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An evaluation of the literacy program at Garibaldi Grade School

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AN EVALUATION OF THE LITERACY PROGRAM AT
GARIBALDI GRADE SCHOOL

by

HEATHER THOMAS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Education

George Fox University

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“AN EVALUATION OF THE LITERACY PROGRAM AT GARIBALDI GRADE SCHOOL,” a Doctoral research project prepared by HEATHER THOMAS in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department.

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ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School

by Heather Thomas

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In 2006, the Neah-Kah-Nie School District developed and, subsequently, implemented a comprehensive Literacy Program in the district's two elementary schools. This evaluation investigated the effects of the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School; focusing specifically on teachers' perceptions of the Literacy Program and the impact of the Literacy Program on student performance.

The findings of this study suggest that student performance on both the DIBELS assessment and OAKS reading assessment did improve since the implementation of the Literacy Program. The researcher did note that student performance on the DIBELS assessment was much lower than that on the OAKS reading assessment. Teachers strongly supported the different components of the Literacy Program, and credited these components for the improvement in their students' reading skills. Teachers also reported improvement in their own literacy instructional practices and attributed their students' success to the ongoing professional development and coaching provided through the Literacy Program.

The researcher provided several recommendations for program improvement. Recommendations included researching and adopting an additional assessment tool to be used alongside the DIBELS assessment. Additionally, the researcher has recommended the building principal and teaching staff also investigate alternative interventions that specifically focus on comprehension skill development. Finally, the researcher highly recommends that the district continue the high-quality and intensive professional development with all staff.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Public education in the United States has been under tremendous scrutiny since the release of “A Nation at Risk,” over 20 years ago (National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1983). This report highlighted the weaknesses in public education, referring to high levels of illiteracy, underprepared high school graduates, and inadequately trained educators. In the report, the NCEE stated that the United States had “lost sight of the basic purposes of school, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain that” (p.9). As a result, public education reform became a central issue in American politics and policy. In 2001, Congress enacted the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which called for schools to ensure high levels of learning for all students through increased accountability, more rigorous academic standards, and a strong emphasis on reading instruction (2002). Throughout this effort, National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) scores have been used to track the progress of public education, identify discrepancies between states, and identify areas of need within the public education sector. Students in the United States continue to perform relatively flat on the NAEP scores, with the most recent average scores of fourth graders showing no growth since 2007 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011).

In response to the inadequacies pointed out by “A Nation at Risk,” NAEP scores, and the requirements of NCLB, teaching students how to read became the primary focus of public education. The U.S. Department of Education commissioned several investigative reports on literacy learning. Both the National Reading Panel Report (2000) and the Snow, Burns, and

Griffin (1998) study focused on how children learn to read, how to help children who struggle to read, and how to improve reading instruction in the classroom. Research has demonstrated that reading is the gateway skill for all other learning. In fact, statistics show that students who struggle with reading, by the end of third grade will continue to struggle with reading their entire academic career (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Fiester, 2010). Studies have even suggested that a student who has difficulties reading past the third grade will likely not graduate from high school.

As literacy has moved to the forefront of public education, school districts around the nation have been assessing their educational practices and developing new ways to improve the literacy skills of their students (Allington, Gaskins, Broikov, Jachym, & King, 1990; Koepf, 2008). In response to this movement, the Neah-Kah-Nie School District in Rockaway Beach, Oregon, developed a district-wide Literacy Program that aims to improve teachers' instructional practices and the literacy skills of all students.

Neah-Kah-Nie Literacy Program Description

In 2006, a team consisting of parents, teachers, administrator, and school board members met to develop a district-wide Literacy Program for the students in the Neah-Kah-Nie School District. Team members reviewed student data, worked with literacy professionals, and researched best practices in literacy instruction, before producing a comprehensive Literacy Program. The Neah-Kah-Nie Literacy Program has four main components: a core curriculum that utilizes a balanced literacy instructional model, a multi-tiered response to intervention approach, the use of formative assessment and progress monitoring for learning, and ongoing professional development and coaching for staff.

All students in grades K-5 are provided with the same core instruction. Teachers utilize a Balanced Literacy model that includes instruction and practice within the five key areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These five areas have been identified as essential components of a successful Literacy Program (Snow et al., 1998; National Institute for Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000; Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). The majority of teachers in the district have been trained in the Daily 5 and CAFE Model (Boushney & Moser, 2006; 2009). The Daily 5 and CAFE Model follow a reader's workshop format, in which the teacher, through a mini-lesson, models a specific skill or strategy for students, leads them through guided practice, and then gives them ample time for independent or group practice (Boushney & Moser, 2006). Whole-group and small-group instruction are based on emerging student needs. Throughout the literacy instruction time, students are provided with different types of reading and writing experiences, including read-alouds, shared reading or writing, independent reading or writing, and literacy station activities.

Students in grades K-5 are assessed three times a year using DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), developed by the University of Oregon. DIBELS is a screening tool that is used to identify students who may be at risk for future reading difficulty and are in need of additional reading support or instruction. The district's two Literacy Coaches recommended the use of DIBELS as a screening tool because studies have shown DIBELS assessment to be reliable in identifying students who struggle with reading (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Jenkins, 2001; Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001; Riedel, 2007; Hagans, 2008). Several different technical studies found correlations between DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency scores and comprehension skills (Shaw & Shaw, 2002; Barger, 2003; Rouse & Fantuzzo, 2006; Shilling, Carlisle, Scott, & Zeng, 2007), while other studies found no correlation at all (Rankie Shelton,

Altwerger, & Jordan, 2009; Johnson, Jenkins, Petscher, & Catts, 2009). Additionally, some researchers have questioned the reliability of DIBELS assessment data, stating that schools should reconsider making academic decisions based on DIBELS data (Ardoin & Christ, 2009). The district selected DIBELS as an assessment tool because it was recommended by the Literacy Coaches and it was one of several assessment tools recommended by the State and Federal Departments of Education.

Students whose scores fall below the benchmark set by DIBELS are placed in an intervention class that is designed to meet individual student needs. Data gathered from DIBELS, an IRI (Individual Reading Inventory), and Running Records are used to determine intervention placement. Students who score in the moderate risk range on the DIBELS assessment are classified as needing “strategic” or additional interventions. These students receive a minimum of 30 minutes of intervention instruction each day. Students who score in the high risk range on the DIBELS assessment are identified as needing “intensive” reading interventions and receive a minimum of 60 minutes of intervention each day. The intervention classes utilize research-based programs that include Read Naturally (Hansbrouck & Tindal, 1991; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1993; Hansbrouck, Innot, & Rogers, 1999; Tucker & Jones, 2010), Utah Reading Programs - Early Steps and Next Steps (Morris, Shaw, & Perney, 1990; Santa & Hoiem, 1999), and Rewards (Cunningham, 1998). In addition, students who require further support are provided with individualized instruction tied directly to their specific needs. The intervention classes are fluid and are adjusted as needed. In addition to DIBELS, all students are given a writing assessment in the fall and spring. Teachers collaboratively score the writing samples of all students, based on the state’s writing rubric. Grade level data teams meet twice a month to review individual student and classroom data. Teachers discuss the different intervention classes and share progress

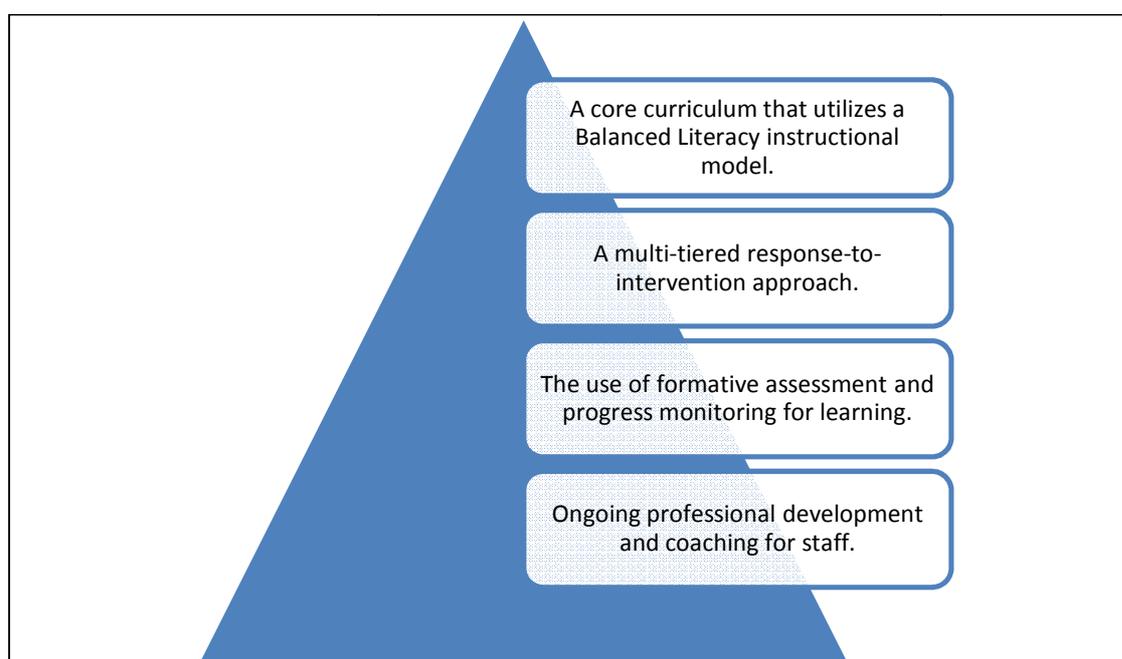
monitoring data. The data is used to determine the next steps in instruction, as well as to develop support plans for those who are continuing to struggle with reading and/or writing.

A key aspect of the Literacy Program is the intense focus on professional development for all staff. The professional development for staff begins with a book study. Each year, the staff at both elementary schools read and discuss a book related to literacy instruction or improving student achievement. These books have included, *Whatever It Takes* (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004), *Strategies That Work* (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007), *The Daily 5* and *CAFE* (Boushney & Moser, 2006; Boushney & Moser, 2009), and *I Read It But I Don't Get It* (Tovani, 2000). Each principal holds staff meetings twice a month, at which staff members participate in write-to-learn activities, and discuss the book they are currently reading. In addition to the book study, the district brings in literacy specialists from the National Louis University (Chicago Branch) to provide coaching and training to all staff, throughout the school year. The coaches spend 1.5 days a month at each school site, providing instruction and modeling of new strategies, observing teachers implementing the new strategies, and meeting individually with classroom teachers. Literacy coaches also provide support and feedback to teachers through conference calls and emails. Teachers are provided with several days of training, during the summer, on balanced literacy strategies. In addition to the literacy training and coaching, teachers are given time (up to three days a year) to observe and collaborate with other teachers in the district on literacy instruction. Teachers are encouraged to observe one another, share resources, and develop lessons together.

All staff that provide support to students during intervention classes are trained in each of the intervention curricula. The school district holds a summer reading clinic at which staff are trained to use the Utah Tutorial Reading Program - Early Steps and Next Steps, and are then

provided coaching and practice time with individual students. At the beginning of each school year, staff are provided with refresher training for intervention programs such as *Read Naturally* and *Rewards*. In order to teach an intervention class, the teacher or staff member must be trained to use the curriculum. The district is building internal capacity by having multiple teachers who also serve as trainers for the different intervention programs

Figure 1



Components of the Neah-Kah-Nie School District Literacy Program

Neah-Kah-Nie Literacy Program Objectives:

The overarching goal of the Literacy Program (See Figure 1 for key components) is to improve all students' reading and writing abilities, through strong core instruction and targeted interventions. The primary objective of the Literacy Program is that 90% of all students will achieve the benchmark, according to district reading assessments. The district uses two forms of assessment with all students: DIBELS and OAKS. DIBELS is used as a screening tool, and a

way to monitor student progress throughout the school year. OAKS (Oregon Assessment and Knowledge and Skills) is the summative assessment required by the State of Oregon, and is used to determine whether a school/district has met Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) as defined by federal legislation.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The Neah-Kah-Nie School District adopted a Literacy Program in the 2006/2007 school year as a means of addressing the reading and writing needs of students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The administrator at Garibaldi Grade School wished to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, and to examine the impact of the program on the staff and students at the school. In addition, the building administrator wanted to know teachers' perceptions with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The data gathered from this evaluation were used to determine whether the program has met its intended objectives, and assisted the school principal and school district in improving the current program. In addition, this evaluation has contributed to the educational profession by bringing to light new program designs and developments.

Evaluation Questions:

1. How has overall student performance on the DIBELS assessment and on the OAKS reading assessment changed since the implementation of the Literacy Program?
2. What are teacher perceptions regarding the Literacy Program?

