

READING INSTRUCTION DURING THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND YEARS:  
THE FIRST R REVISITED

By

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## LIST OF TERMS/SYMBOLS/ABBREVIATIONS

Comprehension strategies	Strategies for understanding, remembering, and communicating with others about what has been read. Comprehension strategies are sets of steps that purposeful, active readers use to make sense of text.
Fluency	The ability to read text accurately and quickly with expression and comprehension. It provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time.
Phonemic awareness	The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds – phonemes – in spoken words. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that sounds of spoken language work together to make words.
Phonics	The understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes – the sounds of spoken language – and graphemes – the letters and sounds that represent those sounds in written language. Readers use these relationships to recognize familiar words accurately and automatically to decode unfamiliar words.
Vocabulary development	Development of stored information about the meanings and pronunciation of words necessary for communication. There are four types of vocabulary:  <b>Listening vocabulary:</b> the words needed to understand what is heard <b>Speaking vocabulary:</b> the words used when speaking <b>Reading vocabulary:</b> the words needed to understand what is being read <b>Writing vocabulary:</b> the words used in writing
Just Read, Florida!	The reading initiative issued by Governor Jeb Bush, which proposes that every child in Florida will attain grade level or higher reading skills by 2012. This initiative is designed to guide changes at every level of education that has an impact on reading outcomes. Just Read, Florida! is directly aligned and consistent with the scientific knowledge base in reading that underlies the Reading First component of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.
No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)	A federal act reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Act, which proposes to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility and choice to ensure that no child is left behind

Pullout Program	Students are taken from the general classroom, usually to another location, to receive alternative instruction often by a reading specialist.
Reading First	A federal initiative that builds on the findings of years of scientific research, which, at the request of Congress, were compiled by the National Reading Panel.
Response to Intervention	A provision to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004), which allows for an alternative method to identify students with reading disabilities and a means for providing early intervention to all children at risk for school failure.
Scientifically based reading instruction	Research that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties.
Sunshine State Standards (SSS)	Approved by the State Board of Education (FL) in 1996 to provide expectations for student achievement in Florida. In the subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies, the SSS have been expanded to include grade level expectations. These Standards are the basis for state assessments at each grade 3-10 in Language Arts and Math.
Progress monitoring	Provides a quick sample of critical reading skills that will tell the teacher if the child is making adequate progress toward grade level reading ability at the end of the year – “growth charts for reading.”
Screening	Provides the teacher a beginning assessment of the child’s preparation for grade level reading instruction. Screening tests are a “first alert” that a child will need extra help to make adequate progress in reading
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS):	<p>Five measures for three areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. Five to ten minutes per student.</p> <p><b>Letter Name Fluency</b> – identify upper and lower case letters (K, 1)</p> <p><b>Initial Sound Fluency</b> – Identify the beginning sounds of words represented by pictures (K)</p> <p><b>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency</b> – Say the individual phonemes (sounds) in words (K, 1)</p>

**Nonsense Word Fluency** – Decode non-words of 2 and 3 letters (consonant-vowel-consonant combinations) (K, 1, 2)  
**Oral Reading Fluency** – Read connected text (1, 2, 3)

Diagnostic assessments	Provide a more detailed picture of the full range of a child's knowledge and skill so that instruction can be more precisely planned. According to Reading First guidelines in FL, diagnostic assessments will usually only be given when a child fails to make adequate progress after being given extra help in learning to read (iii – immediate intensive intervention)
Outcome measures	Given at the end-of-year for teachers to evaluate overall effectiveness of their reading program; principal can compare school performance across multiple years. <b>Oral Reading</b> (Grades K, 1, 2, & 3) <b>Reading comprehension</b> (Grades 1, 2 & 3) <b>Reading Vocabulary</b> (Grades 2 & 3) <b>Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, &amp; Fluency</b> (Grades K-3: DIBELS 4 <sup>th</sup> Assessment)

#### Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)

An assessment designed to assess the teaching and learning of the Sunshine State Standards. The primary purpose of the FCAT is to assess student achievement of the higher-order cognitive skills represented in the SSS in reading, writing, and mathematics. The SSS portion of the FCAT is a criterion-referenced test. A secondary purpose of the assessment is to compare the performance of Florida students to the performance of students across the nation using a norm-referenced test. All students in grades 3–10 take the FCAT in the spring of each year.

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Chair: Anne McGill-Franzen  
Co chair: Richard Allington  
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

The objective of this study was to examine contemporary Florida teachers' instructional practices and beliefs related to the teaching of reading. Drawing upon an earlier survey of reading beliefs and instructional practices, I developed and sent via email an elementary reading instruction survey to elementary teachers throughout the state of Florida. I gathered data for this quantitative study during the month of May, at the conclusion of the 2005-2006 school year. I received survey responses from 669 Florida elementary teachers, including reading coaches, and other instructional staff. Independent-samples t-tests, chi-square tests of independence, and simple descriptive statistics were used. Themes and patterns in survey responses that emerged within the Florida sample of teachers as well as between this sample of teachers and teachers of the past were described.

This study contributes to the understanding of teaching and learning during a highly politicized era characterized by high-stakes assessments and accountability. Specifically, the findings from this study elucidate Florida elementary teachers' self-reported instructional practices and beliefs. The survey responses suggest: (1) teachers' instructional practices and beliefs are closely aligned with contemporary Florida policies; and (2) these policies have altered

teacher beliefs and practices when compared to the responses of teachers gathered a decade earlier.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

#### **Introduction**

This is an era when the American educational system is highly scrutinized. With the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 [NCLB] ("No child left behind act of 2001, pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 stat. 1425", 2002), the federal government imposed regulations requiring more accountability, flexibility and local control, options for parents, and emphasized scientifically based teaching methods, particularly in the area of reading.

Although NCLB called for idealistic changes in education to improve the teaching and learning of students, debates continue around the implementation of the policy. The constraints imposed on teachers remain at the core of the debates. Even so, policymakers continue to impose curricular and instructional mandates, but the outcome of these instructional mandates varies across contexts. By identifying the instructional practices and beliefs that teachers reported using, I determined the impact of such policies within the Florida context.

All of the teachers in my study came from the same state, Florida, which undoubtedly has an active educational policy context. What are the instructional practices of Florida teachers and are contemporary polices influencing their instruction? To show the effect of policy on Florida teachers practice during this era, I juxtaposed data from my study with past data to identify changes in practices prior to NCLB and now. To provide a context for understanding past practices, I utilized data provided in the seminal work of Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, and Moon Ro (2000).

In the summer of 2000, Baumann et al. (2000) published their 1996 survey data. This survey highlighted reading instruction at the conclusion of the 20th Century. Provoked by uncertainty and misperceptions surrounding reading instruction in the 1990s, Baumann et al.

(2000) replicated the original *First R* conducted by Mary Austin and colleagues during the 1960s (Austin and Morrison, 1963). Now, seven years after the publication of *The First R Yesterday and Today* (Baumann et al, 2000), confusion still exists regarding reading instruction. What are effective strategies for teaching reading? Are our most underprivileged students being served appropriately? Who or what should be held accountable for those not achieving?

In 2007, the questions asked are not strikingly different from those asked 10 or even 40 years earlier, but the political milieu in which teaching and learning occurs has changed greatly. Research suggests sharing and identifying best practices enables reforms to flourish (Spellings, 2005). My study collected the instructional practices and beliefs of Florida elementary teachers to identify whether reform efforts have influenced the teachers of today. Specifically, are the teachers that teach today's youth highly qualified, as federally mandated by the end of the 2006 school year? Are teachers using scientifically based teaching practices as identified by the National Reading Panel? Have teaching practices and beliefs changed significantly from 10 years earlier, prior to the inception of NCLB?

### **Statement of Problem**

January 1 of 2001 marked the beginning of a new era for education. George W. Bush signed into law The NCLB Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002), unequivocally one of the most influential and highly touted educational reforms this country has ever seen. This legislation was the federal government's reaction to a national outcry for improved teaching and learning; but, was the imposition of a heavy-handed policy the panacea or the problem? This question has been at the core of many debates surrounding education and it continues today. The challenge we face as educators today may be how to continue to meet the individual needs of our students while teaching within a prescribed educational context.

## **Significance of Study**

My research study proposed to extend the research community's awareness of the instructional practices and beliefs of teachers in Florida and the impact of contemporary legislation on these teachers' classrooms. My study provided documentation, as reported by Florida elementary teachers, about the authentic state of present-day reading instruction and identified changes that have come into practice since the Baumann et al. (2000) study.

## **Research Questions**

My study revealed Florida teachers' instructional practices and beliefs during an era of high-stakes assessments and accountability, and contrasted the practices of today to those of the past. My study explored whether teaching practices and beliefs have changed significantly from 10 years earlier, prior to the inception of NCLB. Using independent-samples t-tests, chi-square tests of independence, and simple descriptive statistics for survey items, I offered data that provides answers to the following research questions:

- **Research Question 1:** What are the instructional practices and beliefs related to reading instruction as reported by Florida elementary teachers?
- **Research Question 2:** Are teachers' self-reported instructional practices of today significantly different from those reported prior to the inception of NCLB? If so, in what ways?

## **Hypotheses**

Given the active policy environment surrounding reading, I hypothesized a strong dissimilarity to the findings collected ten years earlier by Baumann and colleagues.

- H1: The reading instruction of the sample population will differ from the sample population of the *First R Revisited* study (2000).
- H0: The reading instruction of the sample population will not differ from the sample population of the *First R Revisited* study (2000).

## **Summary**

This chapter has provided the pertinent backdrop for understanding the current study. Research questions and hypotheses were presented. Education encompasses many perspectives; therefore, I offered definitions of terms to help the reader clearly understand my use of particular vocabulary throughout the paper. In the chapter that follows, I discuss prior studies that contributed to my work. In addition, I explore the Florida policy context and the theoretical framework, including an ecological perspective. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology and the survey instrument. In Chapter 4, I present the findings of the current study and identify significant differences between this study and past studies (Austin & Morrison, 1963; Baumann et al., 2000). Finally, in Chapter 5, I conclude with a discussion of findings with accompanying implications.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

The implementation of contemporary policies is a hot topic within the current educational context of teaching and learning. Now in its sixth year of implementation, NCLB continues to impact local and state decisions in important ways. Policy mandates, which stem from NCLB, unequivocally outline when and how students take tests, which textbooks series districts adopt, which children receive extra attention and how they are grouped, how states and districts spend their federal money, how teachers are trained, and where principals and teachers are assigned to work (Retner et al., 2006). The implementation of NCLB is at its pinnacle, and this is a fascinating moment in educational history to examine teaching and learning. NCLB has made its mark on our schools, and it is important that we study and evaluate the consequences of this legislation.

To understand where we are historically in education, I begin with a brief outline of the two studies, *The First R: The Harvard Report on Reading in Elementary Schools* (Austin and Morrison, 1963) and “*The First R*” Yesterday and Today: U.S. Elementary Reading Instruction Practices Reported by Teachers and Administrators (Baumann et al., 2000), that contributed to the development of this study. These studies provide a snapshot of education during two very distinct political eras. Next, I discuss the theoretical framework of the ecological perspective guiding my analysis. I provide a schematic to enable the reader to visualize the theoretical perspective. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the chapter.

#### **The Original *First R* Study**

The 1960s was considered a volatile time for education (Baumann et al, 2000). The educational context focused on the teaching and learning of skills, influenced by behaviorist

theory popularized during that era. Teacher education centered on teachers learning a set of skills, specific behaviors, and psychological routines, that were believed to be the necessary “competencies” of reading teachers (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000). Mary Austin and Coleman Morrison (1961) sought to examine pre-service teacher preparation in reading during this period. Their study, *The Torch Lighters* (1961), found that graduating pre-service teachers were not always “adequately trained” to help students learn to read. Prompted by the findings of *The Torch Lighters*, Mary Austin and a group of colleagues conducted *The First R* study (Austin and Morrison, 1963) to examine the guidance teachers were receiving after graduating from college, the methods and techniques used to help children to read, and the role of administration in improving reading instruction.

*The First R* surveyed over 1000 teachers from fifty-one demographically distinct districts about the status of current practices and the content of reading instruction. Laudably, Austin’s research team also interviewed teachers, principals, and district personnel. To examine, firsthand, the components of the reading programs, Austin and her research team observed lessons and activities in 14 school districts (Austin et al., 1963). The researchers elucidated the mediocrity of the reading programs, including teachers’ over reliance on materials, which Austin and Morrison contended was a potential inhibitor to teachers’ focus on the individual needs of students (Shannon, 1983). Austin and Morrison (1963) identified five areas in need of improvement: more challenging developmental programs for all children; better provisions for individual differences; more stimulating programs for gifted readers; improved teacher preparation; and more effective leadership at the administrative level. They outlined forty-five specific recommendations for educators.

### ***The First R Yesterday and Today***

The educational milieu of the 1990s consisted of misperceptions and confusion about reading instruction as it existed in the 1960s. Hot topics included public perception of declining achievement levels, the effectiveness of instructional approaches for preventing reading failure, and whole language vs. process-oriented approaches. In 1996, Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, and Moon Ro, revisited the original *First R* (Austin & Morrison, 1963) study; hoping to provide a broad inspection of the context of reading instruction that had not been examined since Austin's original study. Baumann et al. (2000) surveyed U.S. teachers and administrators. Their study examined what changes had occurred and what reading instruction was taking place at the turn of the century. They surveyed teachers, building administrators, and district administrators to determine reading instruction of the time. Over 3,000 U.S. teachers were contacted, with just over 1,200 returning surveys.

Baumann et al. (2000) reported a number of noteworthy differences between reading instruction in the 1960s and in the late 1990s. Teachers at the turn of the century described their reading instruction as reflecting a “balanced, eclectic perspective” in contrast to the strong “skills-based emphasis” of the past, utilizing a whole group reading instruction rather than a three-group reading, and adjusting to endemic changes in programs and philosophy, as compared to the stagnant reading instruction of the 1960s (Baumann et al., 2000).

Baumann et al. (2000) characterized teachers as educated professionals who taught diverse children in varied districts. These teachers taught a balanced literacy perspective with systematic instruction in decoding through the wide use of literature (trade books and basals). A considerable amount of instructional time was dedicated to reading and language arts instruction. Read-alouds, exposure to print-rich environments, and independent and self-selected reading were common practices. Students were typically grouped heterogeneously in self-contained

classrooms that commonly used some flexible grouping. Teachers used alternative assessment measures and procedures for reading assessments, although standardized tests were still administered and mandated. Classroom teachers had sole responsibility for accommodating struggling and gifted readers, while support programs were available for struggling readers; they were less frequently reported for gifted readers. Teachers and administrators reported a shared responsibility in making decisions concerning reading programs as well as a modest amount of district-sponsored professional development. Baumann et al. (2000) documented that the two greatest challenges faced by teachers were how to accommodate struggling readers and the lack of support (parent, administrative, funding) for reading programs. Administrators reported their greatest concerns were teacher knowledge and professional development.

Since the publication of the *First R Revisited*, numerous national surveys have been conducted. Rita Bean and colleagues queried reading specialist on their changing roles and responsibilities (Bean et al., 2002); researchers surveyed Head Start preschool teachers regarding their views and practices related to emerging literacy (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2005); and Rankin-Erickson and Pressley inquired the same of special education teachers nominated as effective teachers of literacy (Rankin-Erickson & Pressley, 2000). Researchers also have explored Florida specifically , examining how Florida principals interpret and implement 3<sup>rd</sup> grade retention policy (Zmach, 2006) and changes in teachers' knowledge and instructional practices related to their interactions with reading coaches (Lefsky, 2006). Although these surveys provided valuable information regarding specific aspects of literacy instruction, none of them specifically explored the teaching practices and beliefs of elementary teachers in general. My study uniquely utilized past data to illuminate changes in practice prior to and following the implementation of NCLB.

## **Theoretical Framework: Ecological Perspective**

My study is organized around the ecological perspective, drawing on ecological theory and the ecological structure of the educational environment as proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1975, 1976). I utilized the theoretical perspective of ecology to deepen conceptualizations of reading instruction today. Currently, United States education is in a highly politicized and top-down era. High-stakes assessment and accountability are at the forefront of education.

In 1996, when Baumann et al. (2000) originally revisited *The First R*, the political milieu was strikingly different. Although skepticism surrounding the achievement of U.S. students was on the rise, instruction embodied theories of holism and balanced literacy. Instruction during the 1990s focused on making meaning of the text rather than the skills-based approach of the 1960s. When Austin and Morrison (1963) first explored reading instruction, it was conceptualized as a “time of consensus, albeit misguided, on how to teach beginning reading” (Chall, 1967, p. 13, as cited in Hoffman et al., 1998, p. 171). How, then, have the different environmental contexts such as policies and historical periods influenced the instructional practices and beliefs of contemporary teachers?

### **The Ecological Perspective**

The ecological perspective provided an umbrella for conceptualizing the interplay of policies, school, and students on the instructional practices and beliefs of teachers. The ecological perspective, championed by Uri Bronfenbrenner, considered the development of an individual as an interplay between the developing individual him- or herself, and the environments in which s/he nested (Bronfenbrenner, 1975). According to this theory, for optimal development of an individual (or organism), a close fit must exist between the individual and his/her environment. This theory expands the concept of “development” to mean the “structural and functional change, over time, in the relation between the organism and its

environment” (p.439). Development implies that there is some form of “continuity” between the individual and the environment; there is a reciprocal influence as the environment affects the development of the individual and the individual influences the development of the environment.

Most notably, Bronfenbrenner’s research (1975) focused on how the various environments in which children live (family) and learn (school) contribute to their educational and human development. He described the ecological structure of the educational environment in which researchers can conceptualize how children are nested within the multiple interacting environments that contribute to their development, and contended that studying children within their environments enables a fuller understanding of how children learn. According to Bronfenbrenner (1976), an environment is a “nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next.”

Bronfenbrenner’s primary focus was on human development, more specifically how the environment influenced children’s learning. For my study, I transposed his ecological perspective to explore how teachers, as the unit of analysis rather than children, are nested within an interacting environment. For the purpose of my study, the ecological perspective served as an umbrella to understand and analyze the data. Bronfenbrenner described a setting or context as a place where individuals engage in activities and assume roles for particular periods of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). The very foundation of this definition is the idea of place, time, activity, and role as paramount to the context. For my study, the place is where the study was conducted (Florida), the time in which it took place is 2006, the activity is teaching, and the role is that of the teacher. These elements are necessary if we are to understand the data of today and, further, compare the data of yesterday (Austin and Morrison, 1963; Baumann et al., 2000).

## **Visualizing the Framework**

A theoretical schematic (Appendix 1) is provided to show how policies, schools, teachers, and students all are individual, yet interrelated in their influence on the instructional practices and beliefs of teachers. They form the ecological environment in which teaching occurs. I considered the ecology of teaching to analyze the interplay of each of these agents of change: policies, schools and students, in this current climate of high-stakes testing and accountability.

To implement educational change, there needs to be change in practice (Fullan, 2001). I acknowledge the vital impact of other contributing agents of change in the teaching of reading; For example: how policies are interpreted; parental involvement and community support; and the role of the principal (Fullan, 2001). My study, however, is a replication of earlier studies; therefore, I was limited, in part, to the questions included in the original survey instrument. The following section provides a review of the current educational policy context in Florida. Brief descriptions of each agent of change—policies, schools, and students—and their effects on teachers and teaching within the context of high-stakes assessments and accountability follows. I conclude with a summary.

### **Florida Educational Policy**

Florida, like most states, agreed to the federal mandates under NCLB. NCLB, a response to the failed reforms of the past, demanded greater accountability by requiring high-stakes assessments of subject-matter knowledge. The “problem” emphasized in NCLB is the failure of public schools to teach what state governments test – more specifically, focusing on the gap in student achievement among economically diverse students (McCaslin, 2006). Explicit policy documents were created to ensure the implementation of these policies. For example, states are provided with a road map for implementing the “bright lines”— essential and indispensable markers for implementing *NCLB*. These “bright lines” include:

- Assessments in Grades 3-8
- Disaggregated Data
- Proficiency by 2013-14
- Highly Qualified Teachers
- Options for Families (Education, 2005).

One of the central tenets of NCLB calls for states to adopt a standards-based accountability system that tests challenging content and identifies performance standards. NCLB requires that students be tested annually in reading and math in grades 3 through 10 (Spellings, 2005). To test their proficiency in meeting these standards, Florida identified the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) as the state-approved assessment system. According to the Florida Department of Education website ([www.fl DOE.org](http://www.fl DOE.org)), data from the FCAT is “used to report educational status and annual progress” for students to the state department of education (Florida Department of Education, 2007a). In alignment with the federal guidelines of NCLB, starting in the 2002–2003 school year, Florida began requiring all third graders to take and pass the FCAT (Florida Statue 1008.25 Section (4)(a)). During the first year of this law, nearly one-quarter of Florida’s third-graders did not meet the “passing” criteria (Weber & Postal, 2003).

An additional component of Florida policy was the aggressive Reading First Initiative. Reading First is a federally funded component of NCLB that provides upwards of 300 million dollars over six years to Florida, which is then distributed to districts who have applied for and complied with the requirements of the grant (Florida Department of Education, 2005a). Reading First has been noted as the largest, most focused, early reading initiative to face this country. Reading First requires more provisions on classroom instruction than previous federal reading efforts; in particular, it specifies that teachers’ classroom instructional decisions must be informed by scientifically based reading research as identified by the National Reading Panel (United States Department of Education, 2007). Reading First proposed as a goal that teachers

have the necessary tools to provide coherent, skills-based reading instruction for all children. The over arching goal of Reading First is for children to become proficient readers by the end of the third grade (United States Department of Education, 2007).

The National Reading Panel (NRP) Report (NICHD, 2002) is at the core of the Reading First Initiative. Reading First has deemed the NRP report the authority on “scientifically based reading instruction” (United States Department of Education, 2007). Five essential components of reading instruction are considered to be the integral elements of “scientifically based reading instruction.” The NRP proposed explicit and systematic instruction in these five areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies.

Reading First drew upon these five essential components of reading instruction as the interrelated areas that all readers must master in order to be proficient, successful readers by the end of the third grade (United States Department of Education, 2007). One of the current requirements is that schools within the district must all use a “scientifically research based program.” The basal reading program or core-reading program which historically has been defined as “a sequential, all-inclusive set of instructional materials that can teach all children to read regardless of teacher competence and regardless of learner differences” (Goodman, Shannon, Freeman, Murphy, 1988; p.1), has now taken on the prestigious title of “scientifically-research based program.” Reading First funds will only finance programs that the FLDOE has identified as rooted in scientifically based research.

In 2002, a formal review of a number of core-reading programs was conducted by the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR). Based on this review, the FCRR acknowledged five core-reading programs that they identified as meeting Reading First standards and suitable

for Reading First schools (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2006). The core-reading programs identified were: *Trophies* published by Harcourt (2003); *A Legacy of Literacy* published by Houghton Mifflin (2003); *Open Court* published by SRA (2002); *Reading Mastery Plus* published by SRA (2002); and *Scott Foresman Reading* as long as the manual *Links to Reading First* is used (2002). During the 2005-2006 school year, 585 schools were Reading First schools (Florida Department of Education, 2007a).

All districts whose schools receive Reading First funds are required to supply evidence that these schools are following the procedures and programs outlined in the application to the state (Florida Department of Education, 2005d). Most districts do not have the resources available to enact different policies for each individual school. Therefore, when a district falls under Reading First mandates, many times all schools are affected by the mandates; however, only those schools identified as “Reading First” suffer the penalties (such as loss of Reading First funding) (Florida Department of Education, 2005d).

Florida’s response to these federal initiatives was to construct a state level initiative, *Just Read, Florida!*. This initiative adhered to and supported the requirements of NCLB and Reading First.

### **“K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan”**

In 2006, Just Read, Florida! developed the “K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan”, in order to allocate money for reading through the public school funding formula (Florida Department of Education, 2003). The statewide allocation to districts who complied with the guidelines outlined in the “K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan” was \$111.8 million (Florida Department of Education, 2003). The plan ensured that:

- Leadership at the district and school level is guiding and supporting the initiative;
- The analysis of data drives all decision-making;

- Professional development is systematic throughout the district and is targeted at individual teacher needs as determined by analysis of student performance data;
- Measurable student achievement goals are established and clearly described;
- Appropriate research-based instructional materials and strategies are used to address specific student needs (Florida Department of Education, 2007a).

## **Reading/Literacy Coaches**

Florida does not require all schools to use a reading/literacy coach, but district leadership must allocate resources to hire reading/literacy coaches for the lowest performing schools. Schools who utilize a reading/literacy coach must adhere to the Just Read, Florida! reading/literacy coaches model (Florida Department of Education, 2007a). Each year districts must increase the number of reading/literacy coaches used in the prior year.

## **Professional Development**

The “K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan” (Florida Department of Education, 2007a) requires that professional development be available for all teachers, coaches, and administrators. This professional development was mandated to ensure that all district educators are grounded in the essential components of reading instruction. Providers of professional development (internal and external) must be trained in reading instruction according to scientifically based reading research.

The Plan requires that professional development address:

- Fidelity in implementation of all instructional materials, all reading programs, and strategies based on scientific reading research, including early intervention, classroom-reading materials, and accelerated programs. Immediate intensive instruction (iii) should be addressed.
- Instruction in the use of screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based progress monitoring assessments, as well as other procedures that effectively identify students who may be at risk of reading failure or who are experiencing reading difficulties (Florida Department of Education, 2007a; p.10).

## **Classroom Instruction**

Districts must all address the reading needs of all student subgroups identified under NCLB. To do so, the Just Read, Florida! initiative required schools to align their research-based activities with the Florida Formula for Success (Table 2-1). The Just Read, Florida! “K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan” provided an outline of intended instruction for teachers:

“... classroom instruction in reading in a dedicated, uninterrupted block of time of at least 90 minutes duration. An initial lesson from the Comprehensive Core-reading Program (CCRP) usually requires 30–40 minutes per day of the required 90-minute uninterrupted reading block. For the remainder of the block, the teacher should then differentiate instruction focusing on individual student needs. In addition to, or as an extension of the 90-minute reading block, the classroom teacher, special education teacher, or reading resource teacher will provide immediate intensive intervention (iii) to children as determined by progress monitoring and other forms of assessment” (Florida Department of Education, 2007a; p.11).

Elementary schools who received a school grade of an A or B in addition to meeting Adequate Yearly Progress in reading by all subgroups, with 90% of students achieving high standards in reading (an FCAT score of Level 3 or above) were eligible for flexibility options. Schools meeting all these criteria were not required to implement a comprehensive core reading program (Florida Department of Education, 2007a).

