

The Practices of Speech-Language Pathologists Supporting the Acquisition of
Skilled Reading in Public Schools

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the practices of certified speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who participate in school-wide literacy initiatives within the K-12 educational setting. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do speech-language pathologists indicate they are able to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of intervention?
- RQ2: What steps do speech-language pathologists indicate they have implemented to increase awareness of their role in reading and writing (literacy)?
- RQ3: What measures do speech-language pathologists indicate they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy programming?

The practitioners participating in this study were selected from online professional communities of speech-language pathologists holding the Certification of Clinical Competence from the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) or an equivalent credential from a licensing organization. Twelve speech-language pathologists engaged in virtual interviews. Their responses were collectively analyzed to identify common practice employed by SLPs, who through a tiered intervention process, support literacy acquisition. The intent behind the study was to add to the current literature in such a way that more SLPs would have actionable steps to follow to increase participation in tiered literacy initiatives. Additionally, the investigator sought to inform educational leaders of the expertise of SLPs on school campuses and potential ways in which that expertise can be used to support literacy acquisition. Findings from the study revealed that through collaborative practices, speech-language pathologists are able to assist with the identification, intervention, and monitoring of students exhibiting challenges with early language and literacy. Additionally, the findings suggested that support from district and building administrator(s) or the lack thereof, is highly influential in determining the level of involvement of speech-language pathologists in tiered literacy initiatives across the public school environment.

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GENERAL PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the practices of certified speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who participate in school-wide literacy initiatives within the K-12 educational setting. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do speech-language pathologists indicate they are able to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of intervention?
- RQ2: What steps do speech-language pathologists indicate they implemented to increase awareness of their role in reading and writing (literacy)?
- RQ3: What measures do speech-language pathologists indicate they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy programming?

Results of the interviews were collected and analyzed into common themes. Major findings of this research revealed that speech-language pathologists participating in tiered literacy initiatives in public schools did so most frequently through participation on student assistance teams, collaborating with instructional staff to assess student performance, developing and modeling interventions and by supporting teacher efficacy through professional development. The speech-language pathologists in this study placed emphasis on having the support of administrators to allow SLPs the autonomy to navigate their workloads and to encourage inter-professional collaboration in order to support literacy initiatives across the K-12 setting.

Dedication

This body of work is dedicated to the four people who love me most: my parents and my children. To my mom, Thelma L. Alexander, you taught me how to sacrifice for others, how to cry under the weight of life's burdens and lean on Yahweh for the strength I need so that I wouldn't break. To my dad, Wilson E. Alexander, from the time I started school I frequently heard your mantra in my head, "Cs are for average people, you aren't average". This sentiment echoed throughout my thoughts and pushed me to spend just a little more time conceptualizing and reframing when I wanted to write anything so I could be done. You both knew that the life would bring challenges my way that I would only survive walking by faith, being willing to put the needs of others before my own and developing perseverance when I wanted to give in, but quitting has never been an option.

To my children, Dazon and Kayla. First, to my son, Dazon, my philosopher. You, young man, have been a grounding force in my life. I remember you making me a sandwich when I wrote my paper on the effects of unilateral pallidotomy on emotion processing. You have always been a God-given source of joy through challenges, hurts, and pains. I am forever proud of you. And to my daughter, Kayla, my advocator. Kayla, you have a special gift of bringing warmth and love with just enough spice to remind us of all that you are your own head-strong person. Thank you for the reminders that I needed to write and for setting me up with the Forest app to keep me on track (I didn't want to kill any trees!). You both have sacrificed right along with me as I embarked on this road not so frequently taken. I am forever grateful that you didn't give up on your mom, especially on those days I wanted to give up myself. You are my God-sent fuel when I'm on empty. I understand the love of the Father better because He blessed me with two outstandingly, lovely, creative, mini-OCD, ADD children who love me even in the midst of imperfect parenting. I am so honored to be your mom and share this accomplishment with you both.

Acknowledgements

I begin my acknowledgements with a verse from the Amplified Bible translation that reads “In all your ways know and acknowledge and recognize Him, And He will make your path straight and smooth [removing obstacles that block your way].” (Proverbs 3:6). Therefore, I acknowledge Yahweh, my Father, the Creator of heaven and earth and my Savior, Yeshua as my source and strength. With heartfelt thanks I acknowledge the support of those who continuously believed in the plans that Yahweh had for me.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

During the 1990s, the practices of school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) largely focused on providing therapeutic remediation and/or compensatory training to students with identified speech and language deficits to increase global communication and independent functioning (Bradburn & Gill, 2020; Duchan, 2002; Means, 2006). “Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) work to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication, and swallowing disorders in children and adults.” (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, n.d.a; n.d.b). As legislative mandates and instructional trends changed, the role of SLPs shifted from “medically-based” services to “educationally-based” services within the public schools (Means, 2006). The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 2001 and the 2002 implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act redefined how some students were found eligible for special education and related services by providing other means beyond criteria referencing as the primary method for eligibility determination. Additionally, a clause within NCLB specifically required teams to consider a student’s response to ongoing evidenced-based interventions as a data point when determining student eligibility for Specific Learning Disability (No Child Left Behind, 2001).

Changes in the federal regulation impacted various educational services including speech-language pathology in schools. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), in 2001, initially published its position statement defining the roles and responsibilities of speech-language pathologists in schools relative to reading and writing. In 2010, ASHA reiterated its position statement concluding that:

SLPs’ knowledge of normal and disordered language acquisition, and their clinical experience in developing individualized programs for children and adolescents, prepare them to assume a variety of roles related to the development of reading and writing. Appropriate roles and responsibilities for SLPs include, but are not limited to (a) preventing written language problems by fostering language acquisition and emergent literacy; (b) identifying children at risk for reading and writing problems; (c) assessing

reading and writing; (d) providing intervention and documenting outcomes for reading and writing; (e) assuming other roles, such as providing assistance to general education teachers, parents, and students; (f) advocating for effective literacy practices; and (g) advancing the knowledge base. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) play a critical and direct role in the development of literacy for children and adolescents with communication disorders, including those with severe or multiple disabilities (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2001b, 2010).

Although the role of ASHA certified school based SLPs has been defined, results of ASHA Schools Surveys over the last decade revealed that many SLPs are not addressing literacy within their scope of practice beyond the initial student identification for special education. According to the results of the 2018 ASHA School Survey, 72.5% of SLPs reported that they support school-wide literacy in some capacity, primarily through referrals for formal testing while 27.5% of those SLPs completing the survey reportedly did not participate in school-wide literacy initiatives or participate on MTSS/RTI teams (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2018 p.33 Q.21).

National Perspective

The IDEA has identified Speech-Language Impairment as a disability that requires specialized skills to assess and provide treatment. Therefore, every state is required to have licensed practitioners trained to remediate, rehabilitate, and/or habilitate speech and language impairments (IDEA, Part B). Moreover, school districts are prohibited from finding students eligible for any disability if weaknesses can be contributed to environmental, socio-cultural, or limited English proficiency factors (IDEA, Part B). SLPs are trained to provide in-depth language assessments to assist in reducing false-positive identification of language impairments (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2010).

ASHA routinely surveys certified school-based speech-language pathologists and educational audiologists on even numbered years. For the 2018 SLP Schools Survey, 4500 ASHA certified speech-language pathologists and audiologists practicing in schools were solicited to participate. The response rate for SLPs was 48.8%. Of the 1539 SLPs providing direct services to students, only 31.1 % of SLPs reported providing reading and writing intervention to students that they serve regularly (American Speech-Language Hearing

Association, 2018). SLPs also reported spending 2.3 % of their time providing collaborative consultation and 7.3% of their time providing direct intervention as a classroom based or integrated service. Two percent of SLPs reported conducting Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) used interchangeably with Response to Intervention (RTI) activities across preschool, elementary, secondary, and special day/residential settings. As language experts, skilled in oral language development, 27.5% of respondents reported that they do not support school-wide literacy programs or participate on MTSS/RTI or pre-referral teams (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2018 p. 33 Q.21).

Overview of the Study

The investigator employed a semi-structured interview process to identify current practices of certified speech-language pathologists who participate in school-wide literacy development public schools as outlined in ASHA's Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Pathologists in Schools Regarding Their Role in Reading and Writing (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2010). Participants who met the established inclusionary criteria were solicited from speech-language pathology forums/groups. Coding and triangulation were used to identify commonalities, patterns, and themes among speech-language pathologists engaged in structured involvement in school-wide literacy development.

Historical Perspective

The role of speech-language pathologists in schools has evolved over the last several decades. Rees (1974) delineated the evolving role of school based SLPs as one from providing speech correction to incorporating "language and communication as they affect the child's ability to speak and understand as well as his ability to learn" (p. 186). Since the early 70's the scope and practice of SLPs in schools has continued to expand. American Speech-Language Hearing Association (2010) position statement discussed the importance of SLP involvement in reading and writing. Ehren et al. (2012) charted avenues in which SLPs could support the implementation of Core Curriculum, specifically in the areas of reading and writing. To further identify the role of SLPs in reading and writing, American Speech-Language Hearing Association (2014) lobbied for a change in the scripting of the reauthorization of the Elementary

and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to include increased involvement of SLPs and audiologists in the provision of literacy services in schools.

The literature is rich with published articles highlighting the interconnectedness of oral language and reading (Apel, 2009; Catts, 1993; Nippold, 2017). Will (2019) concurred with Moats (2009a, 2009b) who established in her research that teachers are missing prerequisite knowledge of the fundamentals of language acquisition which directly impacts their [teachers] ability to strengthen precursory skills needed to build skill readers. School-based SLPs, however, are equipped to support the building blocks of language (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2010; Wilson, 2016). Opportunities to engage in the collective work of early literacy development swings on a pendulum with some SLPs embracing opportunities to contribute to school wide literacy initiatives and others reluctant to engage in such practices (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2016, 2018), in the midst of changing roles and increased demands (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2018; Weiss et al., 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Historically, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing has revealed that students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds consistently underperformed white middle class peers in the area of reading (NAEP, 2018). This performance, or *achievement gap*, according to The Glossary of Education Reform (2013) “refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, such as white students and minorities, for example, or students from higher-income and lower-income households.” In spite of the development of whole language and phonics-based reading initiatives, achievement gaps in the area of reading between subgroups continue to persist (Gentry, 2018; National Assessment of Education Progress, 2018; van Kleeck & Schuele, 2010).

Traditionally, reading intervention has been provided by teachers with specialized training in reading and general educators who teach curriculum reading (Stuebing et al., 2008; Wanzek et al., 2010). Kent et al. (2013), in *Preparing Elementary Educators to Teach Reading: An Exploratory Study of Preservice Teachers' Evolving Sense of Reading Efficacy* found that teacher preparation programs trained teachers to combine phonics-based and whole language

approaches to provide effective reading instruction. However, other researchers suggested teacher preparation programs have not adequately prepared teachers with the foundational knowledge of the underpinnings of language necessary to transition students from oral language proficiency to the practice of skilled reading (Hindman et al., 2020; Moats, 2004, 2009a, 2009b). Conversely, Speech-Language Pathologists are trained to assess, identify, diagnose, and treat the areas that comprise language and communication (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2010).

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) birthed response to intervention (RTI) which provides tiered supports to struggling students. The RTI framework has been described as a multi-tiered or multi-leveled system of prevention and intervention (Fuchs et al., 2012; Hudson & McKenzie, 2016; Kavale & Spaulding, 2008; Ritchey et al., 2012). Hudson and McKenzie (2016) reported that state and district education agencies frequently determine the number of tiers within their RTI program; however, the most consistently reported number of tiers from school districts has been three.

At the onset of RTI, universal screenings are administered to determine those students who may be identified as at-risk (Hudson & McKenzie, 2016; Ritchey et al., 2012). Researchers reported that 80% of student population generally fall into Tier 1. In this tier, student response to high quality instruction provided by general education teachers to all students is considered to be sufficient to meet educational needs (Fuchs et al., 2012; Hudson & McKenzie, 2016; Ritchey et al., 2012). Students identified by initial screening and/or students whose performance and progress lag behind age-matched peers may receive Tier 2 support. Tier 2 intervention provides supplemental and increasingly intensive instructional supports (Fuchs et al., 2012; Hudson & McKenzie, 2016; Ritchey et al., 2012). Students who continue to demonstrate minimal to no progress will often be referred to Tier 3 intervention and/or special education teams. Tier 3 intervention provides more in-depth and specialized assistance from various educational practitioners including special education teachers, educational diagnosticians, content specialists, and speech-language pathologists (Fuchs et al., 2012; Hudson & McKenzie, 2016; Ritchey et al., 2012).

Although the role of SLPs has been identified as vital to the development of literacy, more than 25% of practicing SLPs reported that they did not provide additional assistance to general education students as a function of RTI teams within the school setting beyond those

identified for speech-language services through the special education process (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2018). The problem is that SLP participation in school-wide literacy initiatives is often limited by a lack of administrative awareness as to how SLPs are able to support literacy and by unestablished practices of SLPs that promote their involvement in tiered literacy across the school setting. Based on the reviewed research, speech-language pathologists, as language experts, are an underutilized resource in the area of school-wide reading intervention programs although researchers have shown that foundational language interventions provided by SLPs have increased student performance in the components of reading.

Significance of the Study

ASHA reported that 53% of certified speech-language pathologists practice in schools (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2018). Although several studies have identified the perceptions and attitudes of teachers, administrators, and SLPs regarding the perceived role of SLPs as therapeutic providers and as intermittent collaborators (Myrick, 2018; Shelton, 2018), few studies have outlined specific practices or strategies used by SLPs to verify their role as a member of literacy support teams. Identifying such practices would serve two functions: 1) provide SLPs with specific processes to increase participation in school-wide literacy, and 2) provide school leaders with increased knowledge as to ways in which SLPs could embed their expertise into current intervention practices. This information would significantly benefit administrators invested in school-wide collective practices designed to identify and develop interventions for low performing students in the area of reading. Additionally, the information would prove useful to those speech and language practitioners seeking actionable methods to greater involvement in language and literacy intervention.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the practices of licensed school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who participated in school-wide literacy initiatives within the K-12 educational setting. The study sought to gain insight into actionable processes of SLPs that increased involvement in school-wide literacy across multiple tiers of intervention.

Additionally, the study sought to determine how SLPs increased administrator awareness of their role in reading and writing.

Justification of the Study

Student performance in the area of reading as measured by National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data, has consistently demonstrated minimal closure in the performance of students from culturally and linguistically diverse student groups when compared to white students. Moats (2009a) reported that successful reading interventions must be supported by professionals with expertise in the areas of language fundamentals such as morphology, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics (Cabell et al., 2008; Goldstein et al., 2017; Kilpatrick, 2016) all areas that fall within the scope of practice of speech-language pathologists (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2001, 2010, 2012; Foster 2018; Ireland & Conrad, 2016). ASHA's position statement asserts that SLPs are specifically trained to facilitate the development of reading and writing (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2001, 2010). ASHA's School Surveys of 2016 and 2018 revealed that not all SLPs participate in school-wide intervention or assessment beyond traditional special education activities. Researchers have shown measurable growth in student performance in the precursors of literacy development under the direct service provision and/or collaborative support of SLPs (Hendricks & Adlof, 2017; McLellan, 2016; Ralabate et al., 2016; Terry, Connor, Johnson et al., 2015; Terry et al., 2012).

The results of the study add to the body of literature by providing first hand experiences of SLPs participating in school-wide literacy initiatives. One of the primary findings identified how SLPs have collaborated with teachers and literacy specialists to provide a more comprehensive assessment of student strengths and weaknesses related to language and literacy. Additionally, findings revealed how SLPs informed public school administrators of the SLP's role in reinforcing the precursors of skilled reading and how SLPs have attempted to acquire the backing of school based administration to supported RTI practices within schools.

Research Questions

The American Speech-Language and Hearing Association posits that speech-language pathologists are highly trained in the areas of language development and are able to positively

impact literacy development through direct instruction, collaboration, program development, consultation and coaching within the educational setting (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2001, 2010, 2012). This study will endeavor to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: How do speech-language pathologists indicate they are able to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of intervention?
- RQ2: What steps do speech-language pathologists indicate they have implemented to increase awareness of their role in reading and writing (literacy)?
- RQ3: What measures do speech-language pathologists indicate they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy programming?

Conceptual Framework

For two decades, NAEP testing has revealed that students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have underperformed middle class white students in the area of reading based on the results of fourth and eighth grade assessments (National Assessment of Education Progress, 2018). While teacher preparatory programs are designed to teach teachers the process of teaching reading, these same programs have neglected to provide teachers with the foundational knowledge of language needed to building skilled readers (Hanford, 2018; Kilpatrick, 2016; Moats, 2009a; Will, 2019). Researchers have established that skilled reading is not an inherent skill, nor does it develop in the same way as oral language (Bell, 2017; Hanford, 2018; Lyon, 1998). To the contrary, researchers have established that skilled reading for many children requires succinct knowledge of the underpinnings of oral language development (Gillon & Dodd, 1995; Kilpatrick, 2016; McNeill et al., 2009; Moats, 2009a; 2009b).