Key Terms

Balanced Literacy - A methodology that integrates a variety of literacy instructional practices. It always includes explicit instruction and the use of authentic texts. Instructional modalities such as read-alouds, modeled writing, shared reading, interactive writing, and independent reading are used.

DIBELS - Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills is an assessment tool developed by the University of Oregon that measure the acquisition of K-6 literacy skills. See Appendix A for an example of the DIBELS assessment.

Formative Assessment - Assessments data that are used as feedback by teachers to modify and change their instruction, based on student need. It is frequent and ongoing assessment of specific skills and strategies being taught in the classroom.

OAKS - Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills is the state reading, writing, math, and science assessment used in the state of Oregon. Students in grades 3-12 are given the assessment each year in reading and math. Science and writing assessments are administered at specific “benchmark” years.

Progress Monitoring - A type of formative assessment used to assess students’ academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students, entire classes, or school wide.

Readers Workshop - A model that allows students to spend a great deal of time on reading authentic texts. Activities within the workshop include read-to-self, read-to-someone, listen to reading, and write about reading. The workshop always begins with a mini-lesson, and it is followed by independent practice and work time.

Response to Intervention - A method of academic intervention that is designed to provide early, research-based, and effective assistance to children having difficulty learning.

Limitations and Delimitations

This evaluation includes the use of both student assessment data and staff survey data. The use of assessment data is a delimitation, in that it is a snap shot of student performance from 2006 through 2011. Assessment data is objective and will provide an accurate account of student performance. A limitation of this study is the fact that a survey is being utilized. Although surveys can provide researchers with a great deal of information, the answers provided often lack depth in comparison to qualitative measures. This study was designed specifically to evaluate the Neah-Kah-Nie School District's Literacy Program, as implemented at Garibaldi Grade School.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Maren Koepf's (2008) book, *Synchronizing Success*, the author identifies the key components of the school's successful comprehensive literacy system: a consistent instructional framework, prioritized curricular focus, timely and targeted interventions, common literacy assessments, and professional development. The Neah-Kah-Nie School District's Elementary Literacy Program comprises similar components: a core curriculum that utilizes a balanced literacy instructional model, a multi-tiered response-to-intervention approach, the use of formative assessment and progress monitoring for learning, and ongoing professional development and coaching for staff. Although these different aspects match with Koepf's recommendations, they are also all strongly supported by empirical research.

This literature review is organized into the four components described above: Balanced Literacy, Multi-Tiered Response-to-Intervention, Formative Assessment and Progress Monitoring, and Professional Development and Coaching. Although the researcher sought to include a variety of sources from differing viewpoints, most of the literature on these components discusses the positive impact that these components have on student learning and teacher instruction. After a thorough search, little empirical research was found to suggest that these components have a negative influence on student achievement.

Balanced Literacy

The Literacy Program implemented in the Neah-Kah-Nie School District is based on a Balanced Literacy model. Balanced Literacy has been described as a centralist approach to teaching and learning literacy (Wiencek, Vazzano, & Reizian, 1999). This approach encompasses a variety of activities and instructional methods, including read-alouds, teacher modeling and guided practice, shared or partner reading, independent reading, word study/vocabulary development, strategic comprehension instruction, literacy centers, and integrated writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Wiencek et al., 1999; Boushney & Moser, 2006; Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2007; Boushey & Moser, 2009). The National Reading Panel (NRP) report argues that a balanced approach to literacy instruction is best when teaching children how to read (NICHD, 2000). In a Balanced Literacy model, teachers often utilize reading conferences as a formative assessment tool, and use the data gathered from the reading conferences to guide instruction (Calkins, 2001).

Several studies focusing on the practices of effective literacy teachers found that these same instructional methods and activities were being used by highly effective teachers. Pressley, Yokoi, Wharton-McDonald, and Mistretta (1997) surveyed 62 teachers who were nominated as being highly effective literacy teachers. In addition, 53 reading supervisors, who nominated the teachers, were also surveyed. The surveys focused on the instructional practices used by “outstanding” teachers. Results show that the instructional practices most often used by highly effective teachers include literature-based instruction, student-selected reading and daily silent reading time, explicit vocabulary instruction, guided reading practice, whole-group and small-group instruction, explicit teacher modeling of comprehension strategies, and critical thinking skills, written responses to reading, and the use of frequent formative assessments (Pressley,

Yokoi, Wharton-McDonald, & Mistretta, 1997). Another study also looked at the instructional practices used by teachers who are considered by their reading supervisors to be highly effective in literacy instruction (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1997). This study utilized survey data gathered in two previous studies. In total, 89 general education teachers and 34 special education teachers were surveyed. Researchers found that highly effective teachers integrated authentic reading and writing activities with explicit strategy instruction (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1997). A third study looked at the instructional practices that improve student literacy achievement (Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, & Socias, 2009). This study used observational and interview data to examine which practices associated with a Balanced Literacy approach impact students' reading comprehension. Researchers found that three instructional practices "demonstrated a consistently positive and statistically significant relationship to students' reading comprehension achievement" (Bitter et al., 2009, p. 31). These instructional practices include scaffolding techniques like higher-level comprehension instruction, and the use of higher-level questioning, integrated writing instruction and practice, and accountable talk among students.

At the heart of any Balanced Literacy model is an emphasis on independent reading. Providing time for students to practice their comprehension skills independently with texts that are at an appropriate level is essential to student growth in reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Research regarding independent reading has been inconclusive, with the focus primarily being on silent sustained reading. The National Reading Panel (NRP), in its report, stated that silent sustained reading lacked sufficient research. The majority of the studies analyzed by the NRP focused on silent sustained reading practices that asked for little or no student feedback (Langenberg et al., 2000). However, independent reading in a Balanced Literacy model differs, in that it requires students to practice comprehension skills and respond to their reading and

writing activities. Snow et al. (1998) discuss the importance of explicit reading instruction, coupled with numerous opportunities for independent reading practice. In one study, researchers examined the effects of independent reading on oral reading fluency in grades 3-5 (Reis, Eckert, McCoach, Jacobs, & Coyne, 2008). Researchers in this study looked at the School-wide Enrichment Model for Reading (SEM-R) which is a school-wide enrichment approach to reading for elementary students. This approach includes read-alouds with higher-order thinking, and questioning skills instruction coupled with independent reading practice, support/coaching from a teacher, and written responses to reading. The results show that students who participated in SEM-R scored statistically significantly higher in reading fluency than students who did not take part in SEM-R. This suggests a reading program that integrates reading instruction with ample time for independent reading practice may be more successful at improving reading fluency than basal reading programs (Reis, Eckert, McCoach, Jacobs, & Coyne, 2008). Another study looked at an independent reading approach, in which students would read a self-selected text, and then reflect on the skills they used while reading, thus forcing students to pay attention to their metacognitive practices (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006). Researchers found that after seven months, students who took part in this approach were more engaged in independent reading, and made significant improvements in their reading comprehension. Pressley et al. (1997) found that daily silent reading is a common instructional practice used by outstanding literacy teachers, and even the NRP suggests that silent sustained reading can be beneficial for students, even if there is little empirical evidence to support it (Pressley et al., 1997; Langenberg et al., 2000). Many believe that there is a connection between the amount of time students spend reading independently and their comprehension skills (Pressley, 2000).

Another key practice found in a Balanced Literacy model is explicit comprehension strategy instruction, also referred to as transactional instruction (Pressley, 2000; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Research has shown that students need to be taught how to construct meaning from the texts they are reading (Snow et al., 1998; NICHD, 2000). Teaching students a variety of comprehension strategies can lead to overall improvements in their comprehension (NICHD, 2000). It is imperative that students are explicitly taught how to specifically use the different comprehension strategies, so that they can better understand and apply what they are reading (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Explicit comprehension instruction includes a variety of approaches, such as direct explanation, teacher modeling, group or guided practice, independent practice, and teacher observation and feedback (Pressley, 2000; Tovani, 2000; Calkins, 2001; Beers, 2003; Graves, Jeul, & Graves, 2007; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Of the different approaches listed above, modeling is the most important for systematic comprehension instruction. Because teachers are considered the expert readers, they need to model for students how they use various comprehension strategies to better understand the texts they are reading (Beers, 2003).

The NRP report (NICHD, 2000) cited studies that suggest explicit comprehension instruction improves students' ability to construct meaning from texts. In addition to the research cited in the NPR report, there have been other studies that emphasize the importance of explicit comprehension instruction. Researchers in one study examined the impact of explicit strategy instruction on student meta-cognitive awareness (Book, Duffy, Roehler, Meloth, & Vavrus, 1985). In this study, 22 fifth-grade teachers were trained to explicitly explain comprehension strategies. Teachers had to introduce the skill, explain and model the skill, provide opportunities for students to practice the skill and explain their thinking, and make corrections and provide feedback to the students. Student meta-cognitive awareness was measured using a four-point

scale. Researchers reviewed transcripts of student interviews and rated student responses. The results of this study indicate that there is a positive relationship between explicit comprehension instruction and student meta-cognitive awareness. The authors state that the findings show students instructed by teachers who are trained to use explicit explanations will have greater meta-cognitive awareness than students of teachers who are not trained in that approach. A year later, researchers reproduced the same study, but chose to examine student achievement in addition to student awareness (Duffy et al., 1986). Again, 22 fifth-grade teachers were trained to explicitly explain comprehension strategies when teaching reading. Researchers rated student responses, and found that students in classrooms in which explicit instruction was taking place had significantly higher student awareness ratings (Duffy et al., 1986), when compared with students in the control classrooms. However, there were no statistical differences when it came to the comprehension subtest.

Several studies focus on the impact that strategy instruction has on student achievement. Two investigations specifically discuss the instructional practices that take place at the Benchmark School. Gaskins (1988) describes the Benchmark School's approach to strategy instruction and the impact it has on student performance. The Benchmark School targets students who are struggling readers, and Gaskins states that its approach to reading instruction improves student comprehension. At the Benchmark School, teachers use explicit explanation and teacher modeling when teaching comprehension strategies. Gaskins claims that follow-up studies of 160 students who attended the Benchmark School show that students who graduated and returned to mainstream education continued to have higher than average standardized test scores in reading (Gaskins, 1988). In another study, Gaskins (1998) found that students who entered the Benchmark School two-to-five years behind in reading would leave several years later achieving

at or above grade level on standardized tests. Again, the researcher attributes this success to the explicit strategy instruction that takes place at the Benchmark School.

Several studies compared multiple comprehension instructional approaches. One study examined the effects of explicit strategy instruction on at-risk readers in the fifth and sixth grades (Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996). In this study, researchers compared three groups: a strategy instruction group, a story content group, and a basal control group. Students in the strategy instruction group were explicitly taught comprehension strategies through direct explanation and teacher modeling. Teachers used a scaffolding technique, so that students could eventually use the strategies independently. Pre- and post-test data were used to determine the effects of strategy instruction. Students in the strategy instruction group outperformed the story content and basal control groups on the comprehension tests. Researchers claim that the results of this study show that struggling readers who receive strategy instruction made greater gains in comprehension than their peers' instruction (Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996). Another study compared three different forms of strategy instruction and the impact these forms have on reading comprehension (Sporer, Brunstein, & Kieschke, 2009). In this study, 210 third through sixth grade students were divided into four different groups for instruction: a control group, a reciprocal teaching group (RT), an instructor-guided group (IG), and a reciprocal teaching pairs group (RTP). All three experimental groups received direct instruction with teacher modeling. However, they differed in that the RT group received time for independent practice and teacher feedback, while the IG group received small group guided practice, and the RTP group practiced the strategies with partners. All students were administered pre-, post-, and follow-up tests. All three experimental groups outperformed the control group on the post-test and follow-up test, and had statistically significant differences in reading comprehension on a standardized

assessment. Additionally, the RT and RTP students outperformed the IG students, while the control group showed little improvement.

Multi-Tiered Response-to-Intervention Approach

The Literacy Program utilizes a multi-tiered intervention approach based on the Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model. The RTI model includes frequent assessment and progress monitoring, group or team problem-solving, multi-tiered instruction and intervention, and high quality staff development (Burns, Appleton, & Stehouwer, 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Lembke, Garman, Deno, & Stecker, 2010; Ysseldyke, Burns, Scholin, & Parker, 2010). Within an RTI model, teachers meet in small groups to review student performance data, develop instructional interventions, determine intervention placement for students, and monitor student progress. This instructional coordination and collaboration between teachers is essential to the success of students (Allington, 1990). Students who continue to struggle, or fail to make adequate progress, while receiving additional interventions, are referred for special education services (Burns, Appleton, & Stenhauer, 2005). The goal of RTI is to identify struggling students early, provide them effective instructional interventions, frequently monitor student progress, and make adjustments as needed (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The collaboration and coordination between staff is imperative.

