

Spring 4-2015

## Reading Interventions in Relation to the Ohio Third Grade Reading Guarantee

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# Reading Interventions in Relation to the Ohio Third Grade Reading Guarantee



Honors Thesis

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Department: Teacher Education

Advisor: Mary-Kate Sableski, Ph.D.

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## Abstract

Reading is one of the most critical skills that students learn in their first few years of education. A strong foundation in reading at the early childhood level can promote success in the rest of schooling and beyond. This is especially true for children of poverty; reading abilities and the strong education that follows provide students with opportunities to break the poverty cycle. The importance of reading achievement is a political dimension, as demonstrated by Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee. This legislation, which has many implications in education, requires that all third grade students who do not pass the Reading section of the Ohio Achievement Assessment must be retained until they are on reading level. In order to prevent this retention, teachers may choose to implement a reading intervention program with students who are at-risk of retention in third grade. Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham, two reading programs that use different approaches to literacy instruction, have been approved by the Ohio Department of Education to be used for this purpose. The research conducted in this study will look into the factors affecting a low-income school's decision to select one of these two programs. The research will follow a case study format, in which interviews will be conducted with principals and teachers in the selected high poverty schools. The interviews, along with collected data about these schools and the two programs, will provide an illustration of how the Third Grade Reading Guarantee is affecting curriculum, as well as how schools are choosing these reading programs in accordance with the new legislation.

## Dedication or Acknowledgements *[as preferred]*

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals for their support on this project: Dr. Mary-Kate Sableski, Dr. Connie Bowman, Dr. Patricia Hart, and the interview subjects for their time, support, and interest.



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## Chapter 1

### *An Introduction to the Research Study*

#### **Section 1: Background of the Problem**

For the last several decades, reading achievement has been one of the most debated and researched topics in education. The ability to read greatly affects the future educational performance of students; therefore early childhood education continues to emphasize early literacy achievement. Educational researchers constantly work to improve reading instruction at the early grades in order to prevent future difficulties. As education continues to be a political topic of interest for many, legislators are increasingly becoming involved in this research and are searching for solutions to the growing problem of reading difficulties in schools. The Ohio Revised Code states, “Beginning with students who enter third grade in the 2013-2014 school year... no school district shall promote to fourth grade any student who does not attain at least the equivalent level of achievement...” (RC 3313.608). The “Third Grade Reading Guarantee”, created with Ohio Senate Bill 316, is an attempt by legislators to enforce a higher standard for reading instruction and ensure that students can read fluently by the end of third grade. All children in Ohio will be screened for at-risk reading skills beginning in kindergarten. The identified struggling readers will then participate in additional reading instruction outside of the general classroom instruction as an attempt to improve their skills with the objective of all children reading on grade level. If a child is not on grade level by the third grade, as designated by his or her standardized reading test proficiency score, he or she will be retained in reading until he or she reaches grade

level. It is important to note that students have the option to progress to fourth grade level in all other subjects in which they are on level. This policy has an especially immense impact on low-income schools, which often face the challenges of working with students who enter kindergarten already behind due to external socioeconomic factors.

Along with the announcement of this policy, the ODE released a list of approved reading programs that can be used as interventions for the at-risk reading populations of students in grades kindergarten through third grade. The list includes thirteen programs or specialist licenses that are approved and endorsed by ODE as research-based instructional methods for struggling readers. Many of these reading programs have a long history, and can be seen along the continuum of approaches to literacy instruction. Educational researches often find their views on effective reading instruction fall into the polarizing camps of literature-based instruction or phonics instruction. This debate has continued for several years, and policies have regularly shifted between the two approaches depending on the current trends. The latest iteration of this debate presents itself in the form of reading programs chosen under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Two of these programs include Orton Gillingham, which approaches reading instruction from a phonetic approach, and Reading Recovery, which is more of a literature-based approach to literacy instruction. Because these programs are on opposite ends of the spectrum, schools might choose one over the other for a variety of reasons.

This research study will examine the factors that affect the decision of schools as they decide which reading intervention program to select to support their students. The research was conducted as two case studies of teachers that have chosen different reading instruction programs from the list provided by ODE. Many factors were compiled,

including background information and demographics about the selected schools. The research included interviews with professionals of both schools who are working with the instructional programs. The interviews delved into the factors behind their choice in programs. The research was supplemented with observations of training sessions for each program and supporting background research. As the Third Grade Reading Guarantee and reading achievement in general are highly relevant and crucial topics in education currently, this research will provide insights into schools that are currently affected by this policy and how they are choosing to respond to the new demands. The choice in reading instructional programs has long-term impact on the future of students, as it is these programs that determine the need for retention in the third grade. They will also provide the foundation for the educational success of these students. The research question is *What factors influence a low-income school's decision about specific reading instruction programs for struggling readers as a part of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee?*

### **Definition of Terms**

**Low-income schools** - For this specific study, a low-income school is described as a school from a district with a “1”, “4”, “7”, or “8” typology rating from the 2013 Typology by the Ohio Department of Education (2013). The typology is designated are as follows:

1. Rural – High Student Poverty & Small Student Population
4. Small Town – High Student Poverty & Average Student Population Size
7. Urban – High Student Poverty & Average Student Population
8. Urban – Very High Student Poverty & Very Large Student Population

**Reading Recovery** – Reading Recovery is one of the research-based reading programs selected by the Ohio Department of Education that can be used to help at-risk students reach on grade level (2013). The program is a twelve-to-twenty week intervention given to at-risk first grade students that emphasizes individualized instruction with a highly trained teacher or reading specialist (Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007). Reading Recovery continues to be researched and shown as effective.

**Orton Gillingham** – Orton Gillingham is an approach to reading instruction that is based on the research of Samuel Orton and Anna Gillingham. An Orton Gillingham-based instructional program involves multisensory education practices as well as a focus on phonics as the means to improve literacy skills in at-risk populations (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010). This program has been designated as an effective program in regards to the Third Grade Reading Guarantee by the Ohio Department of Education (2013).

**Third Grade Reading Guarantee** – Ohio’s Third Grade Reading Guarantee is a policy put in place to promote reading achievement in the early grades. The policy states that at-risk students identified as “below grade level” in reading from kindergarten through third grade will begin intervention services in order to get them to grade level (ODE, 2013). If they are not successful in getting on grade level by the end of third grade, students will be retained until they are on level (2013).

**Achievement gap** – The achievement gap refers to the differences in school success between student populations, most notably between students of different socioeconomic statuses, races, or gender. Typically, students who are middle to upper

class perform higher in all subject areas than students who are in low-income households.

**Ohio Department of Education (ODE)** – The Ohio Department of Education is the statewide government body that makes decisions that affect school districts across the state.

**Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAA)** – The Ohio Achievement Assessments are the state of Ohio’s standard-aligned assessments given to students beginning in third grade through eighth grade. There is a separate test for each of the major subject areas (reading, writing, science, social studies, and math). Students in third grade take only the math and reading assessments, and the Reading OAA is the primary assessment used to designate students as proficient or non-proficient in relation to the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

**Alternative assessments** – ODE has approved several other vendor assessments to be used to designate proficiency in relation to the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, if the student does not receive the designated score on the Ohio Achievement Assessment. The scores are correlated with the proficiency score on the OAA.

**Diagnostic assessment** – A diagnostic assessment is one that is administered to all students to provide information about a student’s strengths and weaknesses at the beginning of a school year, unit, or lesson. Ohio’s Diagnostic Assessments are used to check how students are progressing related to the grade-level standards (ODE, 2014).

**Multisensory education** – instruction that uses multiple senses to share information, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic instruction (Scheffel, et al., 2010).

**Intervention** - in education, an intervention occurs when a student needs additional instruction in a content area or on specific skill other than what is provided in the general education classroom.

### **Limitations and Assumptions of the Study**

As with any research, there are limitations to this study. While the purpose of a case study is to examine one specific example of the research question in depth, this kind of research can be limiting in that it is by definition a singular case. The research found on the chosen subjects may not apply to similar examples due to the specificity of this research. Another limitation is the selection of schools that fall under Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Several other states, including Florida and Texas, have implemented similar plans to raise reading achievement, but these programs do have differences from Ohio's. The research of this study is limited to Ohio. This research is also limited in that it is a specific study of urban low-income schools. More information could be gained if the research was extended to middle- and high-income schools, or rural schools as well. Finally, the research of this study is also limited due to the inability to actually be in the classroom with students to observe effects of this legislation. Ideally, this research would include observation of implementation of these reading instruction methods in the classroom, but due to the constraints of undergraduate research, this was not possible for this study.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

Reading achievement is a dominant topic in the current education climate. As this topic rises to the forefront of education for parents, teachers, and legislators, programs are being developed in order to support struggling readers. A select few of these programs,

including Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham, have been approved by the Ohio Department of Education as effective, research-based reading interventions that can be used as a part of their recent Third Grade Reading Guarantee. As these programs are different, the research question for this study is *What factors influence a low-income school's decision about specific reading instruction programs for struggling readers as a part of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee?* The research will be conducted through two case studies of low-income Ohio elementary schools, one using Reading Recovery and the other using Orton Gillingham as reading interventions. The case studies will include interviews with professionals who are implementing these programs with students and who have extensive knowledge of how they help students succeed. The factors that affect the decision behind the selection of each literacy instruction method will provide insight into this prevalent topic in the education.

## Chapter 2

### *Review of the Literature*

#### **Section #1 – Reading Achievement**

The success of students in school cannot be discussed without including literacy skills. Reading and writing skills are considered to be “passports to achievement” in other areas of curriculum (Wamba, 2010). Without a strong foundation in literacy skills at a young age, children will be hindered in their future educational growth (Wamba, 2010). The reading skills learned in the primary grades provide access to all future knowledge a student will acquire. Reading is especially important to begin in the earliest years of school, as children who do not learn to read early will continue to be poor readers throughout their educational career (Wamba, 2010). When children enter first grade with a foundation in pre-literacy skills, they will be more likely to succeed in reading-related activities (Ming & Powell, 2010).