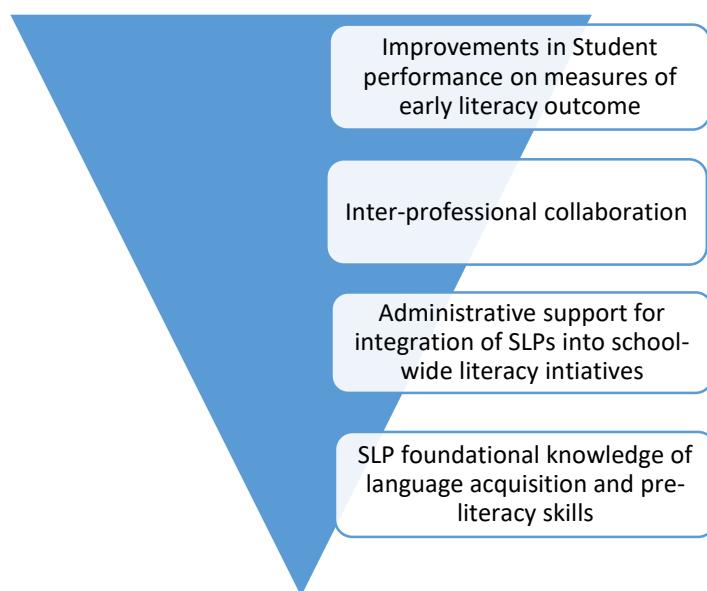
SLPs are trained in the areas of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics which support skilled reading (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2010, 2012; Foster, 2018; Goldstein et al., 2017). American Speech-Language Hearing Association (2010) established the role of speech-language pathologists as professionals trained to identify, assess, diagnosis, and remediate phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics, all of which have been identified as building blocks of language, regardless of oral or written form. Therefore, the investigator postulated that SLPs, as language experts, are trained to support and stabilize the underpinnings of the language of students from linguistically and cultural diversity populations and are a pupil personnel resource that should take a more active

and direct role in the development of skilled reading, which may facilitate improved student outcomes.

The conceptual framework of this study (see Figure 1) was developed from the research examining the effectiveness of interventions implemented by speech-language pathologists as language experts skilled in assessment, identification, and remediation of precursory skills needed for skilled reading (Hendricks & Adlof, 2017; McLellan, 2016; Ralabate et al., 2016; Terry, Connor, Johnson et al., 2015; Terry et al., 2012; Wallach, 2014, 2017). The investigator suggested that direct SLP involvement in school-wide literacy initiatives coupled with teacher knowledge can positively affect the performance of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the area of skilled reading.

Figure1

Conceptual Framework



Definition of Key Terms

The following key terms are used throughout the study.

Academic Language. “The specialized language, both oral and written, of academic settings that facilitates communication and thinking about disciplinary content” (Nagy & Townsend, 2012).

Achievement Gap. “Any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, such as white students and

minorities, for example, or students from higher-income and lower-income households” (The Glossary of Educational Reform, 2013).

African American Vernacular English (AAVE). “AAVE is characterized by specific grammatical and phonological features. While the use of some of these features seems to be restricted to exclusively to AAVE, the use of other features differs with respect to the frequency with which they occur in AAVE and other varieties of American English” (English Language and Linguistic Online).

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). “The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is the national, professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 204, 000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists, speech, language and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students” (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2020).

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). “BICS includes aspects of language such as basic vocabulary and pronunciation, skills that are readily apparent during conversations between two or more people” (Bylund, 2011).

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). “CALP refers to language skills that allow an individual to process and make meaning of language that exists independent of any situational clues and is the language skill required for meaningful engagement in most academic tasks” (Bylund, 2011).

English Language Learner (ELL). Describes students whose first language is not English and are in the process of learning English (Freeman & Freeman, 2009).

Language. “A rule-based set of processes composed of dynamic systems generally including morphology, semantics, syntax, narrative, phonological awareness, and pragmatics used to represent thoughts and ideas in spoken, written, or gestural forms” (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, n.d.a)

Literacy. “An individual’s ability to read, write, speak in English, compute, and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family, and in society” (National Institute for Literacy, n.d.).

Reading. “Reading is a complex cognitive process in which the reader, through interaction with the text, constructs meaning.” (Kim & Goetz, 1995)

Response to Intervention (RTI). “Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom.” (rtinetwork.com).

Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP). Professionals who work to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication, and swallowing disorders in children and adults (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, n.d.a; n.d.b; n.d.c).

Standard English Learner (SEL). Describes the culturally and linguistically diverse groups of native English speakers with limited acquisition of academic language yet speak a nonstandard English dialect (Okoye-Johnson, 2011; Ringler, 2015).

Limitation

This research study focused on the practices of ASHA certified school-based speech-language pathologists who actively support literacy acquisition/development in public schools. The limitations of this included:

- The sample size associated with the study may be small and may limit the generalizability/transferability of the study results; and
- The study will employ purposive sampling which focuses on specific characteristics of a population best suited to answer the proposed research questions.

Delimitations

The delimitations are factors in which the investigator had control. These delimitations included:

- The study was conducted by soliciting participants from closed professional social media groups of speech-language pathologists.
- The study only examined the practices of ASHA certified SLPs and/or SLPs with equivalent licensure participating in literacy development in K-12 public schools; and
- The study did not examine the perceptions of general educators, reading/literacy specialists, school-based administrators or speech therapists, speech-language

pathologists who do not hold the Certification of Clinical Competence or an equivalent licensure, regardless of their years of experience and work settings.

Organization of the Study

This research study contains five chapters. The information in Chapter One includes background information for the study as well as the statement of the research problem, purpose for the study, research questions, a summary of the methods to be used, conceptual framework, limitations and delimitations of the study, and key terms. Chapter Two outlines the relevant research literature related to this study to include the following topics: poverty, language, and literacy, academic language and literacy, instructional leadership, and speech-language pathologists' role in language and literacy support, assessment and identification, collaboration, and leadership. A detailed description of the methodology used to conduct this study is included in Chapter Three, followed by the presentation of data collected from this study in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five presents the findings of the research, the implications of the study, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Search Process

Initially, the search process included searches for peer-reviewed research and active studies on Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) websites. Search terms included instructional leadership, academic language acquisition, BICS/CALP, literacy, student achievement, inter-professional collaboration, ELL, and speech-language pathology. Although this process yielded a large number of studies and articles, the need to refine the search process required support from the Virginia Tech Online and Graduate Engagement Librarian. The search process was refined, and several search parameters were utilized. Date parameters were set to include sources from 2010 to 2019. Additional parameters included peer reviewed articles and scholarly journals. The following search combinations were used to identify current research for review:

1. Academic language, poverty, and speech-language pathology (8627),
2. Academic language, poverty, speech-language pathology, and student achievement (4327),
3. Academic language, dialectal variations, and student achievement (2656),
4. Instructional leadership, academic language, and professional development (7),
5. BICS and CALP, AAE and SWE (14),
6. Professional development, inter-professional collaboration, and speech-language pathologist (1089),
7. Professional development, English language learners, and speech-language pathologist (2373)

The first 100 article titles were reviewed for searches that produced 100 or more potential resources. From that grouping, those articles thought to be most relevant to areas of interest were selected for further review. The reference lists were reviewed for several articles, which led to review of additional bodies of work outside of the original date parameters. The articles referenced prior to 2010 were considered foundational as they were referenced or cited in multiple articles that were reviewed. Additionally, ascd.org, everystudentsucceedsact.org,

educationpost.org, k12academics.com, NCES.org and NAEP.org websites were also reviewed as primary or secondary sources of information.

Purpose of the Literature Review

This chapter reviewed the literature related to how the expertise of speech-language pathologists, as language experts, support the underpinnings of literacy development, specifically in the area of reading. The first section focused on the impact of poverty related to early literacy development. The second section defined academic language and associates language proficiency with student performance. For the purposes of this literature review, the characteristics of African American English (AAE) and Southern White English (SWE) serve to represent NMAE. These particular dialectal variations were selected as many low income urban and rural communities use AAE or SWE s the language of the community (Hendricks & Adlof, 2017; Horton-Ikard & Miller, 2004). Additionally, students within urban and/or rural areas may use a form of dialect and not experience the impact of poverty. The third section addressed instructional leadership and support of language difference. Section four examined the successful methods used by speech-language pathologists to increase student performance on reading indicators and barriers identified by SLPs that delay the integration of their expertise into school-wide literacy initiatives.

Poverty, Language, and Literacy

Historically, the nation began its process of addressing the educational needs of students in poverty in 1965 with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Hart and Risley (2003) reported that during the 1960's the field of child development was instrumental in drawing attention to the impact of poverty on the academic growth of the nation's children. At that time, President Johnson addressed the nation's poverty crisis by proclaiming the "*War on Poverty*." Matthews (2014) proposed that, within his speech, President Johnson provided the catalyst for the Head Start Program by suggesting the government could negate, as well as prevent the impact of poverty on academic achievement. Consequently, Head Start was designed to help end the influence of poverty on academic attainment by providing preschool children from low-income families with early educational experiences. Matthews (2014) concluded that the results of early research in child development and learning were the foundational tenets for

the development of the Title I program designed to financially supplement educational programs to meet the needs of students from economically disadvantaged communities (Kainz, 2019).

Academic Language, Literacy and Student Performance

The United States was faced with meeting the educational needs of a growing number of non-English speaking students within the public education system. Initially proposed to address the needs of Spanish-speaking students learning English, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, Title VII of ESEA, was broadened to encompass non-English speakers regardless of native language (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). The primary purpose of Title VII was to develop educational programs to meet the needs of students with limited ability to communicate using the English language (k12academics.com,2019).

Decades after the initial implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and several reauthorizations and name changed to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), student performance in the areas of reading, mathematics and science continued to be areas of concern addressed by national, state, and local educational agencies (LEAs) (educationpost.org). The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) (NCLB), was designed to address such concerns by prompting states to meet their obligation to protect the interests of student groups whose needs were being overlooked and underserved, particularly students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and students identified with limited English proficiency (educationpost.org; Kainz, 2019). The NCLB Act ushered in increased accountability, parental school choice based on school performance, and state flexibility when allocating school funding with an emphasis on increased reading proficiency. In order to ensure all students were provided more equitable resources and educational opportunities, the NCLB Act required states to increase and report performance monitoring for all public schools—to include annual state testing in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science for students in grades 3-8 and once in high school. Increased monitoring included the disaggregation of assessment results parsed by identifiable marker such as poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and English proficiency to demonstrate adequate growth as a condition of receiving federal funds (ascd.org; educationpost.org; everystudentsucceedsact.org).

Although wording differences found within the texts of the purpose of Title I and Title III within the NCLB Act and ESSA, the overarching theme remained consistent in supporting the

identified needs of marginalized student populations by holding school divisions responsible for providing equitable educational experiences, high quality education and for closing the achievement gap between identified student groups (everystudentsucceedsact.org). The implementation of ESSA provided states with more versatility to set proficiency goals, determine statewide student accountability assessments, identify growth measures, and develop and implement an array of outcomes for schools not meeting outlined proficiency standards (educationpost.org; ascd.org). Although not required to receive Title III funds for English language acquisition, those states, districts, and schools receiving Title I funds must participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing (NCES, 2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) website, the NAEP assessment is the primary method of assessing knowledge and skill proficiency of students across the nation.

This “national report card” has provided national, state, and local education agencies with the ability to easily compare differences among specific student groups through standardized measures of academic achievement. Using NAEP, educational agencies were able to determine if districts and states were meeting the funding criteria outlined under both the NCLB Act and ESSA, specifically the academic growth of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (identified by eligibility for the National Student Lunch Program, NSLP) and English Language Learners (ELL) groups. Over the last decade, national NAEP reading data for fourth grade students revealed no significant reduction in the performance gap between students found eligible for free and reduced priced lunch and those students not found eligible. The national trend reflected a 26-29-point gap differential from 2005 to 2017. Likewise, the performance gap between students identified as English language learners and those students not identified as English language learners did not show a decrease, rather a consistent gap ranging from 35 to 37 points difference from 2005 to 2017 (NAEP, 2018).

Eighth grade student performance on the NAEP reading assessment mirrored that of fourth grade student groups with no significant reductions in test performance scores between students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch and those students’ ineligible for free and reduced-price lunch, as well as students identified as English Language Learners and those students not identified as English Language Learners (NAEP, 2018). When comparing the gaps of 4th graders with the gaps of 8th graders, there was an improvement as 8th grade students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch reduced the gap by at least 4 points on the testing years.

Conversely, the gap between ELLs in 4th grade and 8th grade did not reduce; in fact, the gap increased on average by 6 points, meaning that on the 8th grade reading assessment, the gap between ELLs and non-ELLs increased.

Still present today, the impact of language on literacy outcomes appears to impact the academic achievement of students from culturally and linguistically backgrounds. English Language Learners, primarily Hispanic students, and Black students continue to perform below other student groups except students with disabilities, who, as a group, performed two points below ELLs on the 2017 Reading NAEP (NAEP, 2018). The literature related to language variance between non-mainstream American English (NMAE) and mainstream American English (MAE) was considered relevant to this line of inquiry.

More than two decades of research has established the impact of poverty on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Krashen, 2011; Taylor, 2005; Vera, 2011). The research has shown that children from impoverished backgrounds have a higher risk for school failure (Gorski, 2013; Morgan, 2012; Vera, 2011). Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) reported that students from low-income backgrounds are twice as likely to experience grade retention, expulsion, suspension, or dropout of high school. Researchers found that students living in poverty are exposed to chronic factors that negatively impact development. Morgan (2012) noted that high stress, poor nutrition, and poor health conditions make children more vulnerable to cognitive weaknesses that increase the challenges of academic performance. These factors, particularly poor health care and conditions, have been found to contribute to decreased attention, learning, and memory (Darling-Hammond, 2013), as well as impeded the development of age appropriate emotional, social, and behavioral development of children in poverty (National Center for Childhood Poverty, 2018).

Koball and Jiang (2018) reported that 41% of the 72.4 million children in the United States under the age of 18 are from families considered to be poor or near poor. The 2017 federal poverty threshold for a family of four supporting two children was \$24,858. According to the NCCP, “15 million U.S. children live in families with incomes below the federal poverty threshold,” (NCCP, 2018). Based on the vast number of the nation’s school-aged children living in poverty and lack of progress the nation has made to ensure the success of its most vulnerable population, researcher Darling-Hammond (2013) resolutely affirmed that “we need to take the education of poor children as seriously as we take the education of the rich, and we need to

create systems that guarantee all of the elements of educational investment routinely to all children.” (p. 113). The literature indicates that poverty is viewed as the most influential factor related to low student achievement. Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) found that family income was more strongly correlated to student achievement outcomes, whereas other researchers reported that maternal education which influenced engagement with the child, use of expanded and varied language, and shared reading experiences reading as the most relevant factor related to student achievement outcomes for children living in poverty (Dollaghan et al., 1999; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hendricks & Adlof, 2017; Kainz, 2019). Overall, the literature reveals the global impact of living in poverty negatively impacts school performance (Gorski, 2013; Morgan, 2012; NCCP, 2018; Palafox, 2017).

Hart and Risley (2003), in their study of the 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3, found that students from economically disadvantaged environments were exposed on average to 153,000 less words over the course of 100 hours a week than toddlers from upper socioeconomic status (SES) environments. Palafox (2017) reported that children from environments with decreased language exposure and variety lagged behind children from higher income environments by 15,000 words in their receptive vocabularies. Reduced exposure to rich, robust vocabularies, coupled with decreased variations in interactions, were interpreted to impact vocabulary and language processing (Fernald et al., 2013; Hart & Risley, 2003). Hart and Risley (2003) noted that delayed vocabulary development and language processing skills were so impactful on academic performance that “vocabulary use at age 3 was equally predictive of measures of language skills at age 9-10” (p. 6). Research conducted by Fernald et al. (2013) corroborated the results of the Hart and Risley (2003) study. In addition, their research revealed that differences in language processing and vocabulary development between SES groups is evident as early as 18 months of age. The observed variability has been associated with the differences in exposure to reading in the home, as students living in middle class families were exposed to over 1,000 hours and children living in low-incomes family were exposed on average to 25 hours of reading in the home prior to kindergarten (Palafox, 2017). Although the researchers were able to determine that children from low SES backgrounds presented with language differences well before access to formalized education, their research focused on the impact of factors external to the school environment (Fernald et al., 2013; Hart & Risley, 2003; Palafox, 2017) rather than on what steps educational agencies employed to support vocabulary development and language processing in

the school environment. Palafox (2017) research demonstrated that limited student exposure to language and literacy created academic disadvantage for children from low-income environments.

Jensen (2009) suggested educators embrace the notion that students respond to created environments. He reported that due to the neuroplasticity of the brain, children from low SES backgrounds can develop the academic skills necessary to be successful in school (Neuman & Kaefer, 2018; Temple et al., 2003; Vandenbroucke et al., 2018; Welsh et al., 2010). Specifically, Jensen (2009) referenced earlier neurological studies which revealed that intensive language training can change the physicality of the brain structure. Wallis and Wright (2018) validated Jensen's work by revealing that language processing and word exposure have the propensity to increase activity in Broca's area of the brain, associated with the phonological loop involved in speech sound recognition and production and decoding abilities (Russo et al., 2010; Ylinen & Kujala, 2015). Wallis and Wright also referenced published research in the February 2018 edition of *Psychological Science*, which revealed that relevant, meaningful and scaffold conversational engagement is more impactful on language comprehension and use than socioeconomics. Willingham (2012) postulated that children from low SES backgrounds are able to increase cognitive capacity and literacy skills given quality educational experiences (Gorski, 2013) facilitated by skilled educators who understand and address these specific students' needs (Kim et al., 2020; Morgan, 2012). Based on the premise presented by Jensen (2009) and Wallis and Wright (2018), explicit and intense language instruction has the potential to move students from low SES backgrounds forward academically.