## **Teachers and Teacher Change**

Research postulates (Darling-Hammond, 2006) that implementing any approach, whether it is a core-reading program or new research-based practices, requires a strategic teacher who can systematically and effectively execute the proposed program or practice (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Teachers are the decisive element in improved student achievement, especially for students from high poverty schools (Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges, 2004). Without a knowledgeable teacher to execute the curriculum to meet the needs of their students, improved learning may be minimal, if at all, regardless of which programs or curricula are in place. Even though researchers have documented the limitations of core-reading materials (Durkin, 1984;

McGill-Franzen et al., 2006), policymakers continue to impose policies mandating the use of core-reading programs as essential to improved student achievement.

This is not to say that teachers do not need guidance from instructional materials (McGill-Franzen et al., 2006; Valencia et al., 2006), especially those teachers who sought alternative routes to certification, and who often times lack sufficient pedagogical knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006) vital to teaching a range of learners. Mandated curriculum programs, however, do not result in substantive teacher learning, thoughtful instruction, or best classroom practices (Austin and Morrison, 1963; Valencia et al., 2006). Some argue that mandated materials may inadvertently distract teachers, causing them to focus more on how to use the materials and strategies and less on the students and the impact of their teaching (Valencia et al., 2006). Today's current educational political context imposes increased requirements and significant pressures from administrators and policymakers (Hamerness, 2004). It is not clear how these policies affect teachers' practice.

### **The Role of Policies**

The insidious role of policies that encroach upon teaching has been noted by teacher educators. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2006) conducted a comprehensive analysis of NCLB and accompanying policy documents. From this analysis, they concluded that NCLB impinged on teachers leaving them "void of agency" and that the NCLB legislation "oversimplifies" the process of teacher learning and practice. For example, NCLB documents explicitly identified five areas of reading instruction essential to reading instruction that all teachers must utilize in order to improve student learning of reading. Mandating the content of instruction and instructional practices assumes that teaching is "universal" and "generalizable" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). In alignment with the NCLB view, Florida implemented the "Florida K–12 Comprehensive Reading Plan" to ensure that Florida schools integrated and taught these five

essential components. Under the Plan, schools are required to adopt and teach only from scientifically research based programs or comprehensive core reading programs as identified on the “state approved” list. Additionally, schools receiving state funds through the K-12 Reading Plans are required to use screening, diagnostic, and evaluative assessment measures. Often times it is these tests that determine how students who struggle with reading will be categorized and the types of interventions that will be available to them (McGill-Franzen, 1987).

Reporting for the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Educational Research Improvement (OERI), Allington (2000) provides an in-depth review of research studies addressing the impact of policies on reading instruction (Allington, 2000) and suggests, historically, federal policies have had, at best, a minimal impact on teacher behavior. McLaughlin’s Rand Change Agent Study is one example of the inconsistencies of policy implementation (1991). This study examined the implementation of federally funded initiatives in the 1970s, noting the lack of fidelity in the implementation of policies: teachers often varied in how and to what degree they implemented policies. Research acknowledges that the faithful and appropriate implementation of policies is necessary for intended change to occur (Fullan, 2001). Teaching is a complex, multidimensional act that is challenging to capture. When policies are mandated, teacher implementation varies based on the environment as well such factors as personal beliefs, knowledge, materials and practices utilized (Spillane, Reisner, and Reimer, 2002). This confounds a researcher’s ability to capture the actual effect of a policy on practice.

In an attempt to standardize the implementation of policies, changes to organizational patterns are mandated; however, changing organizational patterns has been shown to have little effect on teaching (Allington, 2000). Teachers teach what they know and believe to be best practice. Elmore (1996), as cited in Allington (2000), notes the difficulty in changing central

tenets of teaching and learning. Teachers' individual beliefs about what defines appropriate reading instruction is paramount to the implementation of policy mandates (Allington, 2000; McGill-Franzen, 2000; Fullan, 2001) over curricular materials (Hoffman et al., 1998). If policy mandates do not match a teacher's personal beliefs, often times the policy will be implemented minimally, if at all.

Assessing the effects of policies at the teacher level is multidimensional and muddled (Fullan, 2001). Educational policymaking rarely reflects the intended instructional outcomes (Allington, 2000). Implementing new policies or innovations requires teachers to: (1) use new or revised materials; (2) use new teaching approaches; and (3) possibly alter personal beliefs (Fullan, 2001). Each of these dimensions must be explored when considering a policy's effects on teaching. Fullan (2001) argues that in order to alter practice in teaching, change has to occur along all three dimensions to affect the outcomes of the innovation; however, little research documents this notion of uniformity between materials, approach to teaching, and teacher's beliefs when implementing reform efforts. Conceivably, this is the result of how research was promulgated. Teachers are "mandated" to implement "best-practices" that are misaligned with their personal beliefs about teaching. Therefore, policies are seen as intrusive to intended practice and lead teachers to feel unsettled about their practice (Hamerness, 2004).

Richardson (1990) suggested teachers be provided with practices that work, but then present ways for teachers to heighten awareness of their own beliefs through time for reflection, and develop their understandings of warranted practices. Since teachers' "sense-making" around policies has been linked to how teachers teach (Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, 2002), teachers should be encouraged to challenge their "views of knowledge," what they believe about teaching and learning, in order to change their practice (Hoffman et al., 1998).

Has NCLB been different? With the requirements of “scientifically-based research” to support instructional practices and the influx of federal funds to build local capacity, are the intended instructional outcomes of NCLB present in Florida schools? Faithful implementation of policies is consistently noted as a problem (Allington, 2000; McGill-Franzen, 2000); so, do Florida teachers’ reported instructional practices align with current policies?

### **Role of Schools in Teaching**

Other than individual teachers, the schools in which teachers are embedded contribute significantly to what and how they will teach. Schools determine how policies will be enforced and supported. The culture of the school and the teachers who work there can contribute to the success of a particular innovation or to its failure (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Schools, unfortunately, are subject to an overload of fragmented policies and innovations from “hierarchical bureaucracies” (Fullan, 2001).

Schools are vital to the development or hindrance of teachers practice. Lack of support and adequate information for how policies should be implemented is often documented as an inhibitor to policy implementation (Standerford, 1997). When teachers share common goals and organization about their work, schools are more likely to adopt a new innovation related to student learning, and as a result, improved learning occurs (Rosenholtz, 1989). Linda Darling-Hammond (2006) recommends systematic efforts to redesign schools that provide time for teachers to work together to promote collaboration, collective planning, lesson study, peer coaching, curriculum and assessment development, and student work. Nevertheless, some research documents that even when capacity-building opportunities, such as professional development, are provided; few teachers participate in these initiatives (Freeman and Freeman, 1998, as cited in Allington, 2000). School culture affects the type and level of participation in professional development activities (Richardson, 1990). How the subjective realities of what

teachers know and believe to be appropriate practice are addressed or ignored is crucial for ensuring that innovations are implemented meaningfully (Fullan, 2001).

### **Role of Students in Teaching**

Students affect teaching. Students from impoverished backgrounds often achieve at lower levels than their economically advantaged counterparts (Pellino, 2006). Teachers must adapt their instruction to meet the needs of struggling readers. Research documenting the challenges of teaching these students is plentiful (Montero-Sieburth, 1989; Pellino, 2006). Teachers in urban schools report increased pressure, scant materials, lack of community support (Pellino, 2006), and teacher burnout. Due to the increased pressure to succeed and the significant lack of resources at schools with the highest numbers of poor students, teachers in these environments are often under-qualified (Ingersoll, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006).

The learning needs of the students also influence what is taught and how (McGill-Franzen & Goatley, 2001). Students who are struggling require expert teachers who are skillful in adapting materials and practices to the needs of their students. Research documents the need for diversity of instruction for the most struggling students (McGill-Franzen & Goatley, 2001). Teachers may not be aware of the ways in which students of diverse cultures learn. The stakes for the teacher may be high, with the potential for failure as a teacher; the stakes for the students, however, are even higher (Hamerness, 2004).

### **Teaching Within a Context of High-Stakes Assessments and Accountability**

NCLB mandated that all students be tested in grades 3–8 (United States Department of Education, 2003). Mandating high-stakes testing is perceived as the panacea for improving teaching. Rather than providing a remedy for the perceived problem of inadequacy in both teaching and learning, this climate of high-stakes testing and accountability may actually be promulgating the problem (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). Afflerbach (2004) developed a

policy brief on high-stakes testing and reading assessment for the National Reading Conference.

It outlines the varied liabilities of this situation, arguing that high-stakes tests:

- Are used with increasing frequency in spite of the fact that there is no research that links increased testing with increased reading achievement.
- Are limited in their ability to describe students' reading achievements.
- May be harmful to students' self-esteem and motivation.
- Confine and constrict reading curriculum.
- Alienate teachers.
- Disrupt high quality teaching and learning.
- Demand significant allocation of time and money that could otherwise be used to increase reading achievement.
- Are used with increasing frequency to characterize and label young children who are in early developmental stages of reading.
- Most often come with caveats related to the accuracy of scores and the suitability of uses of scores, which are widely ignored.

Each of these liabilities contributes in some way to the instructional practices and beliefs of Florida elementary teachers. Teachers in the state are required under Florida Statute 1008.22 to administer the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test. Further,

"beginning with the 2002–2003 school year, if the student's reading deficiency, as identified in paragraph (a), is not remedied by the end of grade 3, as demonstrated by scoring at Level 2 or higher on the statewide assessment test in reading for grade 3, the student must be retained" (Florida Statute 1008.25 section 5b).

In addition to the state-mandated assessments, districts require the administration of assessments (e.g., Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills –DIBELS or SAT) in grades for which no state-mandated assessments are required (Section 232.245(5), Florida Statutes). Often times, students in first and second grade are retained in grade for failure on these assessments. Despite the lack of research supporting retention (Allington & Walmsley, 1995),

students are being retained for not mastering the content of a test on one particular day. Teaching in this context emphasizes the “product” of learning—or how well a child performs on a standardized test—rather than the “process” of learning that research has historically valued. Teachers—rightfully—are feeling pressure to teach to the test to ensure that their students master the content of the test. Although research does not support this practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 20006; Guthrie, 2002), teachers and administrators often embrace the idea that if the material of the test is taught, no one can say they did not do their jobs.

### **Summary**

In a letter preceding the publication of *NCLB: A Road Map for State Implementation* (Spellings, 2005), U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings discusses rising achievement levels and the narrowing of the achievement gap among U.S. students. She acknowledges the need for documentation of best practices that have contributed to the improved success of students. Florida has been touted as a state that is demonstrating improved scores on the most recent National Assessment of Educational Process (NAEP). The 2005 administration of the fourth-grade reading NAEP scores shows Florida’s average score (219) was marginally higher than the national average score (217). Thirty percent (30%) of Florida students performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level and 65% scored at or above the NAEP Basic level (United States Department of Education, 2005). Sharing the instructional practices of Florida teachers may shed light on contemporary instructional practices.

Florida is a state enmeshed in the demands of NCLB. This state represents the diversity of teachers and students representative of many U.S. schools. Florida teachers, like most teachers nationally, are intertwined in many of the same ecological issues of policies, schools, and students when implementing practices. In the following chapters, this study explores those

practices and beliefs. The next chapter describes the methodology used to collect and analyze the data presented.

Table 2-1. Florida's Formula for Success

<b>5 Major Components</b>	<b>3 Types of Classroom Assessment</b>	<b>ii Initial Instruction</b>	<b>iii Immediate, Intensive Intervention</b>
Phonemic Awareness	Screening	Explicit	Flexible Groupings
Phonics	Progress Monitoring	Systematic	Accommodations
Fluency	Diagnosis	Scaffolded	
Vocabulary		Differentiated	
Comprehension		Print-rich	

Note: Available from Just Read, Florida! website

[http://www.justreadflorida.com/Reading\\_Plans/Examples/rbrpg\\_memo.pdf](http://www.justreadflorida.com/Reading_Plans/Examples/rbrpg_memo.pdf)

## CHAPTER 3 METHODS

### **Introduction**

Contemporary policies have increased the federal role in education, requiring schools to adhere to specific mandates in order to receive federal monies. Although a number of other researchers, have examined reading instruction (Austin and Morrison, 1963; Baumann et al., 2000; Chall, 1967) during periods of educational disharmony, collecting data six years into the NCLB act allowed me to illuminate the existing instructional practices utilized by Florida elementary teachers in light of the legislation. This study used simple descriptive statistics to elucidate the instructional practices of teachers today; independent-samples t-tests and chi-square tests of independence were used to compare these practices to those of the past.

### **Participants**

#### **Population**

For my study, I collected sample data from a Florida population of elementary school teachers. In contrast, the Baumann et al. (2000) study sample was drawn from a national population. Florida's overall population may be comparable to that of the nation (Table 3-1). In comparing the demographics of Florida elementary/secondary schools with national demographics, Florida is more disadvantaged with a higher pupil to teacher ratio, more students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and a higher percentage of students on Individualized Education Plans. Nonetheless, Florida students perform slightly better than the national average on the fourth grade NAEP in both Reading and Math.

Florida has 1,884 public elementary schools. Approximately, 57, 863 elementary school teachers (United States Department of Education, nd) work at these schools. I collected my

sample from this population of elementary teachers. Drawing data from a Florida population provided me with a demographically diverse sample.

### **Sample**

The primary step in understanding the impact of NCLB on teaching is to learn what local actors know about it (Stodolsky, 1996); therefore, I surveyed Florida elementary teachers to ascertain their reported instructional practices and beliefs.

All Florida district contacts, as identified through the Just Read, Florida! office, received an email instructing them to forward the email to all elementary teachers at their school.

Included in this email was a consent letter (Appendix B) asking for participation in the current study, and a hyperlink connecting the individuals to the *Florida elementary reading instruction survey* (Appendix C). All participants who accessed the survey and answered the questions were included in the sample (n=669). Due to the design of the study, confidentiality was secured.

There were no identifying questions included in the survey.

The participants were descriptively and statistically compared to participants from the *First R: Yesterday and Today* (Baumann et al., 2000). I provided a comparison between the two samples of teachers (Table 3-2).

### **Data Collection**

#### **Survey Construction**

Baumann et al. (2000) note the cumbersome process they undertook to recreate the original *First R* survey, as it was conducted in 1963. Baumann and his research team contacted Mary Austin and Coleman Morrison, as well as the Harvard Libraries and Carnegie Archives, to obtain the original survey instrument. Unfortunately, they were unable to obtain the original instrument—although Mary Austin provided an unpublished dissertation by Coleman Morrison. In his dissertation, Morrison, surveyed 50 experts and prominent researchers in the field rather

then teachers and administrators. From this document, Baumann and his research team reconstructed a survey. “Morrison (1963) juxtaposed the expert’s opinions to those of teachers and administrators contained in *The First R*, reporting the questionnaire used for reading specialists [...] was identical to that for the administrative officers,” that is, the original *First R* survey (as quoted in Baumann, et. al, 2000). Using extensive data tables and results provided by Morrison, Baumann and his research team reconstructed a close approximation of the original survey. Fortunately, Baumann et al. (2000) appended their reproduction of the original *First R* survey. I used an adapted form of the survey for my study. The Florida elementary reading instruction survey consisted of twelve sections.

**Part 1:** *Teacher education and professional development* consisted of twenty-four questions querying teachers on demographic information about themselves and their students. Questions also related to their education, in addition to past and current professional development activities. Due to current legislation requiring teachers to be highly qualified by the year 2006 (United States Department of Education, 2003), I added three questions asking teachers for the number of undergraduate and graduate courses taken in reading, as well as whether they were certified as reading teachers or reading specialists. In this section, I asked teachers to indicate the number of regular and exceptional students taught and to assess their students’ economic situation.

**Part 2:** *Teacher beliefs/philosophical orientation* consisted of two questions asking teachers to identify multiple statements that represented their personal philosophical beliefs and goals related to reading and their instructional program.

**Part 3:** *Instructional time* contained two questions eliciting the amount of time teachers spent instructionally on various reading activities. I then gave teachers a matrix of questions that

provided numerous activities and components of reading. I asked respondents to indicate the amount of time they devote to each of these on a scale of one through four, where one is a considerable amount of time and four is no time.

**Part 4:** *Instructional materials* presented five questions. Again, a matrix provided a list of instructional materials. Teachers were asked to choose the level of use of each of the types of materials by choosing a number between 1 and 5, where 1 corresponds to the most use (Exclusively) and 5 represents the least use (Never Used) (for the analysis portion of my survey these rated items were reverse-coded).

**Part 5:** *Content area reading* was new to the survey, although one of the two questions in this section were included in past surveys. I added a question asking simply if reading was taught through the content areas.

**Part 6:** *Organizing for instruction* contained three questions about the organizational structure of their respective teaching situations, instruction for reading with students, and their primary organizational structure for teaching reading.

**Part 7:** *Accommodating gifted and struggling readers* consisted of four questions about the accommodations available provided to students of varying needs. Since the inclusion of reading coaches in Florida schools is prevalent, I added question stems to one question about support personnel as well as one question about the teachers' perceived effectiveness of the reading coach at their school.

**Part 8:** *Intervention and support for struggling readers* was also a new section in the survey. This section contained four questions about the interventions that were provided for students and, if they were provided, the number of students receiving them.

**Part 9:** *Assessing reading development* contained nine questions about assessment.

Because Florida mandates the use of a number of assessment instruments, I chose to query teachers specifically about their degree of use of each of these assessments. I also questioned teachers about their overall use of assessments and the different roles of assessments in their instructional decision-making.

**Part 10:** *Overall school and classroom reading program* contained two questions in which each teacher was asked to grade his/her overall school and classroom reading program with a grade of A through F.

**Part 11:** *Grade level-specific questions* contained five questions that explored philosophies and perspectives particular to the grade level taught. I also questioned teachers about their use of instructional materials specific to their assigned grade level.

**Part 12:** *Open-ended questions*, the final section, asked teachers to share major changes or innovations in their reading programs in recent years, the nature of the changes, and their degree of success. Lastly, I asked teachers to describe the greatest challenge facing them as they work toward improving reading instruction.

### **Survey Creation and Field Testing**

Following a similar process described by Baumann, et al (2000), I prudently analyzed the survey questionnaire to determine relevant questions to include in my adapted survey and questions to be altered or omitted. I included only questions that were analyzed and determined appropriate to the era in which I collected the data, 2006, compared to when Baumann et al. (2000) collected their data, during 1996. I altered language to reflect the educational vocabulary representative of Florida elementary schools. (e.g., inclusion of fluency, phonemic awareness, and FCAT). I omitted questions (nine total) to reduce the total number of items on the survey (e.g., questions related to home-school connections and library use). I added questions (eighteen

total) to reflect the current political and educational context (e.g., the addition of questions on alternative certification, number of undergraduate and graduate courses taken, reading teacher/specialist certification, professional development topics, and time allotted to test preparation).

### **Procedures**

In the original *First R* study (Austin and Morrison, 1963), the researchers utilized mail surveys and field visits to collect data from various stakeholders (classroom teachers, principals, and central office administrators). *The First R Yesterday and Today* (Baumann et al., 2000) was modeled closely after the original and also collected multiple perspectives surveying elementary teachers, building administrators, and district administrators via mail surveys. The current study surveys only Florida elementary teachers.

Data collection for this study took place during the final month (May) of the 2005–2006 school year. The mode of data collection used was email, with Web page surveys. Email or Web page survey methods of data collection are advantageous in a number of ways. Internet methods garner faster response times than regular mail, are more cost effective, stimulate higher response levels, and encourage longer answers to open-ended questions; respondents also are more apt to respond to sensitive questions (Doyle, nd). Due to the availability of resources (time, money, and labor), Internet surveys were utilized to collect data from the sole perspective of the elementary school teacher. One of the noted disadvantages of Internet methods may be their lack of applicability to the whole population (Doyle, nd); because of this, I chose to include in my study all respondents who completed a survey ( $n=669$ ).

I sent an email containing a consent letter to reading contacts from each of the sixty-seven Florida school districts with instructions to forward the letter to all elementary teachers at their

schools via email. For those agreeing to participate, teachers were prompted to follow a hyperlink to an online survey (Appendix A).

## **Design**

### **Research Questions**

The impetus of my study was to examine the reported instructional practices and beliefs of classroom teachers during a highly politicized era in education, where high-stakes assessments and accountability have become the norm. For this purpose, I used simple descriptive statistics to answer relevant data with regard to the instructional practices and beliefs related to reading instruction as reported by Florida elementary teachers.

A secondary issue underlying my study was whether significant differences existed between the reported instructional practices and beliefs of current teachers and those of the past and, if so, in what ways. I specifically chose to look at teachers' self-reported instructional practices of today as compared to those reported prior to the inception of NCLB. If so, in what ways?

### **Data Analysis**

Teachers' responses on the Florida survey were imported into SPSS for analysis. I obtained the electronic data from the Baumann et al. study (2000) to use to cross-analyze with my data in order to identify similarities and differences between the two groups.

Due to the variability in professional language used by educators, some items were recoded. I analyzed each response that coded "Other" on teaching position to identify potential responses that could be recoded. If teachers' responses fit into one of the categories provided, the response was recoded to represent the appropriate group. For example, teachers marked "Other" and then filled-in "3<sup>rd</sup> grade". Therefore, their responses were recoded to represent the category of "K-5 teacher that teaches one grade level". The following is a list of specific

responses that teachers provided for “Other”. These responses were then recoded to fulfill the category of “special education teacher”:

- Remedial reading
- Title 1/Reading Recovery
- VE K-5

Recoded to “reading coach”:

- Reading Resource Teacher
- Reading Specialist

Teachers “Other” responses were also recoded for those who indicated they taught 6<sup>th</sup> grade. These were recoded to “K-5 elementary teacher of just one grade level”. This represented the restructuring of schools from nine years earlier when the *First R Revisited* (Baumann et al., 2000) collected their data. Sixth grade is included in more elementary schools today. After all the recoding, 12% of the total sample remained in the “Other” category. Examples provided by the respondents for the “Other” classification of teaching position were *assistant principal, curriculum resource teacher, music teacher, or media specialist*.

To align my analysis with the design of the *First R Revisited* study of Baumann et al. (2000), simple descriptive statistics and frequencies were calculated for the forced-choice questionnaire items. Two types of analyses were employed and results are reported. For questions that required a rating on an ordinal scale (such as 1 through 5), independent-samples t-tests were conducted. Between-group and within-group differences are reported. Independent-samples t-tests and chi-square test of independence are used to identify significant differences between the Baumann, et al (2000) data and my study, and within my study. Disparities and similarities between the two studies were identified and described.

For questions that required teachers to choose multiple responses (see example below) percentages and frequencies were computed for all respondents. Between-group and within-

group differences were highlighted. Following the analysis of data, I also highlighted specific contemporary Florida policies and discussed my findings within this context.

“What activities do you engage in to further your professional knowledge and skill in teaching reading and language arts? (you may choose more than one response)”

- attend workshops, in-services, or staff development courses
- attend local, state, or regional professional conferences
- attend national conferences
- present at local, state, regional, or national conferences
- enroll in college or university courses in education
- enroll in a graduate degree program in education
- read professional magazines or journals
- write articles for professional education newsletters, periodical, or journals
- membership in professional organizations
- serve in a leadership role in a professional organization (e.g., officer, board member, committee chair)
- conduct research in your own classroom, either alone or in collaboration with others
- other (please specify)

### **Study Limitations**

One of the well-documented biases of internet surveys is the respondent’s lack of access to computers (Yoon & Horne, 2004); however, since the sample collected was made up entirely of teachers, it was assumed that most, if not all, would have internet access at their schools.

Another documented disadvantage related to internet surveys is that respondents can quit answering questions in the middle of the questionnaire, whereas a personal interviewer may be able to encourage the respondent to finish (Doyle, nd). I noted this limitation in my study. My study utilized sophisticated survey software that compensates for noted disadvantages present in Internet surveys. My survey was posted on SurveyMonkey.com, which respondents reach by using the hyperlink provided in their consent letter, sent via email. The software provided by Survey Monkey allows respondents to skip irrelevant questions and prohibits respondents from completing the survey or answering the questions multiple times, each of which is a typically noted disadvantage of internet surveys (Doyle, nd). Noting that internet methods may not be

generalized to the whole population (Doyle, nd), I have provided information that showed the similarities and differences between Florida and the United States (Table 3-1). Conclusions can only be drawn based on the current data available and those views expressed by the available sample.

Another potential limitation to the study was the structure of the instrument as an opinion survey. Given that my goal in using the survey was to illuminate the impact that NCLB had on pedagogies of Florida teachers, it was necessary to question the actual teachers about their practice. Sunderman et al. explained the limitations and values of opinion surveys:

Opinion surveys have limits as a source of policy guidance, but teachers' views are very important to the success of any educational reform plan. Among the reasons these responses deserve credibility is their thoughtfulness, the complexity of opinions expressed, the close divisions on some issues, and the fact that the teachers whose schools are succeeding under the law report most of the same things that the teachers in the less successful schools say. These opinions cannot be interpreted as defensive justifications of failure (Sunderman et al., 2004; p.8).

My study was limited by the response rate on individual questions. The design of the survey allowed respondents to skip questions. Therefore, the study was limited by the response rate of each question as identified (Table 3-3). Given the demographics of my sample, with 12% identifying themselves as an “other” teacher (e.g., assistant principal or curriculum resource teacher), questions that related directly to classroom teaching may have been skipped by those respondents who did not teach in a traditional classroom setting.

Lastly, my sample of teachers may be biased. Certain responses were atypical of classroom teachers. For example, 41% of the responding teachers reported conducting research in their own classrooms. Teachers’ definitions of conducting research in their classrooms may vary greatly.

## **Summary**

This chapter outlined the methods used when conducting the research for my study. The process was presented as well as the limitations to the study.

In Chapter 4, I offer the relevant data organized by within-group differences and between-group differences. Data tables are provided to display descriptive statistics that aid the reader in making comparisons between today's teachers and data about teachers in the past. Graphs are also presented to illustrate variability in teachers' responses.

Table 3-1. Comparison of Florida and average (all states) educational information

	Florida	Average, all states
Total number of schools	3,700	1,920
Total number of students	2,639,336	956,762
Total Teachers	154,864	60,598
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	17	15.8
White, non-Hispanic	50.52%	56.94%
Black, non-Hispanic	24.08%	17.00%
Hispanic	22.96%	18.74%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.12%	4.39%
American Indian/AK Native	0.34%	1.19%
Total population male	51.45%	49.49%
Total population female	48.54%	46.77%
Free lunch eligible	38.66%	29.34%
Reduced-price lunch eligible	8.69%	6.82%
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)/English Language Learners (ELL) Students	8.12%	8.00%
Individualized Education Program	15.25%	12.18%
2005 NAEP		
Scale Score, Grade 4 Math	239	237
Scale Score, Grade 8 Math	274	278
Scale Score, Grade 4 Reading	219	217
Scale Score, Grade 8 Reading	256	260

Note: Data provided from

<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/stateprofiles/sresult.asp?mode=full&displaycat=1&s1=12> retrieved April 12, 2007.