Reading is especially important for children of poverty. Often children who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds do not have adequate exposure to literature or experiences that will help them to acquire these pre-literacy skills (Ming & Powell, 2010). These beneficial experiences that they could be missing include print materials in the home, oral reading experiences, adult oral interactions, and engagement with text in community settings (Ming & Powell, 2010). According to Wamba (2010), literacy skills play a role in moving people out of poverty and breaking the cycle. Proficiency in reading and writing is critical for children from low-income homes.

Literacy is also seen as a way to lessen the achievement gap that exists across the country between children of low-income homes and children from middle or upper class

homes. Without the inclusion of literacy skill development, these students can enter school and already be up to two years behind their peers academically (Ming & Powell, 2010). This can mark the beginning of a gap in the educational progress of these student populations. Specifically, a language gap can exist between students of affluent backgrounds and those of low-socioeconomic backgrounds as early as the age of eighteen months (Rich, 2013). These middle and upper class students might hear up to 30 million more words than their lower-income peers by age three, and because oral language and vocabulary is so connected to reading comprehension, this can have an impact on the future reading abilities of these students (Rich, 2013). These achievement and language gaps continue to grow as children progress through schooling and emphasize the importance of literacy instruction in the early years in order to limit the expansion of these gaps. The closing of the growing achievement gap is one of the main goals of national and state legislation, such as No Child Left Behind in the United States (Kennedy, 2010).

Literacy skills can be developed in students from high-poverty schools through high quality educators. Many economically disadvantaged students will have their first literacy experiences in an early childhood classroom, so it is important for their teachers to be well equipped to provide quality reading instruction (Ming & Powell, 2010). Instructional techniques that teachers can employ in an early childhood setting include literacy-enriched play settings (i.e., block area, library center) and shared storybook reading with specific techniques for increased child participation (Ming & Powell, 2010). A study by Kennedy (2010) emphasizes the importance of professional development for reading teachers. Teachers from an underachieving school participated

in a thorough professional development training that included implementation of a reading intervention program for students. The students improved in reading, writing, and spelling after completion of the program, and the teachers were more satisfied and confident in their work (Kennedy, 2010). Early literacy development can also be incorporated into the lives of students by parents or family in the home life through phonological awareness activities and print-rich environments, as well as by health care professionals who can provide literature recommendations and model reading activities (Ming & Powel, 2010).

## **Section #2 – Ohio Legislation**

As reading achievement continues to rise to the forefront of educators, it in turn has caught the attention of legislators across the country. Reading success is the key of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, which was a major push in widespread educational reform at a governmental level (Wamba, 2010). Many states in the nation have begun to pressure their school districts into formulating some sort of reading achievement program. In 2012, Ohio legislators voted to increase the impact of their Third Grade Reading Guarantee (Ohio Department of Education [ODE], 2013).

According to legislation that became effective in the 2013-2014 school year, any third grade public school student who does not earn a passing score on the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA) in Reading (392 for the 2013-2014 school year) is required to be retained in the third grade (ODE, 2013). Previously, the student had the option of being promoted if the principal and teacher found an alternative reading assessment that demonstrated academic preparedness for fourth grade, or to move up to fourth grade with intensive reading interventions (ODE, 2013). Additionally, students

have the option to demonstrate reading proficiency using an alternate assessment if they do not reach the designated score on the OAA (ODE, 2014). Students must reach a “promotion score”, which has been aligned to the cut score on the OAA, on one of these alternative assessments to move to fourth grade in reading (ODE, 2014). These assessments include the Iowa Assessments Form F Level 9 (grade 3), the Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measure of Academic Progress, or the Terra Nova 3 (ODE, 2014). While districts are not required legally to administer any alternative assessments, parents may request them and students are permitted to take them up to three times in a calendar year (ODE, 2014).

Exceptions to the new policy include students with limited English proficiency, special education students with Individualized Education Program (IEP) exemptions, students who display competency on an approved alternative assessment, or any student who has been previously retained and has received intervention for two years (ODE, 2013). It is important to note that if the student is proficient in other content areas, they must receive appropriate grade level instruction in those areas despite retention in reading (ODE, 2013). Students may also be promoted after completing a summer intervention program and reaching the score mid-summer, or may be promoted mid-year upon reaching the cut score on the OAA or alternative assessment, and retained third-grade students are eligible to receive external reading instruction funded by the district, if requested by the parents or guardians (ODE, 2014).

The process begins with a state-approved reading diagnostic test in kindergarten and continues each year through third grade (ODE, 2013). Diagnostic assessments must be administered by September 30<sup>th</sup> of each school year (ODE, 2014). Schools can choose

to screen students using ODE’s K-3 reading diagnostic assessment, or select another assessment from the Approved Vendor Comparable Assessments list provided by ODE, although the administration of these assessments will not be covered by the department (ODE, 2014). The approved screeners include:

Figure 1

<b>Vendor</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Form C</b>
Amplify Wireless Generation	mCLASS: DIBELS Next	mCLASS: DIBELS Next
Cambium	DIBELS Next	DIBELS Next DIBELS Next Cost
Curriculum & Associates	iReady Diagnostic	iReady DX
Global Scholar	Performance Series Reading	Performance Series Reading
NWEA	MAP for Reading Assessments (K-3)	MAP for Reading Assessments (K-3)
Pearson Clinical Assessment	Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests	WRMT-III Form C
Pearson Clinical Assessment	AIMSWEB	AIMSWEB
Pearson School	Developmental Reading Assessment	Developmental Reading
Pearson School	Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE)	Group Reading Assessment
Renaissance Learning	STAR Reading Enterprise	STAR Reading
Renaissance Learning	STAR Early Literacy Enterprise	STAR Early Literacy
Scholastic, Inc.	Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)	Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)

Source: ODE, 2014.

After receiving scores from one of the above diagnostics or the ODE Diagnostic, students will then be designated as either “on-track”, meaning on or above grade level based on content standards, or “not on-track”, meaning below grade level based on content standards (ODE, 2013). Students who are in the “not on-track” category will then immediately receive a research-based reading intervention that will be specifically targeted towards the student’s learning needs, as well as a reading improvement and monitoring plan (ODE, 2013). The student will keep receiving interventions as needed up through third grade and in fourth grade if retained. Teachers of these students are required to have at least one year of teaching experience and at least one of the following reading qualifications (ODE, 2014):

- K-12 reading endorsement, or
- Master’s degree in reading or literacy, or
- “Above expected” rating for value added in reading instruction for two consecutive school years, or
- “Most effective” designation for reading instruction for two consecutive school years using approved instrument of student growth, or
- Passing score on test of research-based reading instruction (Praxis 5203), or
- Alternative credential or successful completion of approved training for reading instruction.

Teachers receiving their pre-K-3 or 4-9 license in Ohio after July 1, 2017, will pass an exam over reading instruction that will serve as their qualification for teaching these students.

The Ohio Department of Education has provided districts with a list of approved programs that teachers with the qualifications mentioned above can use with students who require intervention services, beginning in kindergarten. The programs were selected based on several criteria that were designed to hold programs to high credibility standards. According to the ODE (2013), “the program must support the development, intervention and acceleration of reading in children” and has to incorporate differentiated instruction, screening and process monitoring, alignment to the Common Core State Standards, cross-curricular literacy encouragement, and culturally responsive teaching. Likewise, any educator who is implementing one of these approved programs is held to a similar set of criteria to promote quality intervention services. The list of ODE (2013) approved programs is as follows:

- Literacy Specialist Endorsement
- TESOL Endorsement
- Active National Board Certification- Early and Middle Childhood (applies to literacy, reading, language arts)
- IMSLEC (International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council), ALTA (Academic Language Therapy Association), AOGPE (Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators)
- Reading Recovery
- Literacy Collaborative (coach or teacher)
- Success for All (SFA)
- Wilson Language Training- Wilson Reading System Level 1 Certification

- Orton-Gillingham (30 hour-training) / IMSE (Institute for Multi-Sensory Education) \*must include practicum
- Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI)
- CLLIP (Collaborative Language and Literacy Instruction Program)
- AFTCRIP (American Federation of Teachers Comprehensive Reading Instruction Program)

Districts and schools may select any of these programs when working with students in grades kindergarten through third grade, as well as when working with students who have been retained at the end of third grade. The research of this study will focus on two specific programs from this list, Reading Recovery and Orton-Gillingham / IMSE.

### **Section #3 – Reading Recovery**

Reading Recovery started in the U.S. in 1984 with the goal of providing an intensive reading program for first grade students in order to prevent future difficulties with reading and writing tasks (Reading Recovery Council of North America [RRCNA], 2013). Dr. Marie Clay originally developed the program in New Zealand in 1978, as a continuation of her research into effective reading instruction for young struggling readers (RRCNA, 2013). The research of Clay focused on proficient readers and what they do to be successful, rather than the more common research focus of the time, which was what “deficient” readers did or did not do when attempting to read. (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). By studying successful readers and their processes, Clay developed her theory on literacy and accompanying ways to assess students in order to determine their reading ability (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Clay’s research showed that a majority of children being recommended for special education were not “slow learners” but had

relatively high levels of intelligence (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). She wanted to design a system that would not only assess the specific difficulty that students were facing while reading, but would also offer a solution to help these students move beyond this difficulty (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). This desire led her to develop the Reading Recovery instructional system. The 12 to 20 week program is designed for first grade students who have been designated as at-risk in reading (Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007). The implementation of Reading Recovery typically involves “intensive, one-to-one, daily tutoring” for thirty minutes a day with a trained Reading Recovery teacher (Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007) in addition to general classroom literacy instruction. The teacher will select literature and related activities based on the child’s reading level upon beginning the program, and works to get the child up to grade level at the completion of the program (Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007). The program includes many characteristics of successful early literacy instruction, including “high expectations, time spent reading and writing, rereading of texts, setting clear goals, learning about letter-sound relationships, making time for observation of students’ reading, deliberate teaching, phonemic awareness, and professional development that focuses on effective instruction” (Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007).