The fields of linguistics and sociolinguistics have established Non-Mainstream American English (NMAE) dialects as "rule governed linguistic systems, and speakers systematically produce these alternative forms in specific contexts to convey the same semantic and syntactic information produced in MAE" (Terry et al., 2015, p. 268). Ringler proposed that these native Standard English Learners (SELs) exhibit weaknesses in their second language (L2), or academic language, which also requires systematic and meaningful instruction. Ringler further suggested that the same models used to support ELLs should be extended SELs or NMAE speakers.

Hendricks and Adlof (2017) clarified in their research findings that a vast majority of NMAE or SELs come from lower SES brackets; however, there was a sizeable number of

NMAE speakers who had not experienced the impact of economic disadvantage. Conversely, they also shared no evidence of a causal relationship between that low SES and NMAE use. Regardless of the type of NMAE dialect spoken, studies have shown a negative relationship exists between high dialect density, language, and literacy (Hendricks & Adlof, 2017; Sledd, 1969; Terry et al., 2012; Washington et al., 2018). In their review of extant research, Washington et al. (2018) found disparities between researchers who postulate that students with high dialect density exhibited difficulty with decoding, phonological awareness and reading comprehension; whereas other researchers found high density dialect speakers displayed strengths in early language and literacy development. Terry et al. (2012) concluded that the frequent and consistent use of dialectal features directly correlated with weaker language and literacy skills, specifically pre-literacy skill development in word reading, phonological awareness and vocabulary. Terry and her colleagues conducted longitudinal studies examining the impact of dialect variability, dialect shifting and reading across early elementary grades that revealed negative relationships between the density of NMAE use and student performance standardized word reading, decoding, vocabulary, phonological awareness and reading comprehension assessments (Terry, Connor, Johnson et al., 2015; Terry et al., 2012; Terry et al., 2010).

Barnes (2015) described academic language as that linguistic code "... found in informational text, contains precise academic vocabulary which is presented in complex syntax. Pronouns have specific referents, modifying clauses have been embedded and scientific vocabulary is used to provide a tone of expertise" (p.87). Academic Language Literacy (ALL) is the language register of schools. It is also the language of oral and printed discourse which is the content, form, and use of language that without, students cannot access the curriculum nor sufficiently demonstrate mastery of oral and written conventions of school-based literacy (Barnes, 2015; Heppt et al., 2015; Ringler, 2015; Zygouris-Coe & Goodwiler, 2013). To increase student acquisition of academic language literacy, Barnes (2015) noted that "children should have the opportunity to read, write, and speak using academic language" (p. 86). Terry et al. (2015) recommended that early instructional programming be designed with dialectal variations in mind while providing students the opportunity to acquire academic language necessary for school success.

Ringler (2015) found that teachers were unfamiliar with components of academic language literacy beyond content-specific vocabulary. Lee (2014) stressed the need for educators

to become astute in recognizing and addressing the impact that linguistic variability may have on literacy especially in the areas of decoding, vocabulary, and accessing prior knowledge (Alverman, 2004, p.75). Ringler (2015) reported that teachers were unaware that students must demonstrate command of the conventions of standard academic written English, such as correct punctuation and grammar in addition to vocabulary. Oftentimes, teachers will accept students' written work and oral responses that are not written in academic language because the content is accurate. This practice will not meet the curriculum standard of the 21st century" (p.3). To further support Ringler's position, during debriefing opportunities with teachers, it was reported that "students knew the content well, they did everything correctly in class, but did poorly on standardized test" (p.18).

Instructional Leadership

Ringler (2015) noted that instructional leaders are tasked with identifying the factors preventing a reduction in the gap between student groups in the area of reading. School principals are required to consider a variety of political and social forces as they make daily organizational decisions (Cotton, 2003; Green, 2013; Rallis et al., 2008). Karadağ et al. (2015) reported that:

school administrators are expected to guide all employees and students, support them, undertake all responsibility, and inspire them to meet the objectives of the school.

Furthermore, school administrators pave the way for curriculum reform and the development of a positive learning environment (p. 80) (Cotton, 2003; Goddard et al., 2019; Hallinger, 2005; Huber, 2004)

Bredson (2000) asserted that "one of the primary tasks of school principals is to create and maintain positive and healthy teaching and learning environments for everyone in the school, including the professional staff" (p. 386). A combined approach establishing student improvement as the school's primary goal yet allowing other instructional staff to share in the responsibilities and tasks associated with improving outcomes such as providing school-based training and professional development, appeared to be highlighted as consistent themes of effective leadership practice (Karadağ et al., 2015).

The literature supported creating environments that establish and maintain a culture of collaboration amongst principals, teachers, and other instructional staff members (Cotton, 2003;

DiPaola & Hoy, 2014; Fink & Markholt, 2011) designed to celebrate student and teacher successes and address instructional challenges (Wagner, 2006). Within this collaborative setting, administrators are able to engage in shared leadership practices by allowing educators and specialists to facilitate data review, incorporating in-house expertise of specialists, identifying staff professional development needs, and developing schedules of observation and embedded peer coaching to increase teaching expertise (Cotton, 2003; Fink & Markholt, 2011; Karadağ et al., 2015).

The literature has shown that student outcomes are highly correlated to and with teacher expertise (Bredson, 2000). DiPaola and Hoy (2014) proposed that ongoing job-embedded professional development is a key factor in providing the framework needed to grow teacher expertise. In defining professional development, Bredson (2000) reasserted his previous definition of professional development as "...learning opportunities that engage teachers' creative and reflective capacities to strengthen their practice" (Bredson, 2000, p. 4). Effective instructional leaders participate in professional learning activities with staff, demonstrating the value of continuous learning. Administrators build cohesive learning environments when they allow internal and external experts to take the lead in sharing content knowledge and instructional practices (Bredson, 2000). According to Fink and Markholt (2011) "it takes an expert to make an expert" (p.5). They suggest that effective educational leaders seek internal and external experts to provide job-embedded professional development and recognize this practice as a crucial component in developing teaching and learning.

Bowgren and Sever (2010) suggest that a model of targeted, embedded, and differentiated professional development in order to provide teachers with the expertise needed to move all students forward, particularly students with cultural and linguistic differences that present barriers to accessing the academic language required for school success (Conn & Garten, 2005; Ehren et al., 2006; Hudley, & Mallinson, 2011). School-based SLPs are language and literacy experts that are accessible throughout school districts. Reviewed research has shown that the knowledge and skill set of school based SLPs regarding language development, language difference, and pre-literacy development has effectively increased student performance (Conn & Garten, 2005; Ehren et al., 2006; Farquharson et al., 2015; McLellan, 2016). Administrators able to expand the influence SLPs beyond direct service provision by including SLPs as members of RTI teams, as collaborative support to literacy teams and coaches, and as in-house professional

development providers (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014; Fink & Markholt, 2011; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Reeves, 2009). Such practices facilitated by building leaders has the propensity to increase collective efficacy, where instructional and support staff collaboratively learn from each other with the primary task of growing student achievement (Drysdale et al., 2016; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Sun & Henderson, 2016).

Speech-Language Pathologists

School-based speech-language pathologists (SLP) have been identified as communication experts able to support reading and writing in school-aged children. The American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA), in the *Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Pathologists with Respect to Reading and Writing in Children and Adolescents (2010)* emphasized the role of SLPs as skilled practitioners able to support identification and treatment of language based literacy deficits. ASHA reiterated its stance regarding the expertise of SLPs in *The Role of Speech-Language Pathologists in Schools (2010)*, defining the role of SLPs as professionals directly able to support and facilitate literacy development across developmental age ranges.

Language and literacy support. School leaders oversee the daily implementation of evidenced based instructional practices. Periodic review of student performance is required to ensure that students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills required to perform favorably on standardized accountability measures (The National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2017). Schools are often faced with instances when students do not respond positively to instruction within the general education classroom, have gaps in their learning, or are unable to keep up with the content. Frequently, schools consider two courses of action: referral to the response to intervention (RTI) teams or referral for special education eligibility determination. Although both courses of action are designed to meet student needs, each addresses the task in different ways (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2017). RTI teams are generally designed to provide the supports that students need to address potential weaknesses and prevent further academic problems from evolving. The composition of RTI teams varies from district to district and school to school. Regardless of the team composition, the function of the RTI team is that of:

“... assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. Within the RTI framework,

schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness" (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2012 p.2).

Conn and Garten (2005) reported that Speech-Language pathologists in schools infrequently serve as members of RTI teams, although ASHA describes SLPs as skilled practitioners with advanced knowledge of the interdependent relationship between oral language and literacy development (2001, 2010). Ireland and Conrad (2016) noted that SLPs, by virtue of training, consider several factors during assessment and intervention planning that are inadvertently overlooked by other professionals regarding language and literacy, specifically, cultural, and linguistic variations and the impact of poverty on language and learning. Ortiz (2005) found that students with cultural and linguistic variations exhibited poorer performance on assessments that required a high level of knowledge of and familiarity with mainstream middle-class culture. Hudley and Mallinson (2011) further explained that educators, unfamiliar with dialectal features in oral and written discourse, may inadvertently refer students for special education rather than engage in dynamic assessment or provide explicit instruction in the areas of language development in the classroom

Although a variety of literacy programs exist to support struggling readers, Derewianka and Jones (2016) identified six components an effective literacy intervention program must include to develop skilled readers. They identified phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing as underpinnings of skilled reading. While other researchers have not always included writing as a precursory skill need for reading (Kilpatrick 2016; Moats, 2009a, 2009b; Wanzek et al., 2010), the remaining components have been consistently identified as essential components of structured literacy (Barnes, 2015; Kilpatrick, 2016).

School-based speech-language pathologists supporting teachers and teams are able to analyze nuances of phonology, syntax, morphology, and semantics often displayed as cultural and linguistic features to help teachers assess and develop supports and interventions to assist in the classroom (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, n.d.d; Cabell et al., 2008; Foster 2018; Goldsten et al., 2017; Spencer et al., 2008;). Cabell et al. (2008) noted that the

majority of SLPs are familiar with Tier 2 interventions by providing services for individual students or in small groups, but historically they have not played a significant role as Tier 1 interventionists (Foster, 2018; Sylvan, 2018). In their research, Cabell et al. (2008) referenced a meta-analysis of research studies conducted by the National Reading Panel (National Reading Panel, 2000) outlining high priority reading instructional targets for students in kindergarten through third grade. Their research outlined areas in which SLPs could support Tier 1 interventions. By assisting classroom teachers with the selection of texts that supported directed listening and thinking activities (DLTA), SLPs could directly support vocabulary development and reduce the potential selection of stories that excluded the prior knowledge of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Foster, 2018; Sylvan, 2018, 2021; Thomas et al., 2019). Cabell et al. (2008) further suggested that SLPs assist teachers with the construction of instructional activities that provide multiple opportunities to review and personalize new vocabulary (Foster, 2018; Sylvan, 2018, 2021; Thomas et. al, 2019).

Ralabate et al. (2016) found that using the universal design for learning was most effective for vocabulary building in elementary students. Whereas McLellan (2016) advocated for the use of literature circles facilitated by the SLP to bridge gaps in cultural experiences and further anchor new vocabulary through the use of personal narratives. Additionally, when SLPs, have supported emergent and early literacy learners in the classroom using a variety of models from small group to co-teaching, observable gains have been noted by student performance on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), (Goldstein et al., 2017).

Farquharson et al. (2015) found that students at-risk for reading and academic difficulties produced more positive results when phonemic awareness and phonics instruction was provided in small groups. They also found that much like the research identifying the impact of teacher contribution on aspects of academic achievement, individual SLPs also significantly contributed to increased student achievement in grammar, vocabulary, and word decoding. Using a multi-cohort investigation, they selected 288 kindergarteners and first grade students receiving intervention from one of 73 school-based speech-language pathologists who voluntarily participated in the study. On average, two to five students were selected from each SLP's caseload based on inclusionary and exclusionary criteria. Data were collected sequentially across three academic years from 2009-2012. The Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-

Fourth Edition (CELF-4) and the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test-Second Edition (KBIT-2) were administered to derive baseline data.

To measure the impact of the SLP, the researchers used a two level HLM statistical approach to limit the impact of SLP and student related factors and sole identify “SLP factors as potential predictors of student performance” (p. 507). The Word Structure subtest of the CELF-4 was administered to assess grammaticality, the Picture Vocabulary subtest of the Woodcock-Johnson-III Test of Achievement was administered to assess changes in picture vocabulary, and the Word Attack subtest of the Woodcock-Johnson-III Test of Achievement was administered to assess decoding. All three measures were administered in the fall and spring of the same year. Results of the study revealed that SLPs do at least partially impact language and literacy advancement, particularly in areas related to reading proficiency (Farquharson et al., 2015). As mentioned by the researchers, the greatest limitation of their study was that there were no comparison studies to reference. Practical implications of the study suggest that SLPs as professionals within schools provide specific and targeted interventions which positively impact student performance measures of reading proficiency.

Conn and Garten (2005) conducted a study that also highlighted the positive impact of speech-language pathologists as RTI program developers and interventionists. They reported out previous data that outlined the relationship between oral language, comprehension and phonological processes begin before formal education. Additionally, Conn and Garten (2005) noted that the knowledge and expertise of SLPs equip these professionals to lead and facilitate prevention and intervention team efforts. Conn and Garten (2005) used the four-step method endorsed by ASHA which entailed identifying the target population, targeted intervention strategy, comparison criteria and outcomes. The study was implemented in a Title I school in the Midwest. Target population consisted of 22 first grade students identified as at risk for reading problems based on district screening tool. All 22 students were selected for intervention based on performance indicators on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). Conn and Garten (2005) determined the intervention tools would be two SLP developed computer assisted learning programs. One program, Earobics, was selected to address phonological processes and auditory processing. The Plato program was selected because of the variety of drills that supported contextualized reading skills. Eight students were identified as “at-risk” based on the DIBELS and subsequently selected to receive Earobics intervention. The

remaining 14 students were placed in the Plato intervention group. Over the course of seven weeks, each student was provided 120 hours of instruction.

Comparison data were determined to be pre and post test results obtained from the administration of the Phonological Awareness Test (PAT). The PAT was selected as the indicator assessment because the subtests address the primary components of phonemic awareness skills (rhyming, segmentation, isolation, deletion, substitution, blending, graphemes, decoding, and an overall phonological score). Changes in phonemic awareness skills were determined to represent the outcomes of the study. Students who received Earobics intervention demonstrated a 24-point growth in phonological skills, whereas students who received Plato intervention demonstrated a 19-point growth differential in phonological skills. Overall, researchers Conn and Garten (2005) found that Tier I intervention programs designed and facilitated by speech-language pathologists produced favorable gains in the overall phonological skills that impact literacy development.

Assessment, Data Analysis, and Identification. Traditionally used universal screening instruments are available to assist general educators with identifying strengths and weaknesses related to early literacy development. Brooke (2013) suggested that teachers continue to require additional support when identifying student strengths and weakness related to literacy development. This ideal further supports that teachers may not be adequately prepared to identify, develop, or provide explicit and systematic interventions to address the precursory components of reading to reading to students who struggle (Joshi et al., 2009; Otaiba et al., 2012; Siegel, 2018; Washburn et al., 2011). Washburn et al. (2011) found that 91% of preservice teachers were able to count syllables, yet only 58% were able to correctly identify the definition of phonological awareness and even fewer, 45% had concrete knowledge of alphabetic principal/phonics, all of which are foundational components of skilled reading (Burns et al., 2016; Fallon & Katz, 2020; Goldfeld et al., 2020; Kilpatrick, 2016; Moats, 2007, 2009a; Spear-Swerling, 2019).

The scope and practice of ASHA certified SLPs specifically includes identification of at-risk children, assessment, and program development (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2010) as they relate to language and literacy. Foster (2018) pointed out that student performance data provide information regarding how students are progressing according to curriculum standards; however, additional data are needed to more fully understand where

students are developmentally. It is the other forms of data that provide information regarding how developmentally ready students are for learning curriculum content that teachers have difficulty analyzing and using to developmentally appropriate interventions which is where the expertise of SLPs can be of paramount importance (Foster, 2018; Joshi et al., 2009; Moats, 1994, 2009a, 2009b; Otaiba et al., 2014; Schmitterer & Brod, 2021; Thomas & Lance, 2014).

Kerins et al. (2009) identified two keyways that SLPs can support this assessment and data analysis: 1) by sharing their knowledge base of communication and language processes and development; and 2) utilizing their training in the areas of language and phonological analyses and in their ability to develop student profiles and individualized plans (Foster, 2018; Sylvan, 2018, 2021; Thomas & Lane, 2014). Schmitterer and Brod (2021) prioritized the importance of accurate and differentiated identification of the breakdown among the components of reading which SLPs as diagnosticians routinely due as a function of their role as language experts (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2010, 2016; Fallon & Katz 2020; Foster 2018; Kerins et al., 2009;).

