two urban schools in North Carolina in 2013-2014, and has yet to be evaluated. Therefore, the impact of the program, specifically on the

reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students, was unknown. The purpose of this study was to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of TCRWP and its impact on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. This study was designed to answer the evaluation questions and measure the impact of this program through the collection of substantial data for fourth and fifth grade economically disadvantaged students. The established criterion and basis for evaluation were CCSS for language arts which were assessed by the North Carolina READY EOG assessment in third through fifth grade. The study participants included the school administrative staff and teachers as well as student participation solely through data collection via student predicted versus actual reading performance data. The evaluative study provided the opportunity for examination of TCRWP utilizing the four components of the CIPP model. The four evaluation questions in this study are aligned to the context, input, process, and product components of the CIPP model respectively.

To examine the context, input, process, and product components of the CIPP model, a mixed-methods approach to data collection was used; thus, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to fully examine TCRWP and the impact on the student reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. The program implementation as well as the alignment of the program components to the needs of the student population was also evaluated through this effort. Semi-structured interviews and survey data were utilized to collect qualitative data. These qualitative data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, which is the continuous review of data for patterns and themes. The criterion for the qualitative data set in this study was 70% agreement by participants. An analysis of quantitative data was also conducted by comparing predicted student reading achievement scores to actual student reading achievement scores of

fourth- and fifth-grade students on the EOG ELA state assessment. This was done through a paired samples *t* test with descriptive statistics for School A and School B for both the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Assessment data from the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years were included to evaluate student achievement after 1 and 2 years of the TCRWP implementation. A mixed-methods approach was utilized in this program evaluation to compare and analyze the qualitative narrative information and quantitative student achievement data. This design was selected because it incorporates the essential strength of each approach (Creswell, 2003, 2012). Additionally, the evaluator also triangulated the data through an analysis of core themes during the thematic content analysis of the semi-structured interviews. These themes and their relation to the corresponding quantitative student reading achieve data and TCRWP balanced literacy survey results were interpreted to answer each evaluation question. Creswell (2012) stated that “triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (p. 259). Triangulation “ensures that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, or processes. In this way, it encourages the author to develop a report that is both accurate and credible” (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). Procedures in this study were carried out with care and focus throughout the implementation to ensure ethical execution.

Evaluative Study Assumptions

The following is a list of assumptions by the evaluator based on the reported information during data collection.

1. All participants reported accurate information during the semi-structured interviews.

2. The quantitative data submitted by the school district was accurate.
3. The economically disadvantaged demographic student population data were accurate.

Limitations

This purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of TCRWP on the reading performance of economically disadvantaged students. Possible threats to the internal and external validity in this design included that the quantitative data were a representative sample of economically disadvantaged students; due to the National School Lunch Act regulations, specific economically disadvantaged student information could not be verified (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d.; Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.a). Further, the current study only compared the predicted and actual reading scores of economically disadvantaged students in Grades 4 and 5, not a cohort of students. Equally, the current study sample was inclusive of only fourth- and fifth-grade students which is not representative of all students tested at each school site but is a representative sample of the economically disadvantaged student population of the tested population at each study site. Additionally, students who did not have two scores each year were not included in the study. Likewise, another limitation could be the limited number of teachers available for involvement in this study due to teacher and administrative turnover. Also, teacher and administrative participation in each data collection tool was voluntary; therefore, there were a limited number of participants in the surveys and semi-structured interviews.

Limitations of this study also include the fact that the TCRWP initiative was implemented with a TCWRP supervisory model. That is to say that TCRWP personnel visited the school site several times throughout the 2013-2014 school year but were not

consistently a part of the implementation process to ensure implementation fidelity. A possible limitation of this research could be that although the teachers were all highly qualified as defined by the State of North Carolina regarding Title I schools, the level of instruction might have been extremely different as far as the effectiveness of the balanced literacy instruction. Further, some students may have received additional reading interventions in or outside of the school setting that were not reported and may have impacted student achievement data. Additionally, outside factors that might affect student performance (e.g., family support and individual intelligence) were not addressed in this study. Moreover, internal validity may be limited by experiences, judgments, preferences, and beliefs of the participants.

Delimitations

TCRWP is the literacy curriculum for this school district in North Carolina. School A and School B were selected based on the high percentage of free and reduced meal price student populations along with the fact that each school appears to have fully implemented this program as outlined by the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Homegrown Institute. This cultivated an interest in the impact of this program on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. A program evaluation of such schools could provide useful information for decision makers and educators who work with students who are economically disadvantaged.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of TCRWP, specifically as it relates to the reading proficiency of economically disadvantaged students. Additionally, this study examined the implementation of TCRWP and the fidelity of the program implementation on student outcomes. This study was conducted at two urban prekindergarten through fifth grade elementary schools in North Carolina, School A and School B. A convergent mixed-methods design was employed in this study and was selected for the purpose of obtaining a better understanding of the research problem. This design supports the idea “that one data collection form supplies strengths to offset the weaknesses of the other form, and that a more complete understanding of a research problem results from collecting both quantitative and qualitative data” (Creswell, 2012, p. 540). As a result, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to fully examine TCRWP and the impact on the student reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. The data collection included semi-structured interviews, a survey of balanced literacy, and a statistical analysis to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the predicted and actual student reading data.

All teachers and administrators including instructional facilitators who implemented TCRWP during the 2013-2014 or 2014-2015 school years were invited to participate in this study through semi-structured interviews and a balanced literacy survey. Twelve participants from School A were invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews and the TCRWP balanced literacy survey. All participants from School A participated in the semi-structured interviews with a participation rate of 100%; however, only seven participants participated in the TCRWP survey, yielding 58%

participation. Nine participants from School B were invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews and the TCRWP balanced literacy survey. Seven of the nine participants from School B participated in both the semi-structured interviews and the TCRWP balanced literacy survey, thereby yielding a participation rate of 78%. The semi-structured interviews were inclusive of a series of questions related to the needs, goals, plans, overall implementation, and outcomes of TCRWP from the administrative perspective (see Appendix B) and teacher perspective (see Appendix C). The TCRWP balanced literacy survey questions were vested in the overall TCRWP balanced literacy curriculum, frequency of component implementation, and level of implementation on the TCRWP balanced literacy framework. The TCRWP balanced literacy survey was adapted from Program Evaluation of Balanced Literacy in an Urban School District and An Evaluation of the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School (Perkins Greene, 2015; Thomas, 2013). To protect participant identity when using quotes from their interview, a pseudonym using the school and a randomly assigned number was established.

The results discussed in this chapter are presented relative to each evaluation question and are aligned to the CIPP evaluation model.

Evaluation Questions

1. To what extent did the program goals address the (school's goals) defined as assessed needs? (context)
2. How well aligned were the strategic plan components to the (school's goals) defined as assessed needs? (input)
3. To what extent was the program implemented based on the initial design? (process)
4. To what extent is the reading academic performance of economically

disadvantaged students impacted by TCRWP? (product)

Demographic Profiles of the Participants

Semi-structured interview participants. Twelve participants from School A were invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews, and all participants from School A participated in the semi-structured interviews with a participation rate of 100%. Nine participants from School B were invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Seven of the nine participants from School B participated in the semi-structured interviews, with a participation rate of 78%. Therefore, there were 19 total participants in the semi-structured interviews. Based on the demographic information obtained from the qualitative data collection, approximately 75% of the semi-structured interview participants from School A had less than 7 years of experience and approximately 42% were considered beginning teachers with less than 3 years of experience. Additionally, the semi-structured interview participants from School B were inclusive of approximately 71% having less than 7 years of experience, with only 28% considered beginning teachers having less than 3 years of experience. Table 10 displays the demographic data for each school based on the demographic survey data collected for participants in the semi-structured interviews. The participants were grouped on the chart by classroom teachers and then administrative team members. The administrative team includes the principal and other instructional leaders such as instructional coaches, assistant principals, and deans of students.

Table 10

TCRWP Semi-Structured Interview Participant Years of Experience

Years of Experience	0-3	4-6	7 or more
School A Teachers	3	3	2
School A Administrative Team Members	2	1	1
School B Teachers	1	4	0
School B Administrative Team Members	0	0	2

TCRWP balanced literacy survey participants. Twelve participants from School A were invited to participate in the TCRWP balanced literacy survey; however, only seven participated, yielding 58% participation. Additionally, nine participants from School B were invited to participate in the TCRWP balanced literacy survey; however only seven participated, thereby yielding a participation rate of 78%. Thus, there were 14 total participants in the TCRWP balanced literacy survey. Further, based on the demographic information obtained from the participants, approximately 86% of the survey participants from School A had less than 7 years of experience, and approximately 57% were considered beginning teachers with less than 3 years of experience. Additionally, the participants from School B were inclusive of approximately 71% having less than 7 years of experience; however, only 14% were considered beginning teachers having less than 3 years of experience. Table 11 displays the TCRWP balanced literacy survey participant years of experience and the participants are also displayed in two groups, classified as classroom teachers or administrative team members. The administrative team includes the principal and other instructional leaders such as instructional coaches, assistant principals, and deans of students.

Table 11

TCRWP Balanced Literacy Survey Participant Years of Experience

Years of Experience	0-3	4-6	7 or more
School A Teachers	3	1	1
School A Administrative Team Members	1	1	0
School B Teachers	1	4	0
School B Administrative Team Members	0	0	2

The participants in this study had varied years of experience in teaching as well as varied years of experience and exposure to balanced literacy and more specifically TCRWP; however, all semi-structured interview participants and TCRWP balanced literacy survey participants implemented TCRWP at either School A or School B during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Additionally, it is important to note that both School A and School B experienced a change in leadership after the first year of TCRWP implementation. The leadership change at School A was an external change, as the principal hired was from outside of the school community. The leadership change at School B included an internal promotion: an assistant principal was moved into the role of principal.

Student participants. There was no physical student participation in the current study; however, there was student participation through data collection of student predicted and actual reading achievement scores. Predicted and actual student ELA scores were collected from School A and School B, specifically from their fourth- and fifth-grade student populations during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction utilizes EVAAS which uses a predictive model to project student performance based on their historical test performance. EVAAS uses

the historical testing performance of student A along with Students with Similar Expected Score Testing History to Student A and then compares that to the average performance of all students like Student A, and that yields the expected score for student A. (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.k, sl. 19).

Third-grade students were not included due the fact that the EVAAS system uses a predictive model that requires a minimum of three prior test scores for each student, and third-grade students only have two prior test scores which include the third-grade BOG test score and the third-grade EOG test score.

Table 12 displays the number of student participants in the current study based on the quantitative data collection for both study sites and each grade level for each implementation year, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. These student participants are a representative sample of the economically disadvantaged student population at both Schools A and B, as both school sites have economically disadvantaged student populations of over 80%. This representative population of fourth- and fifth-grade students was not directly identified as economically disadvantaged students per the National School Lunch Act.

Table 12

Student Participation

School A 2013-2014	Number of Participants	School A 2014-2015	Number of Participants
Fourth Grade	164	Fourth Grade	138
Fifth Grade	193	Fifth Grade	169
School B 2013-2014	Number of Participants	School B 2014-2015	Number of Participants
Fourth Grade	228	Fourth Grade	161
Fifth Grade	158	Fifth Grade	132

Analysis of Research Questions

Context evaluation. Evaluation question one, “To what extent did the program goals address the assessed needs,” refers to each school’s assessed needs and the alignment of these needs to the proposed outcomes of implementing TCRWP. This question is essential to the context evaluation of the CIPP program evaluation model. The context refers to a needs assessment that “helps assess problems, assets, and opportunities within a defined community and environmental context” (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 64).

To understand the needs of the schools included in this study, it is critical to examine the historical information that led to the adoption and implementation of TCRWP. In 2012-2013, the year prior to the implementation of TCRWP, statewide implementation of CCSS for ELA began in North Carolina Public Schools (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.n, p. 3). This statewide implementation of new standards was accompanied by a newly re-normed state required standardized ELA EOG assessment for students across the state, which assesses the level of mastery for each grade level beginning with third grade. These standards, according to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction crosswalk document, are standards that are “rooted in the criteria of ‘fewer, clearer, higher,’ standards,” indicating that CCSS for ELA are a more rigorous and in-depth set of standards in the core subject areas of ELA and mathematics (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.o, para. 1).

The 2012-2013 school year ELA test data showed a disparity in student performance between the current study school sites, the district, and the state. More specifically, School A’s and School B’s student performance on the ELA EOG test was approximately 17 and 18 percentage points respectively lower than the proficiency levels

for the same grade levels of students in the school district. Additionally, School A's and School B's student performance lagged behind students in the state by approximately 16 and 17 percentage points respectively during that same school year.

Knowing this disparity in reading achievement scores existed prior to the adoption of the new, more rigorous CCSS in ELA, the administrative teams knew that the current literacy curriculum offering needed to change. In fact, the principal of School A (2013-2014) stated,

At that time our reading block was the time of the day when we had the most discipline referrals. We could track during reading, when I walked into reading classrooms there was low engagement, so making the case for change around the fact that reading, the way we were doing was not necessarily working, wasn't hard. (School A Participant 12, personal communication, May 9, 2016)

Likewise, the principal of School B (2014-2015) indicated that their school decided to implement TCRWP

to improve our literacy scores and to improve the students' love for reading.