The Reading Recovery process is one that is grounded in the research of Clay (RRCNA, 2013). Before entering the Reading Recovery process, a teacher will assess first grade students using Clay’s Observation survey, an assessment that measures six key literacy tasks: letter identification, word test, concepts about print, writing vocabulary, hearing and recording sounds in words, and text reading (RRCNA, 2013). The progress of each student is monitored by the administration of this assessment upon completion of

the twelve to twenty weeks of participation in the program (RRCNA, 2013). Each daily lesson is individually planned, designed, and instructed by trained teachers who use a variety of Clay's researched literacy techniques, and teachers assess students through writing samples, running records, and lesson records in order to inform the next day's lesson (RRCNA, 2013). The general structure of a Reading Recovery lesson includes a familiar book read, the previous day's new book with a running record, working with letters, writing a story, assembling a scrambled story, and the reading of a new book (RRCNA, 2013). These activities are designed to include aspects of phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, comprehension, and fluency, and allow for varying levels of teacher support based on the student's needs (RRCNA, 2013). Upon the completion of the program, students complete the Observation Survey and re-assessed to see if they have reached grade level and are prepared to discontinue the program and achieve without supplemental instruction, or if the student has not yet reached grade level and requires additional services to continue to make progress (RRCNA, 2013).

Teachers wishing to pursue Reading Recovery certification must attend training at an official Reading Recovery site. These sites are affiliated with school districts that have decided to commit to a widespread implementation of Reading Recovery. The training consists of a full academic year of professional development, including graduate credit, under the guidance and supervision of a trained teacher leader. The training begins with a full week of instruction on the Observation Survey administration, and continues with weekly meetings and classroom instruction of four students each day. Professional development continues on a regular basis following the year of training to maintain the teacher's Reading Recovery certification. The cost of training teachers in

Reading Recovery is incurred at the district level and varies based on the size and amount of teachers being trained. One estimate, based on a teacher salary of \$60,000 annually, claims that the cost of the program is \$3,750 per student and roughly \$10,550 for each trained teacher (Harrelson & Geer, 2011).

The effectiveness of Reading Recovery has been shown across many types of implementation. What Works Clearinghouse, in independent initiative of the US government, reviewed several of the research studies that had been done on the effectiveness of Reading Recovery and compared them to rigorous criteria in order to determine the validity of the claims of effectiveness. The research revealed five studies that could be classified as meeting their evidence standards (What Works Clearinghouse [WWC], 2008). Specifically, the report credited the program for its success with instruction of alphabets, fluency comprehension, and general reading achievement (WWC, 2008). Other research has show that Reading Recovery is introduced at the optimal time for learning: the first few years of a child's education (Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007).

One initial criticism of RR's effectiveness is that while it has apparent success in the short term, less research exists on the long-term reading success of student participants. Reynolds and Wheldall (2007) cite a 1993 of the program that demonstrated that any positive gains in Reading Recovery students "washed out" after a year of being out of the program. One study by Haenn (2000) even suggested that these gains were not present on third grade statewide assessments, which would be important to note as the program is being used to prevent retention in the state of Ohio (Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007). However, a study by Holliman & Hurry (2013) followed Reading Recovery

students from high-poverty schools for three years after discontinuation from the program. The authors focused on all students who participated in RR, not just those who successfully completed the program in order to make the study more valid. The conclusion of this research showed that the positive effects of Reading Recovery lasted up to three years post-completion of the program, with these results applying to any student who participated in the program (Holliman & Hurry, 2013).

Other criticisms of the program include its lack of phonics instruction, inability to successfully intervene with the most at-risk students, a lack of efficacy with students who have poor phonemic awareness, and that overall, the program has not dramatically reduced reading failure despite its widespread presence in the US (Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007).

Much of the research concerning Reading Recovery demonstrated the program's ability to lessen the need for special education services later in school. In the Holliman & Hurry study, any student who received Reading Recovery regardless of successful completion was less likely to require special education services (2013). Reynolds & Wheldall compiled data that showed a decrease in learning disability programs as well as a decrease in retention with the addition of Reading Recovery for at-risk students (2007). Other research points towards the predictive ability of Reading Recovery and future literacy performance. Student results after participation in Reading Recovery were used to make a decision about placement, either back in the normal grade-level curriculum or with further intervention services, and this decision was found to be a predictor of student scores on standardized tests in the short-term future (Gapp, Zalud, & Pietrzak, 2009).

It is important to note the common inclusion of Reading Recovery into a Response to Intervention (RTI) model of instruction. RTI is typically a “three-tiered prevention system” (O’Connor, Briggs, & Forbes, 2013) for students who are classified as at-risk after screening. The first tier would be high-quality education in the general education classroom, followed by the second tier, which would typically be small group instruction for students who did not respond to the initial intervention (Dunn, 2010). The third tier would follow for students who were unsuccessful in the second and would include more intensive, one-on-one, long-term assistance (O’Connor et al., 2013). Reading Recovery is often used in collaboration with an RTI framework for a student’s reading needs, and research points to this pairing of intervention strategies as effective and mutually beneficial. In the O’Connor et al. (2013) study, three first grade students who had been identified as the lowest readers in their respective classes received Reading Recovery as a second-tier RTI instruction. After receiving individualized instruction, the students were able to reach grade level upon completion of the program (O’Connor et al., 2013), which points to the success of these two programs working in tandem. The Dunn (2010) conceptual model of RTI and Reading Recovery together provides positive evidence of the success of these two programs, especially with Reading Recovery as a Tier II or Tier III intervention. Because Reading Recovery is research-based, it can be used as an RTI tier and can provide clarification for teachers as to the actual methods of carrying out RTI (Dunn, 2010). In addition, research suggests that Reading Recovery yields the best results when used as an RTI intervention (Schwartz, Hobsbaum, Briggs, & Scull, 2009). These authors point out the many overlapping

characteristics of these two programs and suggest that they will be most effective when implemented in conjunction with each other.

#### **Section #4 – Orton Gillingham**

The Orton Gillingham (OG) method of reading instruction is based on the 1930s research and methods of Samuel Orton and Anna Gillingham (Institute for Multi-Sensory Education [IMSE], 2013). Samuel Orton began his research on what he called “strephosymbolia” in the 1920s, using his knowledge of the brain (IDA, 2007). He worked with adults with brain damage initially, and began to make connections between their struggles with language, and those he saw in children with reading and language difficulties (Reading Horizons, 2014). He concluded that these children were not able to use the left hemisphere of their brain when attempting to read, similarly to those patients who had experienced left-hemisphere brain damage (Reading Horizons, 2014). His research led him to introduce the concept of multi-sensory education, in order to engage both brain hemispheres in reading tasks (Reading Horizons, 2014). His colleague, Anna Gillingham, developed a multisensory instructional method for teaching phonemes and morphemes of the English language that incorporated patterns and rules for spelling, rather than simply memorizing sounds and sight words (Reading Horizons, 2014). Her published work, *Remedial Training for Children with Specific Disability in Reading, Spelling, and Penmanship*, became the premiere manual for the Orton-Gillingham method of instruction as it is today (Reading Horizons, 2014).

The initial development of this program was targeted at students with dyslexia and sought to provide strong instruction in the parts of the English language through multi-sensory pathways including auditory, visual, and kinesthetic (IMSE, 2013). The

instruction includes an emphasis on phonemes and morphemes, as well as common spelling rules (IMSE, 2013). Lessons taught using the IMSE approach to Orton Gillingham instruction incorporate phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension strategy instruction (IMSE, 2013). According to the IMSE website, the program is often considered singularly for remediation or intervention, but it can also be effective for all children in any setting (2013). The program can be implemented into the typical reading curriculum of the general classroom, but can also be used as an intervention, such as with an additional 30 minutes of instructional time (Scheffel, Shaw, & Shaw, 2008).

An Orton Gillingham lesson observed by the researcher followed a specific lesson plan format for each session. The instruction categories included handwriting, visual drill, auditory drill, a review phonogram and new introduced phonogram, a concept related to syllabication and spelling rules, a learned/memory/red flag word review and new introduction, dictation of phrases and sentences, and oral and silent reading of an on-level text. The lesson plan format is accompanied by clear procedures and instructions for the teacher during each stage of the lesson. These procedures include how many times the teacher and/or student should say or write words, what reminders can be given to the student, and what to do if a correction is required, among others (Teacher B., personal communication, March 24, 2014).

Teachers in Ohio wishing to use Orton Gillingham strategies to work with at-risk students under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee must complete the Comprehensive 30-Hour training. This training includes a six-month application period and a twelve month practicum consisting of thirty 60 minute or forty-five 40 minute lessons in

addition to the thirty hours of coursework. The cost of attending this training session is \$975 plus a processing fee of \$50, excluding travel expenditures (IMSE, 2013).

Orton Gillingham instruction can be implemented in many ways. As previously mentioned, the program is flexible enough to function as either a part of the general classroom or as a separate intervention for at-risk students. In the Scheffel et al. study, students received an additional 30 minutes of Orton Gillingham instructional time beyond the typical classroom instruction (2008). In this case, the program was administered with first grade students who were at-risk. In a rural midwestern school, Orton Gillingham instruction was used over several grades to improve test scores in the third grade (Waldvogel, 2011). Orton Gillingham can also be used to work with reading-disabled adolescent students by specifically addressing weak areas of reading for each students (Giess, Rivers, Kennedy, & Lombardino, 2012).