Collaboration and leadership. Speech-language pathologists are equipped to assume multiple roles within a school. In addition to conducting assessments and providing interventions, Ehren et al. (2006) identified other domains in which SLPs can support the vision and mission of schools:

Program Design. SLPs can be a valuable resource as schools' design and implement a variety of RTI models. SLPs can make unique contributions by:

1. Explaining the role that language plays in curriculum, assessment, and instruction, as a basis for appropriate program design.
2. Explaining the interconnection between spoken and written language.
3. Identifying and analyzing existing literature on scientifically based literacy assessment and intervention approaches.
4. Assisting in the selection of screening measures.
5. Helping identify systemic patterns of student need with respect to language skills.
6. Assisting in the selection of scientifically based literacy intervention.
7. Planning for and conduct professional development on the language basis of literacy and learning.

8. Interpreting a school's progress in meeting the intervention needs of its students (Ehren et al., 2006).

Collaboration

SLPs have historically partners with an array of stakeholders including families, teachers, administrators, and other providers (Johnson, 2017). SLPs can support RTI efforts through collaborative practices in several ways such as:

1. Assisting general education classroom teachers with universal screening.
2. Participating in the development and implementation of progress monitoring systems and the analysis of student outcomes.
3. Serving as members of intervention assistance teams, utilizing their expertise in language, its disorders, and treatment.
4. Consulting with teachers to meet the needs of students in initial RTI tiers with a specific focus on the relevant language underpinnings of learning and literacy.
5. Collaborating with school mental health providers (school psychologists, social workers, and counselors), reading specialists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, learning disabilities specialists, and other specialized instructional support personnel (related/pupil services personnel) in the implementation of RTI models.
6. Assisting administrators to make wise decisions about RTI design and implementation, considering the important language variables.
7. Working collaboratively with private and community-employed practitioners who may be serving an individual child.
8. Interpreting screening and progress assessment results to families.
9. Helping families understand the language basis of literacy and learning as well as specific language issues pertinent to an individual child (Ehren et al., 2006).

Barriers to SLP Literacy Support. Each year the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) surveys targeted associated member groups designed to observe a variety of trends related to speech-language pathology and audiology across an array of settings. Typically, school-based audiologists and speech-language pathologists are surveyed biannually, identifying job-related factors impacting the provision of speech-language and audiological services in schools (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, n.d.d). Researchers have been

interested in the trends in school-based speech-language pathology, particularly how SLPs can support reading and writing in the school setting for more than three decades. Casby (1988) conducted a study to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of SLPs regarding their role in literacy and the extent to which they participated in literacy development and/or remediation. The results of that study found that SLPs recognized a need to be involved in the identification and treatment of reading disorders and development; nevertheless, study participants reported low involvement in such activities. Casby described potential barriers to SLP involvement in the management of reading development and/or remediation as 1) lack of consultation requests by other professionals to assist with assessment and treatment; 2) decreased awareness of SLP skill sets related to language and literacy; and 3) low efficacy of SLPs due to the belief that they are missing pertinent skills and more training is needed with an emphasis on reading instruction.

Eight years after ASHA's published its initial position statement on the role of SLPs in reading and writing, Kerins et al. (2009) found that some SLPs believe that engaging in literacy intervention may blur professional boundaries and believe that adding literacy instruction would add more work to over-extended caseloads. Weiss et al. (2010) conducted a national survey of SLPs and identified five barriers to SLP participation in skill reading intervention. They listed high caseloads, limited professional development in the teaching of reading, lack of understanding of the role of SLPs in literacy development among other professional groups, development of collaborative relationships regarding the assessment and remediation of reading fundamentals (Watson, et al., 2020), and the belief that SLPs should only support the literacy skills of those students with suspected or identified speech-language impairments as the identified hurdles limiting SLP involvement in reading assessment and intervention.

Alvarado (2018) found that trends related to inhibitors to SLP literacy participation were consistent with those reported by other researchers. Alvarado identified caseload demands, time constraints, professional boundaries, and limited training on the teaching of reading as the primary barriers to SLP intervention related to literacy in schools. Thomas and Lance (2014) reported on the importance of SLP autonomy over scheduling. Navigating the various responsibilities that rest upon the shoulders of school-based SLPs is best accomplished when given the autonomy to use a workload approach over a caseload approach (American Speech-Language Hearing Association 2017, 2020; Rudebush & Wiechmann, 2011; Thomas & Lance,

2014; Sylvan, 2018) Although the literature has revealed consistent themes related to the obstacles of SLP involvement in literacy assessment and development in schools, the researcher was unable to find studies identifying the strategies and practices of those SLPs who actively support literacy development and how they overcame the identified challenges of integrating SLPs skills sets to address reading in public schools (Foster, 2018; Gallagher et al., 2019; Sylvan, 2018).

Summary

The purpose of the literature review was to examine the extant research related to the role of speech-language pathologists in regard to literacy development through a variety of methods. This chapter highlighted specific studies that showed positive student growth based on assessment and intervention, consultation, collaboration, program development, management oversight, and direct treatment provided directly and/or indirectly by speech-language pathologists. Research has revealed that SLPs are extensively trained to use diagnostic-prescriptive approaches to assess, develop, implement, monitor, and revise programming to address language and literacy deficits which make SLPs valuable assets within the literacy RTI framework (Foster 2018; Kerins et al., 2009; Powell & Gadke, 2018; Sanger et al., 2012; Spratcher 2000; Sylvan 2021). In fact, Goldstein et al. (2017) found that when SLPs support emergent and early literacy learners in the preschool classroom using a variety of models from small group to co-teaching, observable gains have been recording using assessments like the DIBELS. Girolametto et al. (2012) in their study found that professional development provided by SLPs to classroom teachers yielded growth in emergent literacy skills, specifically in print/sound references. Although the research supports the integration of SLP skill sets into the fabric of reading intervention, review of studies outlining the perceptions of SLPs, highlighted consistent barriers to SLP participation in school-wide literacy programs. As such, Rudebusch and Wiechmann (2011) noted that:

Advocacy and leadership, along with strategic communication about the SLP's roles and responsibilities, are important for implementing RTI. Strategic communication with professionals, parents, and students from the beginning is the key to full participation in the school's RTI system. If embedded RTI in a workload approach represents a significant change, it is unlikely to occur if only the SLP knows about it. District and campus administrators,

educators, and parents need information about how the SLP's role in RTI will affect them, and most importantly, the anticipated benefits for students.” (p. 6). Speech-Language Pathologists must be willing to engage in advocacy efforts by gaining support from administrators to promote greater involvement. Administrators are the most influential force within schools who are able to directly impact the function of SLPs beyond direct services by appointing SLPs as members of RTI teams, as collaborative coaches/consultants to support literacy development, and by using SLPs to support in-house professional learning activities designed to increase teacher knowledge in the areas of language and literacy (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014; Fink & Markholt, 2011; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Thomas & Lance, 2014).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

NAEP data reflected the performance gap between student groups remained constant. With the advent of multiple strategies to identify and remediate reading weaknesses, there has been no significant increase in the performance of students from culturally and linguistically diverse student populations who have consistently underperformed white peers (NAEP, 2018). The purpose of this study was to identify the practices of speech-language pathologists who participate in school-wide literacy initiatives the K-12 educational setting. ASHA's position within its Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Pathologists with Respect to Reading and Writing in Children and Adolescents (2001), identified SLPs as language experts trained to assess and identify language weaknesses and disorders that may directly and/or indirectly impact students' ability to read and write. Additionally, SLPs are skilled in the development of treatment and/or intervention plans designed to remediate and strengthen language function which serves as the precursory skills needed in order for some students to develop skilled reading and writing (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2010, 2012, Foster, 2018).

Research Design and Justification

McMillan and Wergin (2010) defined educational research as "a systematic investigation, involving the analysis of information (data), to answer a question or contribute to our knowledge about an educational theory or practice" (p.1). The primary investigator's interest involved developing an understanding of how the thoughts, behaviors, and experiences of the study participants informed and changed their practices within the K-12 educational setting. Therefore, a qualitative methodology was selected for this study to investigate current practices of school-based speech-language pathologists who directly participate in and support school wide literacy development.

The investigator specifically chose a phenomenological approach to obtain robust descriptions of lived experiences that have influenced professional practices of speech-language pathologists with regards to reading in public schools. This phenomenological process allowed the investigator to gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge, perceptions,

and experiences of the participants, in addition to specific actions, protocols and procedures put in place to modify practices (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Roberts, 2010). The information obtained from the interview questions, data analysis, and data interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) of this qualitative study allowed the investigator to compile findings and make interpretations from the study population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), of speech-language pathologists directly involved in literacy initiatives in public schools.

The investigator collected data and performed the data analysis, which is a common characteristic associated with qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Selected participants were administered a semi-structured interview protocol to gather study data. Semi-structured interviews allowed the investigator to obtain detailed and descriptive accounts of the study participants' experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Additionally, the semi-structured interviews provided the researcher the freedom to adjust, clarify, and elaborate on specific questions to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' shared experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Roberts, 2010; Stuckey, 2013). Such specific information may not be easily obtained when participants are limited in response options generally seen in quantitative methodologies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: How do speech-language pathologists indicate they are able to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of intervention?
- RQ2: What steps do speech-language pathologists indicate they have implemented to increase awareness of their role in reading and writing (literacy)?
- RQ3: What measures do speech-language pathologists indicate they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy programming?

Site/Sample Selection

The investigator intended to obtain specific study data from a targeted population of experts to answer research questions related to professional practices. The study employed purposeful sampling criteria to identify the recruitment site and sample. Specifically, the

researcher set specific parameters for study participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Social Media platforms have been determined to be viable recruitment tools (Gelinas et al., 2017). Social media was used because the selected professional media groups maintain criteria for participation that matched study participant criteria, specifically, licensed speech-language pathologists.

Site Selection. The study population for this proposed study was selected from online professional communities of speech-language pathologists through specific internet/website groups with membership criteria monitored by ASHA Certified group administrators. The purpose of selecting SLP membership groups managed by ASHA certified administrators was to ensure that potential study participants had been vetted, if only by self-report, that they are or have been licensed to perform roles and responsibilities of speech-language pathologists. Additionally, the SLP groups required that members answer specific SLP related questions related to their qualifications and ability to discuss evidenced based practices related to the profession before being admitted to the group. All targeted SLP groups had five thousand or more members; therefore, the investigator believed that at least six to twelve interviewees would be obtained from the population.

Sample Selection. The investigator used nonprobability sampling for this qualitative study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) reported that “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p.96). The study sample consisted of professional members of SLP groups who possessed the information and experiences that have shaped or redefined traditional practices and allowed school based SLPs to establish themselves as integral members of the literacy landscape in their respective public-school environments.

The investigator simultaneously conducted interviews and data analysis until participant responses to interview questions no longer provide new, meaningful insights or information (Etikan et al., 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that the specific number of interviews needed to reach saturation was difficult to determine before conducting a study (Box, 2014). Creswell (2013) suggested a range from three to ten interviews would be sufficient for phenomenological studies; whereas Guest et al. (2006) suggested that 12 interviews of a homogenous group was all that was needed to reach saturation. Fusch and Ness

(2015) found that six interviews should provide enough data to reach saturation using a purposeful sampling technique.

Data Collection Procedures

The investigator completed the required training for Human Subjects Protection and received a Certificate of Completion (see Appendix A). After receiving approval from the doctoral committee to proceed with the study, the investigator submitted an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to comply with federal regulations and guidelines related to conducting research with human subjects. Upon receiving IRB approval (see Appendix B), the investigator submitted a request to targeted professional online social media administrator(s) (see Appendix C) outlining the details of the study and requesting permission to submit and/or post a participant recruitment letter (see Appendix D). Criteria for professional group participation include:

1. Groups must be specifically geared towards speech-language pathologists.
2. Groups must have membership criteria.
3. Groups must be administered by someone(s) who is or was a speech-language pathologist.

Afterwards, a participant letter with participation criteria and the investigator(s) contact information was posted to target group web-based platform by the group administrator(s) (see Appendix D). Participation criteria consisted of three questions:

1. Are you an ASHA certified SLP or an SLP holding an equivalent licensure; (participant must pledge or affirm to be an ASHA certified SLP or an SLP holding an equivalent certification)?
2. Do you currently work in K-12 public educational setting;(participant must pledge or affirm to currently work in K-12 public educational settings); and
3. Do you currently participate in literacy intervention through direct student support, inter-professional collaboration, professional development provider, literacy team membership, curriculum development or as a literacy coach/consultant? (Participant must pledge or affirm

Those individuals affirming adherence to the stated criteria were accepted to participate in the study. Participants were asked to complete a recruitment form to capture demographic

information (name, email, phone number), and availability to schedule interviews at mutually agreeable dates/times (see Appendix E). Interviews were conducted via web-based platforms, by telephone, and/or in person based on participant preference.

Data Gathering Procedures

Study data were gathered from speech-language pathologists who self-reported participation in school-wide literacy initiatives in K-12 educational settings. Upon identification of study participants, notification of selection to participate in the study was provided electronically via email (see Appendix F). The participation notification reaffirmed participation criteria and provide additional information to participants to include the participant letter, participant response letter to include informed consent (including permission for video/audio recording), details to schedule interviews according to participant preference (in-person, by phone, virtual conferencing), and opt out instructions. One day prior to the scheduled interview, the investigator sent an electronic communication to confirm date and time of interviews with each participant (see Appendix G). Participants were also sent the Virginia Tech Study Consent Information Sheet (see Appendix H) and provided with a description of the study, interview protocol and interview questions (see Appendix I).

Instrument Design and Validation

The primary investigator developed and constructed an interview protocol to be used with all participants in this qualitative study. The interview protocol was designed to identify experiences that were specific to speech-language pathologists who support literacy development in the K-12 public school environment. Creswell & Creswell (2018) suggested that the interview protocol include:

1. documentation of the interview date, time, and location.
2. an opening statement to describe the purpose of the study, data collection, length of the interview, and declaration of confidentiality.
3. prepared interview questions and potential prompts; and
4. closing statement of gratitude towards participants and process to revoke participation consent.

Semi-structured interview instruments are an effective method to collect experiential data (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Semi-structured interviews permitted the collection of “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” (Patton, 2015, p.14) to gain a deeper understanding of the experience phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interview questions were designed to answer the central guiding research questions and to spur an open-ended narrative between the participants and the investigator.

In order to validate the interview questions, the investigator used a two-part process. First, the investigator presented the interview questions to 16 members of the Virginia Tech Doctoral Program Hampton Roads Cohort to elicit feedback from professionals unfamiliar with the research topic to determine the clarity and alignment of the questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Roberts, 2010). Thirteen (81%) of the cohort members provided feedback and recommendations which were reviewed and considered to revise the interview instrument (Robert, 2010). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) maintained that the wording of questions “is a crucial consideration in extracting the information desired” (p. 117). Therefore, part two of the process included submitting the revised interview questions to three speech-language pathologists, working in K-12 public education, who did not support literacy initiatives in their school settings. The SLPs were asked to provide feedback to ensure that questions elicited the intended information to inform future practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roberts, 2010). McIntosh and Morse (2015) recommended the following guidelines:

- Has the researcher included all of the questions necessary?
- Do the questions elicit the type of responses that were anticipated?
- Is the language of the research instrument meaningful to the respondents?
- Are there other problems with the questions, such as double meaning or multiple issues embedded in a single question?
- Are the questions in logical order?
- Does the interview guide, as developed, help to motivate respondents to participate in the study (p.6)?

These guidelines will accompany the interview questions during each stage of the validation process.

Interview Questions. The interview questions were designed by the investigator to elicit responses from licenses/certified SLPs who currently participate in literacy intervention through

direct student support, inter-professional collaboration, professional development, response to intervention (RTI) membership or as literacy coach/consultant. Responses were gathered, analyzed, interpreted, and reported at the conclusion of this study. To increase subject comfortability with the interview process, subjects were provided with the interview protocol which included the purpose of the study, interview process and interview questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Subjects were also provided the opportunity to ask questions prior to beginning of each interview. The interview questions were as follows:

1. Describe how you support language and literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction (for student who may or may not receive special education services).
2. Describe which specific modalities of language and literacy (oral language, written language, reading, writing) you support across tiers of instruction.
3. Describe your role in assessment related to language and literacy as a member of an interdisciplinary team.
4. Describe how you encourage teachers to implement language strategies with general education students and those students who may need additional support.
5. What steps have you taken to inform public school administrators of the role of SLPs in supporting/developing skilled reading?
6. Describe how you have attempted to acquire the support of school-based administration.
7. How do you define your role as different from a teacher or reading specialist?
8. How have you attempted to share/inform teachers and reading specialists of ways that you can support language and literacy?
9. How have you attempted to bridge the connections for yourself and other instructional staff regarding the role of SLPs in literacy?
10. How have you developed/maintained professional boundaries in areas of overlap?
11. Describe how you obtained the knowledge and/or skills to integrate your expertise into literacy initiatives in your school.
12. How would you encourage SLPs who are not supporting language and literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction to add that service into their practice across the educational setting?

13. Describe how you contribute to progress monitoring for students receiving direct and/or indirect supports as a function of tiered intervention.
14. How did you build inter-professional collaboration that allows you to support the language underpinnings of reading?
15. Describe your process for caseload/workload management (how do you participate in school-wide language and literacy initiatives without adding greater demands to your schedule).