Numerous studies examine the effects of Response-to-Intervention and multi-tiered interventions. Several focus specifically on the effect of RTI on student gains and outcomes. Gettinger and Stoiber (2007) investigated the effect of Head Start's EMERGE program on student improvement. The EMERGE program combines research-based classroom instruction with multi-tiered interventions, high quality staff development, and frequent progress

monitoring. All students receive Tier I instruction within the classroom, while students who clearly demonstrate a need for additional instruction receive Tier II and Tier III interventions. Classroom instruction and interventions are research-based. Teachers in the EMERGE program are provided with three hours of professional development and on-site literacy coaching monthly. Researchers claim that the different components of the EMERGE program, including the multi-tiered approach to instruction, resulted in higher student performance on early literacy and language assessments, compared with peers in other Head Start classrooms (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007). Gettinger and Stoiber (2007) believe this RTI approach has significant benefits on literacy development and long-term reading success. A similar study examined RTI during the kindergarten and first-grade years. Vellutino, Scanlon, Small, and Fanuele (2006) conducted a five-year longitudinal study following two cohorts of kindergarten students. All students were assessed and those who were identified as being at-risk for early reading difficulties were provided with instructional interventions, and their progress was monitored frequently. This process was repeated through the third-grade. Researchers concluded that identifying and intervening early with struggling readers can significantly improve their basic literacy skills and better prepare these students for literacy instruction in the first grade (Vellutino, Scanlon, Small, and Fanuele, 2006).

A more recent study examined the implementation of RTI in one elementary school. The RTI approach used in this study included problem-solving teams, progress monitoring, and tiered interventions and instruction. Researchers found that this approach was responsible for student gains in reading on a standardized assessment. In addition, researchers reported that the number of students qualifying for special education increased from 50–80%. Also, the percentage of intensive interventions decreased from 44–31% (Lembke et al., 2010).

Two studies examined the effect of RTI on special education referrals and identification, and student retention rates. Researchers in one study evaluated the effects of RTI on the identification of students for special education, focusing on what effect this approach would have on the number of evaluations for special education, and the percentage of evaluations that qualified for special education. This specific approach included universal screenings, class-wide interventions, and assessment. The results of this study indicated that RTI does reduce the number of students being identified. At one school, the number of referrals dropped from 30 during the baseline year, to 9 in the first year of implementation, while the percentage of students qualifying for special education services increased from 41% during the baseline year, to 71% in the first year of implementation (Van Der Heyden, Witt, & Gilbertson, 2007). A second study focused on the effect of RTI on first-grade retention rates (Murray, Woodruff, & Vaughn, 2010). Researchers investigated six Title I schools that utilized an RTI approach. As part of this RTI approach, students were screened and those identified as at-risk were tested and provided a Tier II intervention. In addition, teachers were provided with ongoing professional development. Researchers examined student data and interviewed building administrator, and they reported that the grade level retention rates had changed with participation in RTI. In addition, researchers found that during the two years that RTI was being utilized, the first grade retention rates decreased by 47% (Murray, Woodruff, & Vaughn, 2010).

Burns et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analytic review of four RTI models that included a total of 21 studies. These studies followed the implementation of interventions for students who were struggling academically, measured individual student learning, and presented quantitative data. Researchers concluded that both systemic and student outcomes improved with the use of

an RTI model. In addition, researchers also found that implementing RTI led to fewer students being referred for special education services, and being identified as learning disabled.

Formative Assessment and Progress Monitoring

The Neah-Kah-Nie School District's Literacy Program includes the use of ongoing formative assessment and progress monitoring. Formative assessment is part of instruction, and the results are used to support and enhance student learning (Shepard, 2000). The use of formative assessment and progress monitoring can drastically improve student achievement and student motivation (Marzano, 2003; Stiggins, 2004; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2006; Ysseldyke, Burns, Scholin, & Parker, 2010). In addition, progress monitoring data is used to determine if instructional approaches and interventions are being effective (Ysseldyke et al., 2010). Highly effective teachers assess student progress frequently, and provide specific, corrective feedback to students (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

Empirical research suggests that formative assessment and progress monitoring significantly impact student achievement. In one study, researchers examined the school reform movement that took place in several large urban school districts, and the impact of this reform effort on student achievement (Snipes & Casserly, 2004). The study looked specifically at three large urban school districts that had overcome similar challenges, and were successful in improving student achievement. Researchers found a significant similarity between the three districts. Each district had implemented data-driven decision-making practices. Teachers were trained on how to use assessment data to identify areas of weakness and develop instructional interventions and responses that improve student learning. These findings suggest that using assessment data to guide teaching will lead to improved student achievement.

Two research articles reviewed multiple studies on formative assessment. Fuchs and Fuchs (1986) conducted a meta-analysis of formative assessment on the achievement of students with mild learning disabilities. The authors reviewed 21 studies that contained an experimental and control group, and looked at the effect size for each study. The researchers conclude that the data from this meta-analysis indicates that using formative assessment and evaluation can increase student achievement among students with mild learning disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1986). A second study set out to answer the question, “Is there evidence that improving formative assessment raises standards?” (Black & William, 2010, p. 82). The authors reviewed 20 experimental studies that examine formative assessment and student achievement. Black and William (2010) claim that these studies all show that improving and increasing the use of formative assessment can significantly increase student learning and performance.

Stiggins and DuFour (2009) used a case study of an elementary school in their article on formative assessment. The case study follows an elementary school through the process of implementing collaborative data teams and data-driven decision-making procedures, common formative assessments, and frequent progress monitoring. The authors include pre-implementation and post-implementation data. Stiggins and DuFour stated that 40% of students met the reading proficiency on the state assessment the year prior to implementation. However, 96% of students were meeting proficiency in less than two years after implementation (Stiggins & DuFour, 2009).

Professional Development and Coaching:

A significant aspect of the Neah-Kah-Nie School District’s Literacy Program is ongoing professional development that includes coaching and collaboration. Professional development is

key to student success. When teachers' skills improve through professional development, student achievement and performance will improve as well (NICHD, 2000). Highly successful professional development opportunities include several key components: ongoing support through coaching or mentoring, teacher collaboration, opportunities for active learning, shared professional resources, peer observations and feedback, and small group book or article studies (Snow et al., 1998; NICHD, 2000; Danielson, 2002; Marzano, 2003; Koepf, 2008). A common theme in effective professional development is the focus on modeling, coaching, and explicit feedback (Snow et al., 1998).

Professional development and coaching are supported through empirical research. The literature on professional development and coaching focuses on the improvement of teacher instruction, teacher efficacy, and student outcomes. Multiple studies have examined the relationship between professional development and/or coaching and teacher instructional practices. One study looked at the effects of an ongoing professional development model that focused on teaching-specific instructional practices in math and science (DeSimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). Professional development activities in this study included active learning, a focus on content, and teacher coherence. Researchers examined the impact of this specific professional development approach on teacher instruction. Results indicated professional development that focused on providing teachers with specific instructional strategies increases teachers' use of these specific strategies within the classroom.

Another study examined the effect of high-quality professional development on teachers' literacy instruction (Correnti, 2007). In this quasi-experimental study, teachers were provided with ongoing professional development on comprehension and writing instruction. Researchers focused on determining if the intense professional development approach had an impact on

teacher practices in this classroom. Results indicated that high quality and intensive professional development has a significant impact on literacy instruction; much more than any other factor. In addition, researchers noted a large increase in direct explicit strategy instruction, in both reading and writing, when teachers received this professional development. Researchers, in a third instance, conducted a case study following a professional development model implemented in several urban elementary schools (Zakierski & Siegel, 2010). Teachers in this study were provided with intense and ongoing professional development around literacy instruction, scaffolding instruction, and data-driven decision-making. Teachers were trained to use and analyze formative assessment data. Researchers found that prior to the implementation of this model, 68% of all fourth grade students met the standards in reading. After two years of implementation, 99% of fourth grade students had met the standards.

Another study examined the effect of professional development on teacher literacy knowledge and practices at the early-childhood education level (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009). The study focused on early-childhood educational programs, both site-based and home-based. Teachers were sorted into three groups: a control group, a group that participated in a class, and a group that participated in a class and received coaching. Researchers found no real differences between the three groups when it came to teacher knowledge of literacy instruction. However, they did notice significant improvements in literacy and language instructional practices among teachers who took part in the class and received coaching. Another study examined the impact of professional development on instructional practices and student achievement (Sailors & Price, 2010). In this two-year study, researchers tested two different professional models, single in-service training, and a combination of in-service training and classroom-based coaching. All teachers involved in this study were trained in comprehension strategy instruction. Although

results showed no statistically significant differences between the two models, the authors argue that the results do imply that consistent coaching might assist teachers in implementing and utilizing specific cognitive reading strategies throughout the school year. One study examined the effects of professional development and coaching on teacher efficacy (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). In this study, researchers surveyed and observed sixth and ninth grade content area teachers, to look at the effect of professional development training and coaching on teacher efficacy for teaching literacy. The results indicate that teachers learn best through collaboration with coaches and colleagues. Researchers noted that almost every teacher interviewed identified coaching and collaboration as helpful in implementing literacy instruction.

Several studies focused specifically on the relationship between coaching, teacher instructional practices, and student gains. A synthesis of research on beginning reading instruction examined the primary features of professional development that promote student growth (Hiebert & Taylor, 2000). The authors reviewed over 24 different intervention models that included varying levels of professional development. They concluded that professional development opportunities for teachers is essential in any program where the goal is to improve student learning (Hiebert & Taylor, 2000). Researchers in another study looked at the effects of Literacy Collaboration, a model that includes one-to-one coaching of teachers, focusing on a Balanced Literacy approach to instruction. In this four-year study, Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter (2010), observed an increase in student literacy learning as a result of Literacy Collaboration. In the first year of implementation, results showed there was a 16% increase in learning, compared to the baseline year. By the third year of implementation, results showed a 32% increase in learning over the baseline year (Biancarosa et al., 2010).

Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2010) first examined the relationship between literacy coaching and student achievement in kindergarten and first grade. They used coaching logs and observations to look at the amount of time spent coaching, and the content of the coaching. Researchers noted a positive relationship between the amount of hours coaches spent observing teachers and student literacy gains. The researchers claim that these results support the need for ongoing professional development for teachers. In a follow-up study, Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2011) looked at the relationship between literacy coaching and student gains in kindergarten through third grade. The same methodology was used in this study. Researchers found that at the second-grade level, the number of coaching hours and the time teachers spent conferencing with coaches both contributed significantly to student gains. In addition, researchers noted that at the kindergarten level, teachers who conferenced with a literacy coach saw significantly higher gains for their students on the DIBELS assessment than teachers who did not conference with the literacy coach (Elish-Piper and L'Allier, 2011).

Another study examined teacher attitudes towards professional development, instructional improvement, and student outcomes. Researchers compared the responses of first-grade teachers involved in professional development (Carlisle & Berenitsky, 2011). The experimental group was provided with a literacy coach, in addition to the professional development activities, while the control was only provided with the professional development activities. Researchers found no difference in teacher attitudes towards professional development between the two groups. However, 86% of the teachers provided with a coach reported improvements in their own teaching. Researchers also noted that students of teachers with literacy coaches made great improvements in word decoding. An additional study examined the impact of coaching middle-school teachers to use think-alouds when teaching comprehension

(Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011). All middle-school teachers in this study were provided with training on using think-alouds during reading instruction. In addition, eight of these teachers were provided with ongoing coaching on how to implement think-alouds in daily reading instructional practices, while teachers without coaches did not. Researchers compared the student achievement data of the experimental group with the student achievement data of the control group, and found that students in the experimental group out-performed the control group. Researchers claim that these results suggest that teacher modeling of thinking strategies (think-alouds) increases student achievement.

A Balanced Literacy instructional model, a multi-tiered response to intervention approach, the use of formative assessment and progress monitoring for learning, and ongoing professional development and coaching for staff are essential components of the core curriculum of the Neah-Kah-Nie School District's Elementary Literacy Program, and their use is strongly supported by empirical research. The studies summarized above highlight the importance of these four components. Additionally, each of the studies discusses the positive impact that all these components have on student achievement. Although the researcher intended to include a variety of opinions regarding each of these pieces, only literature that supported the different components was found.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The Neah-Kah-Nie School District has devoted a great deal of time, energy, and resources into the development and implementation of their Literacy Program. At Garibaldi Grade School, the teachers, support staff, and administrator are working hard to implement this plan with the hope that students' literacy skills will improve. Since the program was first implemented over five years ago, it has yet to be evaluated. The building administrator wanted an evaluation of the Literacy Program. She wanted to know the overall effectiveness of the program, including its strengths, and areas where improvement is needed.