They didn't want to crack open a book. They were not reading during the day and the instruction was not rigorous enough. The passages and stories that they were reading, the students weren't interested in them. It just wasn't good! (School B Participant 7, personal communication, May 16, 2016)

As a result, the administrative teams from School A and School B along with administrative teams from a few other schools met and formed a district PLC about literacy instruction. PLC is a term defined as

an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students

they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators. (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006, p. 2)

Within the initial district PLC meeting, the teams from Schools A and B and other schools discussed and “looked at our data, discussed our current curriculum offering and the impact of it on our student reading scores” (School A Participant 12, personal communication, May 9, 2016). As result of this discussion and the examination of schoolwide data including observation data, assessment data, and the overall curricular culture, the schools realized that the needs of their schools were very similar. In fact, one participant said, “We all basically had the same concerns, our kids just were not engaged and our student data did not look like it should” (School A Participant 12, personal communication, May 9, 2016). Additionally, a participant at School B stated that prior to implementing TCRWP, students “were in a basal reader. Of course, everybody was reading a fourth-grade book if you were in the fourth grade and some of our children, you know, are below grade level” (School B Participant 6, personal communication, May 16, 2016). As a result, students were attempting to access text that was not on their reading ability level. Likewise, the principal of School B (2014-2015) stated that they needed to improve our literacy scores and to improve the students’ love for reading. They didn’t want to crack open a book. They were not reading during the day and the instruction was not rigorous enough. The passages and stories that they were reading, the students weren’t interested in them. It just wasn’t good! . . . We weren’t necessarily teaching reading strategies . . . for students to internalize . . . whereas, before, you know, they just gave up, like I can’t read this sentence. I don’t know what it means and so we just move on. (School B Participant 7,

personal communication, May 16, 2016)

The district PLC also discussed the CCSS assessments in ELA that were implemented in 2012-2013 included comprehension questions that are based on the more rigorous standards than the previous state assessment of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. The percentage of students scoring at or above the state proficiency level in reading for School A and School B at the start of the PLC was 27.0% and 27.5% respectively. This quantitative data along with the aforementioned participant statements regarding low student engagement and poor proficiency percentages align with the goals of the TCRWP program.

According to the principal of School A and School B, both schools arrived at their identified assessed needs through an internal needs assessment conducted by school-based and district-level administrators and PLC discussions based on their performance data and overall perception of the literacy curricular offerings at that time. These assessed needs were to (1) improve student reading achievement as measured by the state required ELA EOG assessment and (2) increase student engagement in reading by building a love for reading. These needs became the goals for TCRWP implementation for both School A and School B. These goals for program implementation allow for a direct alignment in measuring the progress of the program implementation to their student needs. These goals also aligned to the goal of TCRWP which are to “help young people become avid and skilled readers, writers, and inquirers” (TCRWP, n.d.a, para. 1) and to prepare “kids for any reading and writing task they will face or set themselves, to turn them into life-long, confident readers and writers who display agency and independence in their future endeavors” (TCRWP, n.d.a, para. 2). Table 13 displays the alignment of TCRWP goals, the goals for both School A and School B, and the alignment

of the assessed needs to the goals of the program.

Table 13

Current Study Goals and Needs Alignment

TCRWP Goals	Schools A and B Goals (Assessed Needs)
To help young people become avid and skilled readers, writers, and inquirers and to prepare “kids for any reading and writing task they will face or set themselves, to turn them into life-long, confident readers and writers who display agency and independence in their future endeavors.”	To improve student reading achievement as measured by the state required ELA EOG assessment and increasing student engagement in reading as measured by the increase in student love of reading.

Although the goals of the TCRWP implementation in the current study sites were to improve student reading achievement and increase student engagement in reading for the overall student population, the data from the qualitative research yielded more specific themes that focused on the large underperforming populations in each school. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction archived data publication reported that at the end of the 2012-2013 school year, prior to the TCRWP implementation, School A and School B had approximately 73% and 72.5% of their total tested student population performing below grade level in ELA.

The qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews revealed a more specific need to address student engagement in reading and student achievement of a large subgroup of the student population at School A and School B, below grade level learners. Per the semi-structured interviews, one of the major recurring themes in the interview data was the minimal benefit of TCRWP on reading achievement of students who are performing below grade level. Nine of 12 (75%) of School A participants and six of seven (86%) of participants from School B referenced in their semi-structure interviews below grade level learners not benefiting from the program as much as

learners who were on or above grade level. This below grade level subgroup included English as a Second Language (ESL) learners or ELLs and other non-ELL students who are one grade level or more below in reading. One participant from School A stated that

for my higher ones, I think it was good because I just wanted to get them reading more, but for my lower students, I think if I could have said let me just do small group with them, because they need so much and just to say go read for 45 minutes, they were like sitting there (chuckled) looking at the pages, not really reading and I'm like, I could be doing so much more with them with this time.

(School A Participant 7, personal communication, May 10, 2016)

Another participant from School A said, "a few, not all of them, enjoyed reading and the ones who didn't like to read, it definitely was more of a struggle with them" (School A Participant 2, personal communication, May 9, 2016).

Although not a part of the interview questions, 86% of the semi-structured interview participants from School B indicated language acquisition as a barrier to success with TCRWP for many of their students. One participant from School B stated that

with our school's population, we get a lot of new comers, um, and then a lot of our students are two or more grade levels behind and so for those students we end up working on something completely different. With those students, they don't have a lot of background knowledge either, so we're building background knowledge. We're building vocabulary, and we're doing things so that they have that foundation to read those types of books. (School B Participant 1, personal communication, May 16, 2016)

Further, one participant stated that "you know a lot of them are just mastering the

language. . . . It's just challenging in that we do have such a high ESL population” (School B Participant 6, personal communication, May 16, 2016). These statements of elaboration regarding the alignment of TCRWP to the newly identified ELL and students with disabilities subgroups showed that there was a misalignment in the specificity of need as it related to TCRWP; nevertheless, there was some improvement in overall student reading achievement. Additionally, the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews indicated that several participants utilized additional supplemental material during the TCRWP implementation. Therefore, it is unclear if the TCRWP was solely responsible for the improvement in overall student reading achievement. However, according to the TCRWP balanced literacy survey, 85.7% participants from School A and 71.5% of participants from School B reported they either strongly agreed or agreed that TCRWP has a positive impact on the reading achievement of students. As measured by the 70% agreement criterion in this study, both schools met the criterion.

Another major theme that arose from several of the semi-structured interviews that was also aligned to the school goals was the goal of increasing engagement in reading through creating a love for reading in students. According to the semi-structured interview data and based on the 70% criterion set forth in this study, School B met the criterion and School A did not. The semi-structured interview data showed that eight of 12 participants from School A (67%) agreed that the program has created a love of reading in their students. A participant from School A stated that

they (students) have that excitement that has been missing from reading for a while when we were under our old model. There is that, that enthusiasm in that they can't wait to read the next book and asking for suggestions and talking to each other about books on their own, not something that you (the teacher)

prompt. So, it's very powerful! (School A Participant 8, personal communication, May 9, 2016)

Another participant said "I really do feel like they came out of it enjoying reading a whole lot more they when they went in to it" (School A Participant 5, personal communication, May 9, 2016). While there were several positive comments from School A participants regarding the goal of increasing engagement in reading through building a love of reading, the 70% agreement criterion was not met by the participants in the semi-structured interviews from School A.

Conversely, five of seven participants at School B (71.4%) agreed that TCRWP has created a love of reading in their students. An administrative participant at School B stated that "they (students) get upset when they don't have as much time for independent reading . . . it's (TCRWP) made a tremendous impact on our students' love for reading" (School B Participant 7, personal communication, May 16, 2016). Additionally, another participant from School B stated that TCRWP "just fosters more of a love for reading than some other programs" (School B Participant 6, personal communication, May 16, 2016). Although School B met the 70% criterion, there was one comment made by a participant at School B, which was contrary. Participant 3 stated that "(TCRWP) only works for the percentage of my students who have a love for learning and love to read and already" (School B Participant 3, personal communication, May 16, 2016).

Additionally, the balanced literacy survey results for School B showed that 85.7% agreed that students being engaged and interacting with texts was fully met. In contrast, although School A showed that 71.4% of participants agreed that students were engaged in reading and writing activities, only 42.9% agreed that students were interacting with texts and being engaged in interactive discussions about reading, a building block to

establishing a love of reading in students. Thus, in terms of assessing student engagement, School A did not fully meet the criterion of 70%; however, School B did fully meet the criterion with 85.7% agreement. The commentary from the semi-structured interviews from both School A and School B participants as well as the survey responses from participants indicate that there is a relative alignment to the assessed needs at each school.

Summary. Schools A and B created their goals based on an internal needs assessment. These goals were to (1) improve student reading achievement as measured by the state-required ELA EOG assessment and (2) increase student engagement in reading by building a love for reading. The goal of improving student reading achievement was measured by the TCRWP balanced literacy survey results that revealed that 85.7% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the TCRWP balanced literacy framework had a positive impact on student achievement at School A. Similarly, the survey results from School B showed that 71.5% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP had a positive impact on student achievement. Although the interview data showed that several participants felt that TCRWP did not address the needs of some of the specific student subgroups, the survey results revealed that overall TCRWP had a positive impact on student achievement.

The goal of improving student engagement in reading through building a love for reading was also assessed by the TCRWP balanced literacy survey and it revealed that eight of the 14 total participants (57%) agreed that the program goals aligned to the assessed needs. Eleven of 14 participants (78%) agreed somewhat that the TCRWP program goals aligned to the assessed needs. More specifically, 75% of School A participants and 86% of School B participants agreed that TCRWP was not aligned to the

needs of students who are a grade level or more behind and new comers of non-English speaking students. Therefore, the commentary and data from the interviews at both Schools A and B and the survey responses showed an alignment to the established goals at each school but did not address the needs of specific subgroups. However, these subgroups were not included in the school-established goals at the onset of TCRWP. Table 14 displays the goals, needs, and criterion of the study and the data results that align to those needs.

Table 14

TCRWP Alignment Summary

School Goals	Criterion	Survey Results	Interviews Results
Improve student reading achievement as measured by the state required ELA EOG assessment.	At least 70% of the participants would agree that the program goals met the assessed needs.	School A: 85.7% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP has a positive impact on reading. MET	School A: 67% of participants agreed that the program has created a love of reading in their students. NOT MET
Improve student engagement in reading as measured by the increase in student love of reading.		School B: 71.5% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP has a positive impact on reading. MET	School B: 71.4% of participants agreed that the program has created a love of reading in their students. MET

Input evaluation. The second evaluation question, “how well aligned were the strategic plan components to the assessed needs,” addressed the input evaluation of the CIPP model that “identifies procedural designs and educational strategies that will most likely achieve the desired results” (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 64). The desired results or goals were the same at both School A and School B as was the desire to create a love of

reading and to increase student reading achievement. Although the desired results or goals were the same at both schools, the strategic plan for achieving the desired outcomes was different in some aspects. Because TCRWP does not have implementation protocols, the variances in strategic implementation from both school sites are included to give a comprehensive view of the TCRWP implementation in the current study. To fully portray the likenesses and variances of each school's strategic plan and its alignment to the assessed needs, the strategic plans or plan for implementing components based on assessed needs and program goals will be explained separately with a culminating section regarding the alignment.

School A. Based on interview data from the principal of School A, during the 2013-2014 school year, after conducting a needs assessment and aligning those needs to the goals of TCRWP, they began to develop a strategic implementation plan. This plan was a detailed guide or outline for the implementation of the components of TCRWP with the flexibility to adjust as needed throughout the school year. Per the principal of School A during the 2012-2013 school year, administrators from several schools in the school district formed a PLC to discuss the need for a change in the literacy curriculum.

In the late fall of the 2012-2013 school year, administrators and a catalyst cohort of eight teachers across various grade levels was formed, and this team visited the Teacher's College in New York at Columbia University and returned and began planning and implementing the project for the remainder of that school year with the support of their administrative staff. This group was a pilot group that became the model and expert group for the school-wide implementation the next school year. While observing and supporting the catalyst cohort, the administrative team created a strategic plan outlining day 1 to day 180 for the next school year, 2013-2014. This plan included all TCRWP

units of study, monitoring, and weekly planning sessions. Additionally, the administrative team created a responsive action plan for teachers in order to be proactive with teachers who needed additional support as the implementation process began and would be ongoing. According the principal of School A (2013-2014), this plan included informal surveys conducted during planning sessions in which teachers and paraprofessionals could express frustrating moments in implementation as well as things that were going well. This informal data collection created opportunities for additional professional development, and created what this site called fidelity checks. (School A Participant 12, personal communication, May 23, 2016)

These fidelity checks included “walkthrough classroom visits by administrators, grade level team data discussions during weekly planning sessions, individual data conversations, and data notebook checks” (School A Participant 12, personal communication, May 23, 2016). The fidelity checks also included “a collection of on-going student data to assess student progress during the implementation of this program” (School A Participant 12, personal communication, May 23, 2016).

According to the principal of School A (2013-2014), teachers were required to keep and maintain a data notebook which was inclusive of all individual and classroom data. These data were reviewed by the administrative team through data notebook checks to ensure that student progress was being monitored as a part of the program fidelity. (School A Participant 12, personal communication, May 23, 2016)

The data collected also created opportunities for teachers to plan collaboratively and support each other as a grade level. It also led to vertical alignment whereby grade levels above and below could align their curriculum. For example, a first-grade teacher

may meet with a second-grade teacher or a kindergarten teacher to discuss a particular content standard as these grade levels are before or after first grade and their standards are connected as extensions of one another.

During implementation, the staff reviewed their student data weekly from teacher-developed common formative assessments and Reading 3D/TRC to evaluate student progress. Administrators also collected data spreadsheets from teachers every month and reported grade-level progress publicly to staff at monthly staff meetings so everyone could see the results of the hard work and effort of all staff members. During implementation, administrators also highlighted reading levels and student growth throughout the building. Monthly full staff meetings also included a PowerPoint presentation where students were featured for their growth in reading. The strategic implementation plan at School A was thoroughly planned and executed with fidelity checks and instructional support throughout implementation.