Although there is limited research on the effectiveness of OG, several studies have shown student growth due to participation in this program. In one implementation, the Orton Gillingham was shown to be effective in the instruction of phonemic awareness and knowledge of the alphabetic principle, two key components of early literacy instruction, to students in a target population (Scheffel et al., 2008). Both the aforementioned Giess et al. (2012) and Waldvogel (2011) studies yielded positive results of the inclusion of a supplementary Orton Gillingham program when evaluated in terms of student posttest scores. Not all research is positive, however; the independent What Works Clearinghouse report surveyed much of the previous research and was unable to classify any of the data as credible research (WWC, 2010). This lack of research calls into question the strength of the program. Likewise, another collective review of

research concerning Orton Gillingham programs concluded that the research that has been done thus far on Orton Gillingham is not substantial enough for any claims, positive or negative, to be made about its effectiveness (Turner, 2008).

### **Section #5 – Related Factors**

The content of this study could be affected by educational policies concerning funding. The funding provided by state and federal governments can have an impact on the selection and implementation of specific literacy instruction programs. Certain district and school funding policies might also play a role in the reading instruction programs in a school. Funding can play a role in a school's accessibility to staff, training, and program materials. Another related factor could be changing legislation concerning retention or standardized testing. As the current legislation is new, it could change within the course of the research and have an impact on the choices made by the schools in the case studies.

### **Section #6 – Summary**

The literature review began with an investigation of the importance of reading instruction in the classroom. Research has shown that early literacy instruction and the acquisition of pre-literacy skills is key to the future educational success of students, especially students in poverty. While these students often miss out on important skill-developing experiences, it is critical that they receive high-quality literacy instruction as early as possible in order to limit the growth of the achievement gap and to break the poverty cycle. As the achievement gap grows, legislation also is developing that intends to prevent reading failure and to encourage educational accomplishment. In Ohio, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee sets the expectation that all students will be reading

proficiently by the end of third grade, at which point they will be retained if not proficient. Exploration of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee led the researcher to analyze two specific reading instruction programs that have been selected by the Ohio Department of Education as a part of this new Guarantee. The research-based programs will be used with students who are deemed “at-risk” based on assessments beginning in kindergarten and continuing until the third grade. Specifically, the research focused on Reading Recovery: an individualized, intensive reading intervention program that is typically done with at-risk first grade students. Discussion followed about the effectiveness of the program and its uses in schools thus far. The other focus of this research was Orton Gillingham instruction: a multi-sensory approach to reading instruction that is often used with dyslexic students and which focuses on phonics in order to promote reading. Factors that may affect reading instruction programs in schools were raised as considerations for this research.

While the literature on both Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham is substantial, the inclusion of each program respectively into the context of the Ohio Third Grade Reading Guarantee has not yet been researched, as this legislation is so new. There is also little research into the selection process a school goes through when deciding which reading intervention program to choose. The review of the literature led into the posing of the research question for this particular study, as will be stated in Chapter 3, the Methodology.

## Chapter 3

### *Methodology*

#### **Section #1 – Review of the Research Question**

*What factors influence a low-income school's selection of specific reading instruction programs for struggling readers to meet the expectations of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee?* The goal of the research was to identify specific reasons a school, district, or teacher would select a certain program in order to work with struggling readers. The research focused on two specific reading programs, Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham. Reading Recovery is twelve-week intervention program for first grade students that are below grade level, or at risk of falling below grade level, in reading (Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007). Orton Gillingham is a multi-sensory reading intervention program that can be used with students of all ages, but primarily works to develop strong phonemic and word decoding skills in at-risk readers (IMSE, 2013). Both programs have been approved to intervene with students that are not on track to pass the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA) by the spring of their third grade year (ODE, 2014).

#### **Section #2 – Setting**

The study takes place in a large public urban school district in the state of Ohio. The district has a total enrollment of approximately 50,000 students (ODE, 2013), in a city with a population of approximately 787,000 people (United States Census Bureau, 2010). The main racial groups in the district include black (52%), white, (26%), and Hispanic, (8%) (ODE, 2013). 79% of the district is economically disadvantaged, 16% of students have disabilities, and 12% have limited English proficiency status (ODE, 2013). The student completing the research is an undergraduate in the Department of Teacher

Education at a medium-sized comprehensive university with approximately 8,000 undergraduate students. The interviews took place in face-to-face meetings at the schools and offices of the interviewees, which were located in urban school districts in the same state as the university. Each interview lasted between twenty and forty minutes, and involved the student researcher and a professional who was thoroughly trained in one of the chosen reading programs. Additional research about each reading intervention program was completed using online and print resources in order to establish thorough background information about the research topic.

The research completed in this study has relevance to the teacher education population because the content of the research focuses on a specific aspect of literacy instruction, which is a critical component of curriculum. Reading is a fundamental part of the education process that affects all areas of instruction at all grade levels, so all education professionals would benefit from the content of this study. Furthermore, all taxpayers contribute to education and therefore reap the benefits from a high quality education system that produces successful citizens. Anyone who is concerned about the welfare of future generations holds some stake in this research. One purpose of this study is to identify factors that a school or teacher has used to select a reading program to use with students who are struggling readers. Upon completion, the study will analyze and identify key features of these programs that go into their selection and determine what makes the programs successful. The factors found in the research study will be directly related to the education profession, specifically for reading teachers, but for other educators and stakeholders as well. Teachers can use these data to work with their own students to select or develop quality reading programs and implement instruction in order

to raise the achievement of struggling readers. This research is relevant not only for elementary teachers in Ohio who are faced with the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, but for all educators in all states who wish to learn more about high quality reading instruction. Educators and non-educators alike can benefit from knowledge of instructional improvement.

### **Section #3 – Research Design**

This qualitative study uses a case study format to examine factors related to reading instruction. The goal is to identify common factors and analyze them in order to create a cohesive set of data for educators to consider when selecting a quality literacy intervention program. The case study format included interviews with teachers and other professionals from urban districts in the state who are trained in either Reading Recovery or Orton Gillingham. These educators are considered trained experts in the programs, as well as in reading instruction. After the completion of the interviews, the researcher analyzed themes and patterns from the interviews to identify specific factors related to the selection and implementation of each program. Finally, the researcher will present them in a format that addresses the research question.

The case study and interview method allows for an in-depth analysis of particular teachers, schools, and districts. The personal interviews provide the researcher with a thorough understanding of the setting of the district, classroom culture, and personal teaching style of the interview subject. They allow for open-ended conversations that can lead to more information gathered by the researcher, which can spark increased interest and raise awareness of more issues within the research topic. A wider berth of data may be collected using this interview format. Case study involves a deep focus on particular

schools and districts, as well as the on the selected programs. The narrow lens facilitates viewing an increased depth of information. The collected data will center on the specific goals and desired outcomes of the research question. The researcher can then use these data to explore this question in depth.

The case study format also presents some limitations. The research will involve depth rather than breadth; the selected teachers, schools, and district will be the only ones included in this set of data, excluding the whole state or all urban districts in the area. The research found on the chosen subjects may not apply to similar examples due to the specificity of this research. The study is also limited in the selected reading instruction programs. The Ohio Department of Education has provided a selection of reading intervention programs of approximately fifteen, and this study has chosen to focus on two. Many schools have selected multiple programs or programs that are not a part of this study. Again, the data are limited to these programs, but can potentially be applied to others that have similar factors. Another limitation is the selection of schools that fall under Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee. This legislation is specific to Ohio, and therefore narrows the research to Ohio. This research is also limited in that it was purposefully designed as a specific study of low-income urban schools, even though the Ohio Third Grade Reading Guarantee holds all schools to the same standard regardless of setting or income level. Finally, the research of this study is also limited due to the inability to actually be in the classroom with students to observe effects of this legislation. Because of the limits of an undergraduate research study and time constraints, the research question has been specifically designed to address district, school, and teacher decision processes. Despite these limitations, the design of the study

will allow the researcher to identify specific feedback related to the research question and will provide valuable feedback for those interested in reading intervention improvement.

#### **Section #4 – Subject Selection**

The selection of subjects took place shortly after selection of the reading programs that would be the focus of this research. After choosing to research Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham, the researcher and advisor sought out professionals in urban districts in the state that had some connection to either of these programs. The initial plan was to select one interviewee for each program. The selected interviewees who responded to the initial contact were both professionals from the same urban district. The Reading Recovery professional, referred to as Teacher A, was a district-level lead teacher for the program. Teacher A had been working in this role for three years, but has worked closely with Reading Recovery professionals for several years. Her role as a Reading Recovery lead teacher involved training teachers in the district from multiple schools in RR, and she was trained in Reading Recovery as well. Also noteworthy is the district's proximity to a major research university that serves as a "hub" for the Reading Recovery program, which allowed for a district-level implementation process assisted through the resources at this university. The Orton Gillingham professional was a third grade teacher at an elementary school in the same district, referred to as Teacher B. Teacher B was in the middle of a yearlong process of attaining her Orton Gillingham certification. To protect the anonymity of these individuals, their names and the names of their school and district were not recorded on included in the data. Pseudonyms have been assigned to each of the participants to avoid confusion.

In accordance with the state of Ohio's expectations for K-3 reading teachers, the district in which these professionals work requires each teacher who works with struggling readers in need of intervention to have his or her reading endorsement by the year 2016. The district has chosen to use the approved Literacy Collaborative program in the meantime for teachers who do not have this certification yet. Every third grade teacher in the district is going through the Literacy Collaborative training. The programs of focus are being used in addition to, or in accordance with, the Literacy Collaborative training.

### **Section #5 – Design of the Study**

The research began with general investigation into reading instruction and the importance of reading in elementary education, especially in urban districts. To narrow the focus, the Ohio Third Grade Reading Guarantee was selected as a component of the research. Through research on the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham were selected from the list of acceptable reading interventions as provided by the Ohio Department of Education. The researcher then focused on these two programs including: their history, implementation, and strengths and weaknesses. After completing this review of the literature, the study was designed. To begin, interviews would be completed with professionals who were trained in and currently implementing either Reading Recovery or Orton Gillingham in an urban district as a means to prevent at-risk students from being retained as a result of not passing the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA). To select these professionals, the student researcher and advisor contacted teachers and supervisors from several urban districts and followed up with those who responded positively to an interview request. After

selecting and arranging an interview time, the researcher created interview questions to learn more about the school and classroom. The questions were also designed to help the researcher to understand the factors that went into the teacher's decision to become trained in and use the specific program.