In response to the administrator's requests, this study will evaluate the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School. The evaluation questions for this study are:

1. Has overall student performance on the DIBELS assessment and on the OAKS reading assessment changed since the implementation of the Literacy Program?
2. What are teacher perceptions of the Literacy Program?

Setting

The Neah-Kah-Nie School District is a small rural district located on the Northern Oregon Coast. The K-5 Literacy Program has been implemented in both district elementary schools, Nehalem Elementary School and Garibaldi Grade School. However, the way in which the program has been implemented differs between the two buildings. This study will focus on the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School.

Garibaldi Grade School currently has a student body population of 184 students. The student body population total has varied over the past five years, ranging from 160 students to 185 students. Garibaldi Grade School serves students in the communities of Rockaway Beach, Bar View, Garibaldi, and Bay City.

Currently, Garibaldi Grade School has a free/reduced lunch rate of 67%. Over the past five years, the free/reduced lunch rate has averaged 60%. The percentage of students receiving special education services is 11%, and it has averaged between 11–15% over the past five years. The English Language Development (ELD) population has consistently been at 3%.

Garibaldi Grade School has eight licensed classroom teachers, one special education teacher, one school counselor, and three licensed specialists (music, library, and physical education). In addition, there are three special education assistants and eight classroom assistants.

Participants and Sampling Strategy

This evaluation utilized the total population. DIBELS and OAKS assessment data for every student who attended Garibaldi Grade School during the 2006/2007 school year through the 2010/2011 school year was gathered and reviewed. However, DIBELS assessments were not implemented until the 2007/2008 school year. In addition, all licensed teachers, support staff, literacy coach, and the administrator at Garibaldi Grade School were invited to participate in the study. All staff members were provided with the Staff Perceptions Questionnaire. Additionally, all classroom teachers, the building administrator, and the literacy coach were given the Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment rubric. Participation was voluntary, and some staff members chose not to take part.

Research Ethics

No data were collected until the George Fox University Internal Review Board approved the administration of the study (Appendix D). Consent and access to staff and literacy coaches had been approved in writing by the building principal, Carol Kearns. In addition, Ms. Kearns also authorized access to all OAKS and DIBELS reading assessment data from 2006 to 2011 (Appendix A).

The George Fox University Guidelines for Human Subjects Safeguarding were followed. The researcher ensured that all survey responses were anonymous, and that all assessment data remained confidential. Because the survey questions were anonymous, and only school-wide and grade-level data was analyzed, no personally identifiable information were collected. All research data have been stored in files and on a portable hard drive that are securely housed in my personal safe. The data will be destroyed after three years.

Research Design

The study is part of a larger evaluation, the findings of which will be provided to the building principal. The researcher took on an objectives-oriented approach to program evaluation. The researcher had, with the involvement of stakeholders, developed and defined the program's objectives, and selected the appropriate tools to measure the objectives. The researcher also collected the performance data, and compared the outcomes with the program's objectives. The researcher's primary focus was to determine if the objectives of the program were met. If the intended program objectives were not met, then the next step was to identify areas of weakness within the program, and provide the stakeholders with recommendations on how to improve it. The goals of this evaluation were (1) to assist the building principal and

school district in determining if the program is effective, and (2) to help the building principal and school district to improve the current program.

Data Collection

A variety of techniques was used to collect the data needed for this study. The first question relied on quantitative data from norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests (OAKS and DIBELS). Both OAKS and DIBELS assessment data from 2006 through 2011 was obtained. The researcher looked at the percentage of students in grades K-5 who were considered at the “benchmark,” according to DIBELS for the 2007/2008 through 2010/2011 school years, and also looked at the percentage of students in grades 3-5 who met or exceeded the OAKS reading assessment benchmark for the 2006/2007 through 2010/2011 school years. In addition, the researcher analyzed the data to determine if student performance on the DIBELS and OAKS assessments had changed following the implementation of the Literacy Program, looking specifically at intact student populations (students who attended Garibaldi Grade School at least three years in a row).

A questionnaire and self-assessment rubric were used to gather data on the second question. The Self-Assessment Rubric (Appendix C) was utilized to assess the level at which each teacher is implementing the various Balanced Literacy instructional practices. Each classroom teacher was asked to fill out the Self-Assessment Rubric. In addition, the administrator was asked to fill out the Self-Assessment Rubric for each classroom teacher based on what they observed in each classroom. A Staff Perceptions Questionnaire (Appendix B) with four open ended questions at the end was used to answer the last two evaluation questions. The questionnaire was used to identify whether literacy instructional practices had changed following

the implementation of the Literacy Program. The school staff and building administrator responded to a questionnaire regarding the literacy instructional practices, and their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the Literacy Program.

Data Analysis

The researcher collected and analyzed the data in April of 2012. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize OAKS and DIBELS assessment data as well as the data gathered through the survey questions. The researcher summarized and compared the assessment data from each academic year, allowing the researcher to determine if changes in student academic performance had occurred since the implementation of the program. The questionnaire data from each of the participating groups (13 licensed, 15 support staff, 1 literacy coach, and 1 administrator) was also summarized and compared to one another. In addition, the researcher analyzed and summarized the themes resulting from the questionnaire. The identified themes were shared with one of the classroom teachers to verify that the researcher was accurate.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was a doctoral student in the Educational Foundations and Leadership Program at George Fox University, and a former staff member of Garibaldi Grade School. Having worked at Garibaldi Grade School, the researcher had a firm understanding of all the different components of the Literacy Program. The assessment data was analyzed to determine whether the initial program objectives were met. The survey data was analyzed to identify perceived strengths and weaknesses in the Literacy Program. The researcher attempted to

provide the Neah-Kah-Nie School District with a report that not only highlights program successes, but also provides feedback to further improve the program.

Reporting Procedures

Because the evaluation was both summative and formative in nature, the reporting procedures differ depending on the intended audience. The district superintendent, building administrator, teachers, and support staff wanted to know whether the program was effective in meeting its objectives. More importantly, these stakeholders were highly interested in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the program. They firmly believed in the Literacy Program, and wished to use any formative data gathered to improve the program.

All stakeholders will be presented with a written report. The report will follow the written report outline found on page 383 in *Program Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines*, by Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004). The report will encompass six main sections: an executive summary, an introduction to the report, a description of the focus of the evaluation, a brief overview of the evaluation plan and procedures, a presentation of the evaluation results, and conclusions and recommendations. A draft of the report will be shared with key stakeholders. They will be asked to review the report and provide feedback. Specifically, they will be asked to look for errors, ranging from grammatical errors to factual errors. Once the report is finalized, it will be presented to all intended stakeholders.

Potential Contributions

The research conducted in this study contributed to the Neah-Kah-Nie School District by providing the district with an evaluation of the current Literacy Program. The information

gathered from the evaluation was used to determine the effectiveness of the program, by identifying the current program objectives, and whether those objectives had been met. In addition, the evaluation identified perceived areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. Ultimately, the data from this study assisted the Neah-Kah-Nie School District in improving its Literacy Program.

With the nation-wide focus on literacy instruction, and the pressure put forth by the federal government to ensure that all students know how to read, this study contributed to the field of education, by serving as an example for other school districts across the United States. The highlighted strengths and identified weaknesses of the program can be used to assist other school districts in developing and improving their own Literacy Programs. In addition, districts interested in evaluating their own Literacy Program can use this study as a format to follow when developing their own studies.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This study set out to evaluate the Literacy Program that was developed and implemented by the Neah-Kah-Nie School District, in 2006, at Garibaldi Grade School. The district had one specific goal in mind: 90% of all students would reach the benchmark established by district reading assessments, DIBELS and OAKS. To achieve this goal, the district developed a Literacy Program, comprising four main components supported by research, and believed to enhance student performance in reading and writing. These components include a core curriculum that utilizes a Balanced Literacy instructional model, a multi-tiered response to intervention approach, the use of formative assessment and progress monitoring for learning, and ongoing professional development and coaching for staff.

This study set out to evaluate the effectiveness of the Literacy Program and examined the impact of the program on the staff and students at Garibaldi Grade School. The evaluation focused on answering two specific questions:

1. How has overall student performance on the DIBELS assessment and on the OAKS reading assessment changed since the implementation of the Literacy Program?
2. What are teacher perceptions regarding the Literacy Program?

A variety of assessment tools were utilized in this evaluation, including student OAKS and DIBELS assessment data, the Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment for teachers, and a staff

perceptions survey. The researcher utilized descriptive statistics to summarize the OAKS and DIBELS assessment data, as well as the data gathered through the survey questions. The assessment data from each academic year has been summarized and compared. In addition, the survey and self-assessment data has been grouped by respondent: administrator, support staff, and classroom teacher. These responses from these three groups have been compared to one another. Finally, the researcher identified several themes gathered during the survey and discussed these themes with a research participant.

To further evaluate the effectiveness of the Literacy Program, the researcher identified six cohorts of intact students who had attended Garibaldi Grade School for at least three years in a row, during the implementation of the Literacy Program. The cohorts are described in Table 1.

Table 1

Intact Student Cohort Population

Cohort	<i>N</i>	Years in Literacy Program	Started Kindergarten
Cohort One	17	3	2003/2004
Cohort Two	18	4	2004/2005
Cohort Three	11	5	2005/2006
Cohort Four	14	5	2006/2007
Cohort Five	11	4	2007/2008
Cohort Six	17	3	2009/2010

The intact cohort data for DIBELS and OAKS assessments has been summarized and presented later in this chapter. The researcher compared the percentage of intact cohort students who met and/or exceeded the OAKS assessment, to the percentage of students school-wide who met

and/or exceeded the OAKS. The same comparison was made using the DIBELS assessment data. The researcher compared this data to determine if a difference in performance data exists between the entire student population and just those students who were in the Literacy Program for three or more consecutive years.

Results:

How has overall student performance on the DIBELS assessment and on the OAKS reading assessment changed since the implementation of the Literacy Program?

The first evaluation question sets out to answer whether the Literacy Program had an impact on student achievement over time. Additionally, the district had set a goal of having 90% of students in grades K-5 at benchmark on the DIBELS assessment and 90% of students in grades 3-5 at benchmark on the OAKS reading assessment by the end of the fifth year. Therefore, the researcher also set out to determine whether the two program objectives were met. DIBELS and OAKS assessment data for all students starting in 2006/2007 through the 2010/2011 school year in order to answer this evaluation question were reviewed.

When looking specifically at the DIBELS assessment data for the 2010/2011 school year, the researcher determined that Garibaldi Grade School failed to meet the district's first program objective. Less than 90% of students in grades K-5 were at the benchmark, according to the DIBELS assessment. In fact, not a single grade met the 90% goal. Eighty percent of kindergartners and 81% of first grade students were at the benchmark, while only 64% of second and third grade students were at the benchmark. Fourth grade had only 42% at the benchmark, with 60% of fifth grade students reaching that mark. See Table 2.

Table 2*Percentage of Students at the Benchmark in 2010/2011*

	DIBELS Assessment Data	OAKS Assessment Data
Kindergarten	80%	N/A
First Grade	81%	N/A
Second Grade	64%	N/A
Third Grade	64%	96%
Fourth Grade	42%	91%
Fifth Grade	60%	90%

The researcher also reviewed OAKS reading assessment data for grades 3-5, for the 2010/2011 school year to determine if the district's second objective had been met. According to the OAKS reading assessment data, Garibaldi Grade School was successful in meeting the second program objective set out by the Literacy Program. By the 2010/2011 school year, over 90% of students in grades 3-5 did meet or exceed on the OAKS reading assessment. To be exact, 96% percent of third grade students met or exceeded the assessment benchmark, 91% of fourth grade students met or exceeded it, and 90% of fifth grade students met or exceeded it. See Table 2.

To determine whether student performance on district assessments had changed since the implementation of the Literacy Program, the researcher closely reviewed both DIBELS assessment and OAKS reading assessment data, starting with the first year of implementation through the 2010/2011 school year. In addition, the researcher also looked specifically at

different cohorts of intact student populations, only including students who had been involved in the Literacy Program for three or more consecutive years.

DIBELS assessment data for Garibaldi Grade School students starts in the 2007/2008 school year. Since the implementation of the Literacy Program, it appears that the percentage of students at the benchmark, according to DIBELS, has improved over time at each grade level. In the 2007/2008 school year, 38% of first grade students were at the benchmark, and by the 2011/2012 school year, 81% of first grade students were at the benchmark. Only 10% of second grade students were at the benchmark in 2007/2008, but that number climbed to 64% by the 2010/2011 school year. Although some grades showed growth and loss periodically, almost all grades ended with a higher percentage of students at the benchmark by the 2010/2011 school year. See Table 3.