School B. After discussing the strategic plan details through the semi-structured interviews with the administrative team, it was found that the strategic plan for School B did not include TCRWP initially; however, the plan did include implementation of balanced literacy components in general. The administrative team at School B designed its plan to implement a general balanced literacy curriculum prior to exposure to the TCRWP framework as the beginning of the transition away from scripted lessons, although the scripted program was still in use throughout the 2012-2013 school year. School B was also joined by other schools including School A in founding the district balanced literacy PLC prior to the 2012-2013 school year, but the strategic plan was developed as a general balanced literacy curricular shift at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year with implementing the read-aloud component of balanced literacy and

transitioned to the TCRWP framework in the middle of the school year. After the shift to the TCRWP framework, the beginning implementation journey of TCRWP was comparable to School A in that School B also sent a team comprised of instructional support, administrators, and teachers to New York to the Teacher's College of Columbia University to learn about the TCRWP of balanced literacy. Since the school had already implemented the read-aloud component of a general balanced literacy model, the staff who visited the Teacher's College Institute in New York returned with the specifics of the TCRWP framework. This included an interactive read-aloud component versus the general read-aloud component they were already implementing. The team returned to the school to continue to modify the read-alouds and transitioned into the TCRWP interactive read-alouds. Additionally, these teachers moved forward with implementing word study and guided reading as well building classroom libraries and the school library in 2012-2013. In the summer prior to the 2013-2014 school year, the administrative team developed their strategic plan which focused on professional development and continuous support with component implementation.

During the 2013-2014 school year, the remaining TCRWP components were implemented and the administrative team which included instructional facilitators supported each team of teachers with their implementation of components. Their strategic plan included monthly staff professional development where a component was discussed and modeled and teachers had the opportunity to practice with their colleagues. Administrative observations and feedback occurred daily to improve daily instructional practices. Teachers were given feedback throughout the school year by administrative staff and were given additional support from instructional facilitators, if they were experiencing challenges with the implementation of any component. Additionally,

administrators and teachers planned using TCRWP units of study during their weekly grade-level PLC meetings and discussed student progress. School B monitored student progress through TCRWP assessments in Grades 4 and 5 and used running records in kindergarten through third grade to monitor student progress. School B also had external professional development included in their strategic plan, and this included “about four” Teacher’s College Professional Development Specialist visits to their school (School B Participant 6, personal communication, May 16, 2016).

Select people from each grade level participated. And they came in and met with that person (TCRWP Specialist) and she literally did a staff development. Then we would all follow her to a couple of classrooms where she would do model lessons in the classrooms. (School B Participant 4, personal communication, May 16, 2016)

Unlike School A, School B fully implemented all of the TCRWP components by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. One participant stated that School B was deemed a “Phase 3 School,” meaning that

everything is fully implemented like classroom libraries, anchor charts, all of the components . . . some schools are at different levels where they are implementing more slowly, like might just do reader’s workshop, without like the shared reading part of it or the close reading part of it. But we are supposed to be doing all of it. (School B Participant 5, personal communication, May 16, 2016)

Table 15 shows the similarities and differences between each school’s implementation of TCRWP.

Table 15

Implementation Comparison

School A	Similarities	School B
Began TCRWP implementation with a catalyst cohort group in the late fall of the 2012-2013 school year	TCRWP core literacy curriculum program Began implementation with the interactive read-aloud component	Started a school-wide general balanced literacy implementation at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year
Began school-wide TCRWP implementation 2013-2014	Sent selected staff members to the Teacher's College of Columbia University in New York	Began TCRWP implementation (one component at a time) throughout the 2012-2013 school year beginning in the late fall
Implementation focus: 2013-2014 Reader's Workshop 2014-2015 Conferring	External professional development from a TCRWP Specialist Internal professional development from administrative staff Purchased new books and expanded school and classroom libraries in 2012-2013 A part of the district TCRWP PLC Supplemented the program with other materials	Implementation focus: 2013-2014 All components

There are several similarities and differences in the implementation of TCRWP at School A and School B; however, TCRWP was the core literacy curricular offering for both schools. Both administrators created a strategic plan for implementation; however, their implementation plans varied. The criterion set for the current study was at least

70% of participants would agree that the strategic plan met the assessed needs. The assessed needs, subsequently the goals for both schools, were to increase student reading achievement and to increase student engagement in reading by building a love for reading. Per the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews, five of the six administrative participants (83%) agreed that the strategic plan aligned to the school's assessed needs. More specifically, the semi-structured administrative interview data indicated that three of four participants (75%) from School A agreed that the strategic plan was aligned to the needs, and two of two participants (100%) from School B agreed that the strategic plan was aligned to the student needs. This criterion was met based on the percentage of agreement and is undergirded by the commentary regarding specific TCRWP instructional components that support the assessed needs of students who are performing below grade level.

Semi-structured interview responses to the evaluation questions as well as responses to follow-up questions recorded during the interview process were designed to garner the mindfulness of participants about TCRWP components and implementation alignment to student needs. Participant 12 stated that

At that time (prior to TCRWP implementation) we were- our reading block was the time of the day when we had the most discipline referrals. We could track during reading when I walked into reading classrooms there was low engagement. So, making the case for change around the fact that reading the way we were doing was not necessarily working wasn't hard. (School A Participant 12, personal communication, May 10, 2016)

Additionally, administrative participant 10 from School A stated that their strategic plan

was heavily focused on the students' reading level. So once the students were assessed in their running records, they were matched to their book and they were reading book on their instructional reading level. So, with that, you know that kind of drove the way that the teacher led their workshop models in reading and in writing because they used the used continuum of learning to look at what the strengths were of each level and like how to grow kids to the next level. (School A Participant 10, personal communication, May 23, 2016)

Similarly, administrative semi-structured interview participant 7 indicated that

School B

started just with interactive read-alouds and then we started incorporating the word study and then they started with the guided reading groups. So, we started very small so that number one, teachers were familiar and comfortable with the structure of it. As far as students, they were ready for it and where we started with the interactive read-alouds, because our students didn't necessarily enjoy reading. Because they struggled in it and I feel like the interactive read-aloud helped the children to you know have a love for literacy. And then when they were receiving instruction based on their levels during that guided reading time, it encouraged them and gave them more confidence and then they began to love literacy. (School B Participant 7, personal communication, May 16, 2016)

In the same context, participant 6 also addressed the assessed needs of students

when she stated that prior to implementing the TCRWP, literacy instruction was a

basal reading program. Of course, everybody was reading a fourth-grade book if you're in the fourth grade and some of our children you know are below grade level. So, this (TCRWP) fits our children better because they are able to start

where they are and progress up and they are not forced to read something that's not on their level. And we've seen great growth like our kids can read! Because we do have a high ESL population, you know we still need a lot of work on comprehension, you know a lot of them are just mastering the language . . . the best part is they, you know, they're able to read on their own. (School B Participant 6, personal communication, May 16, 2016)

The strategic plans for both School A and School B were aligned to the assessed needs of students based on the data collection and analysis in the current study.

Summary

School A and School B have the same goals of increasing student achievement and building a love of reading for students; however, their strategic plans were slightly different. Each school's strategic implementation plan was intentionally implemented to address the needs of students to engage students in reading and build student reading skills, thus increase student reading achievement. Per semi-structured administrative interview data, each school implemented TCRWP based on their individual school's strategic plan developed by the administrative team to reach their goals. Based on the qualitative data collection from the semi-structured administrative interviews of the current study, the strategic plan was aligned to the school goals as designed by the assessed needs. Three of four participants (75%) from School A agreed that the strategic plan was aligned to the needs, and two of two participants (100%) from School B agreed that the strategic plan was aligned to the assessed student needs. This agreement was measured and indicated by thematic analysis of the data collected during semi-structured interview data. Table 16 displays the Strategic Plan and School Goals Alignment chart including the criterion and results.

Table 16

Strategic Plans and School Goals Alignment

Schools A and B School Goals	Criterion	Data Results	
		Survey	Interviews
Improve student reading achievement as measured by the state required ELA EOG assessment	At least 70% of the participants would agree that the program goals aligned the assessed needs.	School A: 75% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP has a positive impact on reading (assessed need). MET	
Improve student engagement in reading as measured by the increase in student love of reading.		School B: 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP has a positive impact on reading (assessed need). MET	

Process evaluation. The third evaluation question referred to the implementation and the extent to which TCRWP implementation was based on the initial design. This question attended to the procedure and practice of TCRWP implementation in comparison to the initial design and “provides an ongoing check on the project’s implementation process” (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 65). Balanced literacy is a literacy curricular framework which includes structured classroom plans and use of activities such as read-alouds, guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, and writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The Teacher’s College is a department of the College of Education at Columbia University in New York. TCRWP was founded by Lucy Calkins and other TCRWP staff and is the Teacher’s College balanced literacy framework. This framework does not have sequential steps for implementing components or an implementation protocol per say; however, there is a specific structure for the instructional block of reader’s and writer’s workshop. The reader’s and writer’s workshop structure has the suggested sequence of a mini-lesson to start followed by 45 minutes of independent reading. During this independent reading

time, the educator can conference with students independently or as a group. Reading and writing instruction is interconnected, and there is no teaching in isolation so writing and reading skills are at the same level. Additionally, the implementation does not have to look the same each day. For example, during reader's workshop on Monday and Wednesday, the teacher may confer with students during independent reading. On Tuesday and Thursday, the teacher may pull small groups during independent reading and on Friday pull a small group and confer with students. Additionally, TCRWP suggests reading aloud text throughout the day for multiple purposes and doing instructional interactive read-alouds across content areas. Further, TCRWP suggests teaching foundational skills in text through balanced literacy components such as shared reading versus explicit isolated phonics teaching.

From the TCRWP suggested framework, the initial design for implementation was formed by the administrative teams at both School A and School B. This process evaluation will analyze the implementation of TCRWP based on the initial designs created by each school administration and was evaluated through the utilization of implementation data collected through the TCRWP balanced literacy survey and semi-structured interview data. The TCRWP balanced literacy survey was designed to garner the perceptions of participants on the implementation process including the planning process, accessibility of implementation, and the adaptability to current teaching practices. The participant responses were also measured on a 4-point Likert scale that included the following response choices: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The criterion for each implementation prompt is 70% agreement, of which both agree and strongly agree responses are included. These frequency results from TCRWP survey responses are below in Table 17.

Table 17

TCRWP Survey Frequency

School A	Agreed or Strongly Agreed (Frequency)	Percent	70% Agreement
Requires a lot of planning time and effort	5	71.4	MET
Easy to implement	7	100	MET
Changed instructional practices	7	100	MET
School B	Agreed or Strongly Agreed (Frequency)	Percent	70% Agreement
Requires a lot of planning time and effort	7	100	MET
Easy to implement	5	71.4	MET
Changed instructional practices	6	85.7	MET

School A

The initial design for School A was to implement all components of TCRWP implementation in year one, 2013-2014, with a focus on interactive read-alouds and the structure of reader's and writer's workshop per an administrative participant from School A. The 2014-2015 implementation plan was to continue to implement all components of TCRWP with a focus on the conferring component of reader's and writer's workshop. As a result, staff members who were hired prior to the 2013-2014 school year were trained on all TCRWP components and were expected to implement each component of reader's workshop the first year of implementation (School A Participant 10, personal communication, May 23, 2016).

According to the semi-structured interview data, 11 of 12 participants (approximately 82%) at School A indicated that the implementation of TCRWP was aligned to the initial design. More specifically, the semi-structured interview data showed that 82% of the participants from School A implemented reader's workshop by starting with a mini-lesson followed by independent reading with conferring. Participant 1 said, "we had a mini lesson that we did and then we did, um, like 45 minutes of independent reading where we were either conferring or pulling strategy groups" (School A Participant 1, personal communication, May 9, 2016). Further, another participant stated that "We started with a mini lesson and the mini-lesson ran between like 8 and 10 minutes. Sometimes it was a little bit more but tried to keep to that and then they (students) went into independent reading" (School A Participant 5, personal communication, May 9, 2016). Additionally, the balanced literacy survey data showed that small group work was not regularly implemented at School A as evidenced by 42% of participant responses to the balanced literacy survey. Five of 12 (42%) of participants from School A indicated that small groups were utilized once or twice per week versus regularly which was regarded as three or more times per week. Further, 50% of School A participant responses during the semi-structured interviews indicated that small-group instruction was not implemented consistently, while the remaining 50% indicated that small groups were consistently pulled during independent reading. Although not a part of the questions, it is important to note that the semi-structured interview data analysis results also indicated that seven of 12 participants from School A (58%) felt that the first year of TCRWP implementation was more aligned to the initial design prior to the change in leadership during the second year of implementation which was not as aligned.

The criterion for the current study is that 70% of participants at each school will

agree that each component was consistently implemented weekly. Table 18 shows TCRWP components and the consistency of implementation based on the TCRWP balanced literacy survey responses from School A participants.

Table 18

TCRWP Component Implementation Chart, School A

Component	Consistency Percentage (3 or more times per week)
Shared Reading	29
Guided Reading	29
Independent Reading	71
Read-Alouds	86
Conferencing	43
Reader's Workshop	57
Writer's Workshop	57

According to Table 18, the two components that met the criterion of 70% agreement of weekly implementation were the independent reading time and the read-alouds which were the focus of the implementation for the first year of the initial design. The balanced literacy survey also inquired about the three main foci of the balanced literacy implementation which were planning, the implementation level of ease, and instructional practice changes.