Table 3-2. Comparison of sample demographics

	First R Revisited	Current Study
Sample Size (n)	1207	669
Sample Group (%)	National sample of Elementary Teachers	State sample of Florida Elementary Teachers
Gender (%)	Female 93 Male 8	Female 96 Male 4
Teaching Positions (%)	K-5 classroom teacher of just one grade level 86 K-5 classroom teacher in a multi-grade class 8 Prekindergarten teacher 1 Pre-first grade/transitional first-grade teacher <1 Special reading teacher 1 Special education teacher <1 Other 3	K-5 classroom teacher of just one grade level 64 K-5 classroom teacher in a multi-grade class 3 Prekindergarten teacher 1 Pre-first grade/transitional first-grade teacher <1 Reading coach 10 Special education teacher 10 Other 12
Teacher Nationality (%)	Black/African American 5 White/European American 89 Hispanic/Latino 3 Asian/Pacific Islander 1 Native American/Eskimo <1 Multiracial <1 Other <1	Black/African American 3 White/European American 92 Hispanic/Latino 2.1 Asian/Pacific Islander <1 Native American/Eskimo <1 Multiracial <1 Other 1
Student Demographics	Average number of regular education students 22 Average number of special education/exceptional students 3 Percent of families at a low income level 45 Percent of families at a middle income level 46 Percent of families at an upper income level 8 Percent Black/African American students 14 Percent White students 68 Percent Hispanic/Latino students 12 Percent Asian/Pacific Islander students 2 Percent Native American/Eskimo students 1 Percent multiracial students 1 Percent other ethnic students 1	Average number of regular education students 22 Average number of special education/exceptional students 7 Percent of families at a low income level 39 Percent of families at a middle income level 27 Percent of families at an upper income level 6 Percent Black/African American students 16 Percent White students 40 Percent Hispanic/Latino students 14 Percent Asian/Pacific Islander students 2 Percent Native American/Eskimo students <1 Percent multiracial students 3 Percent other ethnic students 2

Note: Teachers responses from the 2006 sample for percent of families in low, middle and upper income levels and student nationalities do not equal 100%. For this sample, teachers must have students who do not fit into these categories, since these percentages do not come close to 100%.

Table 3-3. Teachers response rate by survey question number (Sample: N=669)

<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
Q1	669	Q32	510
Q2	666	Q33	509
Q3	666	Q34	499
Q4	666	Q35	167
Q5	659	Q36	499
Q6	665	Q37	245
Q7	666	Q38	495
Q8	48	Q39	424
Q9	656	Q40	373
Q10	655	Q41	348
Q11	661	Q42	331
Q12	664	Q43	457
Q13	654	Q44	285
Q14	578	Q45	418
Q15	664	Q46	357
Q16	587	Q47	456
Q17	586	Q48	456
Q18	591	Q49	456
Q19	582	Q50	456
Q20	616	Q51	440
Q21	615	Q52	440
Q22	507	Q53	220
Q23	521	Q54	214
Q24	498	Q55	209
Q25	488	Q56	192
Q26	454	Q57	96
Q27	491	Q58	411
Q28	502	Q59	186
Q29	485	Q60	179
Q30	511	Q61	344

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

### **Introduction**

What instructional practices and beliefs do Florida teachers report for the teaching of reading? How do Florida teachers' instructional practices today compare to a national sample collected prior to the enactment of NCLB? Are teachers' reported instructional practices and beliefs of today reflective of contemporary policies? This chapter provides the data that begins to answer these questions.

The first section begins by presenting within-group differences for my sample of teachers. Subsections are organized around themes from the survey instrument. In the following section, I provide between-group differences for the national sample from the Baumann et al. (2000) study and my Florida sample of teachers. I discuss and display in tables all statistically significant differences. Next, I provide between-group substantive differences identified by comparing the percentages between the two samples.

To highlight teachers' responses throughout the chapter, I have used italics to identify answer stems. For questions such as "identify a rating on a likert scale," I used quotation marks to identify the rating being reported; for questions that are multifaceted, that is, requiring teachers to elaborate on some aspect of their response, specific words are in bold to reference those aspects. For example, in question 50, I asked:

"For each use of assessments, to what degree (Not at All to Considerable) do you use results from DIBELS for these purposes? If your students do not take the DIBELS, please skip this question."

- Identify students at risk
- Grouping decisions
- Identify skills to emphasize
- Determine if skills are improving
- Parent conferences

Quotation marks identify the rating, or in this case, degree of use, which is “Not at All”; italics are used to identify *DIBELS* as part of the answer stem taken directly from the survey; further, I bolded teachers’ elaboration of the response, in this case, the purpose for assessment results, to **identify students at risk.**

For the statistical analyses, I conducted independent-samples *t*-tests with statistical significance contingent on a Type I error rate of alpha = .05. For categorical data, I conducted chi-square tests of independence. I presented descriptive differences and similarities both within and across groups by reporting the percentages of teachers responding from each sample for a specific item[s]. When applicable, I displayed in tables the significant differences in teacher responses between the two studies. In addition, I utilized graphs to illustrate descriptive differences within my sample.

## **Profile of Florida Elementary Teachers and Schools**

### **Teacher demographics**

My Florida sample consisted mostly of *classroom teachers* (64%); however, there was a trend for teachers to hold specialized positions such as *reading coaches* (10%), *special education teachers* (10%) and *other* (16%) (e.g., curriculum resource teachers, ESOL teachers, assistant principal, music teacher). The teachers were predominately *female* (96%) and *Caucasian* (92%). All teachers reported obtaining at least a *Bachelor’s degree* (100%) with 41% of those who reported also holding a *graduate degree*. The majority of teachers (76%) attended *regular Bachelor’s programs* (through the College of Education) to obtain their certification, although some teachers report receiving *post-baccalaureate certification* (e.g., *earned a bachelor’s degree and then become certified* 6%), a *master’s degree certification program* (e.g., *become certified while earning a master’s* 8%), or an “*alternative*” *post baccalaureate certification program*

(e.g., some other certification route following completion of a B.A. or B.S. degree outside education 6%).

As a whole, my Florida sample of teachers were pleased with the overall quality of these elementary teacher certification programs with almost half of respondents rating their programs “very good” (49%). When rating the quality of preparation they received for teaching reading and language arts from their certification programs, this sample of teachers rated their preparation “adequate” (32%) to “very good” (38%). Only 14% of my sample earned a reading teacher/specialist certification. Of those teachers, 48% were K-5 teachers, 25% were reading coaches, 14% were special education teachers, and 11% represented other teaching positions. Overall, my sample of Florida teachers averaged 13 years (SD= 9.96) of teaching experience.

### **School and Student Demographics**

Teachers rated their school facilities as “adequate” (34%) to “very good” (34%). The average class had 22 *regular education* students and seven *special education* or *exceptional students*. A majority of the teachers reported their students came from *low-income* (39%) or *middle-income* (27%) families. Students are predominately *Caucasian* (40%) with *Black/African* (16%), or *Hispanic/Latino* (14%) also represented.

### **Professional Development**

Regarding teachers’ tendency to seek out professional knowledge and development, my Florida sample of teachers were highly motivated as evidenced by their professional activities. The most popular professional activities were to *attend workshops, in-service or staff-development courses* (99%). A majority of these teachers indicated *reading professional magazines or journals* (80%). Roughly half the sample reported *attending local, regional, or state professional conferences* (53%), *membership in professional organizations* (45%), or *conducting research in their own classroom* (41%). My sample of teachers reported a wide-

range of professional development topics as evidenced in Figures 4-1 and 4-2). These teachers reported attending, on average, 204 hours of professional development over the last three years.

Within my sample of teachers, most attended professional development that was ***school-based***.

Widely noted ***school-based*** topics focused on:

- *reading strategies* (62%)
- *progress monitoring and student reading improvement* (59%)
- *technology use* (53%)
- *FCAT preparation* (51%)
- *DIBELS* (51%)

Fewer teachers reported attending ***school-based*** professional development on *how to accommodate ESOL students* and *Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (DAR)*. Popular ***district-based*** professional development within this sample of teachers focused on:

- *reading strategies* (57%)
- *how to accommodate ESOL students* (52%)
- *how to use current basal series* (45%)

Teachers **voluntarily** attended professional development related to:

- *reading strategies* (48%)
- *related to technology use* (47%)
- *how to accommodate struggling readers* (43%)

The least cited **voluntarily** attended professional development topics were *accommodating ESOL students*, *DIBELS*, and *DAR*.

Popular professional development topics that were **required** included:

- *DIBELS* (47%)
- *accommodating ESOL students* (45%)
- *reading strategies* (42%)
- *progress monitoring and student reading improvement* (42%)

Professional development for these teachers was least likely to be required when related to reading research, *DAR*, and designing interventions. Each teacher in this sample of teachers, on

average, reported participating in 204 hours of professional development over the prior three years.

## **Philosophy and Goals**

### **Philosophies**

I asked teachers to choose multiple statements that represent their various perspectives, philosophies, or beliefs toward the teaching and learning of reading. The majority of this sample of Florida teachers described themselves as having an *eclectic attitude toward reading instruction utilizing multiple perspectives and sets of materials when teaching reading* (76%). These teachers approached reading as *balanced, combining skills development with literature and language-rich activities* (89%). Consistent with their eclectic, balanced view, these teachers believed children should be:

- *immersed in literature and literacy experiences in order to become fluent readers* (82%)
- *phonics needs to be taught directly/explicitly to beginning readers in order for students to become fluent, skillful readers* (67%).

### **Goals**

Teachers appeared to be of a similar mind in expressing their goals for instruction. They wanted to develop readers who were:

- *skillful and strategic in phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension* (92%)
- *independent and motivated to choose, appreciate, and enjoy literature* (90%)
- *critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live* (79%).

## **Instructional Time and Materials**

### **Organizing for Instruction**

This sample of Florida elementary teachers reported teaching predominately in *self-contained classrooms* (61%). I asked teachers to select any (i.e., choose more than one) organizational structures they used in their classroom for teaching reading. A variety of organizational structures for teaching reading was reported. They described their typical organizational plans for reading instruction as *flexible grouping* (e.g., students might be grouped according to interest, genre, or skill need, but these groupings were not fixed and changed regularly 58%) and *ability groupings* (e.g., placing all the “highest” readers in one group, all the “middle” readers in a second group, and all the “lowest” readers in a third group 44%). I then asked teachers to identify the primary (i.e., choose only one) organizational structure. *Flexible grouping* (39%) was the ***primary organizational structure*** used among my sample of teachers.

### **Instructional Time**

I asked teachers to identify the average minutes they allotted daily to specific reading and language arts activities. Figure 4-5 illustrates that teachers reported spending a majority of the state required 90-minute reading block actively *teaching* reading. When I added all categories together, teachers spent an average of 161 minutes daily on literacy related activities.

Regarding instructional time, I asked teachers to estimate the amount of instructional time devoted to the development of various components or activities within their classroom reading and language arts program using a rating scale of 1 = No time, 2 = Little time, 3 = Moderate time, 4 = Considerable time. The components or activities with the highest percentage of reported responses for the rating of “considerable” are displayed in Figure 4-6. Although 86% of the teachers reported using a *balanced approach*, the responses selected by teachers to describe the allocation of instructional time to specific classroom activities are not consistent with a

balanced approach. This potential discrepancy could be due to social bias in that balanced literacy instruction represents the contemporary view of literacy instruction. Teachers may describe their approach as “balanced”, although when asked to identify their enacted instructional practices, they do not align with this approach.

When I analyzed my data regarding instructional time allotted to different literacy components, I noticed a trend. Responses favored either the higher end of devotion of instructional time (e.g., the majority of teachers responses were split between “considerable” and “moderate” time) or toward the middle (e.g., the majority of teachers responses were split between “moderate and “little”) time. It is difficult to quantify the difference between “considerable” and “moderate” as a result; I reported teachers’ responses in groups.

It is reasonable to conclude that a majority of teachers from my Florida sample are spending a significant amount of instructional time dedicated to a variety of components or activities when teaching literacy. Seventy percent or more of the teachers (sum of moderate and considerable rating for these topics) responded with “moderate” or “considerable” allocation of time to the following components or activities:

- *reading vocabulary*
- *comprehension*
- *fluency*
- *phonemic awareness*
- *critical reading*
- *silent reading*
- *oral reading by students*
- *reading in the content areas*
- *reading aloud to students*
- *students reading independently*
- *comprehension strategy instruction*
- *process writing or writing workshop*

For some components and activities, my sample was less agreeable. The majority of teachers’ responses were grouped in the “moderate” or “little” devotion of instructional time.

These topics may represent literacy activities or topics that are either newly adopted or simply loosing popularity. These literacy components or activities were:

- *Test preparation*
- *Literature circles, book clubs, literature discussion groups*
- *Oral or written responses to literature (drop everything and read or reading workshop)*
- *Technological applications to literacy*
- *Handwriting instruction and practice*
- *Spelling lists, activities or games*
- *Language experience stories or charts*

One literacy topic, *Silent reading*, did not fit into either a high or middle category. For this topic, the highest percentage of teachers reported devoting moderate (46%) instructional time; however, teachers were evenly split between “considerable” (24%) and “little” (24%) instructional time. There seems to be a dissonance about the importance of silent reading to literacy development as evidenced by the variability in instructional time devoted to this activity.

### **Instructional Materials for Reading**

Regarding the types of instructional materials teachers used for reading, teachers responded on a scale of 1 (Never) to 5 (Exclusively) about their use of different materials. Teachers’ eclectic view of reading instruction prevailed as illustrated in their use of varied instructional materials. Drawing from the highest percentages for each scale within each type of instructional material used, instructional materials are presented that were used predominately (Figure 4-7), moderately (Figure 4-8), infrequently (Figure 4-9), and never used (Figure 4-10). None of the provided instructional materials in survey question 24, had the highest reported percentage as “Exclusively.” Two instructional materials, *phonics workbooks* and *literature anthologies*, are reported in multiple categories because there were less than three percentage points difference between amount of use for these materials (an asterisk\* is used to identify these materials in the following charts).

## **Specific Use of Basal Reading Materials and Trade Books**

When teachers were queried specifically about how they use basal reading materials and trade books (e.g., children's books or library books) in their classroom reading program, the majority of teachers (71%) responded that they *use basal reading materials as the foundation of my reading program; in other words, my reading program is structured around the basal, but I incorporate trade books within the basal program.* Teachers' responses to this question continued to reveal their eclectic, balanced view of literacy instruction.

## **Type of Basal Series Used and Year Adopted**

A little over half (54%) the teachers from the Florida sample responded to the question asking when the last year of adoption for basal series occurred. Of the respondents, the majority of them reported the adoption of a new basal series between the years 2001 and 2004, with most of the adoptions falling in 2002 and 2003. The specific basal series used by these teachers are reported in Figure 4-11.

## **Teaching Reading Skills and Strategies in relation to Reading Instructional Materials**

I asked teachers to choose all of the statements that apply to their teaching of *reading skills and strategies in relation to reading instructional materials.* Accordingly, teachers reported:

- *supplementing the basal program by teaching additional skills not covered well or at all in the basal (68%);*
- *using the basal as a general guide for teaching skills and strategies, but adapting or extending instruction from the basal significantly (62%); and*
- *teaching skills and strategies on the basis of ongoing informal observations and assessments of students' learning (58%).*

## **Content Area Reading**

This sample of Florida teachers also reported teaching reading through the content areas (85%). They utilized trade books “often” to support their teaching of science (41%) and social studies (43%), but only “sometimes” (37%) for math instruction.

## **Gifted and Struggling Readers**

### **Gifted Students**

Forty-one percent (41%) of this sample of Florida teachers indicated *no gifted students* in their class. Forty-five percent (45%) *adapted their classroom curriculum and instruction to accommodate these learners*. Thirty percent (30%) of these teachers reported that a *pullout program was available where students receive instruction from a gifted and talented teacher*. For those teachers whose students received outside instruction from a gifted teacher, they rated the *effectiveness of these support persons* as “adequate” (35%) to “very good” (35%).

### **Struggling Readers**

In terms of struggling readers, 78% of teachers adapt classroom curriculum and instruction to accommodate the special needs of their students who experience problems in learning to read. A pullout program for struggling readers is available to 41% of the sample of teachers. A number of teachers reported the availability of *reading coaches* (36%) to support them in adapting instruction to meet the needs of their struggling readers. Only seven percent (7%) of the sample of teachers report a *reading coach working one-on-one on a weekly basis with their struggling students*. Of the teachers who reported that a reading coach works with them, or their students, these teachers rate their effectiveness as “very good” (40%) to “exceptional” (28%).

### **Interventions**

According to my survey data, almost all schools are providing interventions for students who are struggling with reading (89%). Teachers whose schools provided interventions were

asked to specify the type of intervention their students received. The following is a list of the commonly referenced interventions:

- Tutoring (before, during, & after school)
- Pull-out programs
- Reading Coach/Teacher
- Direct Instruction – SRA, Reading Mastery
- Spell, Pat, Read
- Title 1
- iii – immediate, intensive, interventions
- Voyager
- Computer lab/software
- Small group instruction

Overall, tutoring and pullout programs were cited most often.

### **Assessing Reading Development**

Over half (55%) of Florida teachers today reported using *a mix of conventional assessment measures* (e.g., basal and standardized tests) *and some informal assessments* (e.g., Informal Reading Inventory). These teachers utilized a variety of assessments for wide-ranging purposes. The distribution of teachers who reported on overall approach to reading assessments is given in Figure 4-12.

### **Teachers' use of Assessment Results**

Teachers were asked to what degree, from “not at all” to “considerable,” do they use results from various assessments to *identify students at risk, for grouping decisions, to identify skills to emphasize, to determine if skills are improving, and parent conferences*. This sample of Florida teachers used the *FCAT, DIBELS, or Basal unit tests* to a “considerable” degree for an array of purposes. The percentage of teachers using each type of assessment to a “Considerable” degree and for what purpose is displayed in Figure 4-13.

## **Teachers' use of assessments for Instructional Decision-Making**

Teachers were given a list of formal and informal assessments and asked to rate their degree of use (“Not at all” to “a Considerable degree”) of the assessment results specifically for **instructional decision-making**. The data illustrating where teachers rated their use highest for each type of assessment result for **instructional decision-making** is provided in Figures 4-14 through 4-16. Assessments marked with an asterisk (\*) appear in multiple categories because there was only a one percent (1%) difference between the highest percentages of teachers reporting for each category. For example, *standardized fluency assessments* (e.g., DIBELS) teachers reported using “to a considerable degree” (37%) and “to a moderate degree” (36%). Therefore, standardized fluency assessments appear in both the “considerable” and “moderate” graphs for teachers’ use. Noteworthy, however, is that *standardized fluency assessments* (e.g., DIBELS) are the only assessment where the highest percentage of teachers reported using the results for **instructional decision-making** “to a considerable degree.” Figure 4-14 presents the data for moderately used assessments for **instructional decision-making**.

I asked teachers “*about how many total hours do you and your students spend each year preparing to take (e.g., test-taking exercises or lessons) and actually taking the required assessments...*” (see question 49). These Florida teachers reported spending, on average, 329 hours, per year, per teacher, preparing students to take assessments. There was significant variance in the responses to this question. On the lowest end, some teachers reported spending zero hours preparing for tests, whereas, on the highest end, teachers reported well over a thousand hours preparing and taking tests. Given that there are not thousands of instructional hours in a school year, the teachers who indicated over a thousand hours are exaggerating this number. This may be indicative of a high-pressure testing environment for some teachers (e.g., a failing school or a low SES school). Teachers who reported spending thousands of hours on test

prep may be indicating that they feel all of their instructional time was spent preparing for tests. This variability in teachers' responses also occurred when they were asked to indicate on a scale of "considerable" to "none" the amount of instructional time allotted to test preparation (see question 23). The highest percentages for my teachers were divided between "moderate" (37%) and "little" (38%) instructional time. Again, this disparity in the sample could be an indication of the significant pressure that some teachers are feeling while others are not.

Teachers were asked to rate "to what degree they modify their teaching to conform to mandatory assessments." A little less than half (48%) of the teachers in my sample responded "somewhat" modified, while 39% "very much" modified their teaching to conform to mandatory assessments. Consequently, only 14% did "not at all" modify their curriculum.

### **Overall Reading Program**

#### **School Reading Program**

In regard to the schools from which the current sample of teachers was drawn, I asked teachers in question 56, "*How would you rate your overall school reading program on the following criteria, giving your school a grade of A, B, C, D, or F for each.*" I report the rating A-F that received the highest percentage. This sample of teachers graded their **overall school reading programs** high on all of the provided criteria:

- *developing readers who are skillful and strategic in phonics/phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension.* They rated their schools A (41%) and B (41%) for this criteria;
- *developing readers who are critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live* (B – 38%);
- *developing readers who are independent in choosing, appreciating, and enjoying literature* (A -34%);
- *developing readers who are knowledgeable about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures* (B -34%).

## **Classroom Reading Program**

When questioned specifically about their classroom reading program, these teachers rated their overall **classroom reading program** highest, an “A” rating, for:

- *developing readers who are skillful and strategic in phonics/phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension (49%);*
- *developing readers who are independent in choosing, appreciating, and enjoying literature (47%).*

## **Grade-Level Specific Questions**

### **Pre-K through Grade 2 Teachers**

#### **Philosophy or Perspective**

Of the 220 primary grade teachers that responded to question 53 regarding their personal philosophy or perspective about reading programs for young children, 63% *believed in an emergent literacy perspective; that is, all children can benefit from early, meaningful reading and writing experiences.*

#### **Opinion on the Importance of Teaching Young Children Word Reading Strategies**

Of the provided list of word reading strategies from survey question 54, teachers reported their opinion of the importance of each strategy as “Essential”.

#### **Teaching Phonics to Students**

Of the 209 teachers who believed phonic analysis was “Essential” or “Important,” 78% used synthetic phonics (systematic instruction in which students are taught letter/sound correspondences first and then are taught how to decode words) or word families or phonograms (e.g., -all,-ain, -ake words) to teach their students phonics.

#### **Materials, Techniques or Activities Used Regularly**

I then asked primary grade teachers to select multiple materials, techniques, or activities likely to be used on a regular basis (three or more times a week) in their classrooms. Teachers

were almost unanimous in their reported use of the materials, techniques, or activities listed in question 56. Teachers in the primary grades used a variety of instructional materials, techniques, or activities on a regular basis. Those practices receiving the highest percentage of teachers responding were:

- *reading aloud to students* (97%);
- *phonics and word identification lessons* (92%);
- *working with word cards (e.g., word banks, sentence strips, word sorts, flash cards, pocket charts)* (87%);
- *Oral language activities (e.g., songs, chant, poems, and rhymes)* (86%);
- *Children writing and invented spelling is accepted and encouraged* (83%);
- *Trade books used instructionally* (82%);
- *Reading response activities* (81%);
- *Big books used instructionally* (79%).

### **Third through Fifth Grade Teachers**

#### **Materials, Techniques or Activities Used Regularly**

I asked intermediate grade teachers to choose all of the materials, techniques, or activities likely to be found regularly (three or more times a week) in their classroom. Teachers in the intermediate grades also used a variety of practices and activities when teaching. The highest percentage of teachers reported they used:

- *comprehension strategy instruction (e.g., making inferences, drawing conclusions)* (93%); and
- *vocabulary lessons or activities to develop students' knowledge of word meanings* (90%).

The lowest percentage of teachers' responses was for:

- *Literature discussion groups (e.g., book clubs)* (48%) and
- *Reading Workshop time* (50%).

## **Statistically Significant Differences between Teachers in the 1990s and Teachers Today**

### **Participation in Professional Activities**

The professional activities these Florida teachers engaged in to further their professional knowledge and skill related to reading and language arts were strikingly different from what teachers in the 1996 survey reported. More teachers today attended national conferences (21%) compared to only 10% of the sample of teachers from 1996. However, a majority of teachers (60%) from the 1996 survey reported attending local, state, or regional professional conferences compared to 53% today. Eighty percent (80%) of teachers in 2006 read professional magazines or journals compared to 68% in 1996. Surprisingly, 41% of today's teachers indicated they conducted research in their own classrooms, either alone or in collaboration with others, as compared to 24% in 1996. On the other hand, teachers from the 1996 sample were more highly involved in pursuing professional knowledge and skill by furthering their college education. Over half the teachers from 1996 indicated they enrolled in college or university courses in education (55%) compared to 18% today. Thirty-eight percent of the 1996 sample indicated they were enrolled in a graduate degree program in education compared to 19% today.

### **Instructional Time**

#### **Average Minutes Daily to Components of Reading and Language Arts Instruction**

I highlighted the disparities in teacher reported total average minutes daily allotted to different components of reading and language arts activities (Table 4-2). Teachers from this Florida sample reported spending significantly more time than teachers from 1996 on *reading instruction* (e.g., *reading groups, skill or strategy lessons, teacher-guided reading of selections - this does not include worksheet practice or FCAT practice books*). However, the national sample of teachers from 1996 reported spending significantly more time daily on *applying, practicing, and extending reading instruction* (e.g., *reading aloud to children, students'*

*independent reading or DEAR periods, student-led response groups, cooperative reading activities) and minutes daily for language arts instruction and practice (e.g., writing workshop, response journals, spelling, oral language activities).*

### **Instructional time reported for literacy topics**

The results of nine independent-samples t-tests comparing the instructional time teachers devote to various literacy topics between survey years 1996 and 2006 are provided in Table 4-3. I asked teachers to rate the amount of instructional time they devoted to each of the components or activities identified in survey question 23 within their classroom reading and language arts program on a scale of 1 to 4: (1 = No time, 2 = Little time, 3 = Moderate time, 4 = Considerable time. The mean instructional time was significantly different between the two years for all nine topics. This sample of Florida teachers reported spending significantly more instructional time on *reading vocabulary, comprehension, and phonics/decoding*. Likewise, these teachers reported spending less instructional time than teachers in 1996 on *silent reading, oral or written responses to literature, process writing/workshop, spelling/lists/activities/games* and *handwriting instruction/practice*.