Table 3

Percentage of Students at the Benchmark According to DIBELS

Year	K	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
07/08	74%	38%	10%	46%	33%	47%
08/09	74%	73%	55%	17%	52%	52%
09/10	76%	77%	52%	54%	24%	60%
10/11	80%	81%	64%	64%	42%	60%

The same pattern is not evident when looking at OAKS reading assessment data. In fact, the percentage of students meeting and/or exceeding the OAKS reading assessment benchmark has been relatively consistent over the past five years. For example: In the 2006/2007 school year, 97% third grade students met or exceeded the benchmark, while in 2010/2011, 96% of third grade students met or exceeded it. In three of the last five years, 90% or more of students in grades 3-5 met or exceeded the OAKS reading assessment benchmark. See Table 4.

Table 4

Percentage of Students Meeting and/or Exceeding OAKS Reading Assessment Benchmark

Year	3 rd	4 th	5 th
06/07	97%	94%	82%
07/08	91%	96%	94%
08/09	100%	93%	86%
09/10	92%	100%	93%
10/11	96%	91%	90%

It is evident, when looking at the results graph inserted above, that the percentage of students meeting and/or exceeding the OAKS reading assessment benchmark has stayed relatively flat and consistent over the past five years. See Table 4.

Intact Student Cohorts

A slightly different pattern emerges when looking specifically at intact cohorts of students. The researcher divided intact groups of students into six cohorts. The researcher only included data for students who had attended Garibaldi Grade School and participated in the Literacy Program for three or more consecutive years. The researcher wanted to look specifically at intact student group data because of their consistent participation in the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School.

When looking at DIBELS assessment data, it is clear that each cohort demonstrated growth over time. Several groups stayed relatively flat before making a large gain, while other cohorts' percentages went up and down over the years. However, looking specifically at each cohort's percentages at the end of their first year and the end of their last year in the Literacy Program, each cohort did demonstrate growth over time. See Table 5.

Table 5*Percentage of Cohort Student Populations at Benchmark*

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6
	<i>n = 17</i>	<i>n = 17</i>	<i>n = 11</i>	<i>n = 14</i>	<i>n = 11</i>	<i>n = 17</i>
2007/2008	35%	56%	9%	36%	64%	-
2008/2009	53%	56%	9%	50%	82%	71%
2009/2010	-	72%	9%	50%	64%	82%
2010/2011	-	-	55%	43%	73%	71%

DIBELS assessment data for intact student cohorts yielded similar results when compared to school-wide DIBELS assessment data. Each of the cohort groups demonstrated comparable levels of growth. Several cohorts had a higher percentage of students at the benchmark, compared with school-wide data. However, other cohorts had a smaller percentage of students at the benchmark, compared with school-wide data. There were few differences between the data for all students in the school and the data for students who had participated in the Literacy Program for three or more consecutive years. See Table 6.

Table 6*DIBELS Assessment - Intact Student Cohort Data vs. School-Wide Data*

	K		1st		2nd		3rd		4th		5th	
	SW	C	SW	C	SW	C	SW	C	SW	C	SW	C
2007/2008	74%	64%	38%	36%	10%	9%	46%	56%	33%	35%	47%	-
2008/2009	74%	71%	73%	82%	55%	50%	17%	9%	52%	56%	52%	53%
2009/2010	76%	-	77%	82%	52%	64%	54%	50%	24%	9%	60%	72%
2010/2011	80%	-	81%	-	64%	71%	64%	73%	42%	43%	60%	55%

SW = School-Wide; C = Cohort

When looking specifically at intact student cohorts, OAKS reading assessment data for these cohorts yielded slightly different results than cohort data for the DIBELS assessment. Each

of the cohorts met the Literacy Program objective of having 90% or more students meeting or exceeding the OAKS reading assessment benchmark. In fact, each cohort had at least 91% of students meeting or exceeding on OAKS assessment benchmark each year, and the majority of cohorts had 100% of students meeting or exceeding it for at least two years consecutively.

Several intact student cohorts demonstrated growth overtime. Cohorts 1 and 2 each had 94% of students meeting or exceeding the OAKS reading assessment benchmark in third grade, and had 100% of students meeting or exceeding it in the fifth grade. Cohort 3 was the only intact group that had a smaller percentage of students meeting or exceeding it in the fifth grade than in the third grade. See Table 7.

Table 7

Percentage of Cohort Students Meeting and/or Exceeding OAKS Reading Assessment Benchmark

	Cohort 1 <i>n = 17</i>	Cohort 2 <i>n = 17</i>	Cohort 3 <i>n = 11</i>	Cohort 4 <i>n = 14</i>	Cohort 5 <i>n = 11</i>
2006/2007	94%	-	-	-	-
2007/2008	100%	94%	-	-	-
2008/2009	100%	100%	100%	-	-
2009/2010	-	100%	100%	93%	-
2010/2011	-	-	91%	93%	100%

When comparing the intact student cohorts OAKS assessment data with the school-wide OAKS assessment data, several differences emerge. In general, intact student cohorts performed better on the OAKS reading assessment over time, when compared with school-wide data. For example: In the 2008/2009 school year, school-wide OAKS reading assessment data showed that 100% of third graders, 93% of fourth graders, and 86% of fifth graders met or exceeded the benchmark. In contrast, the intact student cohorts data showed that 100% of third, fourth, and

fifth grade intact students met or exceeded the OAKS reading assessment benchmark. Not only did the majority of cohorts demonstrate growth, but they also had a higher percentage of students meeting or exceeding the benchmark each school year. See Table 8.

Table 8

OAKS Reading Assessment - Intact Student Cohort Data vs. School-Wide Data

	3 rd		4 th		5 th	
	SW	C	SW	C	SW	C
2006/2007	97%	94%	94%	-	82%	-
2007/2008	91%	94%	96%	100%	94%	-
2008/2009	100%	100%	93%	100%	86%	100%
2009/2010	92%	93%	100%	100%	93%	100%
2010/2011	96%	100%	91%	93%	90%	91%

Student performance on the DIBELS and OAKS assessments had changed slightly over time. Overall, student data shows improvement on each of the assessments from the time the program was implemented in 2006/2007 through the 2010/2011 school year. Although the researcher cannot directly link the growth in student performance on the DIBELS and OAKS assessments, there are several indicators that suggest the Literacy Program may be a contributing factor. To begin with, cohort data from intact student populations shows that students who participated in the Literacy Program for three or more consecutive years out-performed their peers on the OAKS reading assessment overtime. Additionally, student performance on the DIBELS assessment improved quite dramatically when comparing the first year of full implementation with the last year of data gathered for this study. See Table 9.

Table 9*Comparison of DIBELS Assessment Data from 2007/2008 and 2010/2011*

	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
2007/2008	74%	38%	10%	46%	33%	47%
2010/2011	80%	81%	64%	64%	42%	60%

What are teacher perceptions regarding the Literacy Program?

An important aspect of this evaluation was to determine what staff thought and how staff felt about the Literacy Program. Since classroom teachers are most responsible for implementing the different aspects of the Literacy Program, this question focuses on their perceptions of the program. Classroom teachers were questioned on the four main components of the Literacy Program: professional development, Balanced Literacy, multi-tiered interventions, and formative assessment and progress monitoring. Assistants, support staff, and licensed specialists were also surveyed, but only a small number responded to the majority of the questions. Therefore, the researcher decided to focus solely on classroom teacher responses.

Extensive and ongoing professional development was an integral part of the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School. The goal of the professional development was to improve the literacy instructional practices of teachers. The different components of Balanced Literacy, as well as specific instructional strategies for teaching reading, were taught to staff during the ongoing professional development and coaching.

When questioned about the impact of the professional development on instructional practices, all classroom teachers responded favorably. In fact, classroom teachers either agreed

or strongly agreed that the professional development had improved their own instructional practices and the instructional practices of their colleagues. See Table 10.

Table 10

Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Professional Development

Survey Questions	Classroom Teacher	
	N	Mean
The professional development has improved your instructional practices.	8	3.75
The professional development has improved your colleague's instructional practices.	8	3.25
The teaching strategies learned through the professional development have helped me improve the reading comprehension skills of my students.	8	3.50
The teaching strategies learned through the professional development have helped me improve the reading fluency skills of my students.	8	3.25
I utilize the teaching strategies learned through the professional development on a daily basis.	8	3.75

Scale: 1-4 with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree

The Literacy Program utilizes a Balanced Literacy approach to reading instruction. The professional development provided to staff focused on the different components of Balanced Literacy, with the goal being that classroom teachers would utilize this new approach to improve student reading. Classroom teachers were questioned regarding their own use of the Balanced Literacy core curriculum, and the impact of this Balanced Literacy on their own instructional practices. Classroom teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the Balanced Literacy approach has changed their instructional practices.

On the Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment, at least 88% of classroom teachers rated themselves at a 4/5 or 5/5, on four of the six main components of Balanced Literacy: classroom library, independent reading, shared reading, and read-alouds. See Table 11.

Table 11

Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment - Classroom Teachers

Area in Literacy	<i>N</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Classroom Library	8	-	-	13%	38%	50%
Independent Reading	8	-	-	-	50%	50%
Shared Reading	8	-	-	13%	63%	25%
Guided Reading Groups	8	13%	-	38%	25%	25%
Read-Alouds	8	-	-	13%	25%	63%
Conferencing	8	-	-	38%	38%	25%

The building administrator also rated at least 75% of classroom teachers as a 4/5 or 5/5 on four of the six main components of Balanced Literacy: classroom library, independent reading, guided reading groups, and read-alouds.

On the Staff Perceptions Questionnaire, over 50% of all classroom teachers reported using shared reading, independent reading time, and read-alouds every day, and at least 75% of all classroom teachers reported using all of the different Balanced Literacy components at least once or twice a week. See Table 12. It is most likely that classroom teachers are utilizing these components of Balanced Literacy as a result of the professional development provided through the Literacy Program.

Table 12*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results - Balanced Literacy Components*

<i>Classroom Teacher</i>					
How often do you utilize the following components of Balanced Literacy?	<i>n</i>	Less than once a week	1 or 2 times a week	3 or 4 times a week	Every day
Shared Reading	8	-	12.5%	25%	62.5%
Guided Reading Groups	8	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	25%
Independent Reading Time	8	-	-	-	100%
Read-Alouds	8	-	-	12.5%	87.5%
Conferencing	8	-	12.5%	50%	37.5%
Reader's Workshop/Daily 5/CAFÉ	8	12.5%	-	12.5%	75%
Writer's Workshop	8	-	-	75%	25%

Classroom teachers were also supportive of the Balanced Literacy components.

Classroom teachers reported that all the different components of Balanced Literacy were effective or highly effective at improving student achievement and each component had a mean score of 3.13 or higher. Additionally, the mean scores for four of these Balanced Literacy components were 3.50 or higher, suggesting that classroom teachers found these four components highly effective at improving student achievement. See Table 13.

Table 13*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Balanced Literacy*

	Classroom Teacher	
	<i>N</i>	Mean
The Balanced Literacy Core Curriculum...		
Is easy to implement/use	8	3.00
Has a positive impact on student achievement	8	3.50
Requires lots of planning time and effort to implement/use	8	3.00
Has changed my instructional practices	8	3.75

Scale: 1-4 with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree

Classroom teachers also found the different Balanced Literacy components easy to implement and use, and reported that the components had a positive impact on student achievement. See Table 13. The only negative aspect of the Balanced Literacy core curriculum, as reported by classroom teachers, is that it takes a great deal of time to use and implement the different components. See Table 13.

Classroom teachers were mixed in their responses to the multi-tiered intervention approach for struggling readers in the Literacy Program. Classroom teachers believed that the interventions were more successful in improving student reading fluency skills, than reading comprehension skills. In fact, the difference between the means scores was 0.62. Classroom teachers' responses regarding whether the interventions improved fluency skills was a 3.0, suggesting that classroom teachers found the interventions effective at improving fluency skills. However, with a mean score of 2.38, it is clear that classroom teachers did not find the interventions effective at improving comprehension skills. See Table 14.