With regard to planning and implementation practices, the balanced literacy survey indicated that 85.7% of the participants at School A agreed or strongly agreed that the planning for the implementation of TCRWP “required a lot of planning time and effort.” This was also solidified by a participant’s comment that

you have to really understand reading to be good (pause) at (pause) the mini lesson and the conferencing. You know, um, and I feel like it’s definitely an art, the Teacher’s College style and you have to practice it and you have to, you have

to spend some time with it. (School A Participant 9, personal communication, May 9, 2016)

The second focus of the TCRWP implantation was the ease of implementation. This prompt was used to specifically gather the perceptions of participants regarding the level of difficulty in implementing this program. The survey data analysis revealed that 71.5% of participants at School A agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP was easy to implement. The final focal point in the TCRWP balanced literacy survey in terms of the implementation process was to gauge the amount of change that took place in instructional practices during the implementation of TCRWP. Seven of seven participants from School A (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP implementation changed their instructional practices.

The results from the qualitative data, more specifically the semi-interview data, showed that approximately 82% of School A participants indicated that the implementation of TCRWP was aligned to the initial design. Additionally, the balanced literacy survey data showed that small group work was not regularly implemented at School A as evidenced by 42% of participant responses to the balanced literacy survey that indicated that small groups were utilized once or twice per week versus regularly which was regarded as three or more times per week. Although not a part of the questions, it is important to note that the semi-structured interview data analysis results also indicated that 58% of participants from School A felt that the first year of TCRWP implementation was more aligned to the initial design prior to the change in leadership during the second year of implementation which was not as aligned. Moreover, the balanced literacy survey inquired about the three main foci of the balanced literacy implementation which were planning, the implementation level of ease, and instructional

practice changes. With regard to planning and implementation practices, the balanced literacy survey indicated that 85.7% of the participants at School A agreed or strongly agreed that the planning for the implementation of TCRWP “required a lot of planning time and effort.” Further, 71.5% of participants at School A agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP was easy to implement. The final focal point in the TCRWP balanced literacy survey in terms of the implementation process was to gauge the amount of change that took place in instructional practices during the implementation of TCRWP. The TCRWP balanced literacy survey showed that 100% of School A participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP implementation changed their instructional practices. Table 19, displays a summary of the Implementation Data Results for School A.

Table 19

School A Implementation Data Results

Criterion	Interview Data	Survey Data Frequency
At least 70% of the participants would agree that the program goals met the assessed needs.	82% participants agreed or strongly agreed that implementation was aligned to the initial design. MET	42% Agreement that Small Groups were implemented weekly. NOT MET 85.7% of the participants at School A agreed or strongly agreed that the planning for the implementation of TCRWP “required a lot of planning time and effort.” MET 71.5% of participants at School A agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP was easy to implement. MET 100% of School A participants agreed or strongly agreed that the TCRWP implementation changed their instructional practices. MET

School B

The initial implementation design for School B was to implement all TCRWP

components and focus on the implementation of each component throughout the school year for both the first (2013-2014) and second (2014-2015) implementation years.

According to the principal (2014-2015), the teachers' initial design expectation was to implement each component regularly which was three to five times per week (School B Participant 7, personal communication, May 16, 2016). Per semi-structured interview data and the balanced literacy survey results, School B implemented reader's workshop by starting with a mini-lesson followed by independent reading with conferring. Seven of seven (100%) semi-structured interview participants from School B agreed that their reader's workshop began with a mini-lesson and was followed by independent reading. All of the participants indicated similar descriptions of the TCRWP framework implementation in School B. For example, participant one stated, "(students would turn) to the mini-lesson section and we'd have our mini lesson. Um, we'd do turn and talk or they would talk with a partner . . . then put exit ticket up (on the mini-lesson) chart before going to do independent reading" (School B Participant 1, personal communication, May 16, 2016). Similarly, participant 2 stated that

we start out with a mini-lesson and then we spend time, they're given an activity or a goal that they're supposed to be doing during their reading. Then they go off and do their independent reading and then we usually stop, at some point mid-workshop time and talk about what it was that they were supposed to be working on. (School B Participant 2, personal communication, May 16, 2016)

The balanced literacy survey data revealed that School B did not implement small group work consistently through guided reading and strategy groups regularly as 29% (two of seven) of participants agreed that small-group instruction was implemented more than three or more times per week. It is important to note that the implementation data

analysis indicated some inconsistency with regard to the implementation of small-group instruction. In contrast, the semi-structured interview data analysis showed that 86% of participants confirmed implementation of small-group instruction. The criterion for the current study is that 70% of participants at each school will agree that each component was consistently implemented weekly. Table 20 shows the TCRWP components and the consistency of implementation based on the TCRWP balanced literacy survey responses from School A participants.

Table 20

TCRWP Component Implementation Chart, School B

Component	Consistency Percentage (3 or more times per week)
Shared Reading	100
Guided Reading	29
Independent Reading	100
Read-Alouds	72
Conferencing	72
Reader's Workshop	100
Writer's Workshop	53

According to the TCRWP balanced literacy survey, the 70% agreement criterion was met and exceeded with regard to the implementation to the initial design. The three foci utilized in the balanced literacy survey were planning, ease of implementation, and instructional practice changes. The planning phase was one of the foci of the implementation process that the TCRWP survey and participants were required to respond to the prompt that TCRWP “requires a lot of planning time and effort.” Per the survey results, 100% of participants from School B agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP required a lot of planning time and effort. Another focus of the TCRWP implementation was the ease of implementation. This prompt was used to specifically garner the perceptions of participants regarding the level of difficulty in implementing

this program. The quantitative data showed that 71.4% of participants at School B agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP was easy to implement. The final focal point in the TCRWP balanced literacy survey in terms of the implementation process was to gauge the amount of change that took place in instructional practices during the implementation of TCRWP. Six of seven participants from School B (85.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP changed their instructional practices.

The results from the qualitative data, more specifically the semi-interview data, showed that 100% of School B participants indicated that the implementation of TCRWP was aligned to the initial design. Also, 100% of participants from School B agreed that their reader's workshop began with a mini-lesson and was followed by independent reading. The balanced literacy survey data analysis indicated some inconsistency with regard to the implementation of small-group instruction. The balanced literacy survey indicated that only 29% of participants agreed that small-group instruction was implemented three or more times per week; however, in contrast, the semi-structured interview data analysis showed that 86% of participants confirmed implementation of small-group instruction. According to the TCRWP balanced literacy survey, the 70% agreement criterion was met and exceeded with regard to the TCRWP implementation to the initial design. The three foci utilized in the balanced literacy survey for School A were used in the balanced literacy survey for School B which were planning, ease of implementation, and instructional practice changes. The balanced literacy survey also inquired about the three main foci of the balanced literacy implementation which were planning, the implementation level of ease, and instructional practice changes. With regard to planning and implementation practices, the balanced literacy survey indicated that 100% of the participants at School B agreed or strongly agreed that the planning for

the implementation of TCRWP “required a lot of planning time and effort.” Further, 71.5% of participants at School B agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP was easy to implement. The final focal point in the TCRWP balanced literacy survey in terms of the implementation process was to gauge the amount of change that took place in instructional practices during the implementation of TCRWP. The TCRWP balanced literacy survey showed that 85.7% of School B participants agreed or strongly agreed that the TCRWP implementation changed their instructional practices. Table 21, displays a summary of the Implementation Data Results for School B.

Table 21

School B Implementation Data Results

Criterion	Interview Data	Survey Data Frequency
At least 70% of the participants would agree that the program goals met the assessed needs.	82% participants agreed or strongly agreed that implementation was aligned to the initial design. MET	100% of the participants at School B agreed or strongly agreed that the planning for the implementation of TCRWP “required a lot of planning time and effort.” MET 71.5% of participants at School B agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP was easy to implement. MET 85.7% of School B participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP implementation changed their instructional practices. MET
Interview data: 86% agreement versus TCRWP data: 29% agreement (inconsistent report)		

Summary

The TCRWP framework model does not have a specified sequenced implementation guide; however, the reader’s and writer’s workshop components include a sequence of a mini-lesson followed by independent reading and writing time respectively. The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews and the balanced

literacy surveys revealed that over 70% of participants agreed that the overall implementation of TCRWP at both School A and School B was aligned to the initial design. Similarly, 82% and 100% of School A and School B participants respectively indicated in their semi-structured interview data that their TCRWP implementation was aligned to the initial design. There was one inconsistency in the data analysis from the semi-structured interviews and the TCRWP balanced literacy survey for School B. This inconsistency was identified as a 29% agreement in the weekly implementation of small-group instruction through the balanced literacy survey versus an 86% agreement from the semi-structured interviews. In addition, the semi-structured interview data from School A indicated a more direct alignment to the initial design during the first year of implementation in contrast to the second year of implementation due to a change in leadership. The TCRWP survey data analysis indicated that the implementation aligned with the initial design as evidenced by the 70% of agreement criterion being met.

Product Evaluation. The fourth and final evaluation question, “To what extent is the reading academic performance of economically disadvantaged students impacted by TCRWP,” referred to the impact of TCRWP on the reading performance of economically disadvantaged students. The product evaluation “is to measure, interpret, and judge a project’s outcomes by assessing their merit, worth, significance, and probity” (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 65). The product evaluation for both School A and School B utilized the North Carolina EOG ELA standardized assessment.

This assessment is used by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and is designed to measure student performance on the goals, objectives, and grade-level competencies. The competencies that are evaluated for mastery are aligned to CCSS. In North Carolina, there are five proficiency levels measured by the North Carolina EOG

tests in core content areas. On a student performance continuum of proficiency, with level one denoting limited command and level five denoting superior command of knowledge and skills, students who are a level four or five are deemed consistently ready to engage in grade-appropriate vocabulary and are on track for college and career readiness work. Students who meet the benchmark score of three are considered grade-level proficient in reading but not on track for college and career readiness in the tested content area. Students who do not meet the benchmark score of three are considered nonproficient in reading, meaning the student performance score was a level one or two indicating limited or partial command of grade-appropriate knowledge and skills. These students will likely need strong instructional support as they are not on track for college and career readiness or grade-level proficiency. These standardized tests are also used to calculate student growth from one school year to the next based on each student's scale score from year to year and the predicted scale score for the next school year.

Fourth- and fifth-grade students' predicted reading scores were collected as a representative sample of the economically disadvantaged student population at both study sites, as each school site had over 80% economically disadvantaged students as a school. These scores, the predicted and corresponding student actual reading scores from the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 North Carolina EOG ELA test, were collected and analyzed to evaluate the extent to which the student reading performance of economically disadvantaged students was impacted by TCRWP. A paired samples *t* test was performed for each school and school year of implementation to compare the predicted score prior to the implementation of TCRWP and the actual score after the implementation of TCRWP. Students who did not have a predicted score or an actual score were not included in the analysis. To fully understand the impact of TCRWP on the student reading achievement

of students at each study site, the results were reported in sections by schools with a summarized results section. The null hypothesis for this study for both School A and School B is that as a result of the implementation of TCRWP, there will not be a statistically significant difference in students' predicted scores versus actual scores in ELA.

School A

School A began the school-wide implementation of the TCRWP balanced literacy components at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year. Paired sample *t* tests were performed for economically disadvantaged students in School A utilizing the 2013-2014 school year and analyzed both the fourth- and fifth-grade students' predicted reading scores and the corresponding actual student scores. The paired samples *t* test analyzed the two test scores per student (predicted and actual) in each grade level to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the two scores. Table 22 shows the descriptive statistics of fourth-grade and fifth-grade students during the 2013-2014 school year from School A, and Table 23 shows the results of the paired samples *t* test. Using an alpha level of .05, a paired samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate whether student performance with the utilization of the TCRWP framework differed significantly. The results indicated that the fourth grade predicted score mean ($M=1.00$, $SD=.00$) was significantly lower than the fourth grade actual score mean after the implementation of TCRWP ($M=2.43$, $SD=1.23$), with $t(163)=-13.85$, $p<.05$, $d=-1.53$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the predicted scores and the actual scores after 1 year of TCRWP implementation was -1.64 to -1.23. Likewise, the fifth-grade data indicated that the fifth grade predicted score mean ($M=1.96$, $SD=1.08$) was significantly lower than the fifth grade actual score mean after TCRWP implementation ($M=2.18$,

SD=1.23), with $t(193)=-3.65$, $p<.05$, $d=-0.371$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the predicted scores and the actual scores after 1 year of TCRWP implementation was $-.32$ to $-.10$.

Table 22

School A 2013-2014 Fourth and Fifth Grade Descriptive Statistics

School A	Mean	Number Tested	Standard Error Mean	Standard Deviation
Predicted 13-14-4 th grade	1.0000	164	.00000	.00000
Actual 13-14-4 th grade	2.4329	164	.10348	1.32522
Predicted 13-14-5 th grade	1.9689	193	.07841	1.08928
Actual 13-14-5 th grade	2.1762	193	.08877	1.23324

Table 23

School A 2013-2014 Fourth and Fifth Grade Predicted and Actual Reading Data Paired T-Test Results

School A	Mean	Standard Error Mean	95%CI for Mean Difference	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Predicted 13-14-4 th grade Actual 13-14-4 th grade	-1.43293	.10348	-1.22859	-13.847	163	.000
Predicted 13-14-5 th grade Actual 13-14-5 th grade	-.20725	.05684	-.09515	-3.646	192	.000

Due to the means of the two scores and the direction of the t value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the conclusion can be drawn that there was a statistically significant improvement in student reading achievement scores following TCRWP implementation.