Alignment between research questions and interview questions. Roberts (2010) suggested aligning research questions with interview questions to verify that the interview questions will provide appropriate data to answer the research questions. After the completion of the validation process, the qualitative interview was field tested on four subjects not included in the study to simulate the interview process, determine the ease of administration, assess the clarity of the questions, and ensure responses relate to the research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roberts, 2010). The matrix found in table 1 displays the research questions on the left and associated interview questions on the right to demonstrate alignment between research and interview questions.

Table 1*Research and Interview Question Alignment*

Research Question	Interview Question
Research Question 1: How do speech-language pathologists indicate they are able to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction?	Describe how you support language and literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction Describe which specific modalities of language and literacy (oral language, written language, reading, writing) you support across tiers of instruction Describe your role in assessment related to language and literacy as a member of an interdisciplinary team. Describe how you encourage teachers to implement language strategies with general education students and those who may need additional support.
Research Question 2: What steps do speech-language pathologists indicate they have implemented to increase awareness (including administrators) of their role in reading and writing (literacy)?	What steps have you taken to inform public school administrators of the role of SLPs in supporting/developing skilled reading? Describe how you have attempted to acquire the support of school-based administration How do you define your role as different from a teacher or reading specialists? How have you attempted to share/inform teachers and reading specialists of ways that you can support language and literacy? How have you attempted to bridge the connections for yourself and other instructional staff regarding the role of SLPs in literacy? How have you developed/maintained professional boundaries in areas of overlap?
Research Question 3: What measures do Speech-language pathologists indicate they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy initiatives?	Describe how you obtained the knowledge and/or skills to integrate your expertise into literacy initiatives in your school. How would you encourage SLPs who are not supporting language and literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction to add that service into their practices across the educational setting? Describe how you contribute to progress monitoring for students receiving direct and/or indirect support as a function of tiered intervention. How did you build inter-professional collaboration that allows you to support language underpinnings of reading? Describe your process for caseload/workload management (how do you participate in school-wide language and literacy initiatives without adding greater demands to your schedule?).

Field/Reflexive journal. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described the importance of field journaling in qualitative studies as an avenue to identify recurring patterns or primary themes used to explain and represent the data. The investigator completed an entry at the conclusion of each interview and kept descriptive records through the data analysis process (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), to describe the data in words, detail observations and recount personal narratives of the participants (Hays & Singh, 2012). Field journaling allowed the investigator to chart a written record of observations, interactions, conversations, and other aspects of the experience related to the context of the phenomenon of the study (Patton, 2015) while reflecting on biases, data collection procedures, data analysis, and interpretation (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Respondent validation. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) indicated that respondent validation is also a process used in qualitative research to increase the credibility of study findings. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) reported that respondent validation is the most prominent method of ensuring that participant responses are interpreted accurately and to diminish investigator biases and misunderstanding of observations and responses. The investigator conducted respondent validation through follow-up correspondences with selected participants to review preliminary interpretations.

Triangulation. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identified triangulation as “a powerful strategy for increasing the credibility” (p.245) of a qualitative study. McMillan and Wergin (2010) explained that when data from interviews coincide with observations, documents, respondent validation, or a variety of approaches, the validity of the study is stronger, thereby increasing credibility of the study findings. Corroborating interview responses, member verification checks, and the investigator’s reflexive journal were used as multiple data sources for this study.

Data Treatment and Management

Data collection occurred during the spring semester of 2021. Interviews were scheduled with each of the participating speech-language pathologists according to their specified preference, which included: video conferencing, telephone conferencing, or in-person face-to-face conferencing, at a mutually agreed upon location within the investigator’s geographic region. Each interviewee was provided the interview protocol detailing the setting of the

interview, describing the purpose of the study, the interviewee's role within the study, and the pre-determined interview questions, and a closing statement thanking the speech-language pathologists for their participation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). All speech-language pathologists interviewed were assured that their personally identifying information to include work location would remain confidential. The interviews were video and/or audio recorded to ensure accurate transcription, and field notes were taken during the interview to record any observations, and narratives provided by the interviewees (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Informed Consent. A component of the IRB application process involved considering and providing informed consent to participants. For the purpose of this study, informed consent included:

An explanation of the study including purpose and research questions.

- A statement of voluntary participation.
- A statement of risk or no risk for participation; and
- An explanation of benefits of participation (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Confidentiality. Roberts (2010) highlighted the importance of establishing and maintaining confidentiality of study participants throughout the research process. Participants were required to use pseudonyms, participant codes were assigned, and kept separate from other identifying information as measures to maintain confidentiality during data collection, data analysis, and when reporting the findings. Additionally, names and specific work locations of study participants were not reported in this study (Roberts, 2010). Data were recorded and stored on a password protected drive to which only the research team had access. (Roberts, 2010). Audio and video recordings were destroyed upon completion of the transcription and the member check procedures. Electronic study related artifacts remain confidential and saved on Virginia Tech's Google Drive account two years following the completion of this study. All remaining study documents to include the investigator's reflexive journal, electronic communications were destroyed once they were no longer needed to support this study.

Data Analysis Technique

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described data analysis as the process in which researchers construct meaning from the collected data to answer the research questions proposed in a study.

The data for qualitative study was analyzed as the data were collected and triangulated into emergent themes. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A reflexive journal and member checks were used by the investigator throughout the interview and analysis processes of this study.

Transcription and Coding. Recorded interview responses were transcribed within one week of each interview. Creswell and Creswell (2018) asserted that transcribing recordings of the interviews will aid the investigator's ability to accurately review participant responses, interpret the data, and discover the overall meaning of responses. As a function of the transcription process, the investigator placed notes and codes within the margin of each transcribed interview to identify commonalities and themes as they emerged. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested maintaining a coding dictionary or table for the purpose of identifying emergent themes. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that identifying and sorting data through the coding process supported the development of common themes when reported, will become the major findings of the study.

Timeline

Permission to conduct this study was granted by the Virginia Tech IRB in March of 2021. Participant recruitment and interviews occurred simultaneously (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interviews were scheduled following participants' confirmation of study eligibility status, participant verification of receipt of the Virginia Tech Information Sheet for Studies without consent, and confirmation of availability. Interviews were conducted and completed virtually using the Zoom platform throughout the months of April and May 2021. Transcribed interview responses were sent as password locked attachments to ensure confidentiality to allow participants to provide correction as needed.

Methodology Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify the practices of school-based speech-language pathologists who participate in school-wide literacy initiatives within the K-12 educational setting. The researcher interviewed twelve speech-language pathologists who met the study criteria. All interview questions were constructed to align with and answer the three research

questions that guided this study. The data from the study were collected, transcribed, coded, and analyzed for common themes, significant to the purpose of the study.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to identify the practices of licensed school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who participated in school-wide literacy initiatives within the K-12 educational setting. The study sought to gain insight into actionable processes of SLPs that would increase involvement in school-wide literacy across multiple tiers of intervention and to gather suggestions for increasing building level administrator awareness of the role of SLPs in reading and writing. The researcher collected and reported data to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do speech-language pathologists indicate they are able to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of intervention?
- RQ2: What steps do speech-language pathologists indicate they have implemented to increase awareness of their role in reading and writing (literacy)?
- RQ3: What measures do speech-language pathologists indicate they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy programming?

Research Design and Justification

McMillan and Wergin (2010) defined educational research as “a systematic investigation, involving the analysis of information (data), to answer a question or contribute to our knowledge about an educational theory or practice” (p.1). This qualitative study applied the interpretation of interview data from a purposeful sample (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of licensed school-based Speech-Language Pathologists. A semi-structured interview methodology was used to collect data and develop findings based on emergent themes/categories (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) to glean practical insights regarding how school-based speech-language pathologists directly participate in and/or support school wide literacy development/initiatives. The following interview questions were utilized to elicit participant responses for this study:

1. Describe how you support language and literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction (for student who may and may not receive special education services).

2. Describe which specific modalities of language and literacy (oral language, written language, reading, writing) you support for students across tiers of instruction.
3. Describe your role in assessment related to language and literacy as a member of an interdisciplinary team.
4. Describe how you encourage teachers to implement language strategies with general education students and those students who may need additional support integration.
5. What steps have you taken to inform public school administrators of the role of SLPs in supporting/developing skilled reading?
6. Describe how you have attempted to acquire the support of school-based administration.
7. How did you define your role as different from a teacher or reading specialist?
8. How have you attempted to share/inform teachers and reading specialists of ways in which you can support language and literacy development?
9. How have you attempted to bridge the connections for yourself and other instructional staff regarding the role of SLPs in literacy?
10. How have you developed/maintained professional boundaries in areas of overlap
11. Describe how you obtained the knowledge and/or skills required to integrate your skills into literacy initiatives in your school.
12. How would you encourage SLPs who are not supporting language and literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction to add that service into their practice across the educational setting?
13. Describe how you contribute to progress monitoring for students receiving direct and/or indirect supports as a function of tiered intervention.
14. How did you build inter-professional collaboration that allows you to support the language underpinnings of reading and not assume responsibility for reading remediation?
15. Describe your process for caseload/workload management (how do you participate in school-wide language and literacy initiatives without adding greater commitments to your caseload).

Each of the 15-interview question correlates with one of the three research questions as shown in Table 2.

Table 2*Research Questions and Interview Question Alignment*

Research Question	Interview Question
1	1,2,3,4
2	5,6,7,8,9,10
3	11,12,13,14,15

The interviews were conducted virtually on the Virginia Tech Zoom platform over a six-week period. Interviews were scheduled on dates and times convenient to the study participants. Interview questions were displayed on the screen during each interview and presented orally to each interviewee. Interviews were recorded to the Virginia Tech Zoom cloud and transcripts were generated after each interview. Interviews were conducted based on a first come first serve basis. Participants codes were issued based on the order in which SLPs contacted the interviewer to schedule the interview; as such, SLP-I3 represented the third SLP to schedule an interview continuing through the twelfth interviewee. All interviews were required to reaffirm meeting the study participation criteria prior to the start of each interview. After transcription and coding was completed, a more simplistic code was assigned to participants for reporting purposes as shown in Table 3.

Table 3*Speech Language Pathologist Representation*

Participants	Shortened Code for Reporting
SLP-I1	SP1
SLP-I2	SP2
SLP-I3	SP3
SLP-I4	SP4
SLP-I5	SP5
SLP-I6	SP6
SLP-I7	SP7
SLP-I8	SP8
SLP-I9	SP9
SLP-I10	SP10
SLP-I11	SP11
SLP-I12	SP12

Results

Data for Research Question 1

Research question one was created to identify how speech-language pathologists defined their ability to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of intervention. Four interview questions were presented to the study participants to gain insight into their current practices. Sub-themes were identified under each of the interview questions which assisted the researcher in developing the overarching themes of research question one.

Interview Question 1. Describe how you support language and literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction (for students who may or may not receive special education services). Five themes emerged based on responses to interview question one. Emergent themes included: assessment, support to staff through strategies, coaching, and professional development, direct support to students, and participation on child study/student support teams as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

SLP Support Across Tiers of Instruction

SLP Responses	SP 1	SP 2	SP 3	SP 4	SP 5	SP 6	SP 7	SP 8	SP 9	SP1 0	SP1 1	SP1 2
Assessment	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		
Staff Support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Student Support	X	X	X	X	X	X			X			X
RTI/MTSS	X			X	X	X		X		X	X	X

Eight SLPs (66%) identified assessment as an area of participation listing mass screenings, conducting dynamic assessments, and data analysis as literacy involvement activities across school settings. Eleven study participants expressed providing staff support through coaching and professional development opportunities as a meaningful avenue to impact literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction. The support varied from

supplying teachers with instructional strategies to providing professional development and classroom modeling. Eight respondents identified direct support as either a structured or unstructured response to intervention approach. Speech-Language Pathologist Interviewee 9 (SP9) reported that “going into all of their kindergarten rooms and doing some early phonemic awareness activities once a week for 20-30 minutes for 10-12 weeks” (lines 25-28) was the initial process used; then, if needed the teachers “provide lists of students for more direct and intensive small group then rotate to another group after 6 weeks” (SP9 lines 35-39).

Interviewees SP6, SP10, and SP4 shared that they typically provide whole group phonological awareness instruction to model for teachers as a tier one intervention; then they pull small groups of students for more intense work through tier two intervention process. Eight SLPs viewed membership on a school-based team that reviewed student data and developed programming to move students forward prior to the special education eligibility referral process as a component of collaborative assessment practices. Speech-Language Pathologist Interviewee Four (SP4) reported consulting with the Child Study Team to help determine what area was impacting students (I30-37).

Interview Question 2: Describe which modalities of language and literacy you support across tiers of instruction. The following themes emerged in response to interview question two which attempted to identify the modalities of language and literacy most frequently addressed by SLPs across tiers of instruction in the educational setting: oral, written, reading comprehension and decoding/encoding. All 12 speech-language pathologist reported support oral language development. Table 5 identified the breakdown of SLP responses to specific areas related to reading addressed across the educational setting.

Table 5*Responses to Modalities of Language and Literacy*

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Oral Language	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Written Language		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reading Fluency					X		X		X		X	X
Reading Comprehension	X			X		X		X			X	X
Decoding and Encoding				X		X		X	X		X	X

Twelve SLPs (100%) provided direct and/or indirect support to students and teachers in the areas of oral language. Methods of oral language support included pre-teaching vocabulary, facilitating oral story retelling and modeling how to scaffold language concepts during story time for teachers. Eleven SLPs (92%) worked directly on writing as a means of supporting literacy instruction across tiers of intervention. Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) described using written language to introduce print awareness, to target sound-letter awareness, having students write to dictation and using that as a means to assess skills such as listening, discrimination, spelling, and oral memory.

Six of the 12 respondents (50%) identified reading comprehension as an area in which they provided interventions to support literacy across tiers of instruction. One respondent, SP9, described reading comprehension support as helping students pull out context clues, expanding curriculum related vocabulary, and helping students identify morpho- syntactic structures within grade level text (lines 50-51). In the areas of decoding and encoding, SLP-I8 reported offering students' assistance with decoding and phonological awareness.

Five of the 12 SLPs identified reading fluency as a specific modality they addressed across tiers of support. These five SLPs reported using grade level text to address speech production and strengthen the prosody and rate of students during oral reading tasks (SP5, SP7,

SP9, SP11, SP12). One SLP described one method of attacking reading fluency as using student written summaries by having students read the summaries as “...fluency practice, not speech fluency, but reading fluency and to have students become more fluent readers.” (SP7, lines 37-39).

Interview Question 3: Describe your role in assessment related to language and literacy as a member of an interdisciplinary team. Review of the responses to interview question three yielded three themes: Assessment, Data Analysis and Interpretation and Development of Interventions. Responses indicated that all twelve interviews participated in assessment and data analysis in some capacity within their current work locations. Table 6 revealed the responses of SLPs in terms of how they contributed to language and literacy development as a member of interdisciplinary teams.

Table 6

Interdisciplinary Team Participation Responses

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Assessment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Data Analysis/ Interpretation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Intervention Development		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X

All twelve interviewees (100%) reported participation on a school-based team. In the role of team member, all twelve respondents reported supporting assessment and data analysis of assessments and all other presented data derived from teacher made probes, curriculum assessments, district-wide testing and standardized testing from school based or external practitioners. Speech-Language Pathologist Interviewee twelve (SP12) as a member of the Child Study Team focused on analyzing and interpreting assessment and evaluative data for teams, which included curriculum assessments that teachers had difficulty analyzing and using the data to determine appropriate interventions (164-70). Ten of the twelve SLP respondents (83%) shared a common practice regarding the development of interventions by suggesting strategies for both

teachers and families to implement to develop and/or strengthen language and literacy, going to the classrooms to modeling interventions across tier one, and developing duration of interventions and data review prior to referral to their three supports and the special education determination process. Collaborating with teachers by reviewing assessment results to help teachers identify needs and develop interventions was reported by SP12, (140-42).

Interview Question 4: Describe how you encourage teachers to implement language strategies with general education students and those students who may need additional support? Speech-language pathologists reportedly engaged in several activities to support the inclusion of evidenced-based practices by teachers. Themes derived from the interview responses included: Professional development activities, intervention strategies and teacher-follow-up. Table 7 outlined responses from participants related to their interpretation of how they encourage teachers to implement suggested strategies to support language and literacy with general education students.

Table 7

Encouraging Teachers to Implement Language and Literacy Strategies

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Teacher Follow-Up			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Strategies and Resources	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Workshops	X		X			X		X	X	X	X	X

The provision of evidence-based strategies and resources to instructional staff was identified by all 12 participants (100%) as the primary means by which SLPs encouraged teachers to implement tier one strategies to support the learning of all students in classes. Respondent, SP12, reported using video modeling as a successful tool that provided teachers the opportunity to review the videos as often as needed to increase teacher efficacy and fidelity regarding the implementation of strategies (line 106-112). Nine SLPs offered some form of follow-up ranging from informal consultation with teachers to co-teaching and modeling. Eight

SLPs (67%) noted that they hosted or provided professional development or workshops after school, gave presentations related to language underpinnings of literacy, or participated in content meetings. The respondents also offered teachers information regarding the roles of SLPs in literacy and ways in which SLPs can support teachers and students in the areas of literacy development through remediation and interventions.