Table 14*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Effectiveness of Interventions*

	Classroom Teacher	
How effective are...	<i>n</i>	Mean
The Tier II (strategic) interventions at improving student reading comprehension skills?	8	2.38
The Tier II (strategic) interventions at improving student reading fluency skills?	8	3.00
The Tier III (intensive) interventions at improving student reading comprehension skills?	8	2.38
The Tier III (intensive) interventions at improving student reading fluency skills?	8	3.00

Scale: 1-4 with 1 being not effective and 4 being highly effective

Interestingly, all classroom teachers agreed that the interventions had a positive impact on student achievement, and they reported that the multi-tiered approach changed how they work with struggling readers. The mean score of classroom teachers' responses, regarding the multi-tiered interventions, was 3.43, suggesting the majority of classroom teachers strongly agreed that these interventions changed how they worked with struggling students. However, they were split in opinion regarding the difficulty of the interventions, and the planning time required to implement these interventions successfully. See Table 15.

Table 15*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Interventions*

	Classroom Teacher	
	<i>N</i>	Mean
The Multi-Tiered Interventions...		
Are easy to implement/use	8	2.50
Have a positive impact on student achievement	7	3.29
Require lots of planning time and effort to implement	8	2.75
Have changed how I work with students who have reading difficulties	7	3.43

Scale: 1-4 with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree

Classroom teachers responded more positively towards the use of formative assessments and frequent progress monitoring. All classroom teachers reported using multiple formative assessment tools with their students, including DIBELS, IRI, Miscue Analysis, Running Records, ERSI, DRA, conferencing, and teacher observations. All eight classroom teachers reported using DIBELS to monitor student progress in reading. Additionally, 75% utilized conferencing and 50% used IRIs. Fifty percent of the classroom teachers stated they use DIBELS at least once week, while the other 50% report using DIBELS once a month. All classroom teachers described conferencing with students at least once a month, with 75% of classroom teachers stating they conference with students at least once a week. See Table 16.

Table 16*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire - Progress Monitoring*

Classroom Teachers	<i>n</i>	Daily	At least 1x a week	At least 1x a month	At least 1x a year	Do not use
How often do you use the following to monitor student progress in reading?						
DIBELS	8	-	31%	38%	8%	23%
IRI	8	-	-	17%	50%	33%
Miscue Analysis	8	-	-	17%	8%	75%
Running Records	8	14%	-	7%	21%	57%
Conferencing	8	33%	25%	25%	-	16%
Other	8	13%	-	13%	25%	50%

One of the eight classroom teachers did not respond to the last set of questions regarding formative assessments and progress monitoring. However, the remaining seven teachers had positive responses to the questions regarding the use of formative assessments and progress monitoring and the impact it has on instructional practices and student achievement. The means scores ranged from 3.0 to 3.29. Classroom teachers agreed that using formative assessments and monitoring student progress had a positive impact on student achievement. They also reported that this approach has changed how they assess and track student progress. Additionally, classroom teachers agreed that these assessment tools are easy to use. However, they also reported that these tools require lots of planning time. See Table 17.

Table 17*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Formative Assessments and Progress Monitoring*

	Classroom Teacher	
Frequent formative assessment and progress monitoring...	<i>n</i>	Mean
Are easy to implement/use	7	3.14
Have a positive impact on student achievement	7	3.29
Require lots of planning time and effort to implement	7	3.00
Have changed how I work with students who have reading difficulties	7	3.14

Scale: 1-4 with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree

To understand teacher's perceptions in regards to the strengths and weaknesses of the Literacy Program, teachers were asked four open-ended questions. These questions included:

1. What do you see as the strengths of the Literacy Program?
2. What do you see as the weaknesses of the Literacy Program?
3. What aspects of the program are essential to student improvement and achievement?
4. What aspects of the program can be eliminated with little or no impact to overall program effectiveness?

Several common themes were present in responses from all staff members, including responses from classroom teachers, assistants and support staff, licensed specialists, and the building administrator. These themes were shared with one of the participating classroom teachers to verify that the researcher was accurate in identifying staff's perceptions. Student independence and meeting the individual needs of students are the two main themes that showed up in staff responses to the strengths of the Literacy Program. Multiple staff members commented on how they now observe students reading and working more independently. One

staff member stated, “Students are reading and learning to work independently.” Other staff members went on to say that students are “practicing their skills in real ways,” and “taking responsibility for their own learning.” Essentially, “students are reading, using good strategies with better understanding.” In addition, several staff claimed that the Literacy Program meets the individual needs of students, and cited the fluidity of the interventions and the fact that certain components of the Literacy Program focus on providing support to struggling students.

When asked about the weaknesses of the Literacy Program, a lack of cohesion and consistency stands out as the main theme. Multiple staff commented on how the extensive professional development training provided when the program was first implemented has not been provided to the new and incoming staff members. A new staff member wrote, “I’m new to the program so it has been challenging for me to learn all the new ways of implementation.” In addition to not all staff having had the same initial training, it was also noted that the rate of change among staff members varies. One staff member mentioned that teachers are “progressing at different speeds.” Two other staff members noted that “everyone is working on something different,” and that classrooms “lack horizontal and vertical alignment.” Staff member responses have made it clear that teachers are focusing on different aspects of the program, and not all are following the same approach. Some staff believe that they are not cohesive as a school.

Collaboration and data driven decision-making are the two themes highlighted by staff, when asked about the aspects of the program that are essential to student improvement and achievement. Numerous staff mentioned that collaboration with peers and colleagues was essential to student improvement and achievement. Collaboration –related matters listed by staff members include teacher observations, discussions with staff, classroom visitations, and time to collaborate with others. Using data to monitor progress and make decisions was another essential

component that was underscored by multiple staff members. Several staff mentioned looking at student data, including DIBELS, as an essential component of the Literacy Program. Other staff wrote that following a Professional Learning Community model, where “constant monitoring and adjustment based on student performance” takes place, is an essential component to student improvement and achievement.

Only one theme arose from the question regarding program components that can be eliminated with little or no impact to overall program effectiveness. Multiple staff members responded that the training from outside the district could be eliminated. Specifically, staff were focusing on the literacy coaches and training provided by the National Louis University, because that support only comes several times a year and the coaches are in the school building for only one or two days during each visit. Staff mentioned that it is better to have coaches in the buildings more often and with less disruption. One staff member observed, “just hire a reading specialist already.”

An attempt was made to do a follow up group interview focusing on the themes mentioned above. An invitation was sent out to all classroom teachers. However, participation in the group interview was completely voluntary and no classroom teachers chose to take part.

Summary

This evaluation of the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School utilized OAKS and DIBELS Assessment Data, Staff Perception Questionnaires, and the Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment rubric. The results from each of these measures were presented and summarized. The findings provide insight into whether program objectives were met, highlight the teachers perceptions of the program, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The conclusions and recommendations will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In the 2006/2007 school year, the Neah-Kah-Nie School District developed and implemented its Literacy Program, as a means to address the reading and writing needs of students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Because the Literacy Program has been in place for five years, the administrator at Garibaldi Grade School wants to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and examine the impact of the program on the staff and students at Garibaldi Grade School. Additionally, the building administrator would like to know teachers' perceptions with respect to the strengths and weaknesses of the program. This evaluation seeks to determine whether the program objectives have been met, and the data gathered will assist the building principal and school district in improving the current program.

Conclusions/Discussion:

This study set out to evaluate the effectiveness of the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School. The researcher set out to answer two specific questions:

1. How has overall student performance on the DIBELS assessment and on the OAKS reading assessment changed since the implementation of the Literacy Program?
2. What are teacher perceptions regarding the Literacy Program?

The findings from this study align with previous literature on the four different components of the Literacy Program. Additionally, the results also provide information to guide improvement of the Literacy Program.

Student Performance on District Assessments

When looking specifically at the program objectives, it is clear that the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School was not successful in meeting its intended objectives of having 90% or more of all K-5 students at the benchmark, according to the two district assessments. However, this does not necessarily mean the program was not successful at improving student reading skills. When looking at the DIBELS assessment data, the researcher noted that the percentage of students at the benchmark in 2010/2011 was higher than the percentage of students at the benchmark in 2007/2008. On average, each grade level had 23.8% more students at the benchmark by year five in the Literacy Program. Intact student cohort data showed a similar pattern, with an average of 19.2% more students at the benchmark by the fifth year.

Alternatively, the school-wide OAKS assessment data has hovered around the 90% meeting or exceeding rate throughout the five years of the program. Historically, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the OAKS reading assessment benchmark in the third grade usually declined by the time those students were in the fifth grade. For example: Ninety-seven percent of students in the third grade in 2006/2007 met or exceeded the benchmark, but this percentage dropped by 2008/2009 with only 86% of fifth graders meeting or exceeding the OAKS reading assessment benchmark. When looking at the school-wide data, one could argue that OAKS assessment scores were not impacted by the Literacy Program. However, when looking at intact student cohort data, a slightly different picture emerges. The OAKS assessment scores for students who were involved in the program for three or more consecutive years were higher than those of the whole student population. Of the three cohorts with OAKS assessment data for the third, fourth, and fifth grades, two of these cohorts showed growth between the third

and fifth grade; growing from 94% in the third grade to 100% by the fifth grade. The third cohort did decline from 100% in the third grade to 91% by the fifth grade. However, the overall percentage of intact student cohorts meeting or exceeding the OAKS reading assessment benchmark was higher, on all accounts, than the school-wide data. This data indicates that students involved in the Literacy Program for three or more consecutive years were more successful on the OAKS reading assessment, than students not involved in the program for three or more years. Because school-wide DIBELS scores showed some improvement by the fifth year of program implementation, and OAKS assessment scores showed growth specifically with intact student cohorts involved in the program, the researcher believes there is some evidence that the Literacy Program may have contributed to improved student performance on district assessments.

This finding aligns with previous research on the different components of the Literacy Program. Several studies of programs similar to the Literacy Program examined in this evaluation had similar results in student achievement (Vellutino et al., 2006; Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007; Biancarosa et al., 2010; Zakierski & Siegel, 2010). In each of these studies, teachers were provided with high quality professional development and utilized different Balanced Literacy approaches to instruction. Additionally, instructional and intervention decisions were based on formative assessment and progress monitoring data. Each of these studies found that student performance in reading improved as a result of these different components.

Teacher Perceptions

This program evaluation relies on teacher perceptions of the program, because they are not only key stakeholders within the program, but they live and breathe the different components

of the program on a daily basis, and have first-hand experience with how the program impacts the students and staff. Based on responses to the Staff Perceptions Questionnaire, it can be concluded that the professional development and coaching provided through the Literacy Program did change teacher instructional practices. Classroom teachers reported that they now use a Balanced Literacy approach to reading instruction and use formative assessment tools to monitor student progress. Additionally, teachers claimed they are now able to identify struggling readers using formative assessment tools and provide these students with reading interventions as needed.

It is no surprise that teacher instructional practices have changed as a result of the Literacy Program, since professional development and coaching are an integral part of the program at Garibaldi Grade School. Previous research has suggested that high-quality, intensive professional development and coaching have a significant impact on teacher instruction (DeSimone et al., 2002; Correnti, 2007; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009).

When looking specifically at classroom teacher responses to the questionnaire, it is clear that teachers believe each of the different components of the Literacy Program has a positive impact on student achievement. All of these components, including Balanced Literacy, response-to-intervention, and formative assessments and progress monitoring were all reported by classroom teachers to have a positive effect on student performance in reading. In each of the survey questions, all of the classroom teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that these different components improved student achievement in literacy.

These perceptions of classroom teachers align with findings from previous research on the different components. Multiple studies have found that students who received literacy instruction from teachers utilizing the different Balanced Literacy approaches made significant

gains in reading comprehension skills (Book et al., 1985; Duffy et al., 1986; Gaskins, 1988; Dole et al., 1996; Sporer et al., 2009). The results of studies conducted by Ysseldyke et al. (2010) and Snipes and Casserly (2004) suggest that using formative assessments and progress monitoring data leads to improvement in student achievement. Additionally, research by Burns et al. (2005) and Vellutino et al. (2006) found that using a response-to-intervention approach led to improved student academic performance. Each of these components is supported by empirical research, and each of these components is supported in the study by classroom teachers who participated in the Literacy Program.

Recommendations:

The researcher has several recommendations for program improvement as a result of this evaluation. These recommendations are a result of staff responses to the questionnaire, student assessment data, and previous research on the different components of the Literacy Program.

Earlier, the researcher noted that DIBELS is the only consistently used screening tool by all classroom teachers. Although some of the literature has suggested that DIBELS is a reliable screening tool for identifying students at risk in reading (Shaw & Shaw, 2002; Barger, 2003; Rouse & Fantuzzo, 2006; Shilling et al., 2007), other studies have found the opposite, and claim that DIBELS is not a good indicator of students struggling with reading comprehension (Ardoin & Christ, 2009; Rankie Shelton et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2009). Additionally, when looking at the DIBELS and OAKS reading assessment data, it was evident that there was a disconnect between the percentage of students at benchmark. Based on the assessment data in this study, one could argue that DIBELS is not an accurate indicator of how students will perform on the OAKS reading assessment. It may be beneficial for staff to research and select an additional

screening tool that not will not only assist in identifying students who are struggling with reading, but will also serve as a better indicator of student performance on the OAKS assessment.