### **Instructional Materials**

The results of ten independent-samples t-tests comparing the instructional materials between the two survey years are displayed in Table 4-4. I asked teachers to choose one response to rate their amount of use for each instructional material identified in the survey on a scale of 1 through 5 (1 = Never, 2 = Infrequently, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Predominately, 5 = Exclusively). The mean was significantly different between the two samples for all but one variable. No significant differences were reported between the samples for *chapter trade book* use. Today's sample of Florida teachers reported using a *single basal series, commercial classroom libraries, phonics workbooks, general reading skills workbooks, picture trade books, computer hardware*

*and software and other instructional materials* more frequently as reading instructional materials than teachers in 1996. Conversely, teachers in 1996 reported using *literature anthologies* and *fiction trade books* more frequently as reading instructional materials.

### **Assessment Results Used for Instructional Decision-Making**

The results of nine independent-samples *t*-tests comparing the use of assessment results for **instructional decision-making** between the two survey years are provided in Table 4-5. I asked teachers to what degree do they use results from the following various types of assessments to make instructional decisions in their classroom. I asked them to rate their degree of use on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 – No time, 2 - Little time, 3 - Moderate time, 4 - Considerable time). The means differed significantly between years for all nine variables. Florida teachers, from the 2006 sample, reported using *group standardized reading tests; individual standardized reading tests, basal reader program unit/level skills test, informal reading inventories, and informal phonics/decoding assessments* significantly more often than the 1996 sample for **instructional decision-making**.

Although, rarely used by the Florida sample of teachers, but significantly more than teachers from the 1990s, are emergent literacy survey assessments and reading miscue analysis, however, the sample of teachers from 1996 reported using reading/writing portfolios and student interviews/conferences significantly more than the teachers today for instructional decision-making. Given teachers' overall approach to reading assessment, reported in Table 4-5, it is not surprising that teachers from 2006 were using a variety of assessments and teachers from 1996 utilized alternative assessments (e.g., portfolios and student interviews) significantly more.

## **Descriptive Differences between Survey Years**

### **Gifted and Struggling Readers**

Salient differences emerged between the two samples related to gifted and struggling readers. Noteworthy were the drastic differences in the identification of gifted students in these samples of teachers' classes. Forty-one percent (41%) of the current sample of teachers reported having no gifted students in their class. However, in the 1996 sample only 6% reported having no gifted students. Of the teachers who reported having gifted students, 79% from the 1996 sample and 45% of the 2006 sample adapted their classroom curriculum and instruction to accommodate the special needs of their gifted and talented students.

When reporting on accommodations and support for struggling readers, a majority of teachers from both samples indicated they adapted their classroom curriculum and instruction to accommodate the special needs of students who experience problems in learning to read (1996 sample, 82%, 2006 sample, 78%). Over half (58%) the 1996 sample teachers had pullout programs available for their struggling readers compared to only 41% of the 2006 sample. When a reading coach or special support personnel worked with these teachers' students, 2006 teachers, as a whole, were more pleased with their effectiveness. In this case, they rated their effectiveness "Very Good" (40%) to "Exceptional" (28%). Teachers in 1996 rated special support personnel for struggling readers "Adequate" (28%) to "Very Good" (45%).

### **Organizational Structures**

I asked teachers to choose all the organizational structures they employed regularly for classroom reading instruction. Teachers in 1996 favored teaching reading as a whole class activity (52%) whereas teachers in 2006 preferred flexible grouping for reading (58%). When questioned about the primary organizational structure used, the Florida teachers' responses were

divided between flexible grouping (39%) and ability grouping (28%). Whole class instruction prevailed as the dominant structure (52%) among the 1996 sample of teachers.

### **Overall approach to reading assessment**

When I queried teachers regarding their overall approach to reading assessment, teachers in the 2006 sample agreed in their overall approach. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the Florida sample reported using a *mix of conventional assessment measures and some informal assessments*. In contrast, the national sample of teachers from 1996, as a whole, was divided in the overall approaches employed for reading assessment. The teachers from the 1990s reported using a *mix of conventional assessment and informal assessment measures* (33%) and *moving toward adopting alternative forms of assessment* (31%). These percentages are substantiated by teachers reported use of assessment results for instructional decision-making as shown in Table 4-5. Significantly, more teachers from 2006 reported using a variety of assessments for instructional decision-making; however, significantly more teachers from the 1996 survey reported using alternative assessments (e.g., portfolios and student interviews).

### **Summary**

This chapter described the self-reported teaching practices of today's teachers in a highly politicized educational context. Significant differences between teachers surveyed in years 1996 and 2006 emerged from the analyses. The next chapter situates current and past data within the ecological framework thereby illuminating the prevalent changes in practice. I also provide a summary table of relevant substantive differences (Table 5-1). Implications and conclusions are discussed.

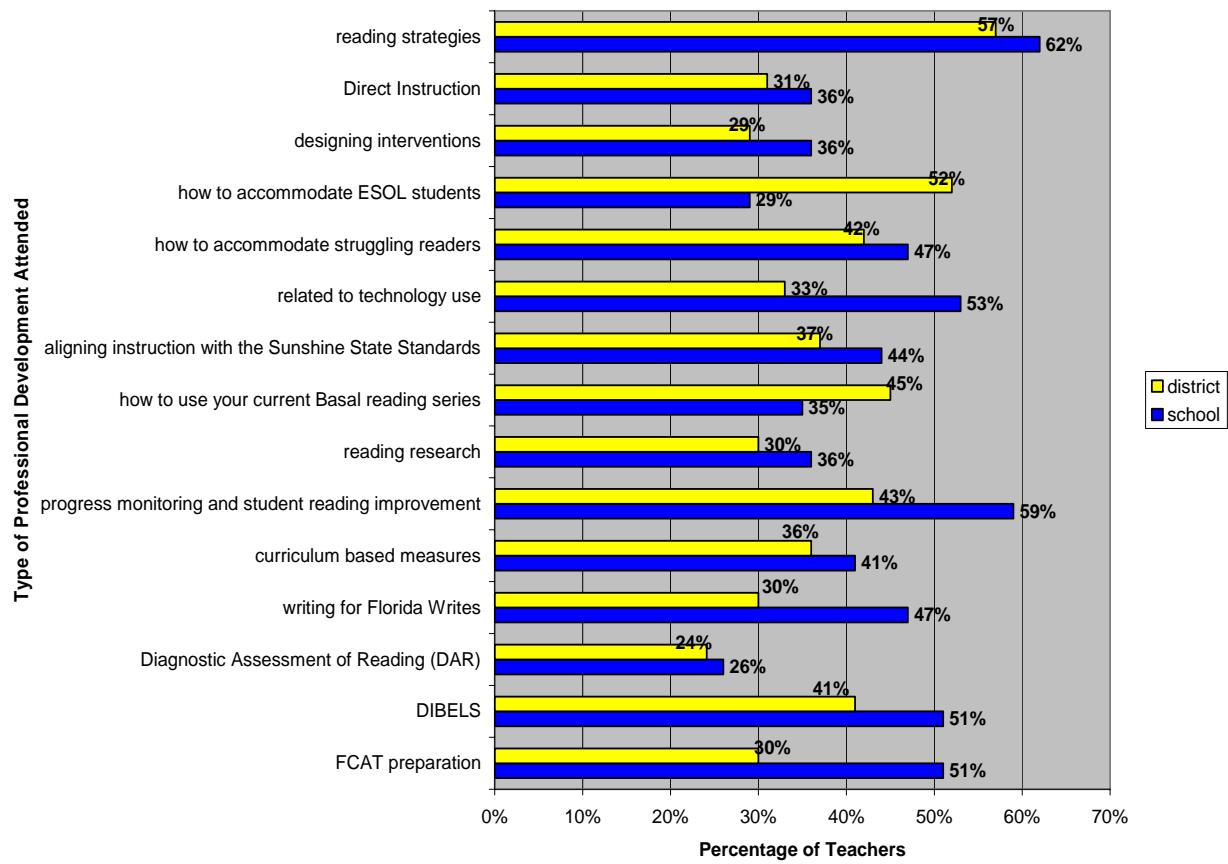


Figure 4.1. School and district-based professional development topics

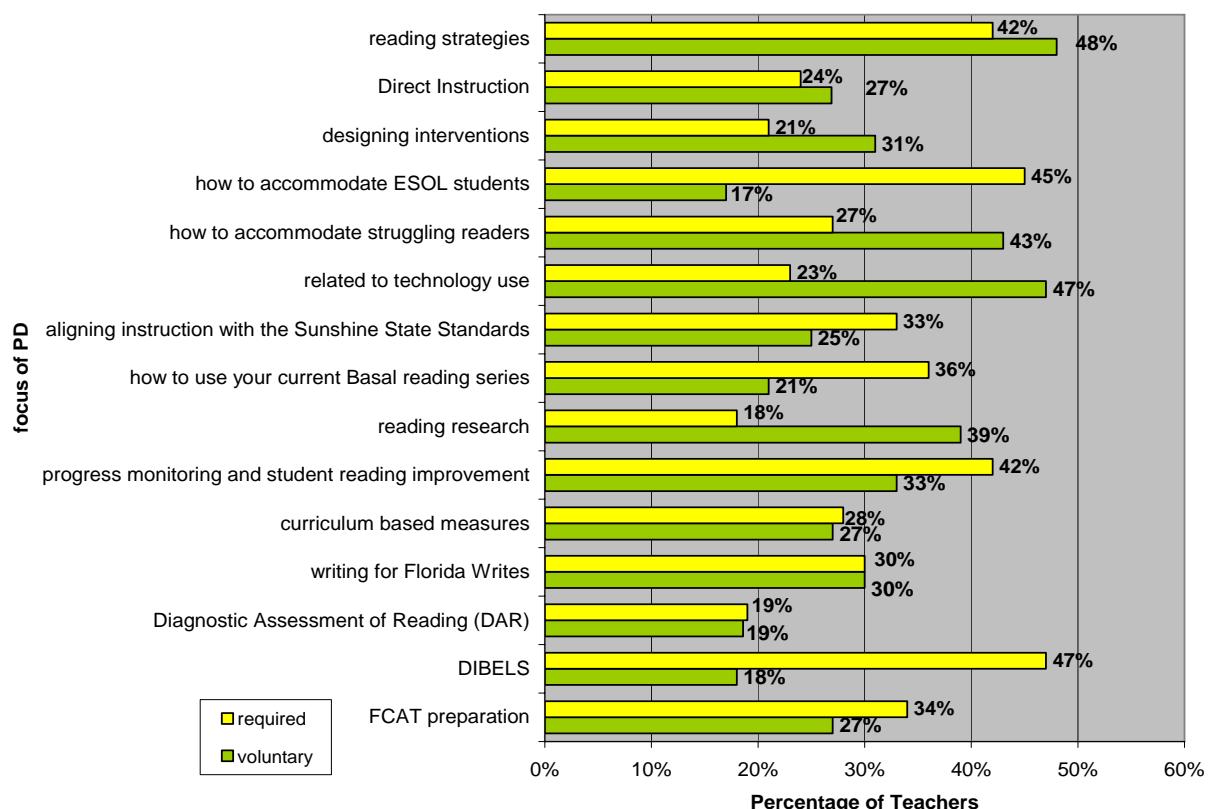


Figure 4-2. Voluntary and required professional development topics

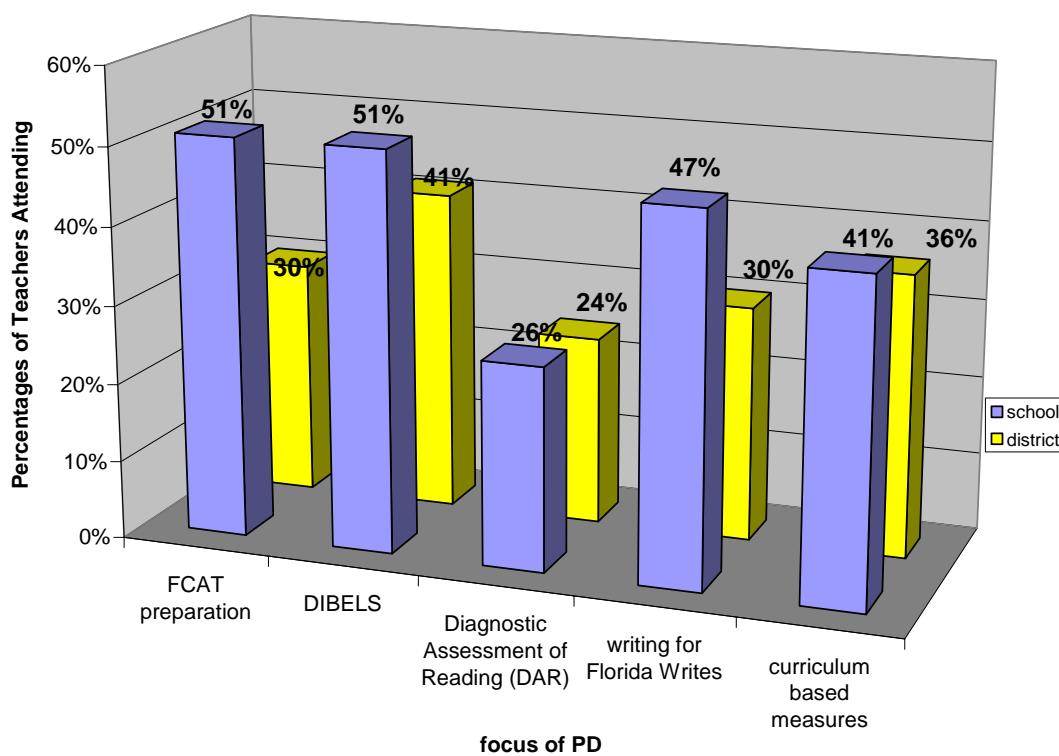


Figure 4-3. School and district-based professional development related to assessment

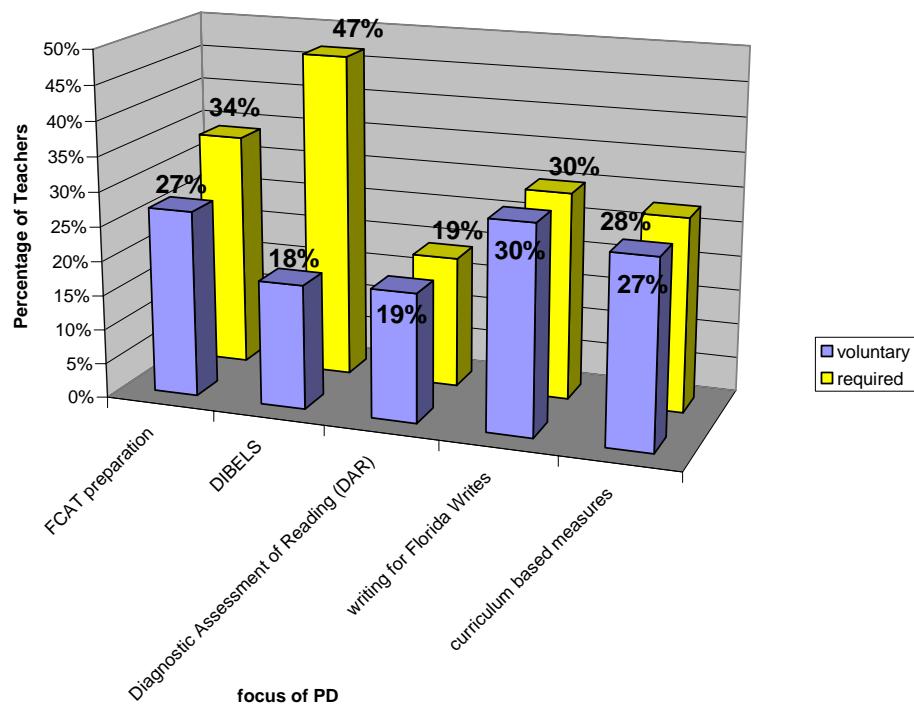


Figure 4-4. Voluntary and required professional development related to assessment

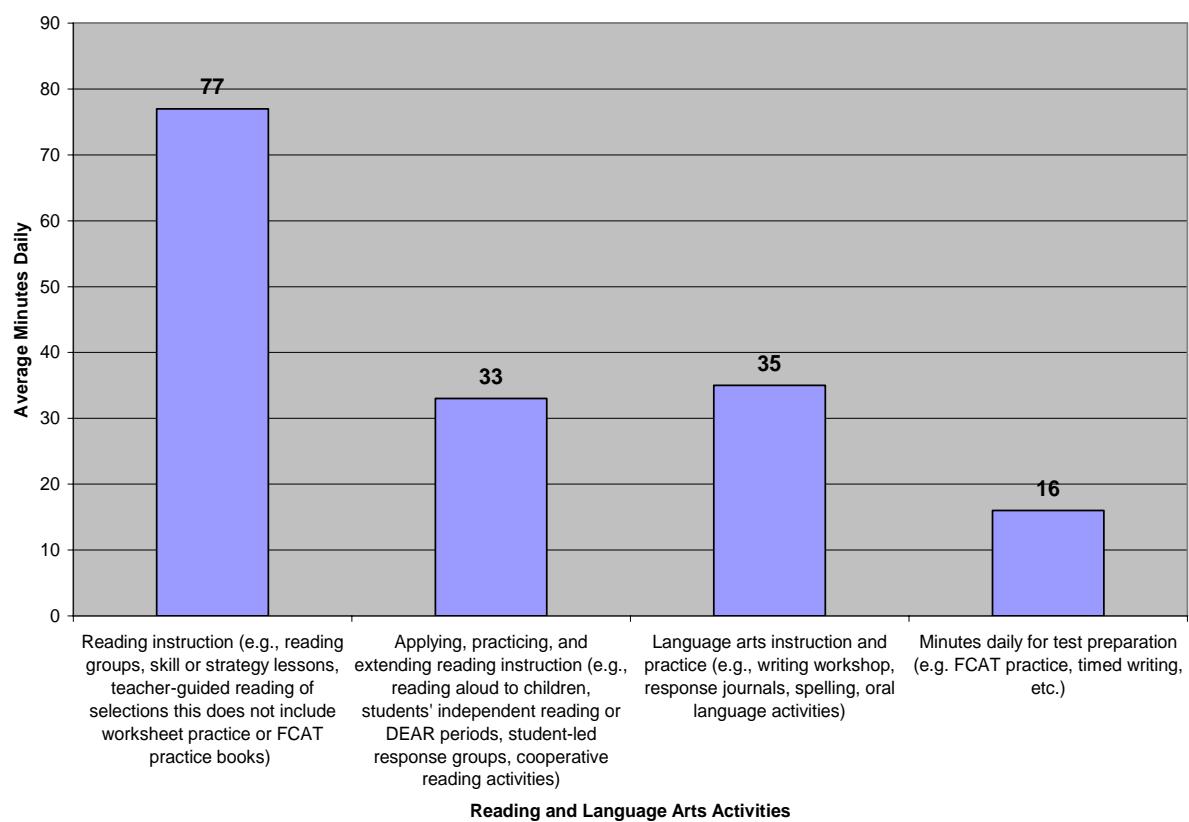


Figure 4-5. Average minutes daily spent on reading and language arts activities

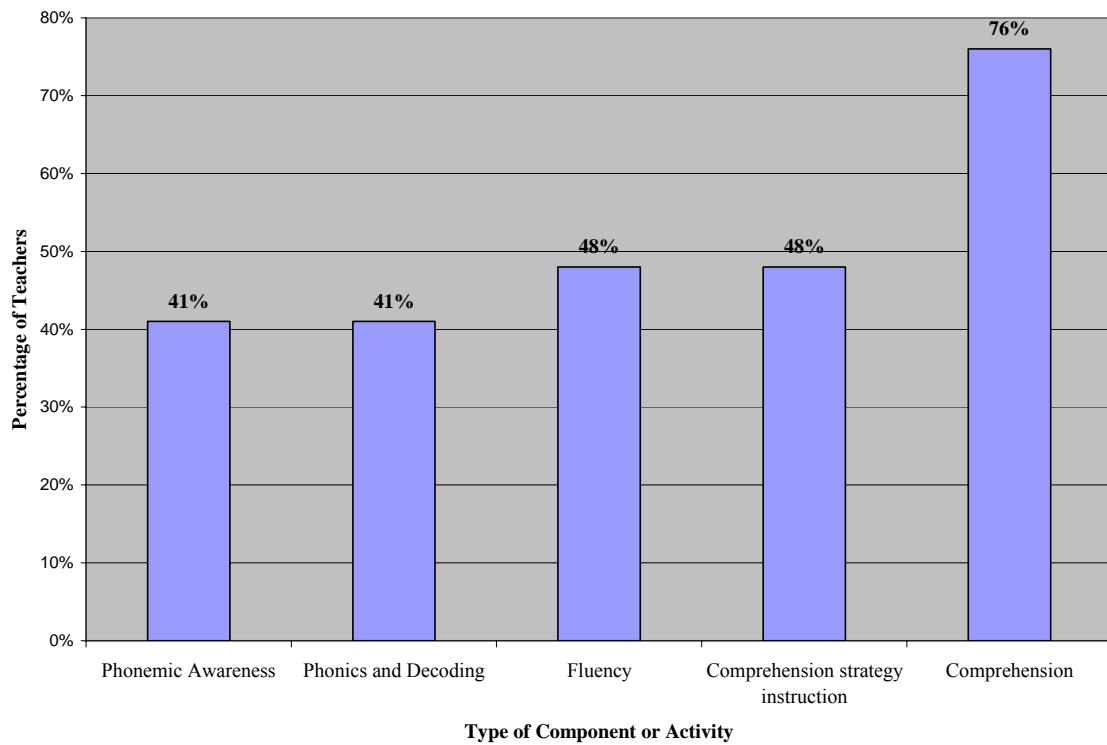


Figure 4-6. Literacy components or activities that received a “considerable” amount of instructional time

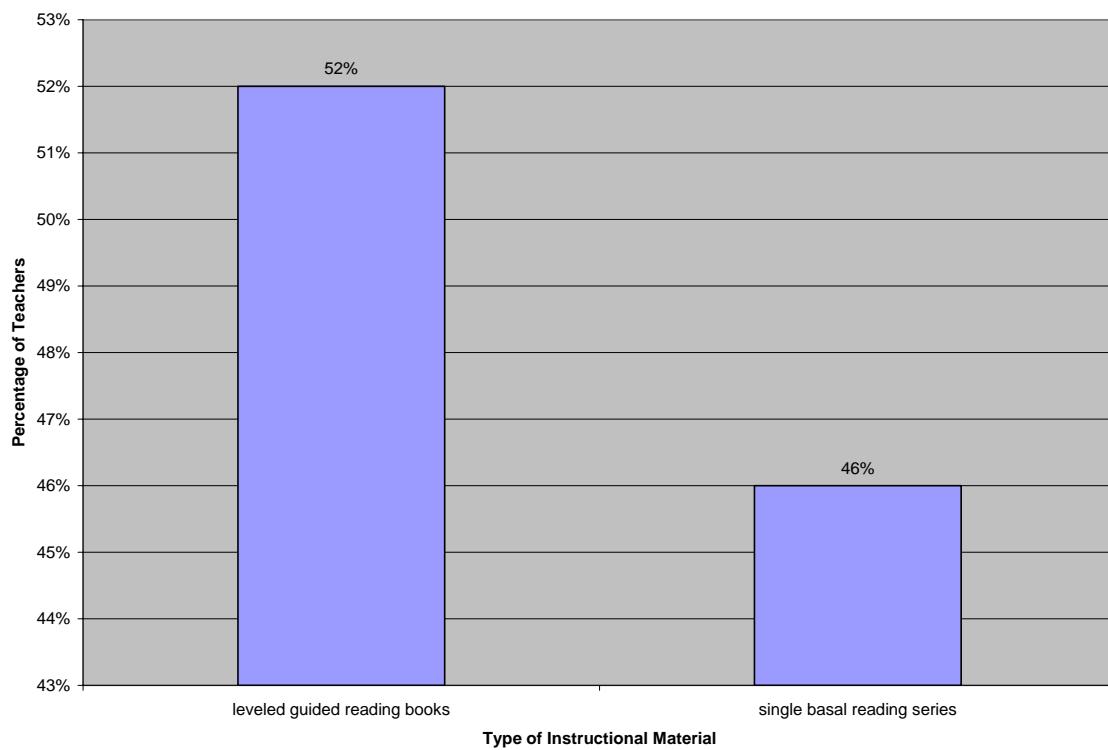


Figure 4-7. Instructional materials used “predominately”

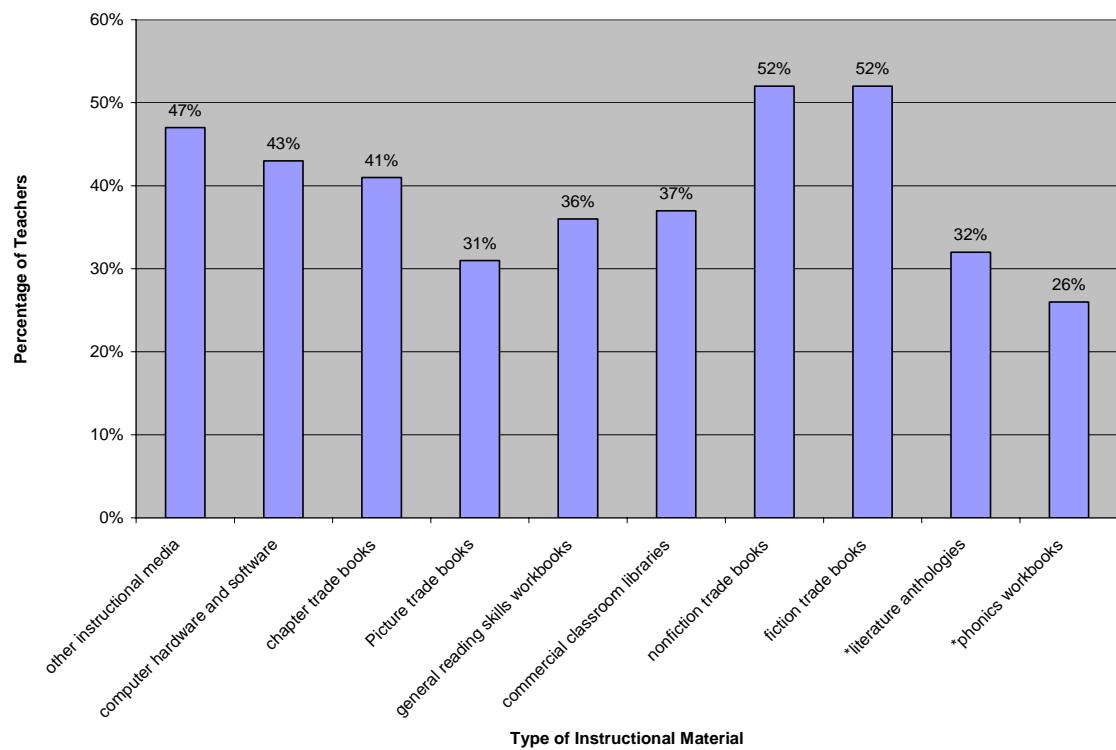


Figure 4-8. Instructional materials used “moderately”