Likewise, the predicted student performance and actual student performance after the implementation of TCRWP the second school year (2014-2015) at School A was analyzed using a paired samples t test and an alpha level of .05. Table 24 shows the descriptive statistics of the fourth- and fifth-grade student reading data from the 2014-2015, and Table 25 shows the results of the paired samples t test.

Table 24

School A 2014-2015 Fourth and Fifth Grade Descriptive Statistics

School A	Mean	Number Tested	Standard Error Mean	Standard Deviation
Predicted 14-15-4 th grade	2.4275	138	.10019	1.17695
Actual 14-15-4 th grade	2.3913	138	.10661	1.25235
Predicted 14-15-5 th grade	1.9941	169	.08661	1.12598
Actual 14-15-5 th grade	2.3373	169	.09962	1.29508

Table 25

School A 2014-2015 Fourth and Fifth Grade Predicted and Actual Reading Data Paired T-Test Results

School A	Mean	Standard Error Mean	95%CI for Mean Difference	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Predicted 14-15-4 th grade Actual 14-15-4 th grade	.03623	.08060	.19561	.450	137	.654
Predicted 14-15-5 th grade Actual 14-15-5 th grade	-.34320	.07074	-.20353	-4.851	168	.000

These data indicated that the fourth grade predicted score mean ($M=2.43$, $SD=1.18$) was higher than the fourth grade actual score mean ($M=2.39$, $SD=1.25$), with $t(138)=.45$, $p<.05$, $d=.05$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the predicted scores and the actual scores after the second year of TCRWP implementation was $-.12$ to $-.20$. In contrast, the fifth-grade data indicated that fifth-grade student predicted score mean ($M=1.99$, $SD=1.13$) was significantly lower than the fifth grade actual score mean ($M=2.34$, $SD=1.30$), with $t(169)=-4.851$, $p<.05$, $d=-.53$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the predicted scores and the actual scores after the second year of TCRWP implementation was $-.48$ to $-.20$. The alpha level of $.05$ was utilized for the paired samples t test, and the results indicated a statistical significance value of $.00$ for fifth-grade students but showed a value of $.65$ for fourth-grade students, indicating no statistical significance. Therefore, the null

hypothesis is accepted for the fourth-grade population of students during the 2014-2015 school year but rejected for the fifth-grade population of that same school year. The conclusion can be drawn that there was a statistically significant improvement in the student reading achievement scores for fifth-grade students only, the second year of implementation of TCRWP for School A.

School B

School B began the school-wide implementation of the TCRWP balanced literacy components at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year beginning with the general balanced literacy component of a read-aloud and transitioning to TCRWP. Paired samples *t* tests were performed for School B utilizing the 2013-2014 school year and analyzed both the fourth- and fifth-grade student predicted reading scores and the corresponding actual student scores. The paired samples *t* test analyzed the two test scores per student (predicted and actual) in each grade level to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in reading achievement. The $p=.05$ value of statistical significance was used to determine the extent to which TCRWP implementation impacted the reading achievement of the economically disadvantaged student population. Table 26 shows the results of the descriptive statistics of fourth- and fifth-grade students during the 2013-2014 school year from School B, and Table 27 shows the result of the paired sample *t* test. Using an alpha level of .05, a paired samples *t* test was also conducted to evaluate whether student performance with the utilization of the TCRWP framework differed significantly at School B. The results suggested that the fourth grade predicted score mean ($M=1.00$, $SD=.00$) was significantly lower than and the fourth grade actual score mean ($M=2.46$, $SD=1.25$), with $t(228)=-17.74$, $p<.05$, $d=-1.66$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the predicted scores and the

actual scores after 1 year of TCRWP implementation at School B was -1.63 to -1.30.

Likewise, the fifth-grade data indicated that the fifth grade predicted score mean

($M=2.06$, $SD=1.03$) was significantly lower than the fifth grade actual score mean

($M=2.39$, $SD=1.16$), with $t(158)=-4.56$, $p<.05$, $d=-.51$. The 95% confidence interval for

the mean difference between the predicted scores and the actual scores after 1 year of

TCRWP implementation at School B was -.46 to -.18.

Table 26

School B 2013-2014 Fourth and Fifth Grade Descriptive Statistics

School B	Mean	Number Tested	Standard Error Mean	Standard Deviation
Predicted 13-14-4 th grade	1.0000	228	.00000	.00000
Actual 13-14-4 th grade	2.4649	228	.08255	1.24653
Predicted 13-14-5 th grade	2.0633	158	.08165	1.02630
Actual 13-14-5 th grade	2.3861	158	.09233	1.16052

Table 27

School B 2013-2014 Fourth and Fifth Grade Predicted and Actual Reading Data Paired T-Test Results

School B	Mean	Standard Error Mean	95% CI for Mean Difference	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Predicted 13-14-4 th grade Actual 13-14-4 th grade	-1.46491	.08255	-1.30224	-17.745	227	.000
Predicted 13-14-5 th grade Actual 13-14-5 th grade	-.32278	.07086	-.18283	-4.556	157	.000

Additionally, Table 27 indicated a statistically significant difference in the predicted scores and the actual scores. Due to the means of the two scores and the direction of the t value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the conclusion can be drawn that there was a statistically significant difference in student scoring following TCRWP implementation. The statistical significance value for fourth and fifth grade predicted and actual performance data was .00 for School B after the first implementation year of

TCRWP (2013-2014).

Similarly, the predicted student performance and actual student performance after the implementation of TCRWP the second school year (2014-2015) was analyzed using a paired samples *t* test. Table 28 shows the descriptive statistics of the paired *t* test of fourth- and fifth-grade student reading data from the 2014-2015 school year, and Table 29 shows the paired *t* test results for the same school year.

Table 28

School B 2014-2015 Fourth and Fifth Grade Descriptive Statistics

School B	Mean	Number Tested	Standard Error Mean	Standard Deviation
Predicted 14-15-4 th grade	2.5574	61	.16451	1.28484
Actual 14-15-4 th grade	2.5246	61	.17274	1.34915
Predicted 14-15-5 th grade	2.1061	132	.10496	1.20595
Actual 14-15-5 th grade	2.4394	132	.11190	1.28561

Table 29

School B 2014-2015 Fourth and Fifth Grade Predicted and Actual Reading Data Paired T-Test Results

School B	Mean	Standard Error Mean	95%CI for Mean Difference	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Predicted 14-15-4 th grade Actual 14-15-4 th grade	.03279	.09629	.22539	.341	60	.735
Predicted 14-15-5 th grade Actual 14-15-5 th grade	-.33333	.08307	-.16900	-4.013	131	.000

Using an alpha level of .05, a paired samples *t* test was also conducted to evaluate whether student performance with the utilization of the TCRWP framework differed significantly after the second year of implementation. These data indicated that the fourth grade predicted score mean (M=2.56, SD=1.28) was higher than the fourth grade actual score mean (M=2.52, SD=1.35), with $t(61)=.34$, $p<.05$, $d=.06$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the predicted scores and the actual

scores after 2 years of TCRWP implementation at School B was -.16 to .23. In contrast, the fifth-grade data indicated that the fifth grade predicted score mean ($M=2.11$, $SD=1.21$) was significantly lower than the fifth grade actual score mean after the second year of TCRWP implementation ($M=2.44$, $SD=1.29$), with $t(132)=-4.01$, $p<.05$, $d=-.49$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the predicted scores and the actual scores after 1 year of TCRWP implementation at School B was -.50 to -.17. The paired t -test results showed a statistical significance value of .00 for fifth-grade students; but indicated that there was no statistical significance, a value of .74 for fourth-grade students during the TCRWP second implementation year. Therefore, the null hypothesis for fourth-grade students during the 2014-2015 school year is accepted, and the null hypothesis for fifth-grade students during the 2014-2015 is rejected. The conclusion can be drawn that there was a statistically significant improvement in the student reading achievement scores for fifth-grade students only, the second year of implementation of TCRWP for School B.

Summary

TCRWP has been implemented as the selected literacy program in School A and School B. Both School A and School B experienced a statistically significant difference in both fourth- and fifth-grade students' predicted and actual reading scores after the first year of implementation, 2013-2014. Similarly, in 2014-2015, after the second year of implementation, both School A and School B experienced a statistically significant difference in fifth-grade students' predicted and actual reading scores; however, there was not a statistically significant difference in fourth-grade students' predicted and actual scores in School A nor School B after the second year of implementation. As mentioned initially in this section, the null hypothesis was there will not be a statistically significant

difference in students' predicted versus actual reading achievement scores. This null hypothesis was rejected for both fourth- and fifth-grade students in both School A and B during the first implementation. Likewise, after the second year of TCRWP, 2014-2015, the null hypothesis was rejected for fifth-grade students only at Schools A and B, accepted for fourth-grade students at both School A and B. Table 30, shows the results for both the first and second year of TCRWP implementation for both School A and School B and the statistical difference in the mean scores of the predicted and actual student reading scores for student participants.

Table 30

Product Evaluation Overall Results

Study Site and Grade	School Year	Statistical Significance	Null Hypothesis
School A 4 th Grade	2013-2014	.000	Rejected
School A 5 th Grade	2013-2014	.000	Rejected
School A 4 th Grade	2014-2015	.654	Accepted
School A 5 th Grade	2014-2015	.000	Rejected
School B 4 th Grade	2013-2014	.000	Rejected
School B 5 th Grade	2013-2014	.000	Rejected
School B 4 th Grade	2014-2015	.735	Accepted
School B 5 th Grade	2014-2015	.000	Rejected

Overall summary of results and findings. Table 31 shows the overall evaluation question results from this study for Schools A and B. The semi-structured interview participants from School A and School B shared their very detailed TCRWP implementation experiences with the researcher. Through this interview process, several themes emerged. The lack of student engagement during reading instruction and the high percentage of underperforming students in reading created a need for a literacy program that aligned with their goals of increasing student reading achievement and increasing a love for reading by engaging students in reading daily. Participant responses during

semi-structured interviews, the balanced literacy survey results, as well as the thematic analysis were evaluated by the 70% agreement criterion. The qualitative data indicated alignment between the goals of TCRWP and school goals. The qualitative data revealed that the 70% criterion was met for both Schools A and B in the alignment of TCRWP goals to the assessed needs; however, the data indicated that School A did not fully meet the criterion regarding increased student engagement. The qualitative data also revealed that the 70% criterion was met for both Schools A and B regarding the strategic plan being aligned to the needs of increasing student achievement and increasing student engagement. Likewise, the 70% criterion was met for both study sites concerning the implementation alignment to the initial design; however, the data showed a discrepancy in the implementation frequency reported in the TCRWP survey and the semi-structured interviews.

Further, the qualitative data analysis revealed a more direct alignment between the initial design and implementation the first year than the second year of implementation. The quantitative data revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the students' predicted and actual scores after the implementation of TCRWP with the exception of both Schools A and B's fourth-grade student populations after the second implementation year. The qualitative data in the current study revealed that TCRWP met the overall needs of the study sites. The quantitative data in the current study revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the student reading achievement scores after the implementation of TCRWP.

Schools A and B were selected to participate in this study based on their high population of economically disadvantaged students. With the convergence of quantitative and qualitative data, the current study indicated that TCRWP aligned to their

goals and met most of their assessed needs. Emerging patterns and themes from the qualitative data as well as the quantitative data from the current study and the implication of the results and the alignment to previous research in the areas of poverty, the achievement gap, balanced literacy, and TCRWP are discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 31

Evaluation Question Results

Evaluation Question	Criteria		Results
1. To what extent did the program goals address the assessed needs (Context)	At least 70% of the participants would agree that the program goals met the assessed needs.	School A: 85.7% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP has a positive impact on reading. MET School A: 67% of participants agreed that the program has created a love of reading in their students. NOT MET	School B: 71.5% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP has a positive impact on reading. MET School B: 71.4% of participants agreed that the program has created a love of reading in their students. MET
2. How well aligned were the strategic plan components to the assessed needs? (Input)	At least 70% of the participants would agree that the strategic plan met the assessed needs.	School A: 75% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP has a positive impact on reading. MET	School B: 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP has a positive impact on reading. MET
3. To what extent was the program implemented based on the initial design? (Process)	At least 70% of the participants would agree that the balanced literacy components were implemented with fidelity.	School A: 42% Agreement that Small Groups were implemented weekly. NOT MET 85.7% of the participants at School A agreed or strongly agreed that the planning for the implementation of TCRWP “required a lot of planning time and effort.” MET 71.5% of participants at School A agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP was easy to implement. MET 100% of School A participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP implementation changed their instructional practices. MET	School B: Inconsistent report (small groups): Interview data: 86% agreement versus TCRWP data: 29% agreement 100% of the participants at School B agreed or strongly agreed that the planning for the implementation of TCRWP “required a lot of planning time and effort.” MET 71.5% of participants at School B agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP was easy to implement. MET 85.7% of School B participants agreed or strongly agreed that TCRWP implementation changed their instructional practices. MET

(continued)

Evaluation Question	Criteria	Results	
4. To what extent was the reading proficiency of economically disadvantaged students impacted by TCRWP? (Product)	A statistically significant difference between the predicted scores and actual scores of matched paired students.	School A 2013-2014 4 th Grade: .00 MET 5 th Grade: .00 MET 2014-2015 4 th Grade: .65 NOT MET 5 th Grade: .00 MET	School B 2013-2014 4 th Grade: .00 MET 5 th Grade: .00 MET 2014-2015 4 th Grade: .74 NOT MET 5 th Grade: .00 MET

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This study was conducted to all-inclusively evaluate TCRWP and its impact on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. Specifically, this study evaluated the TCRWP balanced literacy framework using the CIPP evaluation model. This model is inclusive of four evaluations that have their own functional assessment of outcomes. The “context evaluation assesses needs, problems, and opportunities as bases for defining goals and priorities and judging the significance of outcomes” (Stufflebeam, 2000c, p. 279). The “input evaluation assesses alternative approaches to meeting needs as a means of planning programs and allocating resources” (Stufflebeam, 2000c, p. 279). Third evaluation in the CIPP model is the process evaluation. The process evaluation “assess the implementation of plans to guide activities and later to help explain outcomes” (Stufflebeam, 2000c, p. 279). The final product evaluation identifies “intended and unintended outcomes both to help keep the process on track and determine effectiveness” (Stufflebeam, 2000c, p. 279).