Throughout this evaluation, it was clear that professional development and coaching is an integral part of the Literacy Program. Staff reported that these professional development activities and ongoing coaching had an impact on their instructional practices and on the achievement of their students. When asked to share their perceptions on the weaknesses of the Literacy Program, a lack of cohesion and consistency stood out as a theme among staff. Several staff members commented on how the intense training provided during the implementation year of the Literacy Program had not been provided in the following years to new staff. Additionally, assistants and support staff shared that they were initially involved in the training during the first years, but now they are no longer included. It is my recommendation that this high quality and intensive professional development approach be continued, providing ongoing instruction and coaching to teachers. It is also recommended that all staff be involved in the professional development training whenever possible. Additionally, staff members who are new to the program should receive the same intensive initial training and support that was provided in previous years, to ensure that all staff members have the same knowledge and skills set, and that they all utilize the same approaches to literacy instruction. As a side note, several staff members did suggest that the district hire a literacy coach, instead of continuing to have coaching provided from outside the district.

The third and final recommendation is a result of questionnaire responses by classroom teachers. Although all classroom teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the multi-tiered interventions had a positive impact on student achievement, not all classroom teachers believed

these interventions were successful at improving student comprehension. Overall, classroom teachers reported that the Tier II and Tier III interventions were more effective at improving reading fluency than they were at improving reading comprehension. Neither Tier II nor Tier III interventions were reported to be effective at improving comprehension. Alternatively, Tier II and Tier III interventions were reported to be effective at improving reading fluency. It is the researcher's recommendation that teachers and the administrator investigate the effects of each of these specific interventions on student comprehension and, if needed, seek an alternative intervention program that specifically addresses reading comprehension.

Limitations:

There are several limitations to this evaluation. To begin with, this study focuses on one specific school. The results of this evaluation really only apply to the school involved, and contribute only to that school's improvement of its Literacy Program. When looking at assessment data, another limitation is evident. This study lacks any data for the year prior to program implementation, meaning there is no way to compare pre-e and post-data in this evaluation. Additionally, the number of participants in this study was limited. Although data for the total student population was included, the number of actual students in each grade level is small. By having such a small student population, the data can be easily influenced by one or two outliers. Staff member participation was also limited because participation was voluntary. Eight classroom teachers, four licensed specialists, seven assistants and support staff, and one administrator responded to the questionnaire. Of the twenty that participated, only the eight classroom teachers were consistent in answering each of the questions, while the assistants and

licensed specialists left sections unanswered, or wrote, “not applicable.” Therefore, the classroom teacher responses were more heavily relied upon, than the responses of the other staff.

Summary:

This study set out to evaluate the Literacy Program that was developed and implemented by the Neah-Kah-Nie School District, in 2006, at Garibaldi Grade School. The goals of this evaluation were (1) to assist the building principal and school district in determining if the program is effective and (2) to help the building principal and school district to improve the current program. Although the primary district objective of having 90% all students in grades K-5 at the benchmark, according to the two district assessments, was not met, the researcher did note improvement in student performance on both the DIBELS assessment and the OAKS reading assessment, over the past five years. However, student performance on DIBELS and OAKS were drastically different, leading the researcher to question whether DIBELS was an accurate predictor of student performance on the OAKS reading assessment. Teachers strongly supported the different components of the Literacy Program, and credited these components for the improvement in their students’ reading skills. Teachers also self-reported improvement in their own literacy instructional practices.

The results of this study are encouraging. It appears that the Literacy Program may have had a positive impact on teacher instructional practices and student performance in reading at Garibaldi Grade School. Further study of this program and each of the different components is recommended. Additionally, it is suggested that the building administrator and literacy coach continue to monitor student data and follow up with staff on a regular basis. The combination of

staff feedback and student assessment data will only continue to help improve the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School.

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APPENDIX A



"Home of the Wolves"

Neah-Kah-Nie School District No. 56
Garibaldi Grade School
Ms. Carol Kearns, Principal
Bev Baldwin, Head Secretary
Colleen Waters, Assistant Secretary

PO Box 317 • Garibaldi, Oregon 97118 • (503) 322-0311 • Fax: 322-2193

Date: February 10, 2012

To: Nicki Thomas

From: Carol Kearns, Principal

Re: Permission to Access Information

I am allowing Nicki Thomas access to Garibaldi Grade School student data via DIBELS, OAKS and teacher surveys from 2006 to the present with the understanding that this data will be used for research purposes in her doctoral thesis. The information will be used for comparison and analysis; it will not be used in any individually identified format.

A copy of Nicki's dissertation will be shared with the school.

APPENDIX B

**Staff Perceptions of Literacy Program
Questionnaire**

<p>What is your role at the school? ___ Classroom Teacher ___ Assistant ___ Specialist (Music/PE/Sped/Counselor) ___ Administrator ___ Other</p>
<p>How long have you been working at the school? ___ 2 or fewer years ___ 3 to 6 years ___ 7 or more years</p>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The professional development has improved your instructional practices.				
The professional development has improved your colleagues' instructional practices.				
The teaching strategies learned through the professional development have helped me improve the reading comprehension skills of my students.				
The teaching strategies learned through the professional development have helped me improve the reading fluency skills of my students.				
I utilize the teaching strategies learned through the professional development on a daily basis.				

How often do you utilize the following components of balanced literacy?	Less than once a week	1 or 2 times a week	3 or 4 times a week	Every day
Shared Reading				
Guided Reading Groups				
Independent Reading Time				

Read Alouds				
Conferencing				
Reader's Workshop/Daily 5/CAFÉ				
Writer's Workshop				

How effective do you believe the following balanced literacy components are at improving student achievement in reading?	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
Shared Reading				
Guided Reading Groups				
Independent Reading Time				
Read Alouds				
Conferencing				
Reader's Workshop/Daily 5/CAFÉ				
Writer's Workshop				

How many students in your class receive a Tier II (strategic) or Tier III (intensive) intervention?
 _____ 0 _____ 1-3 _____ 4-7 _____ 8 or more

Do you teach a Tier II (strategic) intervention? Yes No

Do you teach a Tier III (intensive) intervention? Yes No

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Highly Effective
How effective are the Tier II (strategic) interventions at improving student reading comprehension skills?				
How effective are the Tier II (strategic) interventions at improving student reading fluency skills?				
How effective are the Tier III (intensive) interventions at improving student reading				

comprehension skills?				
How effective are the Tier III (intensive) interventions at improving student reading fluency skills?				

How do you monitor student progress in reading? (Mark all that apply)
 ___ DIBEL ___ IRI ___ Miscue Analysis ___ Running Records ___ Conferencing
 Other: _____

How often do you use the following to monitor student progress in reading?	Daily	At least 1x a week	At least 1x a month	At least 1x a year	Do not use
DIBELS					
IRI					
Miscue Analysis					
Running Records					
Conferencing					
Other: _____					

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

The Multi-Tiered interventions...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Are easy to implement/use.				
Has a positive impact on student achievement.				
Requires lots of planning time and effort to implement.				

Has changed how I work with students who have difficulty reading.				
---	--	--	--	--

Frequent Formative Assessments and Progress Monitoring...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Is easy to implement/use.				
Has a positive impact on student achievement.				
Requires lots of planning time and effort to implement.				
Has changed how I assess and track student progress.				

Ongoing Professional Development and Coaching...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Has a positive impact on student achievement.				
Has changed my instructional practices.				
Has improved my instructional practices.				

What do you see as the strengths of the Literacy Program?

What do you see as the weaknesses of the Literacy Program?

What aspects of the program are essential to student improvement and achievement?

What aspects of the program can be eliminated with little or no impact to overall program effectiveness?

APPENDIX C

Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment

Area in Literacy	1	2	3	4	5
Classroom Library	I do not have a classroom library.	I have a classroom library, but the books are not leveled or separated into any particular group.	I have a classroom library. Some of the books are separated or leveled into groups, but I do not have a particular system in place in my library.	I have a classroom library with a variety of books. The books are arranged in some type of the order and the books may or may not be leveled.	I have a classroom library with a wide variety of books. The books are arranged in some particular system and students know what is available and where to find it. The books may or may not be leveled.
Independent Reading	I do not have time in my schedule for students to do any independent reading.	Students have the option to independently read if they would like. This may be during their "free choice time" but I do not have any specific time designated.	Students independently read in my classroom a few days a week. I have a short time set aside and they can choose what they would like to read at that time.	Students independently read in my classroom every day. They can choose what they would like to read. There is time in my schedule for this.	Students independently read every day in class. I have time in my schedule devoted to this type of reading. Students must choose "just right" books and have them okayed with me.
Shared Reading	I rarely use Shared Readings in my classroom.	Shared Reading happens sometimes in my classroom but not on a regular basis. My focus of the lesson is random. Not all students participate.	Shared Reading happens a few days a week in my classroom. My lessons are not consistently planned. Most students participate.	Shared Reading happens most days. The lessons have a general focus. New skills are modeled and practiced. Most students participate.	Shared Reading occurs daily. The lesson has a planned instructional purpose. Text varies. New skills are modeled and practiced. All students participate.
Guided Reading Groups	I do not have any guided reading groups in my classroom.	I have a few guided reading groups in my class. They met periodically with me.	I have guided reading groups in my class. They read the same text together and meet with me or an assistant daily. My groups stay the same most of the year.	I have guided reading groups in class. They read the same text together and have a specific focus strategy. I met with them every day, but my groups change from time to time.	I have guided reading groups in class for my students. They work on a specific strategy and I may or may not meet with them every day. My groups change often.
Read Alouds	I do not use any Read Alouds in my classroom.	I use Read Alouds every so often with my class. It might be a novel or other shorter book.	I use Read Alouds most days of the week. It might be a novel, or a book selected for a specific strategy.	I use Read Alouds every day whether it is built in to my schedule or is for fun. They are varied in their purpose.	I use Read Alouds every day whether it is for fun or for a specific strategy. I use them for reading and other content areas.
Conferencing	I do not have time to conference with students.	I have a little time to conference with students. I am able to check-in to see what they are reading.	I conference with students a few times a week. I have some ideas of what my students are reading and what strategy they are working on.	I conference with students every day. I have conversations with them about what it is they are reading. I might ask a few questions. I do not have a tracking system of who I have met with and when.	I conference with students every day. I have a system to track what our conference is about and what they are reading.

APPENDIX D



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March 5, 2012

Ms. Heather Thomas
Ed.D. Candidate
George Fox University

Dear Heather:

This letter is to inform you that as a representative of the GPU Institutional Review Board I have reviewed your proposal for research investigation entitled "An Evaluation of the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School." The proposal is approved.

Best wishes as you complete your research investigation.

Sincerely,

Terry Huffman, Ph.D.
Professor of Education
Human Subjects Research Committee
George Fox University
(503) 554-2856

APPENDIX E

Evaluation Information

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Literacy Program and examined the impact of the program on the staff and students at Garibaldi Grade School. The evaluation focused on answering two specific questions:

1. How has overall student performance on the DIBELS assessment and on the OAKS reading assessment changed since the implementation of the Literacy Program?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of the Literacy Program?

A variety of assessment tools was utilized in this evaluation, including student OAKS and DIBELS assessment data, the Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment for teachers, and a staff perceptions survey. The researcher utilized descriptive statistics to summarize the OAKS and DIBELS assessment data, as well as the data gathered through the survey questions. The assessment data from each academic year has been summarized and compared. In addition, the survey and self-assessment data has been grouped by respondent: administrator, support staff, and classroom teacher. These responses from these three groups have been compared to one another. Finally, the researcher identified several themes gathered during the survey, and a subsequent follow-up group interview, and discussed these themes with research participants during the group interview process.

To further evaluate the effectiveness of the Literacy Program, the researcher identified six cohorts of intact students who had attended Garibaldi Grade School for at least three years in a row, during the running of the Literacy Program. The cohorts are described in Table 1.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics for Intact Student Cohorts*

Cohort	<i>N</i>	Years in Literacy Program	Started Kindergarten
<i>Cohort One</i>	17	3	2003/2004
<i>Cohort Two</i>	18	4	2004/2005
<i>Cohort Three</i>	11	5	2005/2006
<i>Cohort Four</i>	14	5	2006/2007
<i>Cohort Five</i>	11	4	2007/2008
<i>Cohort Six</i>	17	3	2009/2010

The intact cohort data for DIBELS and OAKS assessments has been summarized and presented below. The researcher compared the percentage of intact cohort students who met and/or exceeded the OAKS assessment, to the percentage of students school-wide who met and/or exceeded the OAKS. The same comparison was made using the DIBELS assessment data. The researcher compared this data to determine if a difference in performance data exists between the entire student population and just those students who were in the Literacy Program for three or more consecutive years.