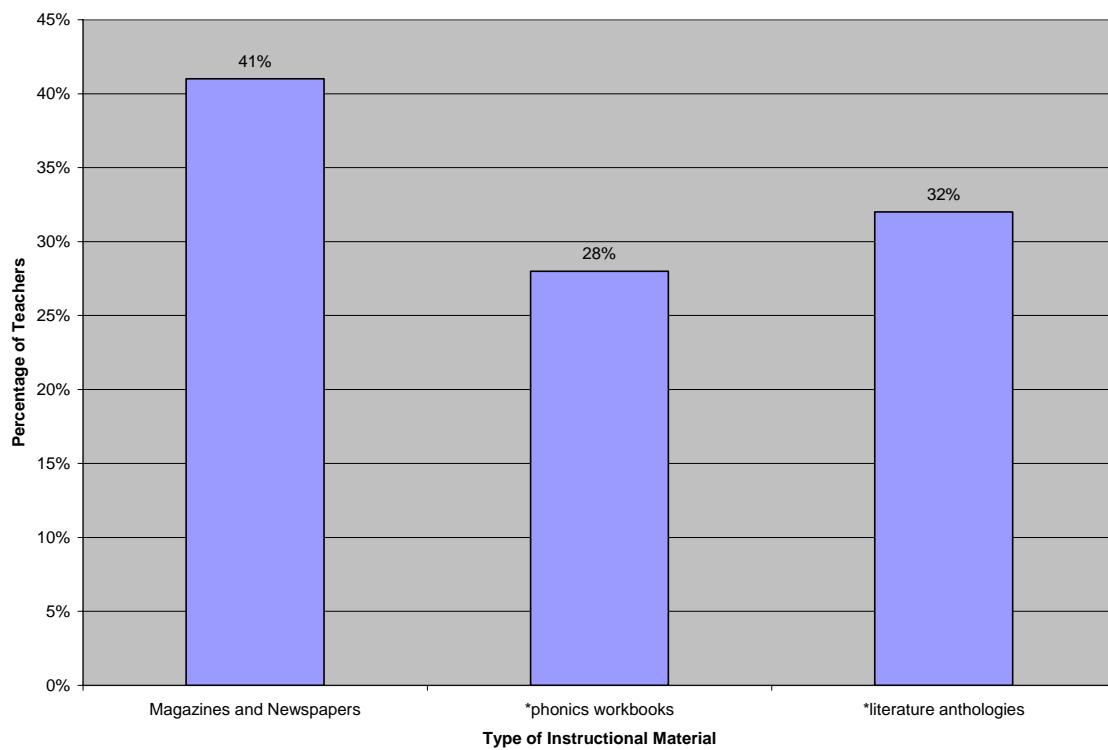


Figure 4-9. Instructional materials used “infrequently”

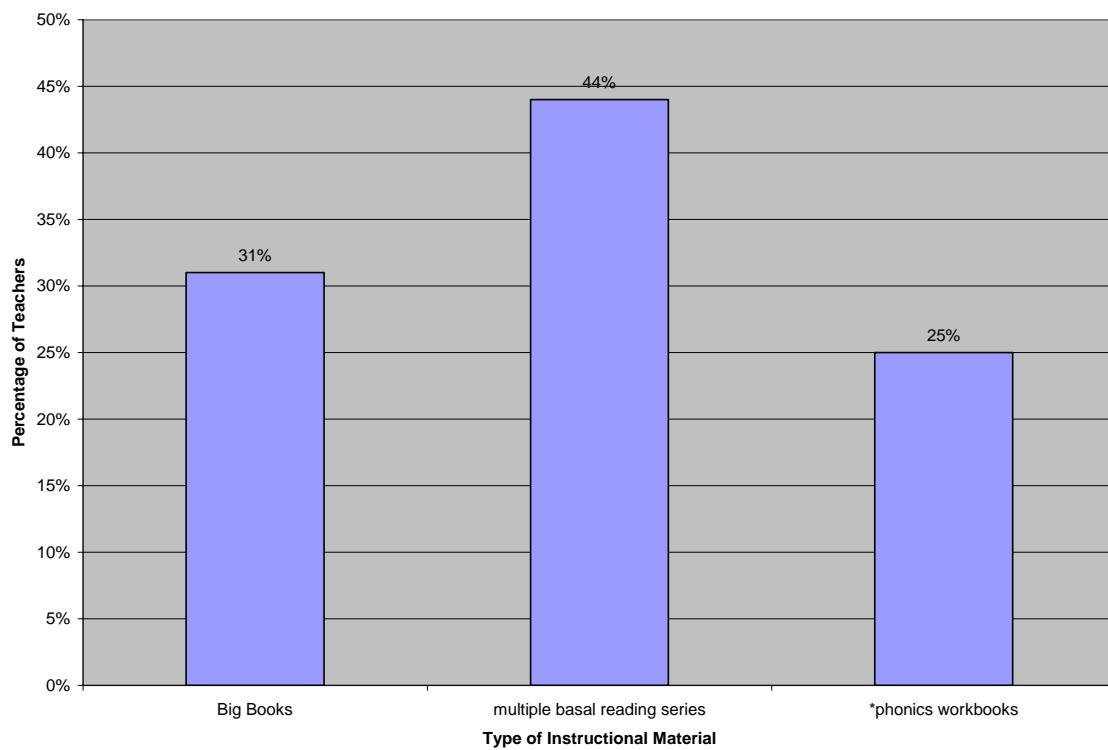


Figure 4-10. Instructional materials “never” used

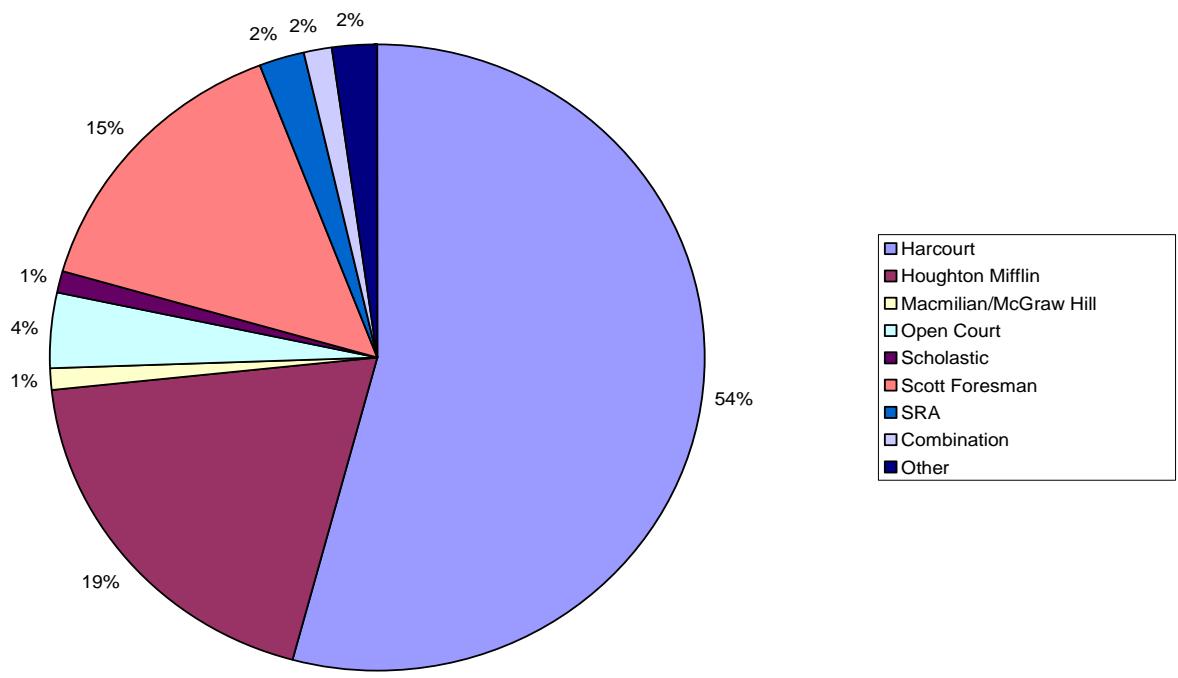


Figure 4-11. Basal Series Adopted

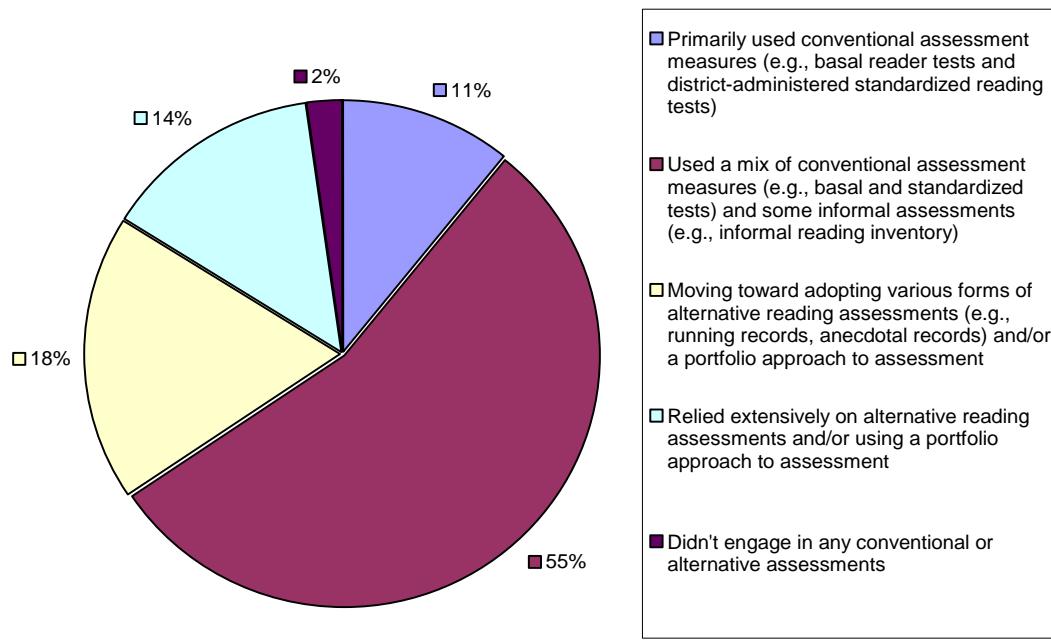


Figure 4-12. Overall approach to classroom reading instruction

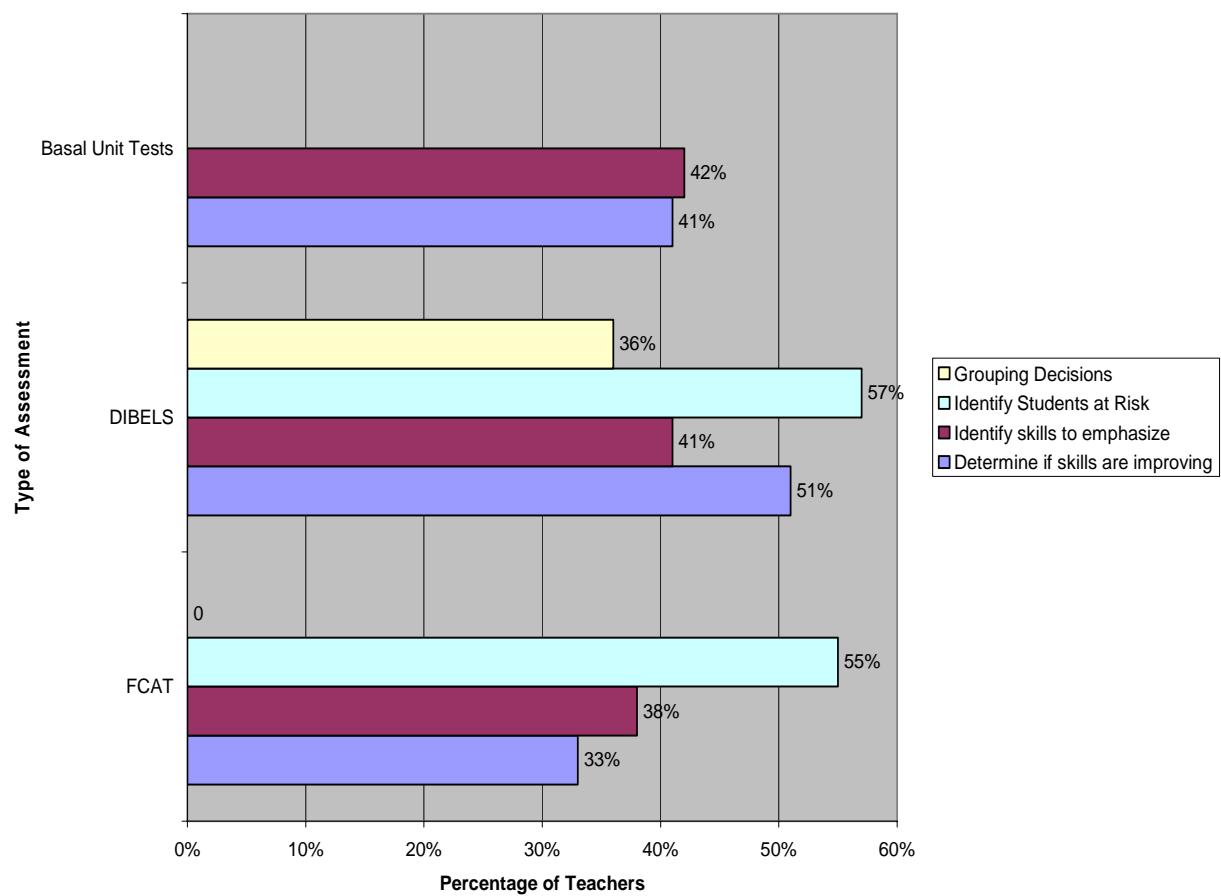


Figure 4-13. Teachers' uses of assessments

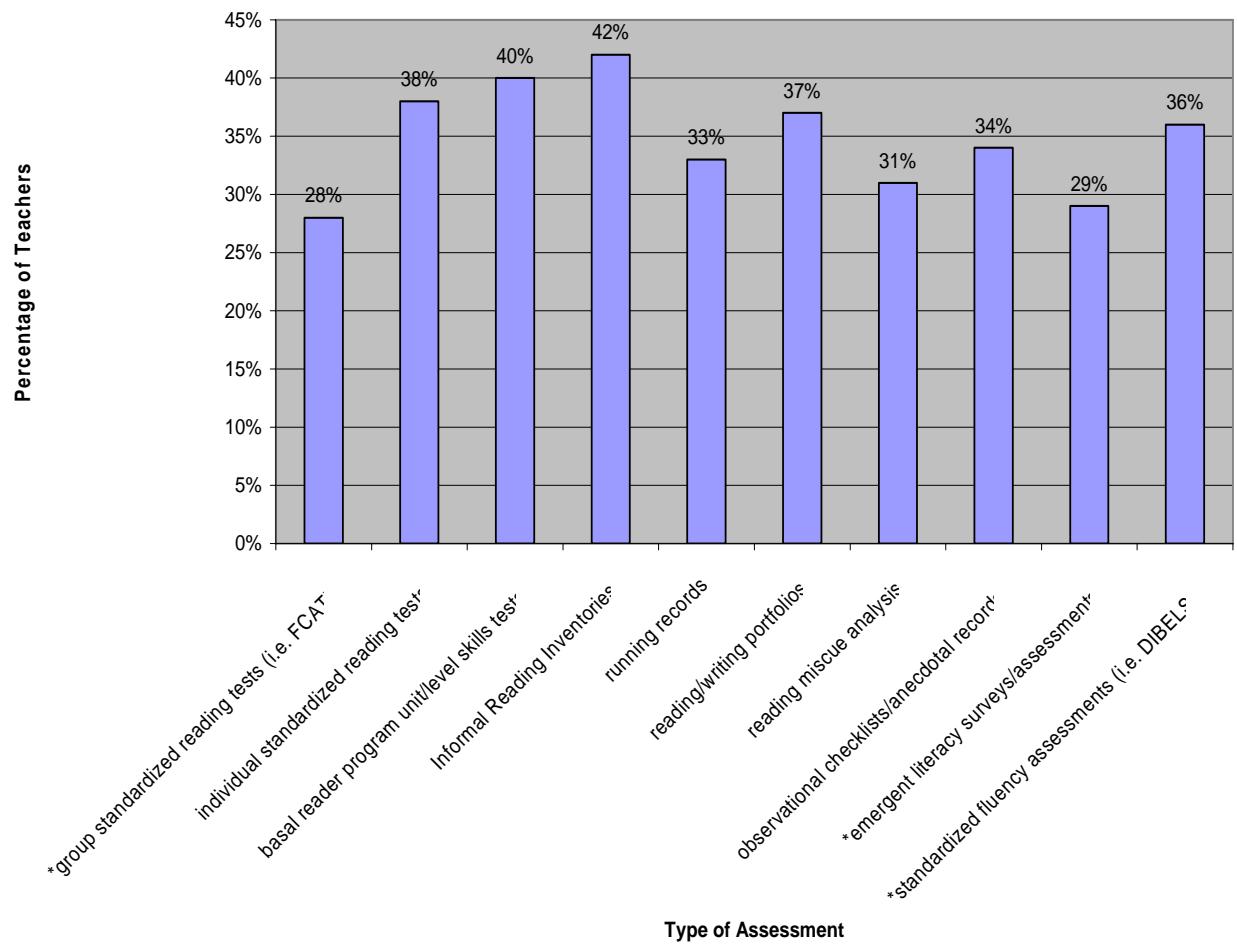


Figure 4-14. Assessments used to a “moderate” degree for instructional decision-making

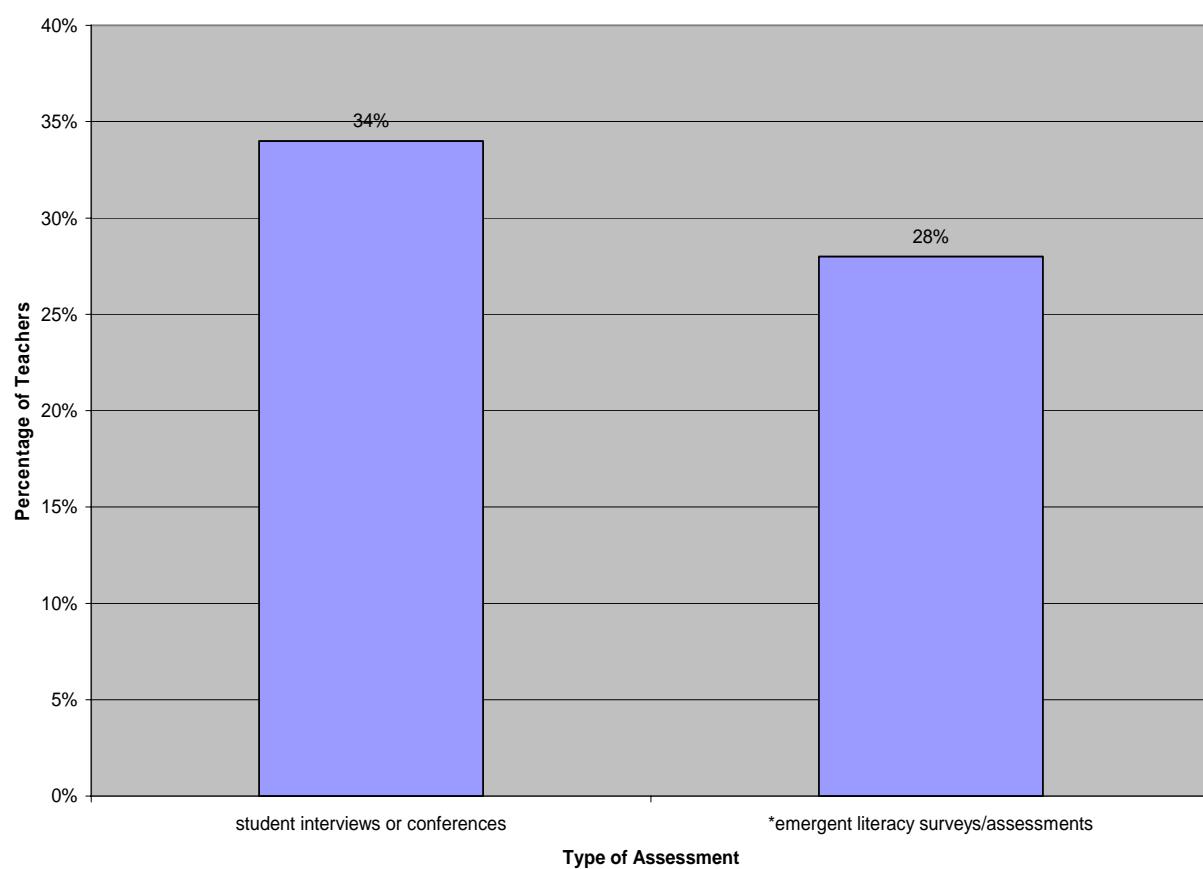


Figure 4-15. Assessments used a “little” for instructional decision-making

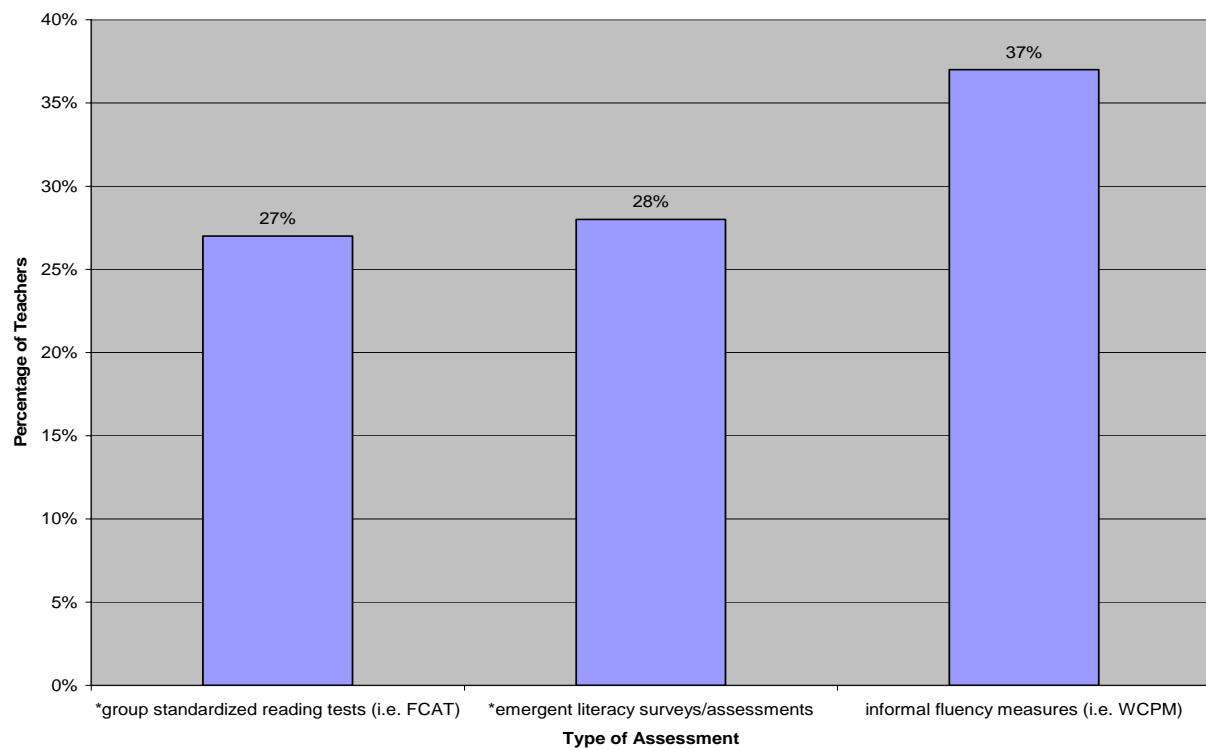


Figure 4-16. Assessments used “not at all” for instructional decision-making

Table 4-1. Chi-square tests of independence comparing activities teachers engage in to further professional knowledge and skill in teaching reading and language arts by survey years

	1996		2006		Results		
	%Yes	%No	%Yes	%No	X2	p	phi
Enroll in college or university courses in education	54.7	45.3	18.2	81.8	235.19	<.001	0.35
Attend local, state, or regional professional conferences	59.4	40.6	52.6	47.4	8.09	.003	0.07
Attend national conference	9.9	90.1	20.6	79.4	42.21	<.001	-0.15
Enroll in graduate degree program in education	38.1	61.9	19.4	80.6	69.67	<.001	0.19
Read professional magazines or journals	67.7	32.3	80.0	20.0	32.25	<.001	-0.13
Conduct research in your own classroom, either alone or in collaboration with others	24.4	75.6	41.3	58.7	58.10	<.001	-0.17

Note: All tests are based on one degree of freedom.

Table 4-2. Independent-samples t-tests comparing the total average time (in minutes) spent daily for reading and language arts activities between survey years

	1996	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2005	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	Results	
								<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>
Minutes daily specifically for reading instruction (e.g., reading groups, skill or strategy lessons, teacher-guided reading of selections)	55.21		34.09	76.99		49.87	-8.83	691.59	<.001
Minutes daily for applying, practicing, and extending reading instruction (e.g., reading aloud to children, students' independent reading or DEAR periods, student-led response groups, cooperative reading activities)	41.88		27.14	32.78		26.90	6.26	927.71	<.001
Minutes daily for language arts instruction and practice (e.g., writing workshop, response journals, spelling, oral language activities)	45.79		23.55	35.18		28.46	7.84	1646	<.001

Note: All tests are based on one degree of freedom.

Table 4-3. Independent-samples t-tests comparing means for reported relative allocation of instructional time between survey years

	1996		2006		Results		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>
Reading Vocabulary	3.17	0.72	3.35	0.66	-4.91	1687	<.001
Comprehension	3.64	0.55	3.73	0.52	-3.21	1028	0.002
Silent Reading	3.03	0.79	2.87	0.85	-0.43	909	<.001
Phonics / Decoding	2.88	0.84	3.15	0.84	-6.14	1679	<.001
Reading Aloud	3.37	0.62	3.25	0.71	3.26	866	0.001
Oral or Written Lit Responses	3.07	0.73	2.67	0.86	9.31	845	<.001
Process Writing / Workshop	3.04	0.82	2.90	0.88	3.21	909	0.001
Spelling / Lists / Activities / Games	2.84	0.82	2.69	0.82	3.60	965	<.001
Handwriting Instruction / Practice	2.58	0.81	2.24	0.83	7.89	1673	<.001

Note: degrees of freedom reduced when *t*-statistic calculated not assuming equal variances between survey responses.