Then, the researcher visited each of the professionals in the schools in which they teach. In addition to completing interviews with the educators, the research had the opportunity to observe the reading intervention programs in action. The interview with the Reading Recovery lead teacher (Teacher A) was preceded by a district-wide training session for elementary teachers who were in the process of completing their Reading Recovery certification. The training provided the researcher with the opportunity to observe the lead teacher working with the trainee teachers, ask questions about the training process, and witness a "Behind the Glass" lesson implementation that took place between a trainee teacher and one of her first grade students. This observation period contributed to the background research and understanding of the program and certification process, as well as illustrating how the program is implemented with students. Before the Orton Gillingham interview, the researcher witnessed a full Orton Gillingham lesson plan with a third grade student, taught by the interviewee (Teacher B), her teacher. The opportunity to watch the lesson allowed the researcher to gain a more complete understanding of the aspects of an Orton Gillingham lesson and to watch a student implement strategies instructed as a part of this program. Additionally, the researcher attended a portion of an Orton Gillingham training session for teachers that contributed to knowledge of the certification process.

After each interview was conducted, it was transcribed and then analyzed for themes. The researcher then identified themes across the data and factors related to the choice in program from each interview. They were analyzed and organized into a cohesive format in order to attempt to answer the research question. Following analysis, the data will be summarized and recommendations will be made.

### **Section #6 – Data Collection**

Data collection took place in the form of interviews and observations related to the selected programs. To begin, the research partners worked together to create questions that would help to answer the many different aspects of the research question. The questions were derived from the extensive review of literature related to the topic. Once written, the questions were reviewed and edited to make sure they would provide thorough and complete responses. After the creation process, the researcher arranged appointments with the intended interviewees in their place of work. During the interview, the researcher attained the appropriate permission and signatures in order to conduct the interview, and then went through each question. The answers were recorded via audio recording device and then transcribed shortly after the interviews were conducted. The majority of the data came from these transcriptions. Data were also collected during the observations of lessons and trainings. The researcher took detailed notes and collected documents related to each of the reading programs. This data helped to add more background information to the research and to fill in some gaps from the interviews. The handouts and notes were stored in a separate folder, and the transcripts from the interviews were stored on a password-protected computer and backed up to a secure drive.

The next step was interpretation of the data. Upon completion of data collection, the researcher analyzed the data in the style of inductive analysis presented by Johnson (2008). The researcher began by carefully reading the interviews and creating a list of potential themes related to key factors in the selection process of the intervention program. The interviews were again read and the researcher recorded each time one of the themes was mentioned in either interview. This process allowed the researcher to narrow the list of themes to those mentioned significantly in one or both of the interviews. The notes and handouts from the training sessions were analyzed to help answer the research question. Representations and explanations of this data can be seen in Chapter 4.

Through the University of Dayton's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher was granted an exemption from going through the full process and likewise was given permission to conduct the interviews upon gaining compliance from the interviewees. This permission to participate and to be recorded was gained through official forms provided by the IRB. In regards to trustworthiness, confidentiality and anonymity were achieved by the removal of participant names, school and district information, and any other identifying information. The transcripts have been edited to remove this information.

### **Section #7 - Ethical Considerations**

Because a large portion of this research took place in a school setting, an important part of the research process was the consideration of ethics. The protocol as dictated by the IRB exemption states that individuals under the age of eighteen are not permitted to participate in any part of the research. The researchers took care to make

sure that no students were involved in the research process. Each interviewee signed a consent form in the presence of a witness to confirm they she was a willing participant in the research. Finally, to maintain anonymity of the interviewees and their schools and districts, all names and other identifying information was removed from transcripts and all related documentation.

### **Section 8 - Summary of Chapter 3**

The purpose of this research is to identify reasons a school, district, or teacher would select a particular reading intervention program in order to work with struggling readers. An undergraduate student in the teacher education program at a medium-sized university completed the study. The study provides important context and details in order to inform educators about reading intervention programs and their use in relation to current legislation that will have a high impact on their profession. It is also relevant for any stakeholder in the education process. This is a qualitative study utilizing a case study format, including interviews with education professionals who have selected one of the two programs mentioned above, with the overall goal of identifying factors that contributed to their selection of the program. Strengths of the research design include an allowance for in-depth exploration of a specific teacher, school, or district, but it is limited in the comprehensiveness of the data. The participants of the study based upon their use of one of these programs and their employment in an urban district. The study was designed after background research was completed and participants were selected. The researchers created interview questions and arranged interviews with each of the participants. The interviews were recorded electronically and transcribed, then analyzed to pull out the factors. The researcher gained permission for the study through

an exemption from the IRB, and ethics were considered, specifically the confidentiality of the participants. Through the design and planning for this study, the researchers were able to gather data from these interviews and begin to answer the research question, as explained in the upcoming chapter.

## Chapter 4

### *The Results - Analysis and Discussion of Data*

#### **Section #1 - Introduction**

This study examined reading intervention programs that are being used in connection with Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee. The purpose of the study was to identify specific factors that contributed to the selection of a reading intervention program by a teacher, school, or district. This research focused specifically on two programs that are approved by the Ohio Department of Education for use with at-risk students from kindergarten to third grade, Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham. The research utilized a case study format in which interviews were conducted with education professionals who were implementing one of these two programs in their urban school or district. These interviews were then used to identify the factors that led to the selection of the program.

#### **Section #2 - Research Question**

The research question developed for this study is, *What factors influence a low-income school's decision about specific reading instruction programs for struggling readers as a part of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee?*

#### **Section #3 - Findings**

The findings from this study will be presented below, accompanied by a brief description of each factor. Discussion of the relevance as related to the review of literature will also be presented. The factors that influenced each selection process, identified through the inductive analysis of the collected data, are: *a research basis, teacher endorsement and leadership, effectiveness in collaboration with a district*

*mandate, continuing professional development, personal examples of student success, and immediate need for highly effective intervention.* Additionally, the data demonstrated factors that, despite providing obstacles, did not deter the professionals from selection of the programs. These factors were *cost* and *time*. The chart below demonstrates the process through which the factors were identified, followed by in-depth analysis of each factor as related to each of the interview subjects.

Figure 2

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number of Mentions (Teacher A – RR)</b>	<b>Number of mentions (Teacher B - OG)</b>
<i>Research basis</i>	4	1
<i>Teacher endorsement and leadership</i>	3	5
<i>Effectiveness in collaboration with a district mandate</i>	2	2
<i>Continuing professional development</i>	2	2
<i>Personal examples of student success</i>	4	4
<i>Need for highly effective intervention</i>	5	3
<i>Cost</i>	0	3
<i>Time</i>	4	2

*Research basis.* As shown in Chapter 2, there is a wide body of existing literature about each of these programs. Both have been examined for effectiveness by several academic sources, and have been identified as high-quality programs in many cases. The Ohio Department of Education includes both programs on the approved list of research-based

instruction programs to meet the needs of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. During the interviews, both the Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham professionals identified this strong evidence as reasons for the selection of these programs. While all of the programs from the ODE list had varied amounts of research background, the interviewees favored these specific programs because of the body of research behind them. In recent past, the district in which this study took place chose to develop its own reading program without considering research on effective instruction. According to one of the interviewees, this program was unsuccessful and the district “lost at least eight years of kids’ lives” (Teacher A, personal communication, March 6, 2014) due to its lack of research. Choosing a program based in strong research is a goal for all teachers in this district.

*Teacher endorsement and leadership.* An important step in the implementation of any new program in a school system is teacher leadership. In the implementation process for both of these programs, endorsement and leadership by a teacher in the building or district was in place. For the implementation of Reading Recovery, the curriculum director for the district had been trained in the program and knew of its success and research basis. She led the district to establish a method and hierarchy for the instruction of Reading Recovery to teachers, beginning with the Reading Recovery lead teachers, such as the interviewee, and then choosing teacher leaders from multiple buildings in the district to be trained by these Reading Recovery teachers. Not only would these teachers be trained in Reading Recovery and be able to use it themselves, but they could take what they learn from the trainings and use the skills and high-level understanding of reading

instruction to support other teachers in their building. Currently, every school in the district has at least one teacher who is trained or in the process of becoming Reading Recovery trained.

In the Orton Gillingham school, the interviewee was one of the first champions for this program in her building. After witnessing a fellow teacher use Orton Gillingham with success, she began the training process herself, paying out of pocket for the expenses, and encouraged colleagues to do so as well. Although her district is requiring an entirely separate reading endorsement by the year 2016, she chose to get this certification as well. She has worked in tandem with her principal to encourage the rest of her building staff to become Orton Gillingham trained, and coordinated a summer learning session for Orton Gillingham math. Most of the teachers in the building will be attending the training without receiving compensation but simply because they want the training, a testament to the interest in the program in the district. By the spring of 2014, the building had twelve teachers trained in OG, which is “unheard of” in the district, according to the interviewee. They have received support from principals in the building, and even the superintendent of the district has praised the extensive training.

*Effectiveness in Collaboration with a District Mandate.* As mentioned previously, each third grade teacher in the district is being trained in Literacy Collaborative in addition to either of these two trainings, which are optional. Literacy Collaborative is another program from the list of approved programs from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE, 2014). The program is based on research by Fountas and Pinnell and involves the use of trained literacy coaches and school leadership who work with struggling readers

using research-based instructional strategies and receive professional development in the school setting (Literacy Collaborative, 2014). Currently, the district uses Leveled Literacy Intervention, a program developed by Fountas and Pinnell. Leveled Literacy Intervention is a supplemental reading instruction program that is designed to work with struggling readers and bring them to grade level (Heinemann, 2014). It focuses on several components, including an emphasis on comprehension strategy instruction, explicit fluency instruction, and specific work on letters, sounds, and words (Heinemann, 2014). In the interviews, each professional discussed how their program was being implemented in accordance with the current and upcoming district-wide systems. For Reading Recovery teachers, the programs fit together well, according to the lead teacher. Marie Clay, the creator of Reading Recovery, trained Fountas and Pinnell, the creators of Leveled Literacy Intervention and contributors to Literacy Collaborative. Because of this common background, many of Clay's principles are embedded in Leveled Literacy Intervention and Literacy Collaborative, as well as in Reading Recovery. Teachers with Reading Recovery training will easily integrate what they have learned from Reading Recovery into the district-mandated program and will be able to increase the effectiveness of their instruction.