A convergent mixed-methods design was engaged in this study and was designated for the purpose of acquiring a better understanding of the research problem. This design rationale was “that one data collection form supplies strengths to offset the weaknesses of the other form, and that a more complete understanding of a research problem results from collecting both quantitative and qualitative data” (Creswell, 2012, p. 540). Neither quantitative nor qualitative approaches alone would have been adequate in explaining the impact of TCRWP on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students due to the complex factors of poverty that influence the overall achievement of economically disadvantaged students. Historically, economically disadvantaged students are more likely

than peers of higher socioeconomic status to start school with poor readiness skills and have low achievement (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Burchinal et al., 2008; Gutman et al., 2003; Heckman, 2006; Luster & McAdoo, 1996). As a result, schools have been tasked with eliminating the achievement gap that exists between economically disadvantaged students and their peers (Blazer, 2009).

The current study utilized two school-wide Title I schools that were inclusive of high minority and economically disadvantaged student populations that implemented TCRWP during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. The reading performance of economically disadvantaged students was evaluated based on the predicted performance scores versus student actual performance scores on the state reading assessment from the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. The predicted scores were indicative of student prior performance as defined by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's growth model, EVAAS. There was also an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data gained from the semi-structured interviews and the balanced literacy surveys to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of TCRWP on economically disadvantaged students. This study did not focus on one specific aspect of TCRWP but instead sought to evaluate the program in its entirety, both quantitatively and qualitatively. To comprehensively evaluate this program, the CIPP model was utilized and the following evaluation questions were used to gauge a perceived level of effectiveness.

1. To what extent did the program goals address the assessed needs? (context)
2. How well aligned were the strategic plan components to the assessed needs?
(input)
3. To what extent was the program implemented based on the initial design?
(process)

4. To what extent is the reading academic performance of economically disadvantaged students impacted by TCRWP? (product)

To answer these evaluation questions, qualitative semi-structured interview data along with quantitative survey data and predicted and actual reading achievement data from the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 state required fourth and fifth grade North Carolina EOG reading comprehension assessment were collected and analyzed. The data analysis and its relation to the evaluation questions give a comprehensive view of the effectiveness of TCRWP on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students at School A and School B.

Review and Discussion

Evaluation Question 1. “To what extent did the program goals address the assessed needs,” refers to each school’s assessed needs and the alignment of those needs to the program goals of TCRWP. This context evaluation utilized qualitative data collected from the one-on-one semi-structured interview data and quantitative frequency data from a TCRWP balanced literacy survey to gauge the extent to which the program goals addressed the assessed needs. The assessed needs, which subsequently were the school goals as defined by the school administrative teams, were to increase student reading achievement and to improve student engagement in reading by building a love for reading. Although both schools met the criterion for alignment between TCRWP and the assessed needs of increasing the reading achievement of students, it was apparent in the thematic content analysis for both School A and School B that the majority of participants believed that TCRWP did not align the instructional needs of the below level learner population. This was not identified as an assessed need or school goal but was revealed by 75% of the participants at School A and 86% of the participants from School

B. The semi-structured interview participants from School A and School B indicated that the below grade level subgroups included a large number of non-ELL minority students and ELLs who are one grade level or more below in reading. ELL students and minority students have historically performed below grade level and are a part of the achievement gaps, more specifically the race gap (Lamar, 2009).

NCES in 2011 found that “the achievement gap between non-ELL and ELL students in reading was approximately 36 points” and that gap was the average for this subgroup since 2002 (NCES, 2013, p. 1). Although TCRWP does not explicitly offer a specific program or instructional script for ELLs, there is an understanding that the components of TCRWP are structured to support not only language acquisition but the reading and writing skills that non-ELLs need to be successful readers. Additionally, the TCRWP research base acknowledges the need for teachers to “adapt text based on a child’s academic language proficiency” (TCRWP, n.d.a, para. 42). The findings from the interviews, along with the TCRWP research base, leads the researcher to recommend that schools develop goals that are more specific to student subgroups. Subsequently, professional development on designing instruction within the TCRWP framework for the specific student subgroups such as ELLs should be a part of the school goals. This should be taken into consideration for future training and development offerings prior to and during TCRWP implementation.

The interview data also revealed that minority students did not benefit as much as their counterparts from TCRWP in the current study. Historically, minority students have had lower academic achievement as evidenced by research results such as the findings of NAEP that reported in 2013 that 52% of Caucasian students were at or above proficient in reading in contrast to their African-American and Hispanic peers with 15% and 24%

respectively. Additionally, per a special analysis by NCES in 2009 and 2011, African-American and Hispanic students lag behind their Caucasian peers by 20 or more test score points on the NAEP reading assessments in fourth and eighth grades (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011). This also is consistent with the findings of PIRLS data which reported that in the United States, White, Asian, and multi-racial fourth graders scored higher on average, while African-American and Hispanic fourth graders scored lower on average (Thompson et al., 2012, p.15). This shows an historic gap in the reading performance of minority students and shows that the achievement gap is relative to race and ethnicity, which Milner (2013) linked to poverty and socioeconomic status. Milner found that although African-Americans and Hispanics constitute only 27.6% of the United States population, they account for over 50% of the impoverished population. These data are relative to this study in that these minority students who were performing below grade level at both school sites received a minimal benefit from TCRWP. Leroy and Symes (2001) found that the “risk factors” that related to poverty can promote academic failure and might have affected the impact of TCRWP on these students. Further, NCES reported a 20-point achievement gap between comparative racial groups such as White economically disadvantaged students and White non-economically disadvantaged students and others which indicates an additional gap, a socioeconomic achievement gap. This historical data and the qualitative data collected in this study suggest that the factors of poverty that Armor (2006) found which included genetic influences, home and community experiences, cognitively stimulating experiences, and poverty status impact the achievement of students. These extraneous factors may have attributed to the commentary from the participants regarding the minimal benefit of TCRWP for these below grade level learners. None of the participants directly mentioned poverty or the

impact of poverty, but several referred to the lack of parental involvement and student academic language proficiency in the English language as indicators of the TCRWP level of impact. Both are attributes or factors that can have an impact on student reading achievement and may have affected the impact TCRWP had on the economically disadvantaged student population at the current study sites.

To evaluate the alignment of TCRWP goals to the assessed need of improving student engagement, the 70% criterion was utilized. School A did not fully meet the criterion, but School B did meet the set criterion. The qualitative and quantitative data collection from School A participants yielded conflicting results, which for the most part were below the 70% criterion. This inconsistency implied that there may have been inconsistency in defining the meaning “interactive discussions,” “engaged” and “a love for reading” by participants. The data from the current study indicated a need for schools or school districts to set goals based on their assessed needs for the general populations as well as more specific subgroups of students to gauge the effectiveness of a program. It is also important to use a standard definition of student engagement for future survey and interview data development and collection to promote uniformity and clarity for participants.

Although both Schools A and B met the criterion of TCRWP goals being aligned to their school goals, the qualitative data revealed the importance of schools carefully identifying their needs and goals using data specific to student subgroups during the planning phase and prior to program implementation. In the current study, neither School A nor School B specified the below grade level student subgroups as an assessed need; therefore, the specified needs of those subgroups were not met per the qualitative data. Identifying and addressing the needs of student subgroups is critical to overall academic

student progress and, according to Soto Kile (2006), has changed the course of professional development practices in schools. As a result, the goals and associated strategic plan which are discussed in Research Question 2 will hinge on this very specific population of students.

Evaluation Question 2. How well aligned were the strategic plan components to the assessed needs? The input evaluation of the CIPP model that “identifies procedural designs and educational strategies that will most likely achieve the desired results” was evaluated through an analysis of alignment of the strategic plan components in relation to the assessed needs (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 64). The desired results or goals were the same at both School A and School B, which were to improve student engagement in reading by creating a love of reading and to increase overall student reading achievement. Although the desired results or goals were the same at both schools, the strategic plan for achieving the desired outcomes was different in some aspects. The main differences in the strategic plans were that School A began TCRWP implementation with a catalyst cohort group in the late fall of the 2012-2013 school year with school-wide implementation at the beginning of 2013-2014 school year. The implementation foci were also different. The focus for the first year was reader’s workshop and the second year was conferring. The strategic plan for School B started with a school-wide general balanced literacy implementation at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year with a transition to the TCRWP implementation (one component at a time) throughout the remainder of the 2012-2013 school year beginning in the late fall. The foci for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 years was all of the TCRWP components with ongoing professional development on each component throughout both school years.

Per semi-structured administrative interview data, each school implemented

TCRWP based on their individual school's strategic plan developed by the administrative team in order to reach their goals. Based on the qualitative data collection from the semi-structured administrative interviews of the current study, the strategic plan was aligned to the assessed needs. This agreement was measured and indicated by thematic analysis of the data collected during semi-structured interview data and met the 70% criterion set forth in this study. Although the qualitative data analysis results showed that School A and School B met the criterion of an aligned strategic plan to the assessed needs, it is important to reiterate that the data also yielded that the assessed needs did not address the instructional needs of this population of below level learners. Thus, the strategic plans from Schools A and B were not directly aligned to these specified target subgroups. The researcher posits that because the participating school sites had such a large population of economically disadvantaged students, the needs assessment team members focused on the overall low reading achievement scores, and therefore their goals were focused on the overall population of students instead of specific subgroups. Schools A and B had well developed strategic plans that included a large amount of professional development, according to the qualitative data; however, their plans lacked the emphasis on the ELL population and non-ELL minority population who were considerably below grade level. As a result, the professional development was not suited to address the instructional needs of these students. Moreover, statements by participants regarding the minimal benefit of TCRWP for ELL students due to the ELL population working to acquire the English language were acknowledged by TCRWP in their research base for their balanced literacy framework. The TCRWP research base asserted that they have previously hosted experts who specialize in helping striving learners and ELLs cultivate stronger academic language skills through professional development for teachers

regarding the process of adapting text based on the academic language aptitude of students (TCRWP, n.d.a, para 52). This suggests that although TCRWP does not explicitly offer a specific program or instructional script for ELLs, there is an understanding that the components of TCRWP are structured to support not only language acquisition but the reading and writing skills that non-ELLs need to be successful readers. It is the belief of the researcher that schools that have a large population of below grade level learners and ELLs provide professional development that specifically addresses the instructional needs of ELLs as a part of their strategic plan to align to their goals and needs for these specific subgroups.

Professional development is critical to teacher development, so much so that NCLB requires that funds are allocated for “high-quality” professional development so that teachers are given the opportunity to grow and develop in the content areas that they teach. Professional development is critical to teaching because, as denoted in its name, it allows a teacher as a professional to develop their expertise and effectiveness in an area of concentration, which Rhoton and Stiles (2002) found “can account for about 40 percent of the variance in students’ learning in reading and mathematics achievement—more than any other single factor, including student background” (p. 1). Professional development was a large part of the strategic plans for both School A and School B. Since both schools were a part of the district’s TCRWP PLC, their strategic plans were similar but were different in several aspects. Both School A’s and School B’s strategic professional development plans included building level literacy coaches who would lead professional development and support teachers with daily implementation of TCRWP. Additionally, both schools sent selected staff members to the Teacher’s College in New York for professional development and facilitated internal professional development at

the current study sites via a TCRWP specialist who came from the Teacher's College to their schools throughout the implementation of TCRWP. This ongoing professional development is one of the 10 characteristics that Kedzior and Fifield (2004) found as characteristics of high quality teacher professional development. Additionally, both schools reported having weekly professional development on TCRWP as well as coaching and feedback from their building level instructional coaches throughout the year as a critical part of their strategic implementation plan. This amount of professional development aligns to the work of Yoon et al. (2007) who found that "teachers who received substantial professional development, an average of 49 hours per year can boost their student's achievement by about 21 percentile points" (p. 1).

The strategic plan differences from School A and School B centered around timing of implementation and implementation foci each school year. School A started their implementation with a catalyst cohort of teachers prior to the school-wide implementation in 2013-2014. The school-wide implementation in 2013-2014 at School A began with a focus on the reader's workshop component. In contrast, School B began school-wide implementation of TCRWP one component at a time throughout the 2012-2013 school year and a continued focus on all components during the 2013-2014 school years. Both schools monitored student progress during TCRWP using various reading assessments; however, the qualitative data revealed that School A had a specific plan including fidelity checks which were "informal surveys conducted during planning sessions in which teachers and paraprofessionals could express frustrating moments in implementation as well as things that were going well" (School A Participant 12, personal communication, May 23, 2016). These fidelity checks or follow-up sessions after professional development are factors that Yoon et al. (2007) reported as factors that

have a positive and significant effect on student achievement. Likewise, Reeves (2003), reported the importance of professional development and application of acquired knowledge from the professional development in classrooms positively impact teaching and learning. The qualitative data for both Schools A and B showed that each school's strategic plans included ongoing professional development and monitoring of the acquired knowledge from that professional development in the application of TCRWP in each classroom. This shows that Schools A and B were using research-based practices in their strategic implementation plans.