Research Question One Summary. Assessment, data analysis, and interventions/strategies were the overarching themes that emerged from responses to the four interview questions developed to determine how speech-language pathologists indicated they were able to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of intervention. Highlighted in responses from interview questions one, two, and three revealed assessments as a common strand. All twelve (100%) of study participants reported engaging in assessment through informal and/or formal testing as members of student support teams. Formal testing included norm and criterion referenced receptive and expressive language, phonological awareness, and reading batteries. Informal measures were described as teacher-made assessments and probes and curriculum assessments modifications.

Data for Research Question 2

A series of six questions was posed to study participants to determine how they increased awareness of instructional staff and building administrators regarding the role of speech-language pathologists in the areas of reading and writing. Although several sub-themes emerged, SLPs placed a high emphasis on collaboration and advocacy for the profession to increase awareness of their ability to support literacy initiatives.

Interview Question 5. What steps have you taken to inform public school administrators of the role of SLPs in supporting/developing skilled reading? Collaboration and advocacy were the two primary themes revealed by SLP responses to interview question five as displayed below in Table 8.

All twelve interviewees (100%) attempted to gain administrator support by providing an explanation of the scope of practice of speech-language pathologists as validation for the work of supporting literacy development. Speech-language pathologist Interviewee One (SP1) informed administrators of specific precursory components of literacy development that were within the scope of practice of SLPs with documentation from the licensing board (lines 127-128). Eleven SLPs found providing administrators with research from the field of speech-language pathology was a successful tool to gain administrator support. Speech-Language Pathologist-Interviewee 9 (SP9) reported providing the school principal with research identifying the connection between oral language and reading to initially gain support (lines 138-141). Three SLPs reported sharing with administrators her involvement with school-based initiatives in the classrooms and tangible examples of how students have demonstrated measurable gains in decoding or comprehension based on collaborative efforts with classroom teachers and specialists (SP4, SP5, and SP12).

Interview Question 7. How did you define your role as different from that of a teacher or reading specialist? All participants differentiated the knowledge base of SLPs as the primary difference between SLPs, teachers, and reading specialists. Respondents specifically noted extensive training in communication modalities, components of language, identification, and treatment of typical and atypical speech-language development across the lifespan as those areas of distinction. The responses of study participants related to differences between SLPs and teachers and SLPs and reading specialists are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Differences Between SLPs and Teachers and SLPs and Reading Specialists

SLP Responses	SP 1	SP 2	SP 3	SP 4	SP 5	SP 6	SP 7	SP 8	SP 9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Educational Training	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Every interviewee (100%) identified the SLP's specific educational knowledge and training in language development as the primary variable that differentiated SLPs from classroom teachers and reading specialists. Specifically, interviewees highlighted the SLP's ability to evaluate, identify, diagnosis, and treat a variety of language-based disorders. Respondent SP3 summed up the differences between SLPs and other professionals in relation to their influence on literacy. "We [SLPs] are diagnostic in nature and are able to

develop interventions based on individual or corporate needs. Reading specialists, generally put into practice a program or pieces of a program that are design to address some part of literacy but rarely have the knowledge to develop an intervention from scratch based on the components of language, which is the precursor to literacy” (SP4, /115-119)

Interview Question 8. How have you attempted to inform teachers and reading specialists of ways in which you can support language and literacy development? Interview responses were highly centered around professional development and collaboration. Professional development activities primarily included faculty meetings, PLCs, and workshops. Collaboration activities included a wide array from co-assessment, co-planning, co-implementation of interventions to simply consultative support. The two overarching themes of professional development and collaboration are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Informing Educators of the Role of SLPs in Language and Literacy

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Professional Development				X		X		X	X	X	X	X
collaboration		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X

Seven SLPs (58%) referenced the importance of providing professional development and/or teacher training throughout interview responses. Respondent SP6 reported “having workshops to get information out to staff then making myself available for those who want to collaborate for individual student needs or as a collective class lesson” (/187-188). Interviewee SP8 described collaboration efforts as actually attending team meetings to assist teachers with dissecting classroom data to find tier 1 and tier 2 interventions (/189-191). Speech-Language Pathologist 12 stated, “collaboration through school-based teams provides an avenue for me to offer strategies and to educate teams of teachers and how what they are seeing in terms of weaknesses that may not be responding to their instruction is really a weakness in the link between language and literacy and here are some ways that we can try to address it” (/160-167). Additionally, SP6 reiterated the importance of collaborating with instructional staff by setting up

common planning time to review interventions and invite teachers to co-teach and/or observe implementation of phonemic awareness intervention tasks (I135-139).

Interview Question 9. How have you attempted to bridge the connections for yourself and other instructional staff regarding the role of SLPs in literacy? Interviewees reiterated the importance of collaboration by identifying collaborative as a tool to bridge the connections between the role of SLPs and other instructional staff. SLPs identified their need to be accessible to teachers as a resource as equally important as the act of collaboration as depicted in Table 12.

Table 12

Responses to Bridging Connections Regarding the Role of SLPs in Literacy

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Collaboration	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Accessibility		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

Nine of 12 SLPs (75%) reported increasing collaborative efforts by making themselves accessible and visible in the schools by observing classes, offering suggestions, being available for questions and participating on student support teams as the primary method in bridging the connection with other instructional staff. Speech-Language Pathologist Interviewee 3 scheduled time to visit teachers in their classrooms to offer strategies or model lessons to increase teacher comfortability and willingness to work together (I208-210). Additionally, nine of 12 SLPs (75%) reported working collaboratively with instructional staff as a means to bridge the connections regarding the work of SLPs in literacy Speech-Language Pathologist Interviewee Nine (SP9) shared that as SLPs participate on SST and Child Study teams, they [SLPs] have the opportunity to ask questions related to the whys and how's teachers and other instructional staff take to address student issues, which in turn demonstrated a desire to learn and participate in the problem solving. Teachers and other specialists begin to view SLPs as members of the team and seek opportunities for collaboration as professional relationships develop and grow (I287-295). Another SLP shared how increased visibility can bridge connections throughout the educational setting by building rapport with teachers and earning their trust. SP4 commented that relationship building showed teachers that "I'm on their side, I'm here to support them, not make their lives more difficult" (I248-250).

Interview Question 10. How have you developed or maintained professional boundaries in areas of overlap? Based on the interview responses, communication and collaboration were identified as themes to interview question ten. All SLPs (100%) concurred that effective communication was required in order to establish and maintain professional boundaries. Interviewees also reported that collaboration with peers assisted in setting boundaries by providing opportunities to demonstrate SLP specific skills. Interviewee responses are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

Responses to Establishing Professional Boundaries

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Communication and collaboration	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Participants reported that communication and collaboration served them best in developing and maintain professional boundaries. Speech-Language Pathologist Interviewee 4 (SP4) explicitly identifying areas of expertise and how support would be provided for tiered intervention (1167-168). Speech-Language Pathologist Interviewee 10 (SP10) concurred stating “I communicate my boundaries by saying what I can and can’t do and define what is a good use of my time for universal learning support across tiers one and two” (1297-299). The common theme of effectively communicating what is and what is not found in the scope of practice of speech-language pathologists was reiterated as one method of establishing and maintaining professional boundaries (SP1, SP2, SP5, SP6).

Research Question Two Summary. Research question two was comprised of six interview questions which were presented to the twelve speech-language pathologists participating in this study. Advocacy for the profession and inter-professional collaboration emerged as the overarching themes SLPs reported as ways of increasing the awareness of instructional staff and building administrators regarding their role in the areas of reading and writing. All twelve SLPs (100%) reported engaging in advocacy through educating administrators and other instructional staff. Advocacy work was described as providing clarification regarding the scope of practice of speech-language pathologists related to literacy, providing peer reviewed literature related to language and literacy outcomes when interventions

were provided by SLPs, and by providing descriptions of ways that SLPs are trained to support the precursors of literacy development during faculty meetings and in-service opportunities.

One hundred percent of respondents also identified collaboration as a key method to increasing awareness of the role of speech-language pathologists. Co-planning, co-teaching and intervention modeling were described as means of first, increasing teacher awareness, then allowing teachers to share the outcomes with building level administrators to increase administrator awareness. Additionally, collaboration with teachers and teams of professionals as an effective method of increasing awareness of the skills and training of SLPs in relation to language and literacy. Active participation on school teams, helping teachers analyze student data, and assisting with the development and implementation of interventions were ways SLPs reported increasing the awareness of instructional staff and administrators as to how speech-language pathologists could be identified as a resource to positively effective literacy outcomes across tiers of instruction.

Data for Research Question 3

Five interview questions were constructed to identify what measures speech-language pathologists indicated they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy initiatives. Interview responses and the themes that materialized are subsequently described in the text below:

Interview Question 11. Describe how you obtained the knowledge and/or skills required to integrate your skills into literacy initiatives in your school? Two themes emerged from responses to interview question 11 regarding the acquisition of knowledge and/or skills related to supporting literacy initiatives across tiers of intervention. All SLPs reported gaining knowledge regarding the impact they could have on literacy outcomes by acquiring continue education units required to maintain licensure. Identified themes are displayed in Table 14.

Table 14*SLPs Learning How to Integrate Expertise into Literacy Initiatives*

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Graduate program		X	X		X			X				
Continuing Education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Professional groups	X			X	X		X			X	X	X

Four of the 12 interviewees reported obtaining their knowledge of the role of SLPs in literacy through graduate programs. All 12 participants however, reported acquiring or fine tuning their knowledge through continuing education opportunities. SLPs reported attending professional development conferences, completing evidence-based self-study courses for continuing education credits for licensure, by joining professional groups, and by attending teacher trainings with a literacy focus.

Interview Question 12. How would you encourage SLPs who are not supporting language and literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction to add that service into their practice across the educational setting? Responses from the study participants reflected a heavy focus on the scope of practice and research surround language and literacy (see Table 15). Educating colleagues about the role of SLPs through the published document of the licensing agency validated their participation in literacy conversation. Respondents reported that sharing the scope of practice helped identify how SLPs are able to support literacy through the precursory of early language development.

Table 15*Responses to Advising SLPs to Participate in Literacy Initiatives*

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Scope of Practice	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	

Eighty-three percent of SLPs participating in the study reported they would encourage other SLPs to support language and literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction by directing SLPs to the scope of practice for speech language pathologists in reading and written language and through the sharing of resources such as materials, peer-reviewed articles, and professional development opportunities. Sharing the scope of practice with building administrators was described as a prerequisite to joining the literacy program in schools (SP1, SP2, SP4, SP6). Speech-Language Pathologist Interviewee One (SP1) reported having the support of the administrative staff increases the willingness of teachers to be flexible with scheduling (I348-352). Speech-Language Pathologist Interviewee Two (SP2) added that due to the itinerant nature of school-based speech pathology services, SLP involvement in schools-wide literacy is highly dependent on how supportive the administration is regarding the role of the SLP (I227-231).

Interview Question 13. Describe how you contribute to progress monitoring for students receiving direct and/or indirect support as a function of tiered intervention. Only one theme emerged from participant responses to interview question 13. All participants reported that data collection and monitoring was inherent to their jobs as SLPs, not all of the interviewees shared that knowledge base with other instructional staff. Ten of the 12 SLPs (83%), as shown in Table 16, reported contributing to progress monitoring directly or indirectly as a function of tiered intervention (see Table 16).

Table 16

Responses to How SLPs Support Progress Monitoring

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Collaborative review of student data	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Interview Question 14: How did you build inter-professional collaboration that allows you to support the language underpinnings of reading and not assume responsibility for reading remediation? Respondents identified three primary methods of building inter-professional collaboration with instructional staff. The most frequent responses are illustrated in Table 17. SLPs felt it was imperative to answer specific questions related to student performance to assist

teachers. They also reported offering suggestions and providing presentations were methods to promote inter-professional collaboration.

Table 17

Responses to Building Inter-professional Collaboration

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
Staff presentation	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Offering suggestions	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Answering questions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Eleven SLPs (92%) reportedly built professional relationships by providing information through staff presentations. Ten SLPs (83%) reported offering suggestions to staff. All 12 respondents (100%) reported answering questions through the RTI process and through collaborative team meetings.

Interview Question 15. Describe your process for caseload/workload management (how do you participate in school-wide language and literacy initiatives without adding greater commitments to your caseload). As revealed in the responses depicted in Table 18, all SLPs (100%) reported the need for professional autonomy as the primary method of managing caseloads and workloads in order to secure the time to support school-wide literacy initiatives. SLPs reported that autonomy over scheduling permitted them to support students as well as collaborate with teachers. SLP autonomy, when exercised appropriately, has the capacity to facilitate greater involvement in literacy efforts across the school setting.

Table 18*Responses to Caseload/Workload Management*

SLP Responses	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5	SP6	SP7	SP8	SP9	SP10	SP11	SP12
RTI before referral	X			X		X				X		X
Service flexibility	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Schedule Interventions				X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Schedule autonomy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

All 12 respondents (100%) reported advocacy efforts to gain or maintain autonomy over their schedules as the overarching process for managing caseloads and workloads. Advocacy included clarifying the differences between caseloads and workloads and what each entailed. All 12 speech-language pathologists reported the importance of writing IEP services with flexibility as well as using flexible scheduling to provide services as a management tool. Seven of the interviewees (58%) specifically stated scheduling Tier 1 and Tier 2 services into their calendars to protect that time.

Research Question Three Summary. Speech-language pathologists identified availability, collaboration, and advocacy as measures they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy initiatives. Interviewees reported making themselves visible and available to answer questions and to network with instructional and support staff as key components to greater involvement. In terms of collaboration, SLPs reported seeking specific forms of professional development to learn more specifically how their skills related to literacy development in school-aged children and various methods of using their expertise to collaborate with instructional staff and student support specialists to support student growth. Last, advocacy was revealed as a primary variable used to increase SLP involvement in literacy development across the school setting. SLPs reported advocating for autonomy over schedules and service delivery options in order to manage scheduling of special education services, intervention

services, and the other required job-related functions such as conducting comprehensive evaluations, record reviews, report writing, student programming, Medicaid billing, coaching, and collaborative work with teachers and specialists.

Summary

The American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) has outlined its position defining ways that speech-language pathologists are expected to support literacy across the educational setting (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2010). Three research questions were developed to identify how speech-language pathologists incorporated this mandate from the national licensing body participated in school-wide literacy initiatives across multiple tiers of instruction in public K-12 educational institutions. Chapter five will report the findings, conclusions, implications for practice, suggestions for future studies and personal reflections.

Chapter 5

Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the analysis of data obtained from twelve interviews of speech-language pathologists who participate in school-wide literacy initiatives. This chapter reviews the research questions that governed the study. A brief summary of the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for further study are also included in this chapter. The chapter ends with a study conclusion and investigator's reflections.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the practices of licensed school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who participated in school-wide literacy initiatives within the K-12 educational setting. The study sought to gain insight into actionable processes of SLPs that would increase involvement in school-wide literacy across multiple tiers of intervention and to gather suggestions for increasing building level administrator awareness of the role of SLPs in reading and writing. The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do speech-language pathologists indicate they are able to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of intervention?
- RQ2: What steps do speech-language pathologists indicate they have implemented to increase awareness of their role in reading and writing (literacy)?
- RQ3: What measures do speech-language pathologists indicate they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy programming?

Summary of Findings

The findings for this study were based on the data obtained from twelve interviews of speech-language pathologists who self-reported participating in school-wide literacy initiatives in K-12 public school settings. The interview data were collected and analyzed revealing several findings. The findings as outlined within this chapter are supported by interview data and linked to previously published research.

Finding One

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) identified assessment as an area in which they

were able to support literacy initiatives within the educational setting. All twelve interviewed speech-language pathologists reported participating in general education assessment practices by conducting mass screenings collaborating with teachers to assess students (see Table 4), suggesting specific assessments and conducting follow-up testing as members of student support teams (see Table 6), all designed to assist with the identification of weaknesses in decoding and/or comprehension in relation to language and literacy prior to the referral process for special education eligibility. SP4 shared an example of how he/she supported the assessment process stating “I consult with the Child Study Team to help determine what area is impacting them [students]: is it a decoding issue or a comprehension issue. I play a huge role pinpointing that because a lot of our teachers don’t know how to do that, so I have specific assessments that I recommend” (130-37). SP3 described taking part in the assessment process by frequently collaborating with teachers. SP3 reported “tag-teaming with assessments trying to figure out how to help students, specifically with language and to support areas of literacy development” (172-74). Additionally, SP5 revealed how collaborating with classroom assessments helped to identify “red flags that may cause them [students] to be at risk when it comes to literacy skills, [which] helps teachers nail down areas of concern” (186-88).

Lee (2004) [in *Bridging the Literacy Achievement Gap Grades 4-12*] stressed the need for educators to become astute in recognizing and addressing the impact that linguistic variability may have on literacy especially in the areas of decoding, vocabulary and accessing prior knowledge. Ireland and Conrad (2016) identified the potential benefits of having speech-language pathologists assist with the assessment process as SLPs, by virtue of training, consider factors during assessment and intervention planning that are often overlooked by other professionals regarding language and literacy, specifically cultural and linguistic variations. This notion/concept/ is further supported by the work of Hudley and Mallinson (2011), who found that educators unfamiliar with dialectal features may inadvertently refer students for special education rather than engage in dynamic assessment or provide explicit instruction for language development in the classroom. Brooke (2013) suggested that teachers required additional support when identifying student strengths and weaknesses related to early literacy development.