Less collaboration exists between the Literacy Collaborative training and Orton Gillingham. The interviewee shared that none of the Orton Gillingham training will be accepted as a part of Literacy Collaborative training or a reading endorsement. However, with the support of building and district leaders, teachers who want to participate in Orton Gillingham training are able to incorporate it into interventions and classroom technique.

*Continuing professional development.* Professional development is an important factor in teacher effectiveness, especially with such critical issues as early literacy instruction. Both of the interviews described ongoing opportunities for professional development that were tied in to each program. Reading Recovery teachers are required to attend six training sessions a year to keep their certification active. At these sessions, they delve into aspects of reading instruction on a deeper level, and are required to go “behind the glass”, an aspect of Reading Recovery in which the teachers go through a lesson with a student using Reading Recovery instruction and receive feedback from the other participants. The Orton Gillingham teacher explained that there are various levels of certification for the program, and teachers can always go back and get a higher certificate if they choose to. This extended certification includes more coursework and more experiences using Orton Gillingham with students. She will continue to participate in one-on-one contact with her trainer to get feedback on lessons and to stay informed of best practice. As mentioned above, she has also planned training in Orton Gillingham math, and plans to receive this certification along with her building colleagues attending the upcoming training. The Reading Recovery teacher explained the importance of this continuing professional development: “The more you get away from it, the more you forget and the less professional you are.” (Teacher A, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

*Personal experiences of student success.* Perhaps one of the strongest factors each teacher identified as a reason for selecting this program was their own experience of success. The Reading Recovery lead teacher had been familiar with the program for

years, and had seen it working successfully throughout her career. In the three years that Reading Recovery has been implemented in schools throughout the district, she has seen it start to make positive changes for students. The district first selected teachers from the nine lowest-performing schools to be trained, only one of these schools remains in the bottom nine performers. The interviewee believes Reading Recovery is a factor in this improvement. “We keep kids from ten to twelve weeks... and in those ten to twelve weeks we can get them up to grade level,” she shared (Teacher A, personal communication, March 6, 2014). Many times over, she has seen children start out in the program with very low reading skills, and come out of the program being able to read on grade level, with their own assortment of skills to use when they approach a reading task. She points out the need for Reading Recovery as prevention, not last-minute intervention, and shares that when teachers begin this kind of instruction in kindergarten and are consistent throughout the student’s early education, test scores are better. The interviewee’s experiences with Reading Recovery contributed to her endorsement and enthusiasm for the program.

The Orton Gillingham teacher also shared personal success stories. She described how the personalized lesson plans and skills created for each student are key in his or her success, and emphasized the importance of providing each student with a “code” that can help them to decipher words and process unknown texts. When students can master these codes, they are more prepared for reading and can make large gains rapidly. She shared an example of one student who went from a first grade reading level to a mid-year third grade reading level in less than a year as a result of participation in her Orton Gillingham tutoring sessions. She also spoke about a second grade teacher using the program and

said that her students test scores were raising and were on track to begin third grade at a higher level than previous classes. Her experiences are what motivated her to continue in Orton Gillingham training and to encourage many others to do so as well.

*The immediate need for highly effective intervention.* In most urban districts, there is a lack of, and high need for, quality instruction. With the implementation of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, increased pressure falls on the teachers of early elementary students in these districts, as they do not have the resources to support hundreds of retained third graders in addition to a full class of first-time third grade students. The district of the interviewees was no exception; both the Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham professionals clearly stated the need for their respective programs in the district. At the school level, the Orton Gillingham teacher emphasized the immediate need for intervention for third grade students as they approached this high-stakes assessment in the spring. Fall Reading OAA results yielded a fourteen percent passing rate, and only two students in the interviewee's class passed. She also cited the school's previous state report card, which gave the building an "F" overall (the lowest possible rating). Because of these factors, building leaders recognized the need for intervention and encouraged the teachers to participate in this Orton Gillingham training as a means to improving student achievement. Likewise, the district's widespread support of Reading Recovery came from the need for high quality instruction, according to the interviewee from this program. "We've got to improve classroom instruction in this district," she said. "This is our attempt to get back to the good teaching that once was going on" (Teacher A, personal communication, March 6, 2014). She sees a pattern of teachers

becoming stronger in their knowledge of high quality reading instruction and participating in high level thinking about their practice as they participate in Reading Recovery training, and believes this is critical to the success of the district. She cites the district's past struggles with high quality reading instruction as a reason why achievement is so low. With the inclusion of RR, in addition to the existing programs, in so many schools, she believes the need for strong intervention will be addressed.

*Cost.* School funding is often an issue that prevents educators from including certain programs in the curriculum. One similarity between Orton Gillingham and Reading Recovery is cost; both programs are considered to be higher-cost options for intervention programs, based on training fees and material prices. While in some cases this cost might prevent a district from selecting one of these programs, the interviewees in this study were not deterred by a high price tag. With Reading Recovery, the district received funds of approximately \$575,000 to support its distribution, and the lead teacher expressed that the need for high quality instruction won over the cost (Columbus City Schools, 2013). The Orton Gillingham teacher shared that she was paying the high cost (around \$1000) for Orton Gillingham out of pocket, as the district does not support it, but that her enthusiasm for the program encouraged her to pursue it despite high costs. "I want to have as many tricks in my bag to make my kids successful," she said when discussing her decision to get the certification. "It makes you more marketable, and anything you can do to help your students succeed, do it" (Teacher B, personal communication, March 24, 2014).

*Time.* Time is a valuable resource in the classroom. Efficiency is key when promoting maximum student growth and achievement. While many schools and districts will likely select programs with minimal training and quick results, the interviewees favored their selected programs despite their extensive time requirements. Both Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham require long periods of training time, often requiring teachers to sacrifice instructional time, summer vacation hours, or after school time. Reading Recovery training is a yearlong process involving one week of intensive training, followed by weekly classes and implementation of Reading Recovery techniques and observation by a teacher leader. After one year, the teachers continue to attend six sessions a year to maintain their certification. The Orton Gillingham certification follows a similar structure, lasting a minimum of eight consecutive months and including ten observations, one hundred hours of tutor time using Orton Gillingham methods, and one case study. Both interviewees also discussed the importance of long-term implementation of these programs to glean overall success. While the Reading Recovery lead teacher recognized that the program is considered to be a short-term intervention, she also shared that in order to see widespread success, it is important to give the program time to grow. “It’s not just a ‘Band-Aid’ fix, it takes time,” she shared regarding the latest program implementation in the district, urging district leaders to be patient and see positive results work their way through the grade levels (Teacher A, personal communication, March 6, 2014). The Orton Gillingham teacher similarly discussed the students she had been working with and the importance of long-term, consistent practice. She explained that in her experience, the most effective Orton Gillingham lesson is individually designed for each student, whereas whole group

instruction has not yielded as much impact. Because of this, true successful implementation of Orton Gillingham requires a lot of time. Despite the time constraints related to these programs, the interviewees prefer them and continue to push for widespread implementation.

#### **Section #4 - Discussion of Results**

As has been reported in the previous section, the researcher collected identified many factors that played a role in the selection of each reading intervention program. The majority of these factors have the potential to be considered and applied when schools, districts, or individual teachers begin the process of searching for an intervention program for struggling readers.

Despite the fundamental differences in the methods and pedagogy of these programs, the interviewees associated with each program identified many similar characteristics as factors into their decision for each program. As mentioned in the background research in Chapter 2, the theories and instructional practices behind Orton Gillingham and Reading Recovery differ in some ways. Five of the identified factors from this study, however, were pulled from both interviews and were true for both programs. Examples include *research basis*, *continuing professional development*, and *teacher endorsement*. As teachers, schools, and districts look to select an intervention program to use with at-risk readers, these high-level factors mentioned above will be imperative when searching for high-quality, effective programs. These factors exist in both of the programs from this study, which include such different styles of delivery and instruction. They and similar factors should be considered as overarching themes of quality instruction and included in the decision-making process. These factors, including

a research basis, teacher endorsement, personal examples of success, and continuing professional development, are important for all reading programs and provide the strong foundation that leads to their successful implementation.

Also critical to the study is the identification of the “despite factors”. *Cost* and *time* were identified in these interviews as non-ideal elements of these programs. However, the teachers were aware of the potential challenges associated with these programs and chose to move forward regardless. In the case of these programs, the strengths clearly outweighed the few negative factors in the eyes of the interviewees, and they were undeterred in their decisions. This decision speaks to their confidence and passion for the programs and willingness to work with any potential challenges. This emphasizes the strength of the positive factors in the decision process. When selecting a program, this research indicates that educators should not focus on possible negative factors, but rather look for the program’s strengths in comparison.

The factors identified in this research have many implications for educators as they look into reading intervention programs for readers under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. This critical decision can have enormous impact on the future of students, teacher success, and overall school performance for years to come, so it is imperative that those given the responsibility to select one program over the other choose wisely. The factors identified as key elements of the programs in this study can be considered and applied to the evaluation of other programs. They are high-level, non-specific factors that represent an overall successful implementation process and should be a part of any high-quality intervention program. A few factors in particular seem to hold the most significance when it comes to choosing a program. A research basis is arguably the most

important of these factors. Much of the background research of this study looked into the effectiveness of the two programs, and this research was referenced on several occasions by both interviewees. The Reading Recovery teacher clearly identified a *lack* of a strong research basis as a reason why the district's previous attempts at reading intervention had been unsuccessful. As teachers select a program, the amount of research, and the effectiveness as shown by this research, cannot be ignored.