Although, both School A and School B had well-developed strategic plans, participants from School A and School B shared that staffing changes such as leadership changes, teacher transfers, and new teachers with no training in TCRWP being hired during implementation were not a part of either of the strategic plans. In fact, a participant from School A mentioned during the interview that she came during the second implementation year and that she was told that the first year,

I guess is when they really started implementing it and got a lot of training and then we got a new principal last year and we kind of switched away from it a little bit. So, I really didn't get any formal training or any information about how to implement it (chuckles), I'm sorry. (School A Participant 3, personal communication, May 9, 2016).

From this commentary, it is clear that there was a lack of professional development during the second year of implementation which, according to Yoon et al. (2007), can affect student achievement. Yoon et al. asserted that professional development can have a domino effect on student achievement through enhancing teacher knowledge and skills, which can improve classroom teaching and thereby raise student achievement. While the

data showed a lack of professional development after the leadership change, the reported teacher turnover also impacted the second year of implementation. Further, Guin (2004) found that teacher turnover plus the lack of professional development has a direct impact on student achievement. These data and previous research suggest that strategic implementation plans must include teacher and leadership retention or include a contingency plan for ensuring that new hires receive professional development on current initiatives in order to minimize the impact of student achievement.

Staffing, ongoing professional development, and teacher and leader retention should be considered when implementing or planning to implement any curriculum framework or programs as these factors can affect the strategic plans and ultimately the outcomes of the program.

Evaluation Question 3. To what extent was the program implemented based on the initial design? This question attended to the procedure and practice of TCRWP implementation in comparison to the initial design and “provides an ongoing check on the project’s implementation process” (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 65). The TCRWP framework does not have a specified sequenced implementation guide; however, the reader’s and writer’s workshop components include a sequence of a mini-lesson followed by independent reading and writing time respectively. The teacher also has the option of implementing small group or individual conferring during the independent reading time. Each study site in the current study created the initial design based on the strategic plan and TCRWP structure observed during their visit and professional development at the Teacher’s College in New York and was supported by the TCRWP Instructional Support Coach who conducted professional development for each study site. The data from the semi-structured interviews and the balanced literacy surveys revealed that over 70% of

participants agreed that the overall implementation of TCRWP at both School A and School B was aligned to the initial design. There was one inconsistency in the data analysis between the qualitative semi-structured interviews and the TCRWP quantitative survey. The researcher posits that the inconsistency was because of a difference in the language of the survey and the terminology of the interview, since over 70% of participants at School A and School B discussed their consistent use of small-group instruction during the semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher. The terminology used by the survey was “small groups”; however, the semi-structured interview terminology was “strategy groups” and “guided reading groups” which are the more specific small-group terms for TCRWP. In future data collections, it would be important to use the terminology from the program in the surveys and interviews to ensure consistency in reporting. This inconsistency could also have been the result of not clearly defining consistency during the semi-structured interviews as defined on the TCRWP survey. TCRWP defined consistency as three or more times per week; however, this definition was not specifically defined during the semi-structured interviews.

Though both Schools A and B both met the criterion for being aligned to the initial design, the qualitative data revealed that there were several staffing changes that occurred during the program implementation at both School A and School B that had an impact on implementation. These changes included a leadership change and several teacher staffing changes at both study sites during the 2 years of TCRWP implementation. Although there was a leadership change at both schools after the first year of implementation, participants from School A indicated that the professional development and monitoring was not done with fidelity the second year of implementation. Over half of the participants at School A noted a drastic change in

implementation during the second year due to leadership change, which resulted in less fidelity the second implementation year. The researcher posits that the effect of the leadership change was felt more by participants from School A than School B due to an external shift in leadership versus an internal shift in leadership, which was the experience of participants at School B. A participant from School A stated during the semi-structured interview that during the second implementation year, “any program of quality should sustain itself beyond any one person being in place” (School A Participant 11, personal communication, May 10, 2016). This commentary supports the findings of Hargreaves and Fink (2006) who found that there are skills that instructional leaders and principals must possess in order to sustain improvement efforts such as the development of leadership from within the organization and the utilization of different kinds of knowledge to continue a previous plan already in place while simultaneously identifying and addressing areas of need. In other words, a leader must have knowledge and skills related to a program to sustain it. Further, schools need to consciously assess whether a program that is being implemented is uniquely dependent on a specific member of personnel and cannot be sustained by another leader and manage and plan for the succession process from the beginning. That is to say that when implementing a plan or program, personnel changes should be considered in order to sustain the program beyond the current leadership.

Teacher turnover was also identified as having an impact on the implementation of TCRWP the second year of implementation. A participant from School A mentioned during the interview that she came during the second implementation year and that she was told that the first year,

I guess is when they really started implementing it and got a lot of training and

then we got a new principal last year and we kind of switched away from it a little bit. So, I really didn't get any formal training or any information about how to implement it (chuckles), I'm sorry. (School A Participant 3, personal communication, May 9, 2016)

Further, a participant from School B asserted that

I wish that (clears throat) you could keep the same staff. Because this is definitely a program, the longer you do it the better you get (pause) with it, um. And you know each year if you're trying to train new teachers it takes them several years to really, um, become proficient. . . . That's the hard part because you know you feel so good about like, we had a third grade that stayed in-tact for a really long time and they were so strong. Well, then we started losing some of them and then you have new people come in and it-you have to start all over. (School B Participant 6, personal communication, May 16, 2016)

This commentary indicates that implementation and outcomes from implementation can be impacted by changes in teaching staff and indicates that turnover is a concern at each of these study sites. Guin (2004) found that teacher turnover is historically prevalent in schools serving economically disadvantaged students, and the current study sites support this finding based on the data collection in the current study. Additionally, Guin found that schools with higher turnover rates also had lower student achievement.

The TCRWP survey data analysis indicated that the implementation aligned to the initial design as evidenced by the 70% of agreement criterion being met, with one inconsistency. As a result, the researcher suggests consistent terminology use in data collection in future research. The semi-structured interview data from School A indicated a more direct alignment to the initial design during the first year of

implementation in contrast to the second year of implementation due to a change in leadership. As previously stated, School B also experienced a leadership change; however, the internal leadership change seemed to have a minimal effect on the implementation of TCRWP the second year. Even though teacher and leader turnover may have impacted TCRWP implementation based on the initial design, the criterion was met. These data findings are important to the process evaluation and the overall CIPP evaluative model due to the connection of implementation and the desired results.

Evaluation Question 4. To what extent is the reading proficiency of economically disadvantaged students impacted by TCRWP? The product evaluation “is to measure, interpret, and judge a project’s outcomes by assessing their merit, worth, significance, and probity” (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 65). The product evaluation for both School A and School B utilized the state required North Carolina ELA standardized assessment. These assessments are used by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to “measure student performance on the goals, objectives, and grade-level competencies” (Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.j, para. 1). These standardized tests are also used to calculate student growth from 1 school year to the next based on each student’s scale score from year to year and the predicted scale score for the next school year.

The current study utilized fourth- and fifth-grade student predicted reading scores and corresponding student actual reading scores from the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 North Carolina EOG ELA test to evaluate the extent to which TCRWP impacted the student reading performance of the representative sample of economically disadvantaged students. A paired samples *t* test was performed for both fourth- and fifth-grade students at each school and for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Students who did not

have a predicted score or an actual score were not included in the analysis due to the lack of paired data.

TCRWP was implemented as the selected sole literacy program in School A and School B. The null hypothesis for this study for both Schools A and B is that as a result of the implementation of TCRWP, there will not be a statistically significant difference in students' predicted versus actual reading achievement scores. Both School A and School B experienced statistically significant growth in both fourth and fifth grade after the first year of implementation, 2013-2014. Also, similarly in 2014-2015 after the second year of implementation, both School A and School B experienced statistically significant growth in fifth-grade students, but their fourth-grade student populations did not experience statistically significant growth. The researcher posits that the lack of statistically significant growth at Schools A and B may have been due to the staffing transitions after the first year of implementation. Several of the participants at each school referred to having only taught during the second year and not having adequate training, if any, in TCRWP during the second year of implementation. Although not a part of the interview questions, it was clear that teacher turnover and training was a concern to the administrators in the current study. The amount of teacher turnover was not specified in the data collection; however, the impact of the turnover can be gathered from the commentary form one of the administrative participants who said,

I wish that (clears throat) you could keep the same staff. Because this is definitely a program, the longer you do it the better you get (pause) with it. And you know each year if you're trying to train new teachers it takes them several years to really um become proficient, where it just rolls off of their tongue and that to me would be the biggest thing. If you just keep staff, a really good staff in place long

enough to really see the benefits of it. . . . That's the hard part because you know you feel so good about like, we had a third grade that stayed in-tact for a really long time and they were so strong. Well then, we started losing some of them and then you have new people come in and it-you have to start all over, like around 5 days start all over. So and it's hard to judge it when you know you have some staff that have been here a long time, they're very well trained, very proficient.

(School B Participant 6, personal communication, May 16, 2016)

Thus, these study sites may not have been able to see the full benefit due to teacher turnover. It also shows the complex changes in professional development that become necessary to grow teachers who are at different levels of competency in the program being implemented. The data garnered from interviews regarding teacher retention align with the findings of Guin (2004) who found that schools that have a high population of economically disadvantaged students, minority students, and low-achieving student populations have higher teacher turnover rates. Additionally, leadership turnover in School A and School B was also asserted as a contributing factor to the change in outcomes the second year of implementation, which is supported by Briggs (2000) who posited that the departure of a leader or any other key personnel can undermine the effectiveness of any program. The qualitative data from the current study suggests that the lack ongoing professional development in the second year had an impact on the outcomes and implementation of TCRWP. These data align to the findings of Kedzior and Fifield (2004) who found that ongoing teacher professional development is one of 10 characteristics of high quality teacher professional development. In addition, Rhoton and Stiles (2002) suggested that professional development which builds teacher expertise "can account for about 40

percent of the variance in student learning; more than any other single factor, including student background” (p. 1). In other words, although the two schools in the current study have high populations of minority and economically disadvantaged students, ongoing professional development can positively impact these students through teacher professional development and subsequent teacher expertise. Teacher and principal turnover and retention as well as professional development are critical to student achievement and should therefore be considered when implementing any program and sustaining implementation over time.

Johnson et al. (2003) conducted a study on the Four Block balanced literacy framework at three different school sites. The data from that study showed that the two schools that had a high population of minority and economically disadvantaged students did not perform as well as their non-economically disadvantaged peers after the intervention of the Four Block balanced literacy framework. Similarly, several interview participants from the current study shared that TCRWP was not as effective for below grade level subgroups which included a large number of non-ELL minority students and second language learners. These data suggest that the factors of poverty that Payne (2005) identified especially in generational poverty such as negative social and emotional challenges, lack of access to educational resources and quality educational experiences, and other non-school factors impact student achievement and must be considered when implementing an instructional program.

Overall Findings Analysis

Program theory is described as “making explicit the underlying assumptions about how programs are expected to work-the program theory-and then using this theory to guide the evaluation” (Rogers et al., 2000, p. 1). The program theory in the current

study was defined by the participants based on their expected outcomes with the use of TCRWP. The lack of student engagement during reading instruction and the high percentage of underperforming students in reading created a need for a literacy program that aligned with their goals of increasing student reading achievement and increasing engagement through building a love for reading. The participants in this study indicated an alignment between School A's and School B's assessed needs or goals to TCRWP goals. Additionally, the qualitative data indicated alignment between the goals and assessed needs as well as the implementation to the initial design specifically for the first year of implementation. The data analysis revealed a possible misalignment during the second year of implementation due to leadership and staffing changes. Participant responses from semi-structured interviews, the balanced literacy survey results, and the frequency data and statistical analysis of the quantitative data revealed whether the criterion for each evaluation question was met. Evaluation questions one through three were measured with a 70% agreement criterion. Evaluation question four was evaluated using the $p=.05$ statistical significance criterion.

The qualitative semi-structured interview and quantitative survey data revealed that the 70% criterion was met for both Schools A and B in the alignment of TCRWP goals to the assessed needs; however, the data indicated that School A did not fully meet the criterion regarding the need for increased student engagement. Therefore, both the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that TCRWP supports the overall reading achievement of this representative sample of economically disadvantaged students. Schools A and B were selected to participate in this study based on their high population of economically disadvantaged students. Based on the convergence of quantitative and qualitative data, the current study suggests TCRWP has a positive impact on

economically disadvantaged students' reading achievement.

This convergent mixed-methods study revealed that although the qualitative and quantitative data indicated an overall positive impact on this representative sample of economically disadvantaged students, these data also showed that needs of specific subgroups of students were not fully met through the implementation measured and evaluated in this study. Thus, the professional development was not suited to address these student needs and therefore there was a minimal benefit to these students.

Likewise, the qualitative and quantitative data showed that the student reading achievement of fourth-grade students during the second implementation year was not statistically significant. The researcher posits that staffing changes as well as the lack of or minimal professional development for new staff may have contributed to the lack of growth during the second year of TCRWP implementation.

Recommendations Based on the Research

The purpose of this study was to comprehensively evaluate the impact of TCRWP on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. The data analysis revealed that participants felt that the needs of an underachieving subgroup of minority and ELL students were not specifically addressed by TCRWP. As a result, the researcher recommends that specific measurable goals for each subgroup of students are established and that the professional development strategic plan is geared toward these goals and subgroups. Likewise, the researcher recommends that student engagement be measured in a more objective way through the possible use of a student engagement checklist tool to ensure that learning targets are specific and measurable. Additionally, the qualitative data indicated that new staff members who were hired prior to the second year of implementation felt that they did not receive adequate professional development in

TCRWP. Therefore, it is the recommendation that a plan for staffing transitions and professional development for staff turnover be addressed in the strategic plan for implementation.