Research has revealed that teacher preparation programs have produced teachers who are not adequately prepared to identify and provide explicit and systematic interventions to address the precursory components of struggling readers (Binks-Cantrell, 2012; Joshi et al., 2009; Otaiba

et al., 2014; Siegel, 2018; Washburn et al., 2011). Washburn et al. (2011) found that 91% of preservice teachers were able to count syllables, yet only 58% were able to correctly identify the definition of phonological awareness and even fewer, 45% had concrete knowledge of alphabetic principle/phonics, all of which are foundational components of skilled reading (Burns et al., 2016; Fallon & Katz, 2020; Goldfeld et al., 2020; Kilpatrick, 2016; Moats, 2007, 2009a; Spear-Swerling, 2019). School-based speech-language pathologists supporting teachers and teams are able to analyze nuances of phonology, syntax, morphology and semantics then help teachers develop supports and interventions to assist students in the classroom (Cabell et al., 2008; Foster, 2018; Goldstein et al., 2017). Foster (2018) highlighted and emphasized that the “SLP’s knowledge regarding language and early literacy development can be invaluable in building systems of support such as screening, training, design, and monitoring (p.11), which when combined with teacher expertise have the potential to move students forward.

Finding Two

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) disclosed that assisting with the analysis of student data in a consultative and/or collaborative role was a resourceful use of their specific expertise. Table 6 identifies the SLPs who responded affirmatively to providing data analysis within their role as an SLP through consultation with teachers and school-based teams to analyze informal and formal assessment data. SLPs assisted teachers and teams with determining strengths, weaknesses, and areas of intervention related to language and literacy needs of students. SP2 described supporting teachers and teams by focusing on the analysis and interpretation of assessment and evaluative data for the child study team/RTI team. SP2 also shared that “although teachers give assessments, they sometimes don’t understand all of the language on the assessments or what they measure so I’m generally the one analyzing and reported that data out” (167-70).

Other SLPs also mentioned that often teachers exhibited difficulty analyzing school-based data and determining how to use assessment data to develop interventions to meet specific language and literacy needs. For instance, “during child study meetings, I do like to know how children are performing on their PALS assessments and how they are performing in class with general oral and written comprehension tasks. I help guide the team in figuring out how that data relate to language and literacy because sometimes teachers just share the results but don’t know

what they mean or how to use them to plan instruction that will actually help student move forward” (SP5, 194-100). Another SLP stated that “We gather a lot of data from the teacher and other staff working with students. Often times I’m the one who really interprets the data to identify what the students really need in terms of intervention” (SP12, 169-73). SP4 disclosed being able to support other professional staff as the literacy coach sought SLP support to help analyze and interpret assessment data (159-61) in that particular setting.

The American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) purports that SLPs are extensively trained to use diagnostic-prescriptive approaches to assess, develop, implement, monitor, and revise programming to address language and literacy weaknesses and deficits which make SLPs valuable assets within the literacy RTI framework (Foster, 2018; Kerins et al., 2009; Powell, 2018; Sanger et al., 2012; Spratcher, 2000; Sylvan 2021). Speech-language pathologists serving on student assistance teams support the analysis and/or review of formative and summative student assessment most frequently to determine if referral for special education consideration is warranted (Conn & Garten, 2005; Ireland & Conrad, 2016; Ortiz, 2005; Sylvan, 2018, 2021). Foster (2018) points out that in addition to student performance data which provides information that shows how students are progressing within the curriculum, developmental data are needed to show how ready students are for curriculum learning. Foster further contends that teachers have difficulty correlating developmental readiness with curriculum standards and this is where the expertise of SLPs can be of paramount importance (Foster 2018; Joshi et al., 2009; Moats, 2009a, 2009b, 1994; Otaiba et al., 2012; Schmitterer & Brod, 2021; Thomas & Lance, 2014). Schmitterer and Brod (2021) prioritized the importance of accurate and differentiated identification of the breakdown among the components of reading which SLPs as speech and language diagnosticians do routinely as a function of their role as language experts (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2010, 2016; Fallon & Katz, 2020; Kerins et al., 2009).

Finding Three

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) reported engaging in direct student support and teacher collaboration to support literacy acquisition. Interventions are designed to help struggling students and monitor student progress. SLPs participating in this study reported providing direct intervention as Tier I supports and indirect intervention to students in the form of teacher support

in the areas of language and literacy. Table 5 reflects the areas in which SLPs in this study report providing intervention such as phonemic awareness, decoding and comprehension. SP6 told of going into general education classrooms to provide whole group phonemic awareness instruction three to four times a week for 30 minutes as a Tier 1 intervention to support dyslexia as a general education concern (130-35). Another SLP reported pushing into classrooms frequently to support decoding and phonological awareness (SP8, 155-56). SP1 added using a graduated approach to small group intervention as a means of attacking/addressing weaknesses in reading comprehension across various grade levels (132-33). Direct intervention provided to students by SLPs to provide immediate corrective feedback to students at the moment of error, particularly in the areas of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

SLPs in the study found that providing modeling and teacher follow were effective tools when imparting their expertise into the literacy framework within their school settings (see Table 7). SP7 capitalized on modeling as a means to encourage the use of interventions and strategies followed by teacher observation meaningful feedback to support literacy intervention (1120-127). SP12 concurred with the practice of modeling a variety of precursory language skills by providing teachers with video recorded clips of interventions as a resource that teachers can view, and practice as needed to develop a skill (1106-112).

Speech-Language Pathologists have provided direct and indirect intervention yielding positive outcomes. Goldstein et al. (2017) found that when SLPs support emergent and early literacy learners in the preschool classroom using a variety of models from small group to co-teaching, observable gains have been noted on the DIBELS which demonstrated the potential to limit reading difficulties as students transitioned to kindergarten. Additionally, McLellan (2016) described intervention by SLPs using the literacy circle or communication discussion approaches within the classroom setting, noting that during literacy circle groups, SLPs may work with teachers to identify student difficulties and develop solutions and may provide direct intervention during literacy small groups and/or work with student prior to or directly after small group to offer additional in class or pullout supports. Indirect supports provided by SLPs have had positive effects on instructional practices. Girolametto et al. (2012) in their study found that professional development provided by speech-language pathologists to classroom teachers yielded growth in emergent literacy skills, specifically in print/sound references and decontextualized language seen in both teachers and students in the experimental group.

Finding Four

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) participating in the study embedded themselves into the literacy framework through highlighting roles and responsibilities as a method of professional advocacy. SLPs shared the scope of practice, specifically the role of speech-language pathologists in reading and writing, sought administrative support for collaborative practices, and voiced the need to have greater autonomy over workload scheduling. SP4 described taking a leadership role by “forcing myself on people through joining SST and really advocating for SLPs to become members of these teams and there has been some change. They have recognized that we do have an important role and a lot to say in the area of reading” (1103-1106). Another SLP remembered advocating by explicitly briefing teachers on the how the SLP knowledge base related to literacy. SP1 stated, “I initially had to stand my ground and tell teachers that precursory reading skills are in my scope of practice and explain that yes, I can work on this because I have the knowledge needed to address morphological and syntactic issues that may be impacting comprehension” (1114-1117).

Rudebusch and Wiechmann (2011) noted that: “Advocacy and leadership, along with strategic communication about the SLP’s roles and responsibilities, are important for implementing RTI. Strategic communication with professionals, parents, and students from the beginning is the key to full participation in the school’s RTI system. If embedded RTI in a workload approach represents a significant change, it is unlikely to occur if only the SLP knows about it. District and campus administrators, educators, and parents need information about how the SLP’s role in RTI will affect them, and most importantly, the anticipated benefits for students.” (p.6)

Administrator support was identified as paramount to the involvement of SLPs in intervention practices across the school setting. SP4 retold the experience of reviewing the speech-language pathologist scope of practice with the current building principal and highlighting the role of the SLP in reading and writing (182-84). During the attempt to gain administrator support, SP4 realized the importance of advocacy to increase awareness sharing that the current administrator was not accustomed to SLPs working on literacy (185-86) adding, “I think he does recognize the knowledge and skill set that SLPs have now, but there is still this dichotomy of experience because it isn’t what he has known or observed traditionally” (187-88).

Administrative support was found to be highly important to SLP participation in school-wide literacy by several SLPs. SP2 shared that due to the itinerant nature of speech pathology practices in schools, involvement in school-wide literacy is highly dependent on how supportive the administration is regarding the role of the SLP. SP2 further shared that if a team member or teacher has a concern about the SLP's role, it is often funneled to the administration who in turn questions the legitimacy of SLP involvement in literacy instruction/remediation (I227-238). SP1 added having the support of the administrative staff has increased the willingness of teachers to be flexible with scheduling times for those students needing special education services and with teachers opening up their classrooms to allow co-teaching of precursory language skills. (I348-355).

Administrators are the most influential force at the building level who are able to directly impact the function of the SLP beyond direct services by appointing SLPs as members of RTI teams, as collaborative coaches to support literacy development and by using SLPs to support in-house professional development to increase teacher knowledge in the areas of language and literacy development (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014; Fink & Markholt, 2015; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Thomas & Lance, 2014). Administrators demonstrate cohesiveness in educational practices when they allow internal and external experts to take the lead in sharing content knowledge and instructional practices (Bredson, 2000) According to Fink and Markholt "it takes an expert to make an expert" (p.5). Speech-language pathologists have been identified as language experts, able to support both oral and written language development and disorders (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, 2016). Therefore, it would appear that accessing the expertise of school-based speech-language pathologists would be effective practice for educational leaders, especially those seeking to provide job-embedded professional development as a practice to develop teaching and learning in their school environments (Fink & Markholt, 2011).

Finding Five

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) in the study reiterated the importance of advocating for control of their scheduling in order to be available to support school-wide literacy. SP1 indicated using the specific language "caseload and workload" and defining what qualifies as workload management has been influential in gaining administrator support during discussions with building administrators when vying for autonomy over scheduling of meetings

and the provision of services (1402-407). SP4 reported having the autonomy to navigate scheduling by writing IEP services in minutes by month to create flexibility in service delivery allowed time for RTI support and participation in PLCs (1260-266). SP10 reiterated the need to have autonomy over scheduling in order to maximize time and expertise. Offering that “SLPs serving in more of a consultative role allows larger amounts of time to be dedicated for consultation, collaboration, and assessment and the teaching of self-advocacy skills across the school setting, especially for students who will need to learn to compensate for deficits” (1468-472).

Thomas and Lance (2014) reported on the importance of SLP autonomy over scheduling. Navigating the various responsibilities that rest upon the shoulders of school-based SLPs is best accomplished when given the autonomy to use a workload approach over a caseload approach (American Speech-Language Hearing Association 2017, 2020; Rudebush & Wiechmann, 2011; Sylvan, 2018; Thomas & Lance, 2014). Thomas and Lance (2014) revealed that when given scheduling autonomy, SLPs coordinate their schedules in a way that allow for the completion of traditional responsibilities in terms of identification and treatment of speech and language disorders, while permitting SLPs to actively participate in collaborative intervention planning and implementation.

Finding Six

All participating Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) indicated that inter-professional collaboration was a fundamental way to increase their active participation in literacy development. SP12 noted participating in faculty meetings allows SLPs to learn which grade levels are not making growth and use that to determine which grade levels or teachers need the most literacy support (1383-385). SP12 stated, “Offering to assist those teachers in particularly by going in during reading blocks and offer some suggestions afterwards or offering to demonstrate how to rephrase questions or get students to expand answers is a nonthreatening way to get in classes and actual help teachers and students” (1387-392).

SP4 reported increasing visibility throughout the educational setting and sharing times of availability provided the opportunity to build rapport with teachers and thereby earning their [teachers’] trust. “These moments help to show them [teachers] (1248-249) that “I’m on their side, I’m here to support them, not make their lives more difficult” (1250). Another SLP shared

that “scheduling time to visit teachers in their classrooms to offer strategies or model a quick lesson on phonological awareness, vocabulary building, or story retell has increased their [teacher] willingness to work together, especially if teachers have unsuccessfully sent students through the SST process. It also gives them a chance to watch me and ask questions about what and why I do what I do. It builds their comfortability and willingness to try to teach a skill a different way” (SP3, 1208-214).

SLP-I9 discussed the benefit of collaboration as it relates to assessment and evaluation stating that when “SLPs participate on SST and Child Study Teams, they have the opportunity to ask questions related to the why’s and how’s teachers and other instructional staff take to address student issues, which in turn demonstrated a desire to learn and participate in the problem solving. Teachers and other specialists begin to view SLPs as members of the team and seek opportunities for collaboration as professional relationships develop and grow” (1287-295). Lastly, SP10 shared how collaboration between SLPs, and educators can support an array of student needs. SP10 stated, “SLPs are able to collaborate with teachers by helping them use the UDL framework to make their lessons accessible for Down Syndrome Children speaking in two-to-three-word sentences, and your nonverbal child with autism, and the four kids who are English language learners. And yes, even adapt it for really proficient and even gifted students in class. Teachers really get on board when they realize that we can collaborate and make materials and activities that reach all of their students with less work than they think” (1125-137).

Within collaborative settings, administrators are to engage in shared leadership practices by encouraging educators and specialists to facilitate data review, making use of the expertise of other instructional staff, including SLPs, through activities of co-teaching, and embedded peer coaching to increase teaching expertise (Cotton, 2003; Fink & Markholt, 2011; Karadağ et al., 2015; Wallace Foundation, 2012). In their study, Thomas and Lane (2014) disclosed the results of SLP led team-based intervention for students in Kindergarten through third grade noting that collectively, the participating students demonstrated a 12% growth rate on a standardized measure when baseline data was compared to post intervention data. The collaborative nature of the project permitted the SLPs in the study to design and coordinate the provision of interventions which included direct classroom support, ensuring the use of evidenced-based strategies, as well as providing professional development and training to participating team members (Foster, 2018; Sylvan 2021; Thomas & Lane, 2014). Additionally, many teachers begin

their careers with limited training and/or experience with providing language rich environments that support and facilitate literacy acquisition (Goldfeld et al., 2020; Kilpatrick, 2016; Moats, 2007, 2009a, 2009b). Collaborative teaming with SLPs and other instructional support staff provide a myriad of avenues to identify and meet the needs of struggling readers (Archibald, 2017; Ehren et al., 2006; Washburn & Mulcahy, 2018). Overall, inter-professional collaboration was described as a primary means of increasing the awareness of the role of speech-language pathologists in literacy and assisting with the development and implementation of literacy interventions across multiple tiers of instruction.

Implications

Each implication is associated with a specific finding. The implications for this study are as follows:

Implication One

School and school division leaders should consider including speech-language pathologists in their support of literacy initiatives. Data from the study as well as the associated literature demonstrated the expertise of speech-language pathologists in terms of assessing the components of language which have been identified as foundational elements of skilled reading. Speech-language pathologists have been trained to identify typical language development as well as cultural and linguistic variability from true disorders which could hinder the development of skilled reading. Building leaders should contemplate incorporating the expertise of SLPs across the educational setting to support language and literacy development. This implication is associated with Finding One and Finding Two.

Implication Two

School leaders should consider enlisting the support of SLPs when analyzing student data to help identify strengths and weaknesses. Data from finding two concludes that SLPs are a viable resource able to assist instructional staff with analyzing informal and formal student assessment data. Accurate identification of student strengths and weaknesses in areas of language and literacy guides intervention planning and remediation of deficits areas (Barnes, 2015; Ehri, 2020; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012; Kilpatrick, 2016). This implication is associated with Finding One and Finding Two.

Implication Three

Instructional leaders should consider utilizing school-based speech-language pathologists as classroom consultants. SLPs can serve in the role of coaches or intervention facilitators who teach, model, and provide embedded coaching to instructional staff on implementation of evidenced-based strategies that support the precursors of language, specifically in the areas of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Instructional leaders who create opportunities for skilled professionals to share their expertise, create an interactive environment in which specialized practitioners work collaboratively to meet the needs of the student population more succinctly (Fink & Markholt, 2011). Implication Three correlated with Findings One, Three and Five.

Implication Four

School leaders should consider advocating for and support SLP involvement in school-wide literacy initiatives. Data from the study support instructional leaders as the fastest catalyst to expedite the potential impact that SLPs can have on school-wide literacy initiatives. Building leaders are influential in terms of stirring willingness of educators to collaborate with SLPs to move literacy efforts forward. Principals are able to designate teams of teachers and speech-language pathologists to work in tandem to address/remediate complementary strands of literacy development within the classroom setting and produce observable outcomes that are shared with building leadership.

Effective instructional leaders demonstrate prudent use of resources when acknowledging and capitalizing on the specific and specialized skill in the area of language that SLPs possess. Instructional leaders could encourage SLPs to provide professional development and job-embedded coach in conjunction with curriculum specialists at the district and building levels to support teacher efficacy in the areas of English Language Arts. The data reveal the necessity of instructional leaders permitting and supporting need for autonomy over scheduling that SLPs need the importance of scheduling autonomy needed by SLPs in order to manage caseloads (identified as direct student services) and workloads (described as all other job related requirements to include but not limited to, testing and evaluation, data analysis and report writing, treatment planning, IEP development and implementation, documentation of services, Medicaid billing and participation on various school teams). Control of scheduling permits SLPs

to be visible and available to meet with teachers, participate in staffing and support team meetings as well as creating opportunities for in class modeling and observation of reading interventions. Implication Four is associated with Findings One, Two, Three, Four and Five.