Table 4-4. Independent-samples *t*-tests comparing means for range of use for instructional materials between survey years

	1996		2006		Results		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>
Single basal series	2.69	1.32	3.32	1.16	-9.42	969	<.001
Literature anthologies	2.62	1.09	2.44	1.03	2.98	879	0.003
Fiction trade books	3.36	0.84	3.17	0.80	4.22	943	<.001
Commercial classroom libraries	3.17	0.80	3.36	0.84	-3.04	906	0.002
Phonics workbooks	1.96	1.15	2.49	1.19	-8.29	865	<.001
General reading skills workbooks	2.48	1.25	2.89	1.11	-6.54	996	<.001
Picture trade books	2.69	1.18	2.83	1.14	-2.27	910	0.024
Chapter trade books	2.78	1.11	2.91	0.99	-2.30	994	0.22
Computer hardware and software	2.65	0.98	3.03	0.96	-7.16	911	<.001
Other instructional media	2.85	0.82	3.08	0.90	-5.03	1645	<.001

Note: degrees of freedom reduced when *t*-statistic calculated not assuming equal variances between survey responses.

Table 4-5. Independent-samples *t*-tests comparing means for reported degree of use of assessment results for instructional decision-making between survey years

	1996		2006		Results		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>
Group standardized reading tests	2.09	1.01	2.54	1.17	-7.22	736	<.001
Individual standardized reading tests	2.18	1.05	2.81	1.05	-10.74	1591	<.001
Basal reader program unit/level skills test	2.31	1.13	2.76	1.00	-7.73	937	<.001
Informal reading inventories	2.55	1.01	2.89	0.96	-6.29	876	<.001
Reading / Writing Portfolios	2.87	0.99	2.67	1.01	3.71	824	<.001
Student Interviews / Conferences	2.60	1.03	2.38	0.96	3.94	895	<.001
Reading miscue analysis	2.15	1.03	2.42	1.08	-4.54	812	<.001
Emergent literacy surveys / assessments	1.99	1.01	2.29	1.03	-5.31	827	<.001
Informal Phonics / Decoding Assessments	2.51	1.03	2.71	1.01	-3.55	1604	<.001

Note: degrees of freedom reduced when *t*-statistic calculated not assuming equal variances between survey responses

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to describe teachers' self-reported reading instructional practices and beliefs during the current educational atmosphere of high-stakes assessment and accountability and compare these reports to those of teachers in the recent past. Chapter 4 presented the within-group and between-group similarities and differences between a Florida sample of teachers from 2006 and a national sample of teachers from 1996. The ecological framework, presented in Chapter 2, provided a theoretical perspective for analyzing the evolution of teaching and learning within the context of high-stakes assessment and accountability. This study confirmed that Florida's aggressive policy agenda has affected the instructional practices and beliefs of Florida teachers, providing additional research on policy effects.

### **Educational Contexts**

By contrasting my data with a similar, earlier survey, I illustrated variation in teaching reading during two distinct times in educational history. The context of teaching reading during the mid to late 1990s was an unstable time in educational history. "The Reading Wars" were in full swing. Debates focused on the validity of the child-centered approaches of whole language versus a more curriculum-centered approach of phonics. Just as whole language was gaining momentum in the mid 1990s; it quickly came under intense scrutiny (Pearson, 2004). Opponents charged whole language with the demise of skills instruction, strategy instruction, text structure, and content area reading (Pearson, 2004). By surveying teachers' practices and beliefs, Baumann et. al. (2000) provided a snapshot of teaching and learning during that time.

Likewise, the turn of the century brought about radical educational changes. The inclusion of the Reading First component of NCLB eschewed the integrated and literature-based practices

of the 1990s. Reading First emphasized the explicit and systematic instruction that was arguably neglected during the Whole Language movement. Scientifically based reading research, as identified by the National Reading Panel, now became the acknowledged -- or rather mandated -- underpinnings of curriculum and instruction (Pearson, 2004). Through surveying teachers' instructional beliefs and practices in a state such as Florida, with an instrument that, largely, replicated the survey conducted by Baumann et al. (2000), I provided a picture of the influence of one state policy on teaching and learning during an era of curriculum reform, high-stakes, and accountability.

Florida teachers teach in a highly politicized state with aggressive structures in place to enforce compliance with state policies. The Just Read, Florida! Initiative mirrored the core elements of the federal NCLB policies. I collected data for this study six years after the signing of the NCLB Act, which allowed enough time to explore the effect of contemporary policies in this state. The teachers' responses are illustrative of how policies, in the state of Florida, are articulated in teachers' instructional practices and beliefs. I revisit my research questions by emphasizing key elements mandated in the K-12 Reading Plan by the Just Read, Florida! Initiative and discuss differences between teachers today and teachers of the past in light of the different political contexts.

**Research Question 1: What are the instructional practices and beliefs related to reading instruction as reported by Florida elementary teachers?**

Contemporary teachers reported a “balanced approach” to reading instruction combining skills development with literature and language-rich activities. However, a majority of the teachers rarely referenced literature-based practices —an important component of balanced reading instruction – in their survey responses. These teachers also reported an “eclectic” attitude toward reading instruction. Today’s teachers employed a mix of instructional materials

to support the teaching and learning of their students, although they relied most on a single basal reading program and leveled guided reading books. Their “teaching” centered on the “Big 5: fluency, comprehension, phonemic awareness, phonics and vocabulary” (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Florida Department of Education, 2005d).

Additionally, Florida teachers reported that they rarely allocated instructional time for independent reading. Today’s teachers modified their curriculum in order to allocate a sizeable amount of instructional time preparing students for high-stakes assessments. They utilized authentic assessments less often, but relied heavily on standardized assessments for instructional decision-making.

I asked teachers to indicate changes and challenges. Commonly noted changes to their teaching were those mandated by the district or state, such as the mandated inclusion of the 90-minute reading block. The greatest challenges these teachers cited were the lack of parental support and student’s lack of background experiences and motivation.

**Research Question 2: Are teachers’ self-reported instructional practices of today significantly different from those reported prior to the inception of NCLB?**

Considering the differing political contexts of the two samples of teachers, significant differences were identified that underscore the influence of state and federal educational policy on teaching. Contemporary Florida policies provided an outline to illustrate significant differences between teachers today and those of the past.

**Comprehensive Core-Reading Programs**

Just Read, Florida! (Executive Order 01-260) required the FLDOE to inventory, review and recommend statewide standards for reading programs. As such, the Florida Center for Reading Research identified five core-reading programs that fulfilled the requirements of scientifically based curriculum materials. Schools acknowledged as Reading First schools and

receiving funding were required to adopt one of the state identified comprehensive core-reading programs. According to the current data, Florida districts and schools have complied. Only 4% of the teachers sampled from Florida reported not using one of the state approved core-reading programs. Further aligned with contemporary policies, Florida teachers reported using a basal series as the foundation to their reading program while incorporating trade books within the basal program significantly more than the 1996 sample of teachers. Although state policies existed in the late 1990s limiting which basal series could be purchased with state funds, waivers were available creating more flexibility to purchase materials not included on state approved lists. However, strict policy guidelines mandating only “scientifically based” reading programs as outlined in current Florida policies were not in place.

The dominant theoretical trends during the 1990s wavered between whole language and phonics based instruction moving toward a balanced approach. Likewise, data from the 1996 sample of teachers was representative of a quickly fading whole language approach regarding instructional materials. Within the group of teachers of the past, teachers reported using fiction trade books and commercial classroom libraries most often. Indicative of the times, teachers from the mid 1990s used literature anthologies and fiction trade books significantly more than contemporary teachers. However, when looking across the Florida sample of teachers’ use of instructional materials, these teachers were utilizing a greater variety of instructional materials than teachers of the past.

Teachers’ use of a variety of instructional materials represents a contemporary trend towards commercialization. Teachers today use a variety of commercially produced materials (e.g., basals, commercial libraries, guided reading books, workbooks) significantly more than teachers from the 1990s, which is indicative of the policies mandating the use of commercially

produced reading programs (which have been marketed by conglomerates as “scientifically research based”).

### **Classroom Instruction**

In addition to using a comprehensive core-reading program, Just Read, Florida! required teachers to use scientifically based reading research, as outlined in the Florida’s Formula for Success (Table 2-1) within the “K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan”, to guide their instruction. The Formula stipulated that instruction be explicit and systematic focused on fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, phonics and phonemic awareness. Following this instruction, teachers were encouraged to provide differentiated instruction.

Comparing the two samples of teachers, it is evident that Florida teachers reported instructional practices aligned with the explicit and systematic instruction proposed under Florida policy. The explicit and systematic instruction mandated in Florida policies reflects a teacher-centered instructional stance with an emphasis on skills. These teachers spent significantly more instructional time daily than teachers of the past on “reading instruction where they taught skill or strategy lessons or reading groups.” On the other hand, teachers of the past spent more time than today’s teachers on student-centered activities such as “applying, practicing, and extending reading instruction (e.g., reading aloud to children, students’ independent reading or DEAR periods, student-led response groups, cooperative reading activities”). These data again illustrated how teachers’ instruction mirrored the dominant theoretical and political milieus.

Looking specifically at what topics of instruction teachers spent the most time on, teachers in 2006 spent a considerable amount of time on vocabulary, comprehension, and phonics/decoding. Contemporary teachers reported they spent significantly more instructional time on these topics than teachers of the past. Likewise, these topics were 3 of the 5 essential

components of reading instruction identified by the National Reading Panel. For the other two essential components, fluency and phonemic awareness, statistically significant differences were not calculated because these topics were not included on the original survey instrument used in the Baumann et al. (2000) study. The mere fact that these components of reading instruction were not included on the past survey is notable. Phonemic awareness and fluency were not even on the radar then, which speaks to the changed theoretical assumptions of the present era.

Turning to the organization of classroom instruction and instructional time, Florida policy, as explicitly outlined in the “K-12 Comprehensive Core Reading Plan” states:

“An initial lesson from the CCRP usually consists of 30-40 minutes per day of the required 90 minute uninterrupted reading block (the 90 minutes is a minimum time required). For the remainder of the block, the teacher should then differentiate instruction focusing on the need of students using the CCRP or SRP (Supplemental Reading Program). In addition to the 90-plus minutes, the classroom teacher, special education teacher, or reading resource teacher will provide immediate intensive intervention to children in need (as determined by a diagnostic assessment).”

Florida teachers, as previously described, have adhered to this policy. A high percentage of teachers use the basal as the foundation to their reading program. However, a recent analysis of mandated core-reading programs in Florida (McGill-Franzen et al., 2006) found that core-reading programs provided an array of side notes highlighting “tips” and “strategies” for working with diverse learners. Overall, however, the instructional focus and organization of the core-reading programs focused on the “average” learners.

This analysis revealed core-reading program manuals focused on whole-group instruction with little explicit guidance or materials for supporting the range of learners (McGill-Franzen et al., 2006). In light of this research, using the core-reading program as outlined in Florida policy may be challenging for a novice teacher who hasn’t the experience to navigate the core-reading program manuals to sufficiently differentiate instruction to instruct a range of learners. As a

result, this policy guideline appears to be contradictory: use a core-reading program for a majority of your instructional program, but differentiate instruction.

In terms of organizational structure reported by the two samples of teachers, significant differences were found. These differences, however, do not align with their other reported practices. For example, as already noted, teachers in 1996 represented their instruction as a student-centered approach to reading and reported their organizational structure for reading as whole class, a typically teacher-centered approach; whereas, contemporary teachers reported they used flexible grouping as their dominant organizational structure, a student-centered approach to reading. I present two potential explanations for the dissonance in responses.

One explanation could be the lack of coherence in professional terminology used by educators. Teachers from both samples reported organizational structures atypical of the dominant theoretical trends of the era. For example, the 1996 sample reported they used a “whole class” organizational structure to teach reading, but used fiction trade books and individual conferences with students. Whole-class instruction, in my view, pertains to instruction in one group on one level with the teacher dominating. Given the materials and activities used most by these teachers, I hypothesize they did not fully understand this definition.

Florida teachers on the other hand reported using flexible grouping and ability grouping most often to organize for reading instruction. I would suggest that Florida teachers do teach predominately using a whole class organizational structure if they faithfully implemented the procedures laid out in the core program manual. It may be that Florida teachers are grouping flexibly between classes or by ability across classes (e.g., one teacher teaches the lowest readers, one teacher teaches the average readers), and their definition of flexible and ability grouping is skewed. As previously noted, basals or core-reading programs are organized to teach the

average student. I contend it would take an expert teacher, as the Florida sample of teachers may be, to differentiate instruction and provide flexible grouping to a range of learners. This is a potential explanation; however, I cannot validate this interpretation. I can only say that the organizational structures reported by both samples of teachers were not aligned with their reported practices and beliefs.

A remarkable finding arose in the data related to instructional time. Florida policy required teachers to provide 90 minutes of instruction to the teaching of reading. However, when adding the average amount of time teachers allotted to different reading activities, both samples of teachers reported an average of 2 ½ hours. It is interesting that teachers of the past reported spending this amount of time on reading instruction and then policies were revised requiring a minimum of 90 minutes. Perhaps, teachers of the past over-estimated the amount of time they spent actively involved in teaching and learning. Or, Florida's policy guidelines for instructional time may be naïve in assuming that instructional time was a problem. As the past data identified, teachers were already spending over 90 minutes on reading instruction.

Returning to the quote provided in the K-12 CCRP, those students identified through diagnostic assessments as “in need”, will receive immediate intensive intervention (iii) by a special education teacher, classroom teacher, or reading teacher in addition to the required 90 minutes. No baseline data is available from the teachers of the past regarding interventions, however, Allington and McGill-Franzen (1989) documented that interventions, often times, impinged on classroom reading instructional time rather than adding instructional time to reading. Looking at the data for Florida teachers, a significant percentage of teachers reported interventions available at their schools. Interventions most widely noted included tutoring and pullout programs.

### **Reading Coaches**

Districts in the state of Florida are required to allocate resources to hire reading/literacy coaches for their lowest performing schools. Conceivably, this explains the influx of teachers holding specialized positions (e.g., reading coach) today as compared to the past. This number is likely to rise. Districts are required under current policy to increase yearly the number of reading/literacy coaches from the prior year. Florida allotted significant funds to an unprecedented professional development plan for the training of reading coaches. However, only 25% of the reading coaches held reading teacher/specialist certification. Apparently, the time and money allotted to developing the expertise of the reading coaches via professional development may have contributed towards a more positive view of reading coaches by classroom teachers. Teachers in Florida were significantly more pleased than teachers of the past with the support they received from reading coaches.

### **Highly Qualified Teachers**

According to Just Read, Florida!, “... any teacher teaching elementary reading courses must have one of the following qualifications: K-12 reading endorsement, K-12 reading certification, or elementary education certification. Federal law requirements of NCLB for teacher quality must be met by the end of the 2005-2006 school year – specifically, June 30, 2006” (Florida Department of Education, 2005). I collected data at the end of the school year (2005-2006) in which all Florida teachers at the elementary level were to be certified. At that time, 1.2% of the Florida sample was not certified. One reason for this may be that 12.4% of my sample responded “other” to the question regarding their teaching position. Responses varied from assistant principal, assistant superintendent, music teacher, or physical education teacher. Given these “other” teachers roles, certification may not be required under policy guidelines.

## **Professional Development**

Just Read, Florida! required professional development addressing: fidelity of implementation of all instructional materials, all reading programs, and strategies based on scientific reading research, as well as professional development instructing on the use of screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based progress monitoring assessments and other procedures for meeting the needs of struggling readers (Florida Department of Education, 2005). Again, no baseline data were available for the 1996 sample of teachers. Historically, states have failed to provide, or fund, the professional development needed to develop teacher expertise (Allington & Cunningham, 2002). By contrast, Florida policy outlined the need for and requirements for professional development and provided the money to do so. During the 2003-04 school year alone, \$52 million went toward professional development, teacher materials, reading coaches, and classroom library improvement (Florida Department of Education, 2005b). The FLDOE website reported over 8,000 teachers statewide attended Just Read, Florida! reading academies to learn the latest in scientifically based reading research (Florida Department of Education, 2005d).

My data revealed an alignment with Just Read, Florida!. Teachers attended professional development related to assessment and instruction as outlined by the policy. My sample of teachers received professional development at their school sites related to standardized assessments (e.g., FCAT and DIBELS). “Professional development is best found at the school level where teachers have formal and informal opportunities to interact with peers and where coaches and mentors can tailor support to individual teachers working with particular students on specific subject matter” (Valencia et al., p.117).

Districts also offered professional development related to instruction (e.g., use of instructional reading programs, reading strategies, curriculum-based measures). Required

professional development topics focused on accommodating ESOL students, DIBELS, progress monitoring and student reading improvement, and reading strategies. When left to choose their own professional development topics, teachers attended professional development on reading strategies and technology use.

Teachers today, on average, attended 204 hours of professional development over the past three years. This is the equivalent to over 60 hours a year of professional development.

Contemporary Florida policies outlined professional development guidelines and funded this professional development. My data revealed, however, that only 18% of teachers today attended graduate courses as compared to 55% of teachers from the past. As well, only 19% of teachers today enrolled in graduate degree programs as compared to 38% of teachers from the past. Perhaps the decline in teachers attending graduate school is indicative of the times. A former Secretary of Education stated that “schools of education and formal teacher training programs are failing to produce the types of highly-qualified teachers that the NCLB Act demands” (as cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006; p.vii). It seems from the data that teachers today are attending professional development rather than seeking knowledge through university programs.

### **Assessments**

Florida responded to federal legislation by mandating an aggressive standardized assessment (FCAT) tied to retention in grade as well as the assignment of school grades with punitive stakes tied to poor performance (Florida Department of Education, 2007). Florida policy required students to be tested as early as Kindergarten (e.g., on the DIBELS) (Florida Department of Education, 2007b). Today’s teachers reported they used a mix of assessments for varied purposes. However, these teachers tend to favor conventional assessment measures over alternative methods employed by teachers of the past. Florida teachers of today used standardized fluency assessments (e.g., DIBELS) considerably for grouping students, making

instructional decisions (instructional planning), identifying students at risk (screening) or skills to emphasize, and to determine if skills are improving (progress monitoring).

Researchers in the field of reading and psychometrics agree using one standardized achievement test to measure students success or failure is unreliable (Allington, 2002; Baker, Linn, Herman & Koretz, 2002). Despite the potential limitations of using one test, Florida policy continues to mandate this practice. Much research indicates that emphasizing teachers' knowledge of their students, including information gathered through the regular use of informal assessments, would arguably provide a more reliable basis for instructional placement decisions (Buly & Valencia, 2002; Hartke, 1999; Hodges, 1997). Teachers need to observe children actively reading and responding to literature to ascertain their strengths and weaknesses and to inform their instructional decision-making (Clay, 1993). In order to provide students with adequate instruction, teachers need valid and useful assessments to guide their instruction. Nevertheless, Florida policies mandated a heavy reliance on standardized assessments and teachers have had to comply.

Following the dominant theoretical and pedagogical trends of the times, teachers of the 1990s reported employing authentic assessment measures (e.g., student interviews). Again, these teachers reported instructional practices supported a student-centered approach symbolic of the era.

NCLB demanded more accountability. Florida has fully adhered to these policies, and as a result, Florida teachers are under increased pressure to have students succeed. This conclusion is evident in the amount of time teachers dedicated to test preparation. Teachers of today reported they spent an average of 329 hours a year on test preparation compared to a mere 43 hours reported by teachers in the past. It is unlikely that teachers in Florida spent this inordinate

amount of time on test preparation. This inflated number may be another indication of the sense of pressure and the loss of autonomy with regard to curricular decision-making that teachers feel. Although research doesn't support the increased emphasis on test preparation to improve student scores (Guthrie, 2002), the trend of Florida teachers to do so is apparent.

### **Limitations**

The design of this study is limited to self-reported data of teachers' instructional beliefs and practices. In particular, this study only identified the instructional beliefs and practices reported by the Florida teachers who responded to this survey. Given that my goal in administering the survey was to describe the impact of current federal policies on the instructional practices and beliefs of Florida teachers and compare these responses to those of teachers in the recent past, the self-report design was necessary. Sunderman et al. (2004) explained the limitations and values of surveys: "... opinion surveys have limits as a source of policy guidance, but teachers' views are very important to the success of any educational reform plan ... (p.8)." However, this survey data of self-reported instructional practices could not be confirmed through observations of classroom teaching. Limited resources did not allow for this element of research.

This study is also limited by not being directly comparable to the survey data from the past. The sample in the Baumann et al. (2000) study was a national sample, representing states whose policies and contexts may have been different from Florida. It was not possible to extract the responses of Florida teachers from the 1996 national sample to make direct comparisons between past Florida teachers to Florida teachers today.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study explored and demystified Florida teachers' beliefs and instructional practices related to reading instruction. I compared the responses of this sample of Florida teachers with those of a national sample of teachers in 1996 in order to assess the influences of the changed

federal and state policy context. Future research is needed to examine teachers' instructional practices and beliefs in relation to student achievement. Research such as this may isolate instructional practices and beliefs that are most likely to contribute to student learning.

Researchers have suggested the negative impact of NCLB on teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). Research exploring how teachers grapple with their day-to-day decision making while also attending to the complexities of their classrooms, as well as the mandated curriculum, could provide insight for policymakers.

### **Implications**

When comparing reading instruction today to instruction in the 1990s, there are more differences than similarities. Baumann et al. (2000) discussed the original *First R* conducted in the 1960s and noted that instruction in the 1960s consisted of a skills-based emphasis with a heavy reliance on commercial core reading programs, along with an emphasis on standardized rather than informal assessments. Instruction during this period focused on the *product* of learning rather than the *process*. Revisiting those key elements of reading instruction identified in the *First R* study by Austin and Morrison, a cyclical trend in instructional practices and beliefs is apparent between teachers today and teachers in the 1960s. Teachers of today favor instructional practices and beliefs that were more prominent in the 1960s than they are in the 1990s. Is this progress?

The design of contemporary policies which focus on the outcome of teaching via high-stakes assessments and increased accountability delimit the value of "how" teaching and learning occurs (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). States, such as Florida, readily aligned their policies in order to federal policies to qualify for funding. In doing so, according to my data, teachers have significantly modified their curriculum and instruction in a manner consistent with the knowledge transmission model of teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). The

conundrum with contemporary practices being so closely aligned with policies, as so desired in the past, is that today's policies are the direct result of the report of the National Reading Panel, notwithstanding the narrow research base of the NRP report, which ignored pertinent scientific evidence related to reading research and instruction (Allington, 2002; Pressley, 2001). The NRP report influenced legislation and, thereby, the instructional practices and materials mandated for use and now implemented in Florida schools.

I contend, if contemporary legislation is going to permeate teaching and learning as extensively as we have seen, then policies need to be designed that truly support a more balanced approach to literacy that has long been supported in the research literature (Pressley, 1998). Enforcing only "scientifically research based" practices and materials not only ignores a vast majority of research (Allington, 2002; Cunningham, 2001), but neglects the extant knowledge and beliefs that teachers possess. I argue for, as David Pearson (2004) described, an "ecologically balanced approach" to teaching and learning. Teaching from an ecologically balanced approach theoretically and pedagogically integrates a range of fields of research within education, and respects the basic wisdom of teachers. This type of approach, if truly implemented and practiced, values the moment-to-moment decision making of teachers based on what they know about their students and learning. Teachers today are limited in their choices around curriculum and instructional practices, leaving them void of agency (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). An ecologically balanced approach values teachers as autonomous individuals, capable of employing historically proven practices and materials suitable to the complexities of the contexts in which they teach. Perhaps if we adopted this transformative view of teaching and learning, rather than the cyclical view (either – or model), that historically has plagued the educational field (Pearson, 20004), we would be making progress rather than backtracking.

## **Conclusions**

As we entered the 21st Century, some researchers suggested an overall public opinion that “public education has failed and drastic change is needed” (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2000). Changes are evident in Florida teachers’ instructional practices and beliefs, but whether these changes are superior to past practices cannot be determined from my data alone. Florida is a state that has fully adhered to the “back to basics” and phonics approaches proposed under NCLB and supported through Just Read, Florida!. Baumann et. al. (2000) described reading instruction in the 1990s as having “great energy in classrooms and administrators offices; a commitment to children, teaching, and learning; and a desire to move elementary reading instruction forward in spite of the many challenges public educators face” (p. 361). Has the energy that teachers of the past invested in literature-based instruction, integrated skills, process writing, and alternative assessment been stifled by the teacher-centered, top-down classrooms of today?

This study identified instructional practices and beliefs prevalent during two distinct political and educational eras. Historically, linking policy to practice was documented as a challenge (Kirst, 2000). McGill-Franzen (2000), in her thorough review of policies effect on classroom instruction, described the “waves” of policy implementation throughout different historical times in education. She concluded that although policies have an effect on classroom instruction, they are one of a myriad of influences that affect instruction. Notwithstanding the influence of multiple actors in the day-to-day teaching and learning in classrooms, my data suggests that contemporary Florida policies are omnipresent in teachers reported instructional practices and beliefs. My data verified that teachers of today, on average, are adopting the basic tenets of contemporary legislation as reported in their instructional practices and beliefs. Perhaps, unlike past federal policy initiatives, NCLB has unequivocally aligned policies with assessments,

materials, curriculum, and professional development. NCLB ensured that federally identified instructional materials, content, and practices would be implemented via professional development, promulgation of extant policy documents and websites (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). States and districts either adhered to these policies or risked losing federal funding for reading. Heavy-handed federal mandates such as these, while claiming to provide local control to states and districts, potentially minimized local control at the teacher level (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006).

We must question whether all these state propagated instructional practices, materials and mandated assessments are the panacea? Is this the state's way of standardizing teaching? While implementing scientifically research based practices and materials appear idealistic on paper, teachers lose the autonomy to choose what and how to instruct their students. As Bronfenbrenner (1977) noted, individuals do not develop in isolation. Teachers must work within their environment as they consider their students' backgrounds, abilities, and attitudes, the curriculum and materials they have available, and the political context at the local, state, and national levels. These variables, rather than policies alone, in conjunction with teachers' personal epistemologies, background knowledge, and experiences, ultimately affect the "what" and "how" of teaching across classrooms (Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, 2002).

McGill-Franzen (2000) warns, "a coherent policy environment is not enough to improve ... instruction" (p. 900). The current educational milieu is ignoring the contextualized act of teaching. Spillane and Jennings (1997) contend that if ambitious reading pedagogy is desired, then the tasks and discourse of instruction must change, rather than just the materials and activities (as cited in McGill-Franzen, 2000). Florida policy has succeeded in promulgating the "scientifically based" mantra throughout their adopted philosophies, practices, and materials.