Contributions. This study has made several contributions to the field of education, specifically in reading instruction, TCRWP, and the research on program evaluations. The available research on TCRWP, especially in terms of the use of the program with economically disadvantaged students, is minimal. This study adds to the body of research on reading instructional methods that are scientifically researched based as required by the Reading First School Improvement grant. Additionally, this study adds significantly to the growing body of research on closing the achievement gap for minority and economically disadvantaged students in reading and supports the body of research that is needed for the growing population of schools that are utilizing this program across the United States and more specifically North Carolina.

Implications of Study

As local schools are charged with the task of closing the achievement gaps in student achievement, it is important to employ programs that have been evaluated for their effectiveness, such as TCRWP in this study—specifically the implementation of TCRWP with economically disadvantaged students. This study provided evidence that TCRWP implemented by two Title I pre-k through fifth grade traditional schools was effective and had an overall positive impact on the reading achievement of the representative sample of fourth and fifth grade economically disadvantaged students. According to Marzano (2003), collecting and analyzing data to assess the effectiveness of programming choices is essential to finding what works in schools. Further, Killion (2008) asserted that it is imperative to evaluate teaching practices to ensure that they are

having the intended impact on student learning. The data in the current study are now historical at the time of publication, which helps to form comparative baselines for current and future evocations of use with economically disadvantaged students.

Recommendations for Future Research

This comprehensive program evaluation of TCRWP and its overall impact on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students was completed on a small scale with limited generalizability due to restricted access to identified economically disadvantaged students. However, the results from this program evaluation indicate that TCRWP may have promising results in high-poverty schools. Based on the literature review and results of the study, the following recommendations for further research are listed below.

1. Future replication of this study with actual economically disadvantaged students to directly assess the economically disadvantaged student population versus a representative sample.
2. Future replication of this study with (measurable) school goals more specific to subgroups and professional development aligned to strategies for those subgroups.
3. Future replication of this study with a plan for professional development for all new hires.
4. Future replication of this study with exact terminology on survey instruments and in semi-structured interview questions.
5. Future longitudinal study of the reading achievement of a cohort of students from the first tested grade level to grade level spans of 3-5 years.
6. Future case study replication comparing economically disadvantaged students

who are taught reading instruction through TCRWP versus economically disadvantaged students who are not taught using TCRWP within the same school setting.

7. Future replication of this study with economically disadvantaged students and the assessed need and strategic plan addressing the ELL and below grade level learners specifically through professional development, assessment, and modified instruction based on strategies for these subgroups.

Limitations. This purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of TCRWP on the reading performance of economically disadvantaged students. The National School Lunch Act regulations prohibit the identification of students who qualify for free and reduced price meals (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d.; Public Schools of North Carolina, n.d.a). As a result, economically disadvantaged students could not be specifically identified, and all students enrolled in fourth and fifth grades that had two scores each year were included in the study. This population was deemed by the researcher as a generalized representative sample due to School A's and School B's economically disadvantaged student population being approximately 86% and 81% respectively. Likewise, another limitation could be the limited number of teachers available for involvement in this study due to teacher and administrative turnover. Also, teacher and administrative participation in each data collection tool was voluntary; therefore, there was a limited amount of participants in the surveys and semi-structured interviews.

Limitations of this study also include the fact that the TCRWP initiative was implemented with a TCWRP supervisory model. That is to say that the TCRWP personnel visited the school site several times throughout the 2013-2014 school year but

were not consistently a part of the implementation process to ensure implementation fidelity. A possible limitation of this research could be that although the teachers were all highly qualified as defined by the State of North Carolina regarding Title I schools, the level of instruction might have been extremely different as far as the effectiveness of the balanced literacy instruction. Some students may have received additional reading interventions in or outside of the school setting that were not reported and may have impacted student achievement data. Additionally, outside factors that might affect student performance (e.g., family support and individual intelligence) were not addressed in this study. Moreover, internal validity may be limited by experiences, judgments, preferences, and beliefs of the participants.

Conclusion

The results of this study were aligned to several of the reviews of literature in Chapter 2 regarding poverty and the impact of poverty on student achievement, professional development, and teacher quality as well as teacher retention and TCRWP. Closing the achievement gaps in education both nationally and internationally for different subgroups of students is a main goal in the educational arena; and thus, there is a growing need to employ effective scientifically research-based strategies and programs. According to the National Education Association (2003), “Over the last several years, student achievement has increased for all groups in all subjects, yet the gaps between rich and poor, white and minority remain a persistent problem” (p. 1). The overall positive results of this program evaluation should be considered as a catalyst for change in the school districts and the state of North Carolina based on the student outcomes revealed in the data analysis. This comprehensive evaluation of TCRWP in schools with high economically disadvantaged student populations is relative to these needs and is therefore

a valuable addition to the body of research on TCRWP, student achievement gaps, reading interventions, scientifically research-based strategies and programs, and economically disadvantaged students' reaching achievement.

The conclusions extracted from this study are based on the qualitative and quantitative data analysis through the program theory which details the steps to the outcomes. A convergent mixed-methods design was utilized along with the four-point CIPP evaluation model to comprehensively evaluate TCRWP and its impact on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. The first three evaluation questions were answered to generate precise underlying assumptions about how TCRWP is expected to work with economically disadvantaged students based on the needs, design, and implementation. The final evaluation question was answered to measure the statistical significance of TCRWP on the reading achievement of the representative sample of economically disadvantaged students. The qualitative and quantitative data from this study revealed that TCRWP had an overall positive effect on the reading achievement of this representative sample of fourth and fifth grade economically disadvantaged students in two Title I schools in southeastern North Carolina. These data also showed that needs of specific subgroups of students were not fully met through the implementation measured and evaluated in this study. The qualitative data indicated that because the below grade level subgroup of learners' needs were not met, there was a minimal benefit to these students. Likewise, the qualitative and quantitative data showed that the student reading achievement of fourth-grade students during the second implementation year was not statistically significant due to staffing and leadership changes as well as minimal or no professional development for new staff prior to and during the second year of TCRWP implementation. Additionally, it is vital that any

school or school district establish an ongoing professional development plan for implementation that addresses their specific needs and goals. It is also suggested that schools and districts that are considering the implementation of TCRWP have contingency plans in staffing with a subsequent professional development plan for new hires.

Results of this study should be of interest to all educators, especially those who serve in schools with high populations of economically disadvantaged students. The evaluation of this program indicated growth in reading that students experienced after the implementation of the TCRWP balanced literacy instructional framework. The current study findings provide evidence that the program has a promising impact on the reading achievement of students in high-poverty schools.

This study should add strength to the educational field and compel future research with recommendations to add to the body of research especially in closing the achievement gap in reading.

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Appendix A

TCRWP Balanced Literacy Survey

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE TEACHER'S COLLEGE READING AND WRITING PROJECT

BALANCED LITERACY MODEL

What is your role at the school?

Classroom Teacher Instructional Assistant Administrator Other

Instructional Support

How long have you been teaching? 3 or fewer years 4 to 6 years 7 or more years

How often do you utilize the following	Less than once per week	Once or twice per week	Three to Four times per week	Everyday
Shared Reading				
Guided Reading Groups				
Independent Reading Time				
Read-Alouds				
Conferencing				
Reader's Workshop				
Writer's Workshop				

The Balanced Literacy Core Curriculum...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Is easy to implement/use.				
Has a positive impact on student achievement.				
Requires lots of planning time and effort to implement/use.				
Has changed my instructional practices.				

3= Fully implemented, 2 = partially implement, 1 = not implemented	3	2	1
1. A variety of reading material is available to students on their reading level			
2. The classroom library is well organized			
3. Books are leveled (A-Z) and a small percentage (20 percent or less) are organized by interest (subject, author, genre).			
4. There are areas in the classroom available for independent and small-group reading instruction.			
5. Student work, reading and writing anchor charts, and reading and writing content are displayed in the classroom.			
6. Assessments are used to determine grade and level-appropriate reading materials for students.			
7. Students are engaged in reading and writing activities during the designated reading time.			
8. Students are interacting with reading texts through the use of reader's notebooks and/or sticky notes.			
9. Students are engaged in interactive discussions about reading with the teacher, a group of students, or a reading partner.			
10. The Readers Workshop begins with a teacher-directed mini-lesson.			
11. The teacher(s) engage in conferring with students during independent reading.			
12. The teacher(s) pull a strategy or guided reading group during independent reading.			
13. A purpose for reading includes students interacting with their texts through note-taking (in reader's notebooks or sticky notes).			
14. The Readers Workshop session includes a mid-workshop teaching point.			

Survey adapted from the following studies.

Thomas, Heather, "An evaluation of the literacy program at Garibaldi Grade School" (2013). *Doctor of Education (EdD)*. Paper 22.

Perkins Greene, T. R. (2015). Program evaluation of balanced literacy in an urban school district. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A*, 76,

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Administrator Interview Questions

1. How well aligned are the components of the TCRWP to your identified needs?
2. What was your strategic plan for implementation and how was it aligned to your identified needs?
3. How were your goals and objectives for this program related to your identified needs?
4. Has this program met the school's expected outcomes based on your goals and objectives? Please explain your answer.
5. From beginning to end how has the implementation actually looked? Please include all professional development and resource acquisition?
6. How aligned is the implementation to the TCRWP framework structure? How do you know?
7. What data collection tool(s) did you use to monitor the implementation fidelity of the program?
8. Has the framework been successful with economically disadvantaged students? How do you know?
9. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the student reading proficiency data since the implementation of this program?
10. If you could change anything about the implementation of this program what would it be? Why?

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Teacher Interview Questions

1. From beginning to end how has the implementation looked in your classroom? Please include all professional development and resource acquisition?
2. How aligned is the implementation to the TCRWP framework structure? How do you know?
3. How well aligned were the components of the TCRWP to your identified student needs?
4. What were your goals and objectives for this program? Have these been met? How do you know?
5. Has the framework been successful with economically disadvantaged students? How do you know?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the student reading proficiency data since the implementation of this program?
7. What would you change about the implementation if anything?

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form for Semi-Structured Interview Participants

To Whom It May Concern,

You are being asked to participate in an evaluation study.

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively evaluate the impact of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students. This program will be evaluated using Stufflebeam's CIPP model (Stufflebeam, 2003). This will provide summative information about the effectiveness of this programs with students who are economically disadvantaged. The school and school district will not be identified in this study or its findings. Additionally, if a direct quote is used from the interview a pseudonym will be used.

The information about the needs, resources, implementation, and the impact of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project on student reading proficiency will be collected from you through an interview. This interview will take approximately 45 minutes of your time and will begin with questions regarding your experiences with implementation and the impact of the program on the reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participation or during study and I will share the findings with you and at the conclusion of the evaluation if you so desire. Most importantly, your name will not be associated with the evaluation findings in any way, and the evaluator will be the only person that knows your identity. As a result, there are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study.

Your participation is voluntary and if you choose not to continue to be a participant in the study, you may stop at any time without penalty. The benefit of your participation is that the findings of this study will add to a body of research that could potentially impact curriculum selection for similar schools, with similar populations in the future.

Please sign this consent form to confirm your election to participate in this study and initial to consent to audiotaping for the purpose of transcription. You are signing it with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this form will be given to you to keep.

Signature _____ Date _____

_____ By initialing, you are giving consent for the researcher to audio tape your interview for the purpose of transcription by the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript.

Evaluator's Name: LaTonya Gaines-Montgomery Email: XXXXXX

Stufflebeam, D.L. (2003). The CIPP Model for evaluation. In T. Kellaghan, D.L. Stufflebeam, & L.A. Wingate (Eds.), Wingate (Eds.), *International handbook of educational evaluation* (31-62). Boston: Kluwe

Appendix E

Site Research Permission Request

Dear Sir/Madame,

My name is LaTonya Gaines-Montgomery and I am a student in the Doctorate of Education, Curriculum and Instruction program at Gardner-Webb University. The research I desire to conduct for my dissertation is a program evaluation on the impact of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project with a specific focus on its effectiveness on the reading achievement of Economically Disadvantaged Students.

There is a limited amount of research on Teacher's College Reading and Writing Program especially in settings with a large population of minority and impoverished students. This study is designed to evaluate this program using guiding questions that focus on obtaining qualitative and quantitative data. Semi-structured teacher and administrative interviews, a balanced literacy survey, and fourth and fifth grade predicted and actual End of Grade student achievement scores from the English Language Arts End-of Grade test 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.

The Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project has been fully implemented at your school. The school and school district will not be identified and the information provided will be kept strictly confidential. The informed consent forms and other identification information will be kept separate from the data. All materials will be kept at the researcher's home. The researcher will destroy any records that would identify participants in this study approximately 3 years after the study is completed. If any direct quotes will be used, permission will be sought from participants first and a pseudonym will be used.

Participation is voluntary and participants will be offered a \$5 gift card for their participation. Participants can withdraw from the project at any time without consequence. There are no risks or discomfort involved in this study to the participants.

If you have any questions about this study, please ask the researchers before signing the form, and I will be happy to answer any questions.

I am asking your permission to complete this program evaluation at Pinewood Elementary School.

By signing below, you are giving me permission to carry out my research with students (data collection only), teachers, and administrators at Pinewood Elementary School.

Please keep one copy for your file and return the signed copy.

Thank you very much for your time.

Signature

Date

Principal Signature

Date

Latonya Gaines-Montgomery

Doctorate Program of Education Department, Gardner-Webb University

Email: XXXXXXXXXXXX