Implication Five

Administrators should consider encouraging and support inter-professional collaboration between teachers, reading specialists, and speech-language pathologists. Such collaborative teams would be better able to tease apart linguistic and cultural variations observed across educational settings based on student demographics and address cultural and linguistic variance. Collaboration may assist with ensuring that instructional materials meet the linguistic and communicative levels of students in addition to drawing in the use of a variety of materials that support linguistic and cultural differences. This implication is associated with Findings Two, Three, Five and Six.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Results of this study indicate that speech-language pathologists are language experts able to support language and literacy acquisition across tiers of intervention. Suggestions for future research include:

1. Increase the sample size to include any speech pathologists providing direct student services and/or parent training to support early language development and pre-literacy support as a clinical outpatient service or in early intervention.
2. Expand the setting of the study to include private practice, rehabilitative services, early intervention, and preschool settings.
3. Consider a study that includes co-teaching of language fundamentals to support literacy development in grades k-3.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the practices of licensed school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who participated in school-wide literacy initiatives within the K-12 educational setting. The study was designed to answer the following research questions: 1) How do speech-language pathologists indicate they are able to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of intervention? 2) What processes do speech-

language pathologists indicate they have implemented to increase awareness (including administrators) of the role of speech-language pathologists in reading and writing (literacy)? and 3) What measures do speech-language pathologists indicate they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy initiatives? The research identified two overarching themes: advocacy and inter-professional collaboration. The themes highlight the importance of relationships between SLPs and other instructional staff, particularly, the relationship and role of administrators as the catalysts that supports the integration of staff expertise to meet the needs of students in the areas of language and literacy. Based on the findings of the study, implications for instructional leaders were presented to increase the participation of speech-language pathologists in the areas of language and literacy across tiers of instruction in K-12 public schools.

Reflections

There were many moments over the course of this journey where I felt as though I wasn't chosen to complete this assignment. I pondered the notion that I had moved before my time, outside of my purpose as life did what life does, draw opportunities that challenge you to take a hard look at yourself and face some internal truths. As I spoke with colleagues who completed other programs, often expedited programs, with no IRB process, no scheduled exams, no dissertation defense-my stamina and faith dwindled, and I wondered if I could endure. During those moments I found myself leaning on words of wisdom, "*trust the process*" and "*stay the course*." This caused me to look back in my reflective journal and recall the passion and dedication of the SLPs who willingly shared their time with me to participate in hour long interviews. Those twelve amazing practitioners who eagerly shared their successes, challenges, and frustrations, trusted me to share their stories. These trendsetters reminded me that we all have purpose and sharing the results of this study was indeed my contribution to the greater collective of collaborative work.

For me personally, the impetus for this line of inquiry began with the many students' assistance team (SAT) meetings that I have sat in over my time in my current setting, wondering why SLPs were nonparticipants on issues related to early literacy or skilled reading at the onset when concerns were identified. Frequently, referrals for speech-language support would occur when students mispronounced sounds that were distractions to teachers; yet SLP would not be consulted when students' omitted letters on spelling tasks, or incorrectly used phonemes and/or

graphemes when decoding, speaking orally, and/ or writing. I would always get sideways glances when I asked teachers if they consulted with the building SLP when teachers brought students forward for special education consideration who exhibited difficulty with comprehension (oral and written), following a sequence, identifying author's purpose and an array of other tasks associated with language and literacy. Even after reading intervention, some students were not demonstrating progress. I was perplexed as to why my current district did not solicit the expertise of the school based SLP because my previous experiences in other locations had produced measurable results when SLPs and other instructional staff collaborated to meet the needs of students with these learning needs.

Conversations with speech-language pathologists and administrators revealed two primary things: 1) administrators had no concrete understanding regarding the work of SLPs; and 2) in some cases, SLPs who wanted to support literacy in the general education setting didn't know where or how to begin the process of supporting language and early literacy in the general education setting. Originally, this study sought to find out what SLPs did to become valued members of the literacy framework in their particular school locations. As I completed this process, I have found that the study was more about what educational leaders do or perhaps don't know to do, to help meet the needs of the students in their schools.

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Appendix A
VT Training in Human Subjects Certificate

		<p>Completion Date 01-Feb-2021 Expiration Date 01-Feb-2024 Record ID 40639056</p>
<p>This is to certify that:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Le-Zondra Alexander</p>		
<p>Has completed the following CITI Program course:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;">Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.</div> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Social & Behavioral Research (Curriculum Group) Social & Behavioral Research (Course Learner Group) 1 - Basic Course (Stage)</p>		
<p>Under requirements set by:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech)</p>		
 <p style="text-align: center;">Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative</p>		
<p>Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w1e609205-de9e-4e38-aeb1-e70be177b0a7-40639056</p>		

Appendix B

VT IRB Approval Letter



Division of Scholarly Integrity and
Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
<http://www.research.vt.edu/sirohrpp>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 2, 2021

TO: Ted S Price, Carol S Cash, Le-Zondra Alexander

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires October 29, 2024)

PROTOCOL TITLE: The Practices of Speech-Language Pathologists Supporting the Acquisition of Skilled Reading in Public Schools

IRB NUMBER: 21-157

Effective March 2, 2021, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category (ies) 2(ii).

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit an amendment to the HRPP for a determination.

This exempt determination does not apply to any collaborating institution(s). The Virginia Tech HRPP and IRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before beginning your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As: Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category(ies) 2(ii)
Protocol Determination Date: March 2, 2021

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Appendix C

Request to Social Media Administrator (s) Letter

Dear *Site Administrators*,

My name is *Le Alexander* and I am a *doctoral candidate* from the *Educational Leadership and Policy Studies* Program at Virginia Tech. I am writing to request permission to post a recruitment for study participation letter to the closed professional Facebook group of which I am a member. The purpose of the study is to identify the practices of school-based speech-language pathologists who actively support school-wide literacy initiatives through Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) more specifically, Response to Intervention (RTI), coaching, collaborative teaching, by providing professional development, participating on school-wide literacy teams, and/or supporting curriculum intervention/remediation across the school setting, not solely for students identified with a speech-language impairment. This particular Facebook professional community was selected because of the self-reported inclusionary criteria required to join the group. To participate in the study, participants must hold the Certification of Clinical Competence (CCC) from the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) or hold an equivalent credential, support school wide literacy development, and work in a public school based on self-report.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and all responses will be anonymous. Participants will be required to contact the researcher in order to participate in the study. The Facebook group will not be used to schedule or conduct the study. This Facebook group will only be used as the initial source of participant recruitment.

My university chair, as the primary investigator, and I will be the only researchers and collectors of data. If you have any questions about the study, please email me at lezon71@vt.edu or alexanderle8990@gmail.com or contact me at 757.754.8990. Should you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact VT HRPP at 540.231.3732 or irb@vt.edu

Attached is the Participant Recruitment Letter that I would like to post to the Facebook group or have you, as group administrator(s), post to the group.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Le Alexander

Appendix D

Participant Recruitment Letter

Re: *A Qualitative Investigation of the Practices of Speech-Language Pathologists Supporting the Acquisition of Skilled Reading in Public Schools*

Dear: Speech-Language Pathologist,

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a voluntary research study about the practices of SLPs supporting literacy instruction in public schools. This study is being conducted by Le Alexander, a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech.

To participate in this study, you must be a speech-language pathologist who:

1. Holds the Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) from the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) an ASHA certified SLP or an equivalent credential; (participant must pledge or affirm to be an ASHA certified SLP or hold equivalent credentials from a licensing board);
2. Currently work in K-12 public educational setting;(participant must pledge or affirm to currently work in K-12 public educational settings); and
3. Currently participate in literacy intervention through direct student support, inter-professional collaboration, professional development provider, literacy team membership, curriculum development or as a literacy coach/consultant (Participant must pledge or affirm).

Should you choose to participate in this study, please complete the [Participant Recruitment Form](#). Once the interview date and time have been determined, you will receive an interview verification email with the date, time, and method of interview (phone/[video-conference](#)). A reminder phone call or email will be placed one day prior to the scheduled interview. Interviews will take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be audio/video recorded for transcription purposes.

If you would like additional information about this study, please contact me at lezon71@vt.edu or alexanderle8990@gmail.com or contact me at 757.754.8990.

Thank you for your consideration, and once again, please do not hesitate to contact me if you are interested in learning more about this *Institutional Review Board approved* project. Remember, this is completely voluntary and all responses will be anonymous. Participants will be identified by their initials on transcriptions sheets and notes and will be given a unique identifier as they are quoted or referred to within the research. My university chair, as the primary investigator, and I will be the only researchers and collectors of data. Should you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact VT HRPP at 540.231.3732 or irb@vt.edu

Sincerely,

Le Alexander

Appendix E

Participant Recruitment Form

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study which aims to investigate the practices of speech-language pathologists supporting school-wide literacy initiatives in public schools. Participation is strictly voluntary. There are no foreseeable benefits and minimal potential risks to participating in this study. Should you elect to participate, you will be given a unique identifier if you are quoted directly or referred to in the research. The interview will take 45-60 minutes and will be audio and/or video recorded for the purposes of transcription. You may withdraw from the study by contacting the researcher and providing your request for withdrawal. Submission of this form implies your consent to participate in this study. If you would like additional information about this study, please contact me at lezon71@vt.edu or alexanderle8990@gmail.com or contact me at 757.754.8990. * Required

1. First Name *

2. Last Name *

3. email address *

4. phone number *

5. I pledge or affirm that I am certified by at least one of the following licensing organizations to practice speech language pathology *

☐

American Speech-Language Hearing Association

☐

National Association of Speech-Language and Audiology-Canada

5. I pledge or affirm that I am certified by at least one of the following licensing organizations to practice speech language pathology *

- ☐ American Speech-Language Hearing Association
- ☐ National Association of Speech-Language and Audiology-Canada
- ☐ College of Speech and Hearing Professionals
- ☐

1. I confirm that I am currently practicing in a public education (K-12) setting *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. I confirm that I currently support school-wide literacy initiatives through direct student support, assessment and intervention, consultation, collaboration, program or curriculum development or management oversight *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. Please provide three days and times that you are available for an interview

Appendix F

Interview Scheduling Letter

Dear Speech-Language Pathologist,

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study which aims to investigate the practices of speech-language pathologists supporting school-wide literacy initiatives in public schools. I'm emailing because you have expressed interest in participating in this study. If you agree to participate in the study, please verify that you:

- 1) Currently hold the Certification of Clinical Competence (CCC) from the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) or an equivalent credential; and
- 2) Currently support literacy acquisition in K-12 public schools.

Your consent to participate in this study is implied by your offer of dates and times of your availability which will be used to schedule the interview. Your consent to participate in this study will be verified prior to the presentation of interview questions. Please provide three dates and times that are convenient for you to be interviewed.

Please remember that participation is strictly voluntary and will not have any effect on employment. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and you can choose to stop at any time without penalty. The main risk of answering my questions may be a loss of confidentiality. However, I will do my best to keep your information confidential by identifying you by your initials on all transcription sheets and notes. Additionally, you will be given a unique identifier if you are quoted directly or referred to in the research. The interview will take 45-60 minutes and will be audio and/or video recorded for the purposes of transcription. The interview will take place on a date and time convenient for you, either by phone or video conferencing.

Thank you again for your participation in my study. I look forward to scheduling an interview with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Le Alexander

Phone: 757.754.8990

Email: lezon71@vt.edu or alexanderle8990@gmail.com

Appendix G

Interview Verification Letter

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study which aims to investigate the practices of speech-language pathologists participating in school-wide literacy initiatives in public schools. Your consent to participate in this study is implied by scheduling this interview and will be verified again prior to the presentation of interview questions. Based on the dates and times that you provided, your interview has been scheduled for:

Date:

Time:

Method:

Please remember that participation is strictly voluntary and will not have any effect on employment. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and you can choose to stop at any time without penalty.

The interview will take 45-60 minutes and will be audio and/or video recorded for the purposes of transcription.

Attached to this email is the interview protocol containing another [brief summary](#) of my research and the 15 interview questions.

Thank you again for your participation in my study. I look forward to our scheduled interview.

Sincerely,

Le Alexander

Phone: 757.754.8990

Email: lezon71@vt.edu or alexanderle8990@gmail.com

Appendix H

Study Consent Information Sheet



Information Sheet for Participation in a Research Study

Principal Investigator: Ted S. Price, Ph.D

IRB# and Title of Study: #21-157 The Practices of Speech-Language Pathologists Supporting Literacy the Acquisition of Skilled Reading in Public Schools

You are invited to participate in a research study. This form includes information about the study and contact information if you have any questions.

I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech, and I am conducting this research as part of my course work.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will complete an *interview*. *As part of the study, you will be asked to identify the professional practices that you have and/or currently use to support the acquisition of skilled reading through school-wide initiatives as a public school-based speech-language pathologist. The questions are related to provision of services, assessment and intervention, consultation, collaboration, and professional roles and boundaries. The interview will be conducted and recorded via zoom. The study interview should take approximately 45-60 minutes of your time. We do not anticipate any risks from completing the study.*

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will do our best to protect the confidentiality of the information we gather from you, but we cannot guarantee 100% confidentiality. At the beginning of the interview, you will be asked to identify yourself as an ASHA certified SLP or an SLP with equivalent licensure or certification supporting school-wide literacy initiatives in public schools and asked to use a pseudonym as a “rename” on the zoom site. Thus, your responses are coded, so no one can associate your answers back to you. Please do not include your name or other identifying information in your responses that can identify you.

Any data collected during this research study will be kept confidential by the researchers. Your interview will be recorded using the zoom platform and then transcribed. The researchers will code the transcripts using a pseudonym (false name). The recordings will be uploaded to a secure password-protected computer in the researcher’s office. The recordings will be uploaded to a secure password-protected computer in the researcher’s home office and will be destroyed after transcription.

WHO CAN I TALK TO?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact **Dr. Ted Price** (pted7@vt.edu), **Dr. Carol Cash** (ccash48@vt.edu), **Le Alexander** (lezon71@vt.edu). You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Virginia Tech HRPP Office at 540-231-3732 (irb@vt.edu).

Please print out a copy of this information sheet for your records.

Appendix I

Interview Protocol

Project Title: A Qualitative Investigation of the Practices of Speech-language Pathologists Supporting the Acquisition of Skilled Reading in Public Schools.

Interview Date:

Interview Time:

Interview Method:

Interviewer: Le-Zondra Alexander

Interviewee:

[Begin recording.]

Opening Script: I appreciate your willingness to participate in this qualitative research study. This study seeks to identify the practices of speech-language pathologists participating in literacy acquisition in public schools. Your participation in this interview confirms that you hold the CCC from ASHA as an SLP holding an equivalent credential, currently work in public education, and currently support school-wide literacy initiatives beyond services to students identified with special education. Your responses are very important to this study. I would like you to feel comfortable responding to each of the questions posed. To ensure that I capture your responses, I will take notes and record our interview. Everything you say will remain confidential with only myself and Dr. Ted Price, primary researcher, being aware of your responses. The purpose of collecting your responses is so that I have a record of whom to contact for follow-up and to assist in my coding measures to identify any resonating themes that are an outgrowth of my interviews. Moving forward to the interview questions implies your consent to participate in this study. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

[Wait for response from interviewee. Address any questions or concerns that may arise. If there are no questions or concerns, proceed with the interview.]

Research Question 1: How do speech-language pathologists indicate they are able to participate in literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction?

1. Describe your process of supporting/participating in literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction.
2. Describe which specific modalities of language and literacy (oral language, written language, reading, writing) you support for students across tiers of instruction.
3. Describe your role in assessment related to language and literacy as a member of an interdisciplinary team.
4. Describe how you encourage teachers to implement language strategies with general education students and those who may need additional supports.

Research Question 2: What steps do speech-language pathologists indicate they have implemented to increase awareness (including administrators) of their role in reading and writing (literacy)?

5. What steps have you taken to inform public school administrators of the role of SLPs in supporting/developing skilled reading?
6. Describe how you have attempted to acquire the support of school based administration
7. How have you defined your role as different from a teacher or reading specialist?
8. How have you attempted to share/inform teachers and reading specialists of how you can support language and literacy?
9. How have you attempted to bridge the connections for yourself and other instructional staff regarding the role of SLPs in literacy?
10. How have you developed/maintained professional boundaries in areas of overlap?

Research Question 3: What measures do Speech-language pathologists indicate they have taken to increase their involvement in school-wide literacy initiatives?

11. Describe how you obtained the knowledge and/or skills required to integrate your expertise into literacy initiatives in your school
12. What would you encourage SLPs who are not supporting language and literacy development across multiple tiers of instruction to add that service into their practice across the educational setting?
13. Describe how you contribute to progress monitoring for students receiving direct and/or indirect support as a function of tiered intervention.
14. How did you build inter-professional collaboration that allows you to support the language underpinnings of reading?
15. Describe your process for caseload/workload management (how do you participate in school-wide language and literacy initiatives without adding greater demands to your schedule?).

[Closing] I truly value your time and the insights that you have shared regarding your practices to support school-wide literacy initiatives. Did you have any final thoughts on the interview or the interview process that you would like to share with me at this time?

[Wait for response from interviewee. Take notes on their final thoughts about the interview and the interview process]

Thank you for feedback. Again, I sincerely appreciate your help with this qualitative study. This concludes our interview.

[Stop recording]