While compliance with contemporary policies is noted, are we neglecting to empower the teacher who possesses the pedagogical and content knowledge necessary to teach a wide range of learners, and whose understanding of the diversities within their classrooms are so vital? Could the imposition of a sweeping policy driven context disarm the expert teacher whose practice is “contextualized” and “mindful,” centered on individual students rather than a mandated program?

“Teaching may be too complicated, too embedded in context and too tied to individual beliefs and knowledge for policy to have a predictable and consistent effect. That is not to say that policy has no effect, because it does, but it does so as one of myriad influences that make up the context of teaching and learning” (McGill-Franzen, 2000; p. 21).

This study documents changes in teachers’ practice that aligned with contemporary Florida and national policies. Only time will reveal whether this standardization of curriculum materials and practice leads to the stated goal of “leaving no child behind.”

**Table 5-1 Summary of Findings**

	Similarities	Differences	
		1996	2006
Overall profile of teachers and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White females</li> <li>• Educated mostly through a regular 4 yrs. Teacher ed. Program</li> <li>• Students' nationalities are diverse from low to middle income families</li> <li>• Vastly professionally active</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• K-5 teachers of one grade level and multi-grade teachers predominates</li> <li>• Teachers sought certification in a post baccalaureate program.</li> <li>• Average years teaching 16</li> <li>• Lukewarm evaluation of preservice courses in reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• trend towards teachers in specialized teaching positions (e.g., special education, reading coach, other)</li> <li>• slight movement towards receiving certification through Master's programs or alternative certification routes</li> <li>• average years teaching 13</li> <li>• larger student teacher ratio (inclusion of more special education/exceptional students)</li> <li>• dominating professional activities included attending national conferences, reading professional magazines and conducting classroom research</li> <li>• growing satisfaction with preservice preparation programs</li> </ul>
Philosophy and Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eclectic attitude with a balanced approach to literacy pervaded</li> <li>• Believed phonics needs to be taught explicitly to beginning readers in order for students to become fluent, skillful readers</li> <li>• Instructional goals continued to focus on skillful, strategic readers who are independent, motivated readers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• believed materials, both basals and literature-based instruction were important</li> <li>• whole language teachers represented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• believed students need to be immersed in literature and literacy experiences in order to become fluent readers and decode words is one of my most important goals for early reading instruction</li> </ul>

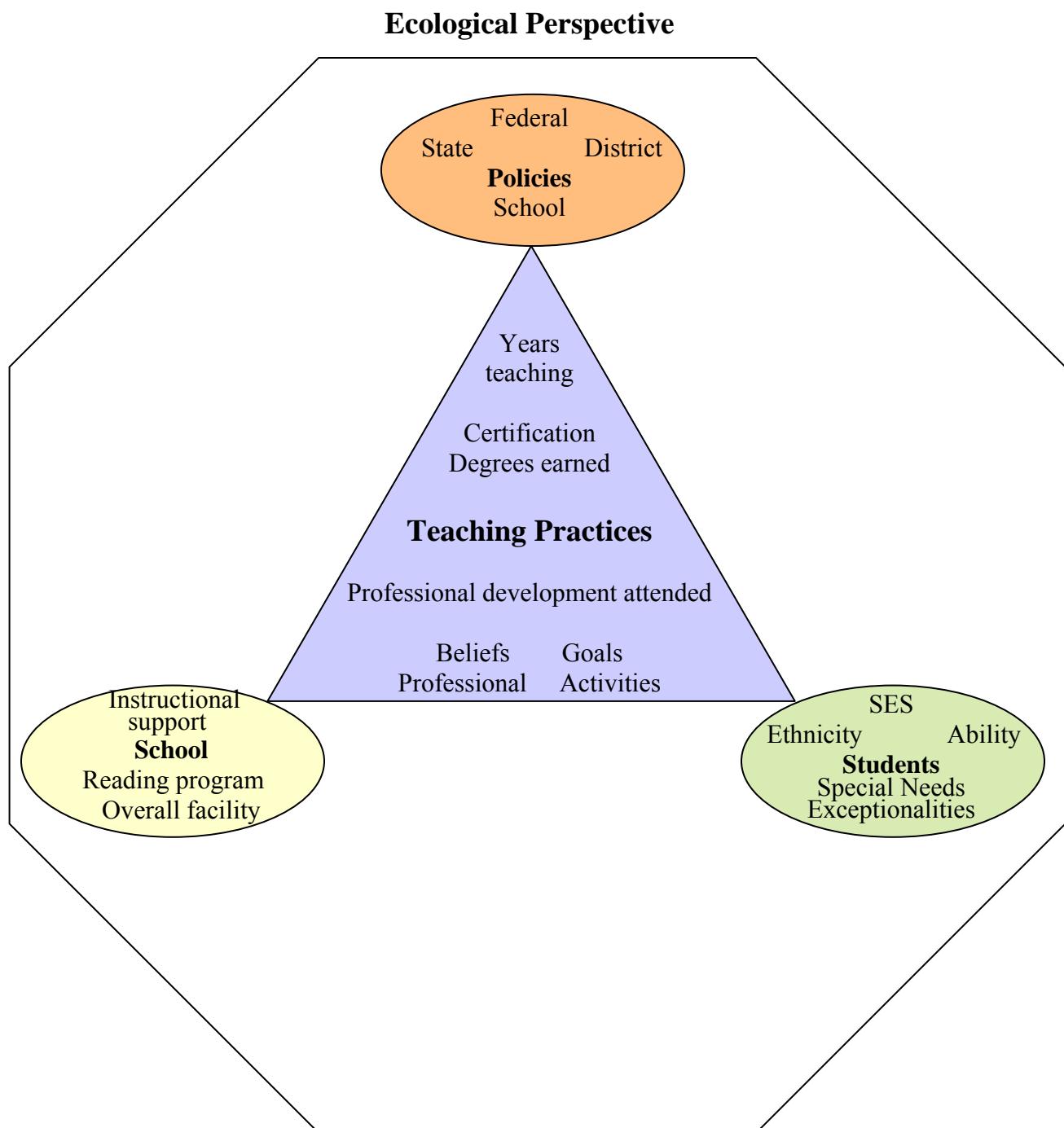
•Table 5-1. Continued

Instructional time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant time dedicated to reading instruction focused specifically on vocabulary, critical reading, oral reading by students, phonics/decoding and reading independently</li> <li>Little Instructional time on literature circles, language experience charts, &amp; handwriting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate time allotted to silent reading and spelling instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant amount of time dedicated to reading instruction and significantly less time dedicated to reading independently</li> <li>Considerable time dedicated to comprehension instruction</li> <li>Moderate amounts of time allotted to phonemic awareness, comprehension, phonemic awareness, and fluency instruction.</li> </ul>
Instructional Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate use of nonfiction trade books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widespread trade books use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single basal series as foundation to reading program dominated</li> <li>Moderate presence of leveled guided reading books dominated</li> </ul>
Beginning reading instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergent literacy perspective prevailed</li> <li>High incidences of reading aloud</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Synthetic phonics taught directly and explicitly in meaningful ways</li> <li>Exposure to literature and independent, self-selected reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching varied word reading strategies is essential</li> <li>Phonic analysis taught predominately through synthetic phonics and word family analysis</li> <li>Phonics and word identification lessons, working with word cards, and oral lang. activities</li> </ul>
Organizing for instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-contained classroom structures common</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole-class instruction dominates with flexible grouping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of pull-out programs and coaching models</li> <li>Flexible grouping dominates with some ability grouping common</li> </ul>
Reading assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers relied on a mix of conventional assessments measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commonly used alternative assessment measures (e.g., portfolios and observational checklists)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerable use of standardized fluency assessments (e.g., DIBELS)</li> <li>Teachers modified their teaching for mandatory assessments</li> <li>Significant amount of hours spent preparing to take assessments</li> </ul>

•Table 5-1. Continued

Teaching struggling and gifted readers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pull-out programs for gifted students less available than programs for struggling readers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority of classroom teachers adapt instruction to accommodate diverse learners</li> <li>Lukewarm evaluation of resource teachers for gifted and struggling readers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers adapt instruction to accommodate struggling readers and gifted readers, although half the teachers report no gifted students.</li> <li>Lukewarm evaluation of gifted resource teachers</li> <li>Teachers are pleased with reading resource teachers</li> <li>Interventions for struggling readers widely documented</li> </ul>
Changes and Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes and innovations in reading programs common</li> <li>Lack of parental support a significant challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most common changes: adoption of a new philosophy or program (often literature-based) and accommodating struggling readers</li> <li>Greatest challenges: accommodating struggling readers and lack of support (parent, administrative, funding) for reading programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most common changes: addition of 90 minute reading block, new philosophy (to balanced), integration of reading strategies and new program</li> <li>Mix of changes spurred by teachers and state or district mandates</li> <li>Greatest challenge: time, lack of parental support, students' lack of background experiences and motivation</li> </ul>

APPENDIX A  
THEORETICAL SCHEMATIC



## APPENDIX B INFORMED CONSENT

**\*\*INFORMED CONSENT SENT VIA E-MAIL TO FLORIDA ELEMENTARY TEACHERS\*\***

**Dear Florida Teacher,**

Many teachers across the state are participating with the University of Florida in a study of the practices of Florida teachers entitled: *Reading Instruction during the NCLB Years: The First R Revisited*. The information gathered will help us analyze if teachers' instructional practice has been impacted by the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2001. We would like your cooperation taking this on-line survey.

**Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study**

**Time Required:** Survey completion – approximately 15 - 20 minutes.

**Risks and Benefits:** There are no risks associated with participation in this study. By participating in the study, you may help policy makers and other stakeholders understand the type of reading instruction students are receiving and how NCLB is understood at the school-level.

**Compensation:** You will not receive compensation for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided under the law. Your identity and responses will only be available to the research team members. Identification numbers will be created for all participants to keep track of your specific responses. We will use the ID# in our analyses of data, not your name. After we compile the data for analyses, your specific answers will be de-identified, as they will be combined together with all the other teachers' responses.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

**Right to withdraw from the study:** You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

**Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:** Jacqueline Love Zeig, M.Ed., Doctoral Fellow, School of Teaching and Learning, 2403 Norman Hall, 392-9191 ([jelove@ufl.edu](mailto:jelove@ufl.edu)) or Diane Yendol Hoppey PhD, School of Teaching and Learning Norman Hall, 392-9191.

**Whom to contact if you have questions about your right as a research participant in the study:**  
UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250, ph 392-0433

By clicking on the link below, you are stating that you have read the above material, and voluntarily agree to participate in this survey.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=190101937449>

***Thank you for joining with us in this project.***

Regards,  
**Diane Yendol Hoppey & Jacqueline Love Zeig**  
University of Florida

## APPENDIX C

### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**Teacher survey: National Reading Research Center** (originally published Baumann et al., 2000). Adapted by Jacqueline Love Zeig (2007)

#### **Florida Elementary Reading Instruction Survey**

Directions: *Please respond to the following questions that inquire about elementary reading instruction in your classroom and school.*

##### **Teacher education and professional development**

1. What is your current teaching position?

- K–5 classroom teacher of just one grade level (I teach grade \_\_\_\_\_)
- K–5 classroom teacher in a multi-grade class (I teach grades \_\_\_\_\_)
- prekindergarten teacher
- pre-first-grade/transitional first-grade teacher
- special reading teacher (e.g., Title I)
- reading coach
- special education teacher
- other (specify position \_\_\_\_\_)

2. What is the highest degree you have earned?

- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Specialist
- Doctorate

3. What year did you earn the degree? (Open-ended)

4. How many total years have you spent as an elementary teacher? (Open-ended)

5. What is your gender (circle one number)?

- female
- male

6. What is your racial or ethnic identity?

- Black/African American
- White/European American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American/Eskimo
- multiracial
- other racial or ethnic group

7. What kind of teacher education program led to your elementary certification?
- a regular 4-year B.A. or B.S. certification program
  - a 5-year B.A. or B.S. program (which might include hours toward a master's degree)
  - a post baccalaureate certification program (e.g., you earned a bachelor's degree and then got certified).
  - a master's degree certification program (e.g., you got certified while earning a master's)
  - an "alternative" post baccalaureate certification program (e.g., some other certification route following your completion of a B.A. or B.S. degree outside education. I am not certified to teach at the elementary level (continued)
  - I am not certified to teach at the elementary level
8. If you indicated that you received an "alternate" certification in question 7, please specify the type of alternative certification program. (Open-ended)
9. Have you earned Florida reading teacher/specialist certification?
- Yes
  - No
10. What is your evaluation of the quality of your overall elementary teacher certification program?
1. totally inadequate
  2. poor
  3. adequate
  4. very good
  5. exceptional
11. What is your evaluation of the quality of the preparation you received for teaching reading and language arts within your teacher certification program?
1. totally inadequate
  2. poor
  3. adequate
  4. very good
  5. exceptional
12. What activities do you engage in to further your professional knowledge and skill in teaching reading and language arts? (you may choose more than one response)
- attend workshops, in-services, or staff development courses
  - attend local, state, or regional professional conferences
  - attend national conferences
  - present at local, state, regional, or national conferences
  - enroll in college or university courses in education
  - enroll in a graduate degree program in education
  - read professional magazines or journals
  - write articles for professional education newsletters, periodical, or journals

- membership in professional organizations
- serve in a leadership role in a professional organization (e.g., officer, board member, committee chair)
- conduct research in your own classroom, either alone or in collaboration with others
- other (please specify)

13. What topics of professional development have you been involved in to improve the reading proficiency of your students? For each topic, you choose please, indicate whether this professional development was *school-based* or *district-based* and whether your attendance was *voluntary* or *required*.
- professional development with a specific focus on FCAT preparation
  - professional development for reading strategies
  - professional development in progress monitoring and student reading improvement
  - professional development in curriculum based measures
  - Professional development with a specific focus on DIBELS
  - professional development on reading research
  - professional development specifically related to how to use your current Basal reading series
  - professional development on how to align your instruction with the Sunshine State Standards
  - professional development related to technology use
  - professional development with a specific focus on Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (DAR)
  - professional development with a focus on writing for Florida Writes
  - professional development for how to accommodate struggling readers
  - professional development for how to accommodate ESOL students
  - professional development for designing interventions
  - professional development with a specific focus on Direct Instruction
14. How many total hours of professional development points have you earned in the last 3 years?
15. How would you assess your school facilities, for example, overall physical condition, classroom size and condition, special instructional areas, library, playground?
1. totally inadequate
  2. poor
  3. adequate
  4. very good
  5. exceptional
16. How many full-time regular education students do you have in your classroom? Do not include here children identified as special or exceptional students. (If you teach in a departmentalized organization, describe your homeroom class for items 17 through 19)

17. How many children identified as special education or exceptional students are “included” or “mainstreamed” in your classroom on a full-time or part-time basis (e.g., learning disabled, gifted, physically handicapped, emotionally/behaviorally disordered students)? Write 0 if you have no special/exceptional students in your classroom.
18. What is your assessment of the economic situation of the families of all regular and special/exceptional students in your classroom? Estimate the percentage of students who fit within each classification. Write 0 if you have no students within a particular classification. The combination of your answers should total 100%.
- \_\_\_\_\_ % of my students' families are at a low-income level  
\_\_\_\_\_ % of my students' families are at a middle-income level  
\_\_\_\_\_ % of my students' families are at an upper-income level
19. What is your assessment of the racial or cultural make-up of all regular and special/exceptional students in your classroom? Estimate the percentage of students who fit within each classification. Write 0 if you have no students within a particular classification. The combination of your answers should total 100%.
- \_\_\_\_\_ % black or African American students  
\_\_\_\_\_ % white or European American students  
\_\_\_\_\_ % Hispanic or Latino students  
\_\_\_\_\_ % Asian or Pacific Islander students  
\_\_\_\_\_ % Native American or Eskimo students  
\_\_\_\_\_ % multiracial students  
\_\_\_\_\_ % students of other racial or ethnic groups

### **Teacher beliefs/philosophical orientation**

20. The following statements represent various perspectives, philosophies, or beliefs toward the teaching and learning of reading. Choose all of the following statements that apply to you personally (e.g., you may mark multiple responses).
- I would describe myself as “skills-based” when it comes to reading methods and materials.
  - I have an “eclectic” attitude toward reading instruction, which means that I would draw from multiple perspectives and sets of materials when teaching reading.
  - I would describe myself as a whole language teacher.
  - I believe in a balanced approach to reading instruction, which combines skills development with literature and language-rich activities.
  - I believe that teaching students to decode words is one of my most important goals for early reading instruction.
  - I believe that phonics needs to be taught explicitly to beginning readers in order for students to become fluent, skillful readers.
  - I believe in a literature-based approach to reading instruction in which trade books (e.g., children’s books or library books) would be used exclusively or heavily.
  - I believe that basal reading materials are useful tools for teaching students to read, as the primary instructional material.

- I believe students need to be immersed in literature and literacy experiences in order to become fluent readers.

21. The following statements represent various goals or objectives that teachers might have for a reading instructional program. Choose all of the following statements that apply to you personally (e.g., you may mark multiple responses).
- It is my goal to develop readers who are skillful and strategic in phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension.
  - It is my goal to develop readers who are critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live.
  - It is my goal to develop readers who are independent and motivated to choose, appreciate, and enjoy literature.
  - It is my goal to develop readers who are knowledgeable about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures.
  - Additional goal(s) I have (open-ended)

#### **Instructional time**

22. Estimate the total average time (in minutes) you spend each school day for each of the following reading and language arts activities (Note: These three numbers should reflect an estimate of the total amount of time you spend each day for literacy-related instruction and activities.):

\_\_\_\_\_ minutes daily specifically for reading instruction (e.g., reading groups, skill or strategy lessons, teacher-guided reading of selections – this does not include worksheet practice or FCAT practice books)

\_\_\_\_\_ minutes daily for applying, practicing, and extending reading instruction (e.g., reading aloud to children, students' independent reading or DEAR periods, student-led response groups, cooperative reading activities)

\_\_\_\_\_ minutes daily for language arts instruction and practice (e.g., writing workshop, response journals, spelling, oral language activities)

\_\_\_\_\_ minutes daily for test preparation (e.g., FCAT practice, timed writing, etc.)

23. How much instructional time do you devote to the development of the following components or activities within your classroom reading and language arts program? (choose one response for each row [1-Considerable, 2-Moderate, 3-Little, 4-None]).

- reading vocabulary
- comprehension
- fluency
- phonemic awareness
- critical reading
- oral reading by students

- silent reading
- test preparation
- reading in the content areas
- phonics/decoding
- reading aloud to students
- students reading independently (e.g., Drop Everything And Read or Reading Workshop time)
- oral or written responses to literature
- Literature circles, book clubs, literature discussion groups
- comprehension strategy instruction
- process writing or Writing Workshop
- language experience stories or charts
- spelling lists, activities, or games
- handwriting instruction and practice
- technological applications to literacy (e.g., microcomputers, video, multimedia)

### **Instructional materials and libraries**

24. What reading instructional materials do you use in your classroom? (Choose one response for each row [1-Exclusively, 2-Predominately, 3-Moderately, 4-Infrequently, 5-Never])
- a single basal reading series
  - multiple basal reading series
  - literature anthologies
  - fiction trade books
  - nonfiction trade books
  - leveled guided reading books
  - commercial classroom libraries
  - phonics workbooks
  - general reading skills workbooks
  - magazines & newspapers
  - Big Books
  - picture trade books
  - chapter trade books
  - computer hardware and software
  - other instructional media (video/audiotapes and recorders, listening centers, filmstrips, etc.)
25. How do you use basal reading materials and trade books (e.g., children's books or library books) in your classroom-reading program? Choose the one response that best describes your teaching.
- I use basal reading materials as the only reading instructional materials in my classroom; that is, I use no trade books to teach reading.

- I use basal reading materials as the foundation of my reading program; in other words, my reading program is structured around the basal, but I incorporate trade books within the basal program.
  - I use trade books as the foundation for my reading program; in other words, my program is trade book based, but I use basals some of the time to supplement the trade books.
  - I use trade books as the only reading instructional materials in my classroom; that is, I use no basal materials to teach reading.
26. If basal reading materials are used in your school (whether you use them or not), when were they last adopted and which basal series was adopted?
27. How, if at all, do you teach reading skills and strategies in relation to reading instructional materials? Choose all of the following statements that apply to you personally (e.g., you may choose multiple responses).
- I teach the skills and strategies as presented in the basal program.
  - I select skills and strategies from the basal program, teaching only those skills that I feel my students need to learn.
  - I use the basal as a general guide for teaching skills and strategies, but I adapt or extend instruction from the basal significantly.
  - I supplement the basal program by teaching additional skills not covered well or at all in the basal.
  - I use the basal to identify reading skills, but I teach them in the context of trade books we are using.
  - I have constructed my own skills program, which I teach in conjunction with trade books we are reading.
  - I teach skills and strategies on the basis of ongoing informal observations and assessments of my students' learning.
  - I teach reading skills very little or not at all—either from the basal or through trade books.

### **Content Area Reading**

28. Do you teach reading through the content areas?

28. Yes

29. No

29. To what degree do you use trade books to support your content area studies in science, social studies, and mathematics; for example, using historical fiction and informational books in a social studies unit (choose one response per row) [Always, Often, Sometimes, Seldom, Hardly Ever)?
- in science
  - in social studies
  - in math

### **Organizing for instruction**

30. Which of the following structures comes closest to describing your classroom teaching situation (choose only one)?

- I teach in a totally self-contained classroom; that is, I teach all subjects and the same students all day long (with the possible exception of sending your students to “special teachers” for art, music, PE).
  - I teach primarily in a self-contained environment, but I do team teaching with one or more other teachers for reading or language classes; that is, we group for reading instruction across several classrooms on the basis of reading ability or interest.
  - I teach in a departmentalized environment; that is, I teach one or two specialized subjects all day long (e.g., reading, math, science, social studies), teaching students from other teachers’ classrooms at my grade level. List specific subject area(s) you teach
  - I teach in another environment (specify)
31. If you answered that you teach in a departmentalized environment in the last question, please specify the subjects that you teach. (Open-ended)
32. The following statements describe various ways to organize classroom-reading instruction. Choose all of the following statements that describe organizational plans you employ regularly in your classroom (e.g., you may mark multiple responses).
- I use ability groupings to teach reading; for example, placing all the “highest” readers in one group, all the “middle” readers in a second group, and all the “lowest” readers in a third group.
  - I use flexible reading groups in my classroom; that is, students might be grouped according to interest, genre, or skill need, but these groupings are not fixed and change regularly (select this category if you use structures such as Book Clubs, cooperative-learning groups, and mixed-ability groups).

- I teach reading as an individualized activity, designing special programs for each of my students; therefore, I do not formally group children for instruction.
  - I teach reading as a whole-class activity; that is, I do not generally group students for reading instruction.
  - I use another organizational plan (specify)
33. Which of the organizational structures described in the last question do you use as the primary or most frequent structure in your classroom reading program (choose only one response)?
- ability groupings
  - flexible groupings
  - individualized instruction
  - whole-class instruction
  - other organizational plan (specify)

#### **Accommodating gifted and struggling readers**

34. The following statements describe various ways to accommodate the needs of children in your classroom who may be gifted, talented, or accelerated readers. Choose all of the following statements that apply to your teaching situation (e.g., you may mark multiple responses).
- There is a pullout program for my gifted readers, which is taught by a special teacher for gifted and talented students.
  - A special teacher for gifted and talented students comes to my classroom and works with me to accommodate my most capable readers.
  - I adapt my classroom curriculum and my instruction to accommodate the special needs of my gifted and talented readers.
35. If you indicated in the last question that there are special support personnel who work with your gifted readers either in the classroom or in a pull-out program (e.g., you selected either of the first two options), how do you rate the effectiveness of these support services (choose one response)?
1. totally inadequate
  2. poor
  3. adequate
  4. very good
  5. exceptional

36. The following statements describe various ways to accommodate the needs of children in your classroom who may be struggling readers or experiencing reading difficulties. Choose all of the following statements that apply to your teaching situation (e.g., you may mark multiple responses).
- There is a pullout program for my struggling readers, which is taught by a special teacher for students experiencing difficulty in learning to read.
  - A special teacher trained to work with children who experience reading difficulties comes to my classroom and works with me to accommodate my struggling readers.
  - I adapt my classroom curriculum and my instruction to accommodate the special needs of my students who experience problems in learning to read.
  - A reading coach supports me in adapting instruction to meet the needs of my struggling readers.
  - A reading coach works one-on-one on a weekly basis with my struggling students.
37. If you indicated in the last question that a reading coach works with you or your students, how do you rate their effectiveness?
1. totally inadequate
  2. poor
  3. adequate
  4. very good
  5. exceptional

#### **Intervention and support for struggling readers**

38. Does your school provide interventions for students who are struggling with reading?
- Yes
  - No
39. If you answered yes to last question, please describe which types of interventions are used (Open-ended)
40. Of students who are involved in an intervention, how many receive 1 intervention **in addition to** regular classroom instruction?
41. How many students receive 2 or more interventions **in addition to** regular classroom instruction?

42. How many students receive 1 or more interventions **instead of** regular classroom instruction?

#### **Assessing reading development**

43. Select the following statement that best characterizes your overall approach to classroom reading assessment (choose only one response).