DIBELS and OAKS Assessment Results:

The researcher reviewed end-of-the-year DIBELS assessment data for all students starting in the 2007/2008 school year through the 2010/2011 school year. Student data is grouped by grade level and divided into three specific categories: Intensive, Strategic, and Benchmark. The researcher looked specifically at the percentage of students in each grade level that were

identified as Benchmark, according to the DIBELS assessment, in the 2007/2008, 2008/2009, 2009/2010, and 2010/2011 school years.

The Literacy Program was implemented in the 2006/2007 school year, and teachers began using DIBELS the following year. The overall objective of the Literacy Program was to have 90% of all students reaching the “benchmark,” according to both district assessments, DIBELS and OAKS, within five years of implementation. By the 2010/2011 school year, the Literacy Program had been in place for five years. School-wide, over 90% of students in grades 3 through 5 met or exceeded the OAKS assessment. However, significantly fewer students in kindergarten through fifth grade were at the benchmark according to the DIBELS assessment.

Table 2

2010/2011 District Assessment Data

	DIBELS Assessment Data	OAKS Assessment Data
Kindergarten	80%	N/A
First Grade	81%	N/A
Second Grade	64%	N/A
Third Grade	64%	96%
Fourth Grade	42%	91%
Fifth Grade	60%	90%

Percentage of students who were at the benchmark.

DIBELS Results:

In 2007/2008, fewer than 50% of students in grades 1-5 were at the benchmark, according to DIBELS. Student performance on DIBELS improved the following year, with only third grade students having less than 50% at the benchmark, while the remaining grades ranged

from 52–74%. This trend continued in the 2009/2010 school year, and by the 2010/2011 school year, the fifth grade had 42% at the benchmark, while the remaining grades had 60–81% of students at the benchmark.

Table 3

Yearly DIBELS Assessment

Grade	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2011/2012
Kindergarten	74%	74%	76%	80%
First	38%	73%	77%	81%
Second	10%	55%	52%	64%
Third	46%	17%	54%	64%
Fourth	33%	52%	24%	42%
Fifth	47%	52%	60%	60%

Although the overall percentage of students at the benchmark improved over the four academic school years, it is noted that the goal of 90% was not met. The six cohorts of intact students also saw some overall improvement in the percentage of students at the benchmark. However, each of the cohorts also failed to meet the goal of 90%.

Table 4

Percentage of Cohort Student Populations at Benchmark

Year	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6
07/08	35%	56%	9%	36%	64%	-
08/09	53%	56%	9%	50%	82%	71%
09/10	-	72%	9%	50%	64%	82%
10/11	-	-	55%	43%	73%	71%

In addition, the percentage of students at the benchmark in each cohort did not improve consistently, but instead fluctuated each year. However, it should be noted that each cohort did show an overall improvement from the first DIBELS score to the last DIBELS score. For example: Cohort 3 had 9% of students at the benchmark in 2007/2008, and ended with 55% of students at the benchmark in 2010/2011; while Cohort 5 had 64% of students at the benchmark in 2007/2008, and improved to 73% by 2010/2011.

OAKS Assessment Results:

OAKS Reading assessment data from the 2006/2007 school year through 2010/2011 school year was analyzed. Only students in grades three through five participate in the OAKS Reading assessment. Results from this assessment are divided by grade level and presented in two categories: those who met or exceeded the OAKS assessment benchmark, and those who did not meet or exceed the OAKS assessment benchmark. Overall, by the final year of the Literacy Program, each grade level had been successful in having 90% or more students meeting or exceeding the benchmark. In 2006/2007, the third grade had 97% of students who had met or exceeded it, the fourth grade was at 94%, and the fifth grade was at 82%. By the 2010/2011 school year, the third grade was at 96% of students meeting or exceeding the OAKS assessment benchmark, the fourth grade had 91%, and the fifth grade had 90%. It should be noted that the goal of having 90% of students meeting or exceeding the OAKS Reading assessment benchmark was met.

Table 5*OAKS Reading Assessment*

Grade	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Third	97%	91%	100%	92%	96%
Fourth	94%	96%	93%	100%	91%
Fifth	82%	94%	86%	93%	90%

I also reviewed OAKS Reading assessment data for five of the six cohorts of intact students. The sixth cohort was unable to participate in the OAKS Reading assessment, because they were in the second grade during the 2010/2011 school year. Cohort Five only participated in the OAKS Reading assessment once, and had 100% of students meeting or exceeding the benchmark. Cohorts One and Two showed overall gains, while Cohorts Three and Four either stayed the same or dropped in percentage.

Table 6*Percentage of Student Cohort Populations Meeting or Exceeding on OAKS*

Year	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5
06/07	94%	-	-	-	-
07/08	100%	94%	-	-	-
08/09	100%	100%	100%	-	-
09/10	-	100%	100%	93%	-
10/11	-	-	91%	93%	100%

It is important to note that all of the intact student cohorts had more than 90% of students meeting or exceeding the OAKS reading assessment benchmark. In addition, almost all of the

cohorts had 100% of students meeting or exceeding the benchmark for at least one of the years in the Literacy Program.

Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results:

All staff who participated in the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School were invited to take part in this study. Out of the potential twenty-six participants, eight classroom teachers, four licensed specialists, seven assistants/support staff, and one administrator completed the Staff Perceptions Survey. The only role not included in the study was the Literacy Coach, who is a hired consultant from the National Louis University, and was unavailable at the time the survey was administered. The majority of the participants have spent three or more years in the Literacy Program.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Staff Participants

Role	<i>n</i>	Percentage of Staff	Average Years in Literacy Program
<i>Classroom Teacher</i>	8	100%	3.25 years
<i>Specialist (Sped, Counselor, Music, PE, Media)</i>	4	80%	4.4 years
<i>Assistant/Support Staff</i>	7	58%	5 years
<i>Administrator</i>	1	100%	5 years
<i>Literacy Coach</i>	0	0%	3 years

Note: The Literacy Program was implemented 5 years ago.

Professional Development

The first section of the Staff Perceptions Survey focused on the extensive professional development afforded by the Literacy Program. Staff members were provided with statements about the professional development, and asked to identify if they agreed or disagreed, using a four-point Likert Scale. The individual scores were then combined to determine a mean score for each question. For each of the five questions regarding professional development and instructional practices, the mean score was 3.15 or higher on a four point scale, meaning that staff members felt positively about the professional development and the impact it has had on instructional practices. See Table 8.

Table 8

Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Professional Development

<i>All Staff</i>		
Survey Questions	<i>n</i>	Mean
The professional development has improved your instructional practices.	19	3.33
The professional development has improved your colleague's instructional practices.	19	3.44
The teaching strategies learned through the professional development have helped me improve the reading comprehension skills of my students.	18	3.17
The teaching strategies learned through the professional development have helped me improve the reading fluency skills of my students.	18	3.15
I utilize the teaching strategies learned through the professional development on a daily basis.	18	3.83

Breaking the questionnaire results down into specific sub-groups provides a more accurate picture of staff perceptions regarding the professional development embedded in the Literacy Program. When looking specifically at the classroom teacher data, it is evident that these staff have the most positive responses towards the professional development. For example: When asked whether the professional development has improved teacher instructional practices, classroom teachers had a mean score of 3.75, which was significantly higher than the Licensed Specialists/Administrator's mean score of 2.83. Assistants had slightly less positive responses than classroom teachers, and licensed specialists/administrator had the lowest mean scores on almost all the questions. The mean scores for classroom teacher responses on each question ranged from 3.25 to 3.75. In comparison, the mean score for assistant responses ranged from 3.2 to 3.4, while licensed specialists/administrator mean scores ranged from 2.8 to 3.67. Although the mean scores varied between the three groups, overall each group responded positively to the questions on professional development. See Table 9.

Table 9*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Professional Development*

Survey Questions	Classroom Teacher		Classroom Assistants		Other	
	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>n</i>	Mean
The professional development has improved your instructional practices.	8	3.75	5	3.4	6	2.83
The professional development has improved your colleague's instructional practices.	8	3.25	5	3.4	6	3.67
The teaching strategies learned through the professional development have helped me improve the reading comprehension skills of my students.	8	3.50	5	3.2	5	2.80
The teaching strategies learned through the professional development have helped me improve the reading fluency skills of my students.	8	3.25	5	3.2	5	3.00
I utilize the teaching strategies learned through the professional development on a daily basis.	8	3.75	5	3.2	5	3.00

The licensed specialists/administrator had mixed reactions to the professional development provided by the Literacy Program. The specialists had a mean score of 2.83 for the question on whether the professional development had improved their own instructional practices. However, when asked whether the professional development had improved their colleagues' instructional practices, the mean score was 3.67. See Table 9.

Later in the questionnaire, each survey participant also responded to a series of statements regarding the impact of ongoing professional development and coaching on student achievement and instructional practices. Every staff member strongly agreed or agreed that the

coaching and professional development have had a positive impact on student achievement and have improved their instructional practices. All but one staff member reported that this professional development approach has changed their instructional practices. Overall, the vast majority of staff at Garibaldi Grade School found that the professional development component of the Literacy Program had had a positive impact on their instructional practices and student achievement in reading.

Balanced Literacy

The professional development provided through the Literacy Program focused on the different components of Balanced Literacy. These components include shared reading, guided reading groups, independent reading time, read-alouds, conferencing, reader's workshop/Daily 5/Cafe, and writer's workshop. As part of this evaluation, all staff were asked to respond to several statements regarding the different components of Balanced Literacy, centering on how often the different components are utilized and how effective the different components are in improving student achievement in reading. Overall, the majority of staff reported utilizing these different components at least once a week. See Table 10.

Table 10*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results - Balanced Literacy*

<i>All Staff</i>					
How often do you utilize the following components of Balanced Literacy?	<i>N</i>	Less than once a week	1 or 2 times a week	3 or 4 times a week	Every day
Shared Reading	16	6%	19%	31%	44%
Guided Reading Groups	14	36%	7%	14%	43%
Independent Reading Time	15	13%	-	13%	73%
Read-Alouds	16	6%	25%	13%	56%
Conferencing	14	21%	21%	36%	21%
Reader's Workshop/Daily 5/CAFE	17	24%	-	6%	71%
Writer's Workshop	17	18%	6%	47%	29%

It is important to note that not all staff members answered each of the questions. Some of the assistants/support staff and licensed specialists chose to write “not applicable” on several different sections. This is why the number (n) of total responses differs, depending on the question. See Table 10.

As stated earlier, looking specifically at each of the different sub-groups provides a more accurate picture of staff perceptions. Because classroom teachers are primarily responsible for teaching literacy within a designated literacy block, only their sub-group data for this particular question was included. Neither licensed specialists/administrator or assistants are responsible for teaching literacy, and therefore, it is not necessary to know specifically how often each of these sub-groups uses the different Balanced Literacy components.

Table 11*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results - Balanced Literacy*

<i>Classroom Teacher</i>					
How often do you utilize the following components of Balanced Literacy?	<i>n</i>	Less than once a week	1 or 2 times a week	3 or 4 times a week	Every day
Shared Reading	8	-	12.5%	25%	62.5%
Guided Reading Groups	8	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	25%
Independent Reading Time	8	-	-	-	100%
Read-Alouds	8	-	-	12.5%	87.5%
Conferencing	8	-	12.5%	50%	37.5%
Reader's Workshop/Daily 5/CAFÉ	8	12.5%	-	12.5%	75%
Writer's Workshop	8	-	-	75%	25%

The majority of classroom teachers reported utilizing the different components three or more times a week. The most often used component of Balanced Literacy was independent reading time, with all eight teachers reporting they have independent reading time every day. It is important to note that all but two of the seven Balanced Literacy components are used by all classroom teachers at least once a week. See Table 11.

When questioned about the effectiveness of the different Balanced Literacy components, the majority of staff found all of the components effective in improving student achievement in reading. In fact, the mean score for each of the components was higher than 3.0 Reader's workshop/Daily 5/CAFÉ and read-alouds were deemed by staff to be most effective in improving student achievement. See Table 12.

Table 12*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Balanced Literacy*

All Staff

How effective do you believe the following Balanced Literacy components are at improving student achievement in reading?	<i>n</i>	Mean