Likewise, the program's ongoing opportunities for professional development play a critical role in its success. As both interviewees noted, professional development must be included in order to fully support teachers and allow them to use the program to their best abilities. Professional development provides teachers with the opportunity to build knowledge and become more skilled in their practice. Professional development is especially important when working with at-risk students, even more so when a high-stakes mandate (such as the Third Grade Reading Guarantee) exists. Additionally, educators should consider the existing framework and programs already in place for their district, especially if the decision is being made on the teacher level.

In both interviews, the teachers acknowledged the already existing intervention in place and discussed how their program (Reading Recovery or Orton Gillingham) fit in with the district-mandated intervention. As mentioned above, Reading Recovery has some overlap and similar background research with the existing program, which made it somewhat easier for Reading Recovery to be implemented. The Orton Gillingham teacher, while able to complete all of her certification as well under the existing program, did not have as much overlap, and was therefore doing more on her own time and with her own money. As teachers and administrators review programs, it will be important

both instructionally and logistically to think about how the program will interact with existing systems in place. These factors, and many of the others identified in the interviews, can support educators as they select a reading intervention program.

#### **Section #5 - Summary of Chapter 4**

This study sought to identify several factors related to the selection and implementation of reading intervention programs to support students who are at-risk for retention in third grade under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. The study took on a case study format in which education professionals who had experience using or implementing either Reading Recovery or Orton Gillingham were interviewed. The interviews were analyzed and the data show several factors that were a part of the decision to select these programs, as well as factors that contributed to a successful implementation. Identified factors include: *a research basis, teacher endorsement and leadership, effectiveness in collaboration with a district mandate, continuing professional development, personal examples of student success, and immediate need for highly effective intervention*. Additionally, the programs were selected despite their relatively high cost and required time.

Most factors identified through the interviews applied to both programs, despite their differences in instructional methods. This particular finding was somewhat unexpected due to the apparent wealth of differences between the programs, as discussed in the literature. The majority of the factors were not associated with specific aspects of the program, but were more general elements of quality intervention and instruction. Because of this, they can be applied to other programs as well and used to evaluate programs based on potential implementation success. Another unexpected

finding from the interviews was that even though both programs had a high cost and a large amount of time associated with implementation, these factors were not large enough drawbacks to prevent their selection. As funds and time are both highly valuable resources in the education field, it was surprising to find that these educators chose to proceed with implementation of these programs despite the amount of money and/or time they would take up. This finding was also in conflict with research referenced in chapter 2, which explained that these programs might not be successful due to their cost. Strengths and positive outcomes of these programs outweigh the cost and time involved, and that the success of the program and improvement of education are stronger forces.

Educators can use the factors identified in this study as they select an intervention program for struggling readers. As they examine the programs on the list provided by the Ohio Department of Education, these educators can use these factors as a starting point to decide what program is best for them. There is a greater chance for successful implementation if teachers and administrators strategically choose a program based on their specific needs and desired outcomes. With a high-quality program chosen with consideration given to these factors, students will be more likely to benefit from the instruction and reach grade level prior to the end of third grade, eliminating the need for retention. This improvement to instruction will not only benefit students and prepare them for success in later grades, but will allow teachers to increase their effectiveness and schools to experience higher achievement and progress.

## Chapter 5

### *Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations*

#### **Section #1 - Significance of the study**

The ability to read is arguably the most critical skill that young children develop in the primary grades. As students build a strong literacy foundation, they are better prepared for secondary grades, higher education, and the workforce. Because reading is such an important ability, educational reformers have begun to attach high-stakes consequences to the ability to read. The Third Grade Reading Guarantee, newly introduced in the state of Ohio, requires any student who does not receive a “proficient” designation in reading on the statewide Ohio Achievement Assessment to be retained for the following school year. Also included in the legislation is the requirement that any student in kindergarten to third grade who qualifies as “at-risk” for non-proficiency on the third grade reading assessment will receive intervention services to bring him or her up to grade level. The Ohio Department of Education provides a list of required quality programs and certifications for teachers who work with these students, as an attempt to provide effective instruction and to prevent the need for retention in third grade. Two programs included on this list are Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham, which were the focus of this study.

This new policy has major implications for early childhood education. In the past, teachers of early grades have not faced as much pressure from high stakes testing as their peers teaching higher grade levels, but the Third Grade Reading Guarantee represents a trend of increased accountability in all aspects of school systems. Many more students will require intensive services and support in order to prevent retention,

and the potential increase in student retention rates may present challenges for districts already struggling to find adequate resources and staff. The increased strain is especially daunting for urban districts, whose student populations typically include students who enter the school system at a disadvantage based on home factors and socioeconomic status. The intent to improve reading abilities is crucial for students in these high-need environments, and urban districts stand to gain the most from qualified teachers and effective programs that will maximize their resources.

### **Section #2 - Summary of the study**

This study was designed to answer the research question *What factors influence a low-income school's decision about specific reading instruction programs for struggling readers as a part of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee?* The purpose of this study was to identify factors that contributed to a teacher-, school-, or district-level selection of a reading intervention program to be used with at-risk students, specifically in an urban setting. By identifying these factors, the researcher aimed to provide educators with a variety of criteria to use when selecting intervention programs, whether it is for this Ohio-specified legislation or other purposes. The factors ascertained from this study were intended to support educators in their ability to select high quality programs to use with the students who need them the most.

The researcher chose a case study format to analyze a particular urban district in the state, in which they would examine educators using either Reading Recovery or Orton Gillingham in accordance with the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. The study included two interviews: one with one of the district's lead teachers for Reading Recovery, and the other with a third grade teacher in a district elementary school pursuing an Orton

Gillingham certification and using the program with struggling readers in her class. The interview questions were designed to identify themes and specific factors that played into the decision to use the respective programs. The interviews were supplemented with background research, observation of lessons, and attendance at trainings for each of the programs. After the interviews were completed, they were analyzed and salient factors were identified.

The interviews provided several factors that were identified by both educators, and several that were identified by only one of the educators. There were also a few factors that, although seemingly negative, were not deterrents in the selection of each program. The factors include:

- Research basis
- Teacher endorsement and leadership
- Effectiveness in collaboration with a district mandate
- Continuing professional development
- Personal examples of student success
- Immediate need for highly effective intervention
- Cost
- Time

### **Section #3 - Conclusions**

What are the factors that influence a low-income school's decision about specific reading instruction programs for struggling readers? The goal of this research was to conduct interviews with educators using either Reading Recovery or Orton Gillingham, and to use these interviews to identify these specific factors in order to provide

individuals in the education field with criteria for selection of a reading intervention program. By using these and similar factors, educators could use a framework for narrowing down the list of possible programs and find one that is suitable for their students and teachers and that would provide the most success. This small improvement contributes to the larger goal of preparing educators to effectively work with struggling readers who are not on track to gain a proficient score on the Ohio Achievement Assessment. Even more broadly, the overarching goal of this research is to contribute to the improvement of reading instruction in the early grades in order to prevent as much post-third grade retention as possible.

After completing the research, the above factors were identified. Most of these elements were applicable to both of the programs examined and likewise can be applied to other programs on the ODE-approved program list. They have the potential to be used for the intended purpose of supporting educators as they choose an effective program for their struggling readers. The professionals interviewed for each program endorsed their use effusively and provided many examples as to why each program is working for their schools, teachers and students. The factors provide a preliminary framework for educators that can be considered as they attempt to combat reading difficulties in the elementary grade levels.

#### **Section #4 - Implications**

The findings from this study hold important implications for the field of education and the improvement of reading instruction. Preliminarily, the results provide a clearer picture of real-life implementations of reading programs. The teachers working with these programs are not simply theorizing about their use; they are using the programs'

core components and practices every day. They provide real examples of the benefits and challenges of these specific programs. Educators who have an interest in the implementation of one of these two programs can use the factors identified here to discern the potential success they could have in their own district or school. Instead of blindly attempting to select a quality program without using criteria for success, they can use this and other similar research to understand what the preparation and implementation processes are really like.

The study has broader implications for educators looking to improve instruction or incorporate new programs into their classroom, school, or district. The factors identified in this study are not specific to the details of the programs themselves, but rather they are higher-level qualities of good instruction and programs that are effective in classrooms in today's landscape. As Ohio educators face large amounts of elementary students that would benefit from reading intervention, they can use the factors identified here when attempting to select their own program. These factors will help them as they examine the ODE-provided program list and attempt to choose the program that would most benefit their students. As schools improve their intervention services, students will become better, stronger readers and will not have to face potential retention at the end of third grade.

Even more broadly, these factors do not just apply to the programs on this list. Many of them, including *research basis*, *continuing professional development*, and *teacher endorsement and leadership* can be key components of other interventions and instructional methods. This list, identified by educators currently in the field, exemplifies characteristics that teachers feel are important when it comes to quality instruction for

their students. If included in the decision making process, they will help educators thoughtfully and purposefully select instruction in a way that works for them as well as for students. The inclusion of higher-quality programs, especially in the early grades, will allow students to get back on track before having to face retention, a consequence that often causes social and emotional distress for young children. If students are identified as needing intervention early and receive the appropriate instruction, it can change the course of the student's educational path. It is critical that educators address problems at this early stage, and selecting the appropriate intervention program is one important initial step.

The researcher chose to focus specifically on an urban environment, where the need for high quality intervention is most critical. As identified by the interviewees, the district as a whole did not have successful readers, and without a change, would have very few students moving on at the end of third grade. There is little feasibility to this concept, as the district (and most other urban districts) would not have the resources to work with such a large amount of retained students. These districts with the largest amounts of struggling students are the ones that can most benefit from careful selection of interventions. As the Reading Recovery teacher identified in her interview, the district had already made the mistake of selecting a program without careful analysis, and students suffered. It is imperative that these districts, which have much at stake and an even greater potential for growth, employ tactics such as the analysis of these factors when choosing intervention programs.