- I rely primarily on conventional assessment measures, for example, basal reader tests and district-administered standardized reading tests.
- I use a mix of conventional assessment measures (e.g., basal and standardized tests) and some informal assessments (e.g., Informal Reading Inventory).
- I am moving toward adopting various forms of alternative reading assessments (e.g., running records, anecdotal records, observational checklists, and informal inventories) and/or a portfolio approach to assessment in my classroom.
- I rely extensively on alternative reading assessments (e.g., running records, anecdotal records, observational checklists, informal inventories), and/or I am using a portfolio approach to assessment in my classroom.
- I basically don't engage in any conventional or alternative reading assessments

44. For each use of assessments, to what degree do you use results from the FCAT for these purposes? If your students do not take the FCAT, please skip this question [Considerable, Moderate, Little, Not at all]

- Identify students at risk
- Grouping decisions
- Identify skills to emphasize
- Determine if skills are improving
- Parent conferences

45. For each use of assessments, to what degree do you use results from DIBELS for these purposes? If your students do not take the DIBELS, please skip this question [Considerable, Moderate, Little, Not at all]

- Identify students at risk
- Grouping decisions
- Identify skills to emphasize
- Determine if skills are improving
- Parent conferences

46. For each use of assessments, to what degree do you use results from Basal Unit Tests for these purposes? If your students do not take the Basal Unit Tests, please skip this question [Considerable, Moderate, Little, Not at all]
- Identify students at risk
  - Grouping decisions
  - Identify skills to emphasize
  - Determine if skills are improving
  - Parent conferences
47. To what degree do you use results from the following types of assessments to make instructional decisions in your classroom? [Considerable, Moderate, Little, Not at All]
- group standardized reading tests (e.g., FCAT)
  - individual standardized reading tests
  - basal reader program unit/level skills tests
  - Informal Reading Inventories
  - running records
  - reading/writing portfolios
  - student interviews or conferences
  - reading miscue analysis
  - observational checklists/anecdotal records
  - emergent literacy surveys/assessments
  - informal phonics/decoding assessments
  - standardized fluency assessments (e.g., DIBELS)
  - informal fluency measures (e.g., WCPM)
48. The following statements describe various standardized or formal assessments. Choose all of the following types of assessments that you are required to administer to your students each school year (e.g., you may mark multiple responses).
- district-required standardized tests (e.g., FCAT, SAT-9) that include one or more reading subtests
  - state-mandated competency tests in reading and/or writing
  - district-required informal reading (e.g., informal reading inventories) and/or writing (e.g., essay) assessments
  - additional required or mandated assessment (specify)
49. About how many total hours do you and your students spend each year preparing to take (e.g., test-taking exercises or lessons) and actually taking the required assessments you indicated in the last question?  
\_\_\_\_\_ hours (write total hours per year)

50. Some teachers report that they feel so pressured by the required assessments (e.g., those listed in item 53) that they end up modifying their curriculum or instruction to conform to the mandatory assessments. To what degree do you modify your teaching to conform to mandatory assessments (Choose one response)?

- very much
- somewhat
- not at all

### **Overall school and classroom reading program**

51. How would you rate your overall school-reading program on the following criteria, giving your school a grade of A, B, C, D, or F for each (Choose one response per row)?

- Developing readers who are skillful and strategic in phonics/phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension.
- Developing readers who are critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live.
- Developing readers who are independent in choosing, appreciating, and enjoying literature.
- Developing readers who are knowledgeable about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures.
- Additional goal(s) my school has (specify)

52. How would you rate your overall classroom reading program on the following criteria, giving yourself a grade of A, B, C, D, or F for each (choose one response per row)?

- Developing readers who are skillful and strategic in phonics/phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension.
- Developing readers who are critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live.
- Developing readers who are independent in choosing, appreciating, and enjoying literature.
- Developing readers who are knowledgeable about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures.
- Additional goal(s) I have (specify)

## **Grade Level-Specific Questions**

The following sets of questions are age or grade specific. If you teach Pre-kindergarten, Kindergarten, Transitional First, First, or Second Grade, please answer items 53 through 56. Then skip to item 58 and complete the rest of the survey. Third, Fourth, or Fifth Grade, please skip to item 57 and answer it and all remaining questions in the survey.

### *Pre-K through second-grade questions*

53. What is your personal philosophy or perspective about reading programs for young children? Check the statement below that best matches your personal philosophy (choose one response).
- I believe in a reading readiness perspective; that is, a child's physical, intellectual and emotional maturity is directly related to success in reading and writing. Therefore, it is a teacher's job to provide students appropriate activities (e.g., visual, auditory, motor skill activities) to support or enhance their readiness for reading.
  - I believe in an emergent literacy perspective; that is, all children can benefit from early, meaningful reading and writing experiences (e.g., invented spelling, environmental print, being read to). Therefore, it is a teacher's job to provide students appropriate activities that will enable them to understand the functions and forms of literacy and to grow into conventional forms of reading and writing.
54. What is your opinion about the importance of teaching young children the following word reading strategies? (choose one response per row) [Essential, Important, Not important]
- teaching phonic analysis skills/strategies (decoding)
  - teaching structural or morphemic analysis skills/ strategies (meaningful parts of words)
  - teaching contextual analysis skills/strategies
  - (what word makes sense in a selection)
  - teaching words by sight (whole words)
  - teaching meaning vocabulary (word meanings)
55. If you believe that instruction in phonic analysis is “essential” or “important”, please choose all the statements below that describe how you teach phonics to your students (e.g., you may mark multiple responses).
- synthetic phonics (systematic instruction in which students are taught letter/sound correspondences first and then are taught how to decode words)
  - analytic phonics (systematic instruction in which students are taught some sight words first and then are taught phonics generalizations from these words)
  - instruction in phonics by way of word families or phonograms (e.g., -all,-ain, -ake words)
  - only as needed (not systematic instruction; rather, students are taught phonic analysis skills as the need arises)
  - in the context of literature (phonics skills are presented and taught through trade books or literature anthologies)

- in the context of writing and spelling (phonics skills are presented and taught through children's writing)
56. Which of the following materials, techniques, or activities are likely to be found in your Pre-kindergarten to Grade 2 classroom regularly (define “regularly” as three or more times per week)? Choose all of the following statements that apply to you personally (e.g., you may mark multiple responses).
- Big Books used instructionally
  - trade books used instructionally
  - basal readers used instructionally
  - children writing and conventional spelling is expected
  - children writing and invented spelling is accepted or encouraged
  - book handling demonstrations or activities
  - phonics and word identification lessons
  - reading aloud to children
  - oral language activities (e.g., songs, chant, poems, rhymes)
  - Reading Workshop time
  - Writing Workshop time
  - Reading response activities (e.g., oral, written, or artistic responses following a reading/listening activity)
  - Free reading periods (e.g., Drop Everything and Read, or Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading time)
  - journal writing time
  - Working with word cards (e.g., word banks, sentence strips, word sorts, flash cards, pocket charts)
- Note: If you are a prekindergarten, kindergarten, transitional first, first- or second-grade teacher, now skip to item 57.

*Third-through fifth-grade questions*

57. Which of the following materials, techniques, or activities are likely to be found in your Grade 3–5 classroom regularly (define “regularly” as three or more times per week)? Choose all of the following statements that apply to you personally (e.g., you may mark multiple responses).
- comprehension strategy instruction (e.g., making inferences, drawing conclusions)
  - instruction in comprehension monitoring (e.g., self-questioning, applying “fix-up” strategies such as rereading)
  - instruction in literary elements (e.g., characterization, mood, setting, narrative structure)
  - word identification instruction lessons (phonics, structural, or contextual analysis)
  - vocabulary lessons or activities to develop students’ knowledge of word meanings
  - literature response activities (e.g., discussion, written responses to literature)

- literature discussion groups (e.g., book clubs)
- trade books used instructionally
- basal readers used instructionally
- reading nonfiction trade books in order to learn about expository genres
- teaching reading strategies along with content subjects (e.g., teaching chronological text structure in the context of a social studies textbook lesson)
- Reading Workshop time
- Writing Workshop time
- critical reading lessons or activities

Open-ended questions

58. Have you made any major changes or innovations in your reading instructional program over the past several years? If you answer no, please skip to question 62
1. yes
  2. no

If you marked “yes” to the preceding, please respond to the following questions by telling about the most important or significant changes you have made:

59. What was the nature of the change or innovation? (specify)
60. Who initiated the change and what was the reason for the change or innovation? (specify)
61. Evaluate the success of the change or innovation. How is the change process proceeding? (specify)
62. As you work toward improving the quality of reading instruction in your classroom, what are the greatest challenges you face?

Thank you for your time and responses

## APPENDIX D

### FLORIDA TEACHERS' SURVEY RESPONSES

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2. What is the highest degree you have earned?

Bachelor's	58%
Master's	38%
Specialist	3%
Doctorate	0%

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4. How many total years have you spent as an elementary teacher?

---

Average 13  
years

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7. What kind of teacher education program led to your elementary certification?

a regular 4-year B.A. or B.S. certification program	76%
a 5-year B.A. or B.S. program	3%
a post baccalaureate certification program	6%
a master's degree certification program	8%
an "alternative" post baccalaureate certification program	6%
I am not certified to teach at the elementary level	1%

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9. Have you earned Florida reading teacher/specialist certification?

Yes	14%
No	86%

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10. What is your evaluation of the quality of your overall elementary teacher certification program?

exceptional	19%
very good	49%
adequate	28%
poor	4%
totally inadequate	0%

---

11. What is your evaluation of the quality of the preparation you received for teaching reading and language arts within your teacher certification program?

exceptional	16%
very good	38%

---

---

adequate	32%
poor	14%
totally inadequate	0%

---

12. What activities do you engage in to further your professional knowledge and skill in teaching reading and language arts? (you may choose more than one response)

---

attend workshops, in-services, or staff development courses	98%
attend local, state, or regional professional conferences	53%
attend national conferences	21%
present at local, state, regional, or national conferences	15%
enroll in college or university courses in education	18%
enroll in a graduate degree program in education	20%
read professional magazines or journals	81%
write articles for professional education newsletters, periodical, or journals	4%
membership in professional organizations	46%
serve in a leadership role in a professional organization	16%
conduct research in your own classroom, either alone or in collaboration with others	42%
Other	11%

---

13. What topics of professional development have you been involved in to improve the reading proficiency of your students? For each topic you choose please indicate whether this professional development was school-based or district-based and whether your attendance was voluntary or required.

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	School-based	District-based	Voluntary	Required
professional development with a specific focus on FCAT preparation	51%	30%	27%	34%
professional development for reading strategies	62%	57%	48%	42%
professional development in progress monitoring and student reading improvement	59%	43%	33%	42%
professional development in curriculum based measures	41%	36%	27%	28%
Professional development with a specific focus on DIBELS	51%	41%	18%	47%

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professional development on reading research	36%	30%	39%	18%
professional development specifically related to how to use your current Basal reading series	35%	45%	21%	36%
professional development on how to align your instruction with the Sunshine State Standards	44%	37%	25%	33%
professional development related to technology use	53%	33%	47%	23%
professional development with a specific focus on Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (DAR)	26%	24%	19%	19%
professional development with a focus on writing for Florida Writes	47%	30%	30%	30%
professional development for how to accommodate struggling readers	47%	42%	43%	27%
professional development for how to accommodate ESOL students	29%	52%	17%	45%
professional development for designing interventions	36%	29%	31%	21%
professional development with a specific focus on Direct Instruction	36%	31%	27%	24%

---

14. How many total hours of professional development points have you earned in the last 3 years?

---

Average 204

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15. How would you assess your school facilities, for example, overall physical condition, classroom size and condition, special instructional areas, library, playground?

---

Exceptional	15%
Very Good	34%
Adequate	34%
Poor	14%
Totally Inadequate	3%

---

20. The following statements represent various perspectives, philosophies, or beliefs toward the teaching and learning of reading. Choose all of the following statements that apply to you personally (i.e., you may mark multiple responses).

---

I would describe myself as “skills-based” when it comes to reading methods and materials.	41%
I have an “eclectic” attitude toward reading instruction, which means that I would draw from multiple perspectives and sets of materials when teaching	76%

---

reading.

I would describe myself as a whole language teacher.	19%
I believe in a balanced approach to reading instruction, which combines skills development with literature and language-rich activities.	89%
I believe that teaching students to decode words is one of my most important goals for early reading instruction.	58%
I believe that phonics needs to be taught explicitly to beginning readers in order for students to become fluent, skillful readers.	67%
I believe in a literature-based approach to reading instruction in which trade books	36%
I believe that basal reading materials are useful tools for teaching students to read, as the primary instructional material.	44%
I believe students need to be immersed in literature and literacy experiences in order to become fluent readers.	82%

---

21. The following statements represent various goals or objectives that teachers might have for a reading instructional program. Choose all of the following statements that apply to you personally (i.e., you may mark multiple responses).

It is my goal to develop readers who are skillful and strategic in phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension.	92%
It is my goal to develop readers who are critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live.	79%
It is my goal to develop readers who are independent and motivated to choose, appreciate, and enjoy literature.	90%
It is my goal to develop readers who are knowledgeable about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures.	64%

---

22. Estimate the total average time (in minutes) you spend each school day for each of the following reading and language arts activities (Note: These three numbers should reflect an estimate of the total amount of time you spend each day for literacy-related instruction and activities.):

Minutes daily specifically for reading instruction	77
Minutes daily for applying, practicing, and extending reading instruction	33

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Minutes daily for language arts instruction and practice	35
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Minutes daily for test preparation	16
------------------------------------	----

23. How much instructional time do you devote to the development of the following components or activities within your classroom reading and language arts program? (choose one response for each row).

	Considerate	Moderate	Little	None
reading vocabulary comprehension	45%	46%	8%	1%
fluency	48%	42%	9%	2%
phonemic awareness		33%	23%	3%
critical reading		44%	18%	4%
oral reading by students \		51%	16%	2%
silent reading		46%	24%	7%
test preparation	15%	37%	39%	10%
reading in the content areas	38%	42%	15%	6%
phonics/decoding	41%	34%	22%	2%
reading aloud to students	40%	46%	13%	1%
students read independently	28%	50%	18%	3%
oral or written responses to literature (Drop Everything or Reading Workshop)	16%	44%	31%	9%
Literature circles, book clubs, literature discussion groups		26%	39%	23%
comprehension strategy instruction	48%	37%	11%	4%
process writing or Writing Workshop	26%	45%	21%	8%
language experience stories or charts	16%	43%	29%	12%
spelling lists, activities, or games	16%	43%	34%	7%
handwriting instruction and practice	9%	23%	52%	17%
technological applications to literacy	13%	34%	41%	11%

24. What reading instructional materials do you use in your classroom? (Choose one response for each row)

	Exclusively	Predominantly	Moderately	Infrequently	Never
a single basal reading series	10%	45%	21%	10%	14%
multiple basal reading series	2%	12%	17%	25%	44%

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literature anthologies	2%	14%	32%	32%	21%
fiction trade books	2%	32%	52%	10%	4%
nonfiction trade books	2%	28%	51%	13%	6%
leveled guided reading books	7%	51%	30%	8%	5%
commercial classroom libraries	4%	27%	36%	17%	16%
phonics workbooks	6%	16%	26%	28%	25%
general reading skills workbooks	7%	22%	36%	22%	13%
magazines & newspapers	0%	10%	34%	40%	16%
big books	5%	21%	20%	24%	30%
picture trade books	4%	28%	31%	21%	17%
chapter trade books	3%	25%	41%	21%	10%
computer hardware and software	5%	25%	43%	19%	7%
other instructional media	5%	26%	47%	19%	4%

25. How do you use basal reading materials and trade books (i.e., children's books or library books) in your classroom reading program? Choose the one response that best describes your teaching.

I use basal reading materials as the only reading instructional materials in my classroom; that is, I use no trade books to teach reading.

3%

I use basal reading materials as the foundation of my reading program; in other words, my reading program is structured around the basal, but I incorporate trade books within the basal program.

71%

I use trade books as the foundation for my reading program; in other words, my program is trade book based, but I use basals some of the time to supplement the trade books.

12%

I use trade books as the only reading instructional materials in my classroom; that is, I use no basal materials to teach reading.

3%

Other

11%

27. How, if at all, do you teach reading skills and strategies in relation to reading instructional materials? Choose all of the following statements that apply to you personally (i.e., you may choose multiple responses).

I teach the skills and strategies as presented in the basal program.

37%

I select skills and strategies from the basal

23%

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program, teaching only those skills that I feel my students need to learn.

I use the basal as a general guide for teaching skills and strategies, but I adapt or extend instruction from the basal significantly.

I supplement the basal program by teaching additional skills not covered well or at all in the basal.

I use the basal to identify reading skills, but I teach them in the context of trade books we are using.

I have constructed my own skills program, which I teach in conjunction with trade books we are reading.

I teach skills and strategies on the basis of ongoing informal observations and assessments of my students' learning.

I teach reading skills very little or not at all—either from the basal or through trade books.

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28. Do you teach reading through the content areas?

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Yes	84%
No	16%

29. To what degree do you use trade books to support your content area studies in science, social studies, and mathematics; for example, using historical fiction and informational books in a social studies unit (choose one response per row)?

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	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Hardly Ever
In Science	22%	41%	24%	6%	7%
In Social Studies	22%	43%	24%	5%	7%
In Math	7%	22%	37%	22%	—

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30. Which of the following structures comes closest to describing your classroom teaching situation (choose only one)?

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I teach in a totally self-contained classroom; that is, I teach all subjects and the same students all day long

I teach primarily in a self-contained environment, but I do team teaching with one or more other teachers for reading or language classes; that is, we group for reading instruction across several classrooms on the basis of reading ability or interest.

I teach in a departmentalized environment; that is, I teach one or two specialized subjects all day long, teaching students from other teachers' classrooms at my

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grade level.

I teach in another environment	23%
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32. The following statements describe various ways to organize classroom reading instruction. Choose all of the following statements that describe organizational plans you employ regularly in your classroom (i.e., you may mark multiple responses).

I use ability groupings to teach reading; for example, placing all the “highest” readers in one group, all the “middle” readers in a second group, and all the “lowest” readers in a third group.	44%
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I use flexible reading groups in my classroom; that is, students might be grouped according to interest, genre, or skill need, but these groupings are not fixed and change regularly	58%
---	-----

I teach reading as an individualized activity, designing special programs for each of my students; therefore, I do not formally group children for instruction.	14%
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I teach reading as a whole-class activity; that is, I do not generally group students for reading instruction.	27%
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I use another organizational plan (describe)	20%
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33. Which of the organizational structures described in the last question do you use as the primary or most frequent structure in your classroom reading program (choose only one response)?

ability groupings	28%
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flexible groupings	39%
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individualized instruction	6%
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whole-class instruction	19%
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Other organizational plan (specify)	7%
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34. The following statements describe various ways to accommodate the needs of children in your classroom who may be gifted, talented, or accelerated readers. Choose all of the following statements that apply to your teaching situation (i.e., you may mark multiple responses).

There is a pull-out program for my gifted readers, which is taught by a special teacher for gifted and talented students.	29%
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A special teacher for gifted and talented students comes to my classroom and works with me to accommodate my most capable readers.	2%
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I adapt my classroom curriculum and my instruction to accommodate the special needs of my gifted and talented readers.	45%
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There are no gifted students in my class.	40%
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35. If you indicated in the last question that there are special support personnel who work with your gifted readers either in the classroom or in a pull-out program (i.e., you selected either of the first two options), how do you rate the effectiveness of these support services (choose one response)?

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Exceptional	17%
Very Good	35%
Adequate	35%
Poor	11%
Totally Inadequate	2%

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36. The following statements describe various ways to accommodate the needs of children in your classroom who may be struggling readers or experiencing reading difficulties. Choose all of the following statements that apply to your teaching situation (i.e., you may mark multiple responses).

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There is a pull-out program for my struggling readers, which is taught by a special teacher for students experiencing difficulty in learning to read.	41%
A special teacher trained to work with children who experience reading difficulties comes to my classroom and works with me to accommodate my struggling readers.	20%
I adapt my classroom curriculum and my instruction to accommodate the special needs of my students who experience problems in learning to read.	78%
A reading coach supports me in adapting instruction to meet the needs of my struggling readers.	36%
A reading coach works one-on-one on a weekly basis with my struggling students.	7%

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37. If you indicated in the last question that a reading coach works with you or your students, how do you rate their effectiveness?

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Exceptional	28%
Very good	40%
Adequate	22%
Poor	7%
Totally inadequate	4%

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38. Does your school provide interventions for students who are struggling with reading?

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Yes	88%
No	12%

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43. Select the following statement that best characterizes your overall approach to classroom reading assessment (choose only one response).

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I rely primarily on conventional assessment measures, for example, basal reader tests and district-administered standardized reading tests.	11%
I use a mix of conventional assessment measures and some informal assessments	55%
I am moving toward adopting various forms of alternative reading assessments and/or a portfolio approach to assessment in my classroom.	18%
I rely extensively on alternative reading assessments and/or I am using a portfolio approach to assessment in my classroom.	14%
I basically don't engage in any conventional or alternative reading assessments	2%

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44. For each use of assessments, to what degree do you use results from the FCAT for these purposes? If your students do not take the FCAT, please skip this question.

	Considerable	Moderately	Little	Not at all
Identify students at risk	55%	24%	7%	15%
Grouping decisions	24%	31%	24%	21%
Identify skills to emphasize	38%	35%	12%	15%
Determine if skills are improving	33%	28%	19%	21%
Parent conferences	27%	35%	20%	18%

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45. For each use of assessments, to what degree do you use results from DIBELS for these purposes? If your students do not take the DIBELS, please skip this question.

	Considerable	Moderately	Little	Not at all
Identify students at risk	57%	28%	9%	6%
Grouping decisions	36%	32%	19%	14%
Identify skills to emphasize	41%	29%	17%	14%
Determine if skills are improving	51%	30%	11%	8%
Parent conferences	31%	37%	19%	13%

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46. For each use of assessments, to what degree do you use results from the Basal Unit Tests for these purposes? If your students do not take Basal Unit tests, please skip this question.

	Considerable	Moderately	Little	Not at all
Identify students at risk	35%	41%	16%	9%
Grouping decisions	25%	44%	17%	14%
Identify skills to emphasize	42%	37%	12%	9%
Determine if skills are improving	41%	40%	12%	8%
Parent conferences	25%	40%	22%	13%

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47. To what degree do you use results from the following types of assessments to make instructional decisions in your classroom?

	Considerate	Moderate	Little	Not at all
group standardized reading tests (i.e. FCAT)	27%	28%	16%	29%
individual standardized reading tests	30%	38%	15%	17%
basal reader program unit/level skills tests	25%	40%	20%	15%
Informal Reading Inventories	29%	42%	17%	12%
running records	31%	33%	17%	19%
reading/writing portfolios	23%	37%	24%	16%
student interviews or conferences	14%	31%	34%	21%
reading miscue analysis	19%	31%	24%	27%
observational checklists/anecdotal records	28%	34%	25%	13%
emergent literacy surveys/assessments	14%	29%	28%	28%
informal phonics/decoding assessments	25%	37%	23%	15%
standardized fluency assessments (i.e. DIBELS)	37%	36%	18%	9%
informal fluency measures (i.e. WCPM)	17%	27%	19%	37%

48. The following statements describe various standardized or formal assessments. Choose all of the following types of assessments that you are required to administer to your students each school year (i.e., you may mark multiple responses).

district-required standardized tests (e.g., FCAT, SAT-9) that include one or more reading subtests	84%
state-mandated competency tests in reading and/or writing	61%
district-required informal reading and/or writing assessments	75%

50. Some teachers report that they feel so pressured by the required assessments that they end up modifying their curriculum or instruction to conform to the mandatory assessments. To what degree do you modify your teaching to conform to mandatory assessments (Choose one response)?

Very much	39%
Somewhat	48%
Not at all	14%

51. How would you rate your overall school reading program on the following criteria, giving your school a grade of A, B, C, D, or F for each (Choose one response per row)?

	A	B	C	D	F
Developing readers who are skillful and strategic in phonics/phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension	41%	41%	15%	3%	1%

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Developing readers who are critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live. 28% 38% 25% 7% 2%

Developing readers who are independent in choosing, appreciating, and enjoying literature. 34% 33% 23% 8% 2%

Developing readers who are knowledgeable about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures. 30% 34% 26% 8% 2%

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52. How would you rate your overall classroom reading program on the following criteria, giving yourself a grade of A, B, C, D, or F for each (choose one response per row)?

	A	B	C	D	F
Developing readers who are skillful and strategic in phonics/phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension.	49%	41%	9%	1%	0%
Developing readers who are critical and thoughtful in using reading and writing to learn about people and ideas, and how they might use literacy to positively affect the world in which they live.	33%	46%	18%	7%	0%
Developing readers who are independent in choosing, appreciating, and enjoying literature.	47%	37%	13%	2%	1%
Developing readers who are knowledgeable about literary forms or genres and about different text types or structures.	36%	39%	22%	3%	1%

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53. What is your personal philosophy or perspective about reading programs for young children? Check the statement below that best matches your personal philosophy (choose one response).

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I believe in a reading readiness perspective; that is, a child's physical, intellectual and emotional maturity is directly related to success in reading and writing. 32%

I believe in an emergent literacy perspective; that is, all children can benefit from early, meaningful reading and writing experiences 63%

I do not agree with either of these statements 5%

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54. What is your opinion about the importance of teaching young children the following word reading strategies? (choose one response per row)

	Essential	Important	Not Important
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teaching phonic analysis skills/strategies	82%	17%	1%
teaching structural or morphemic analysis skills/ strategies	58%	41%	2%
teaching contextual analysis skills/strategies	67%	32%	1%
teaching words by sight	64%	36%	1%
teaching meaning vocabulary	71%	27%	2%

55. If you believe that instruction in phonic analysis is “essential” or “important”, please choose all the statements below that describe how you teach phonics to your students (i.e., you may mark multiple responses).

synthetic phonics	78%
analytic phonics	44%
instruction in phonics by way of word families or phonograms	78%
only as needed in the context of literature	18%
in the context of writing and spelling	54%

56. Which of the following materials, techniques, or activities are likely to be found in your Prekindergarten to Grade 2 classroom regularly (define “regularly” as three or more times per week)? Choose all of the following statements that apply to you personally (i.e., you may mark multiple responses).

Big Books used instructionally	79%
Trade books used instructionally	82%
Basal readers used instructionally	75%
Children writing and conventional spelling is expected	49%
Children writing and invented spelling is accepted or encouraged	83%
Book handling demonstrations or activities	73%
Phonics and word identification lessons	92%
Reading aloud to children	97%
Oral language activities	86%
Reading Workshop time	58%
Writing Workshop time	62%
Reading response activities	81%
Free reading periods	77%
Journal writing time	72%
Working with word cards	87%

57. Which of the following materials, techniques, or activities are likely to be found in your Grade 3–5 classroom regularly (define “regularly” as three or more times per week)? Choose all of the following statements that apply to you personally (i.e., you may mark multiple responses).

Comprehension strategy instruction	93%
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Instruction in comprehension monitoring	83%
Instruction in literary elements	75%
Word identification instruction lessons	75%
Vocabulary lessons or activities to develop students' knowledge of word meanings	90%
Literature response activities	77%
Literature discussion groups	48%
Trade books used instructionally	71%
Basal readers used instructionally	80%
Reading nonfiction trade books in order to learn about expository genres	67%
teaching reading strategies along with content subjects	61%
reading workshop time	50%
writing workshop time	58%
critical reading lessons or activities	60%

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jacqueline Love Zeig was born in Newark, New Jersey to Linda and Duane Love. She graduated from the University of Tampa with a bachelor's degree in elementary education, and then taught elementary school in Tampa, Florida before attending the University of Florida where she received her master's degree in reading education and a specialist degree in curriculum and instruction.

She has taught both preservice and inservice teachers in undergraduate as well as graduate courses. She has been involved as well as a researcher on federally funded grants. Jacqueline also has worked as a professional developer. Currently, Jacqueline resides in Gainesville, Florida with her husband, Bryan, and their three children.