The context of this study has changed over the course of the research project, and relevant updates must be included to provide further implications for this research upon

the completion of the first year of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. One significant change in policy is the scaling down of the amount of intervention programs approved by ODE for use with students designated as “at-risk”. As listed in Chapter 2, the list at the time the research was completed included twelve research-based interventions. In July 2014, ODE released an updated list of approved programs, as seen below (ODE, 2014):

- AFTCRIP (American Federation of Teachers Comprehensive Reading Instruction Program)
- CLLIP (Collaborative Language and Literacy Instruction Program)
- IMSE Comprehensive Orton-Gillingham Training (30-Hour)
- Literacy Collaborative
- LLI (Leveled Literacy Intervention System)
- National Board
- Reading Recovery
- SFA (Success for All)
- TESOL Endorsement (For ELL Instruction Only)
- Wilson Language Training

The Ohio State Board of Education adopted a list of reading competencies in January 2014, and the Ohio Department of Education required applicants to the original list of approved programs to reapply in June of 2014 in order to confirm alignment to these competencies. Programs that demonstrated an eighty percent alignment with the selected reading competencies were accepted for the approved program list for the 2014-2015 school year (ODE, 2014). It is also important to note that upon the conclusion of the 2015-2016 school year, the only approved programs for working with students under

the Third Grade Reading Guarantee will be a reading endorsement, a master's in literacy or reading, or a passing score on the Praxis 5203 (ODE, 2014).

The change and downscaling of this program list holds relevance to the content of this study in that both Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham remained on the approved program list for 2014-2015, indicating that these programs have high alignment with the selected reading competencies for the state. Although the requirements for approval were raised, both of the programs reapplied and are still considered to be appropriate, research-based programs to work with struggling readers. This suggests that both programs are viable options for districts to select when working with their struggling readers, even when the standards are raised. While the qualifications do expire at the end of the 2015-2016 school year and teachers are required to fulfill one of the non-expiring requirements, training in these research-based programs can only contribute to the quality of reading instruction provided to students, and allow schools to provide a wider variety of instructional methods to support their students' learning needs. As teachers and administrators look to select an effective intervention for struggling readers, they can use this information in order to support their decision and make sure they choose a program that is effective for their learners.

Another relevant update for the research presented in this study is the overall performance of students under the first year of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. The majority of the research done here took place during the 2013-2014 school year, which was the first active year of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. The results of the May 2014 Ohio Achievement Assessment were released in early June 2014. Overall, 82% of third grade students in public schools received a proficient score on the reading portion of

the assessment in May 2014. In the previous spring, 81% were at or above proficient.

Below is a chart representing the growth in percentage of proficient third grade readers in the Big Eight Urban districts in Ohio from before the implementation of the Third Grade Guarantee and after the first year of implementation.

Figure 3

District	May 2014 Proficiency Percentage	May 2013 Proficiency Percentage	Growth from 2013 to 2014
Akron	79.1%	68.8%	10.3%
Canton	74.8%	66.4%	8.4%
Cincinnati	81.8%	72%	9.8%
Cleveland	63%	55%	8%
Columbus	69.2%	58.4%	10.8%
Dayton	65%	52.6%	12.4%
Toledo	76.4%	67.2%	9.2%
Youngstown	67.9%	55.9%	12%

Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2013-2014

While the overall proficiency in the state of Ohio did not change significantly, the chart clearly illustrates that the state's large urban districts, including the district examined by this study, experienced a significant increase in the percentage of students that received a proficient score at the end of third grade, and therefore a decrease in the amount of students that end up requiring retention in reading the following year.

Although the percentages of passing students continue to need improvement, the growth indicates massive jumps from the previous year, ranging from 8% to 12.4%. While it is not possible to credit this growth to any specific program or factor, it can be inferred that the Third Grade Reading Guarantee and accompanying research-based interventions for struggling readers encouraged and assisted this increased proficiency. As teachers

continue into the following school year and are faced with slightly increased standards to work towards (a score of 394 rather than 392), it will be imperative to continue to select high-quality programs that work for their students who are struggling.

### **Section #5 - Recommendations for further research**

While this study identified data that can benefit the education field, there is so much more to be explored with potential for even greater positive impacts on quality reading instruction. First, a broader look at more of the programs involved would provide more support for educators. Research into how teachers are implementing other programs can help to add evidence to the existing list of factors and strengthen their credibility as usable factors for identification. Furthermore, researching other programs can help to identify even more factors that teachers can use as criteria for successful programs. As more factors are found, their use in the selection will become more helpful in regards to their use in identifying successful programs. By broadening this research to include more of the ODE-designated programs, the results can be grown and strengthened.

Another extension of this research would be to explore the results and success rates of the use of the two programs of focus (Reading Recovery and Orton Gillingham) in correlation with the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. As the legislation was still in its first year of implementation, the time constraints of this study did not allow for a long-term examination of the effects of the programs. The nature of this research being an undergraduate study opportunity did not provide the time and resources necessary to carry out a full exploration of effectiveness for either of the programs, but this information is critical to the schools that are implementing these programs, as well as any

other schools or districts searching for effective programs. While the interviewees testified to the successes of the programs as seen through preliminary results and observations, a more telling example of success will be the improvement of reading ability in young children upon completion of the program, as demonstrated by test scores and/or observation and other methods of assessment. A research study that is able to look at long-term assessment data over a few years will provide valuable information to educators regarding the success of implementation. The study could take a more comprehensive look at implementation of these programs across the state, rather than focusing on a single district, to provide a more universal look at the success of the programs. This information will be critical as professionals in the education field seek to implement the best reading instruction practices they can.

In addition to examining the success of these programs on a broad scale, another opportunity for related research would be to focus on a specific group of students and to track their achievement before, during and after participation in one of these programs. Because of the IRB process and exemption involved with this study, it was not possible to include data from students. However, a more extensive case study could not only include interview data from teachers, but could follow actual students as they work to improve their reading abilities. This could include observations of lessons, interviews with students and/or parents, and the collection of assessment data (including, but not limited to OAA results). In a study like this, the results would provide a more detailed picture of how the program is being implemented, what students experience as they participate, and how effective a particular implementation is. This size of this study could be altered to focus on a specific teacher, school, or district level implementation,

depending on the desired outcomes and uses of the data. This extension of the research would create a fuller case study of these programs that will help educators throughout all stages in the process of improving reading instruction.

Another way to increase the depth of this research would be to interview more educators from the district that are working with either of the examined programs. While this research chose a smaller case study format that focused on one individual for each program, the inclusion of more interviews would strengthen the reliability of the data and provide more support for the already identified factors, as well as increasing the potential for the identification of more factors. With more interviews, there will be more opportunities for further understanding of the strengths and challenges of each program, of the successes to date, and of the implementation process. More interviews could also broaden the perspective beyond the teacher or lead teacher level and could include administrators, literacy specialists, special educators, and even students or parents, given the right permissions. Interviewing a wider variety of individuals involved with these programs will provide more data that are applicable to more populations and relevant to more aspects of the education field.

Finally, this topic could be researched further by looking at all types of districts, not just those identified as urban. The researcher of this study chose to focus on an urban environment in order to provide context for other urban schools and districts, as urban environments often present unique challenges and strengths when compared to suburban or rural districts. However, many of the factors identified by the research are not unique to the urban environment and could be applied to other districts as well. To extend the research, a similar study could include data from districts with a variety of typologies,

and compare the factors to see if similarities or differences exist. This comparison could provide for more specific, practical factors that are relevant to specific school and district populations and could contribute to the improvement of reading instruction programs on an individualized level.

### **Section #6 - Summary of Chapter 5**

The purpose of this research was to examine reading intervention programs being used with the Third Grade Reading Guarantee and to identify factors that contributed to the selection of each program. The factors, listed above, were identified through interviews with education professionals that were currently implementing one of two specified programs, Reading Recovery or Orton Gillingham. The factors identified included a research basis, teacher endorsement and leadership, effectiveness in collaboration with a district mandate, continuing professional development, personal examples of student success, immediate need for highly effective intervention, cost, and time. Most of these factors were relevant to both programs and can likewise be applied to a wider variety of intervention programs.

The list of factors provided here can provide a starting framework for educators intending to implement a high quality program with struggling readers. While the research set out to identify factors that were present in urban districts, the factors presented here can arguably be applied to all types of districts, and can be a useful part of the decision making process in a variety of school environments. The research has seemingly endless potential for improvements, extensions, and related research that can increase its benefit to educators. While the existing list of factors can be used as a

preliminary framework, it can be broadened in many directions to allow its potential for change and improvement to grow.

Educators benefit greatly from this research. The selection of quality instructional programs can have immense impacts on student success when they are utilized by trained, highly effective teachers. Reading, especially, is a critical skill that must be nurtured, developed, and strengthened in the first few years of education in order to prepare students for success throughout their educational career. While educators have known this for years, the legislation has begun to strongly support the importance of reading proficiency. As a result, the state has created high-stakes mandates that hold teachers, schools, and districts accountable for reading ability. The importance of choosing a quality program thoughtfully and carefully cannot be overstated. Students' futures are at stake. Educators can use this study, and similar research, to make informed decisions that will promote learning and limit consequences for students. Early literacy is a crucial step to improving education. With further research into key success factors of intervention programs, educators can continue on the path to implementing quality reading instruction. As reading instruction improves, so will all other aspects of education, as reading provides the foundation for other content areas and higher-level skills. The improvement of education is critical to the improvement of the lives of those in all socioeconomic statuses. In order to break the cycle of poverty, to provide opportunities for all our youngest citizens to pursue their dreams and contribute positively to society as they grow, educators must instill in their students the knowledge and skills that will allow them to access education at whatever level they wish to achieve. With the implementation of high quality instruction, educators approach the

classroom with higher chances for success and a greater potential to affect positive change for their students.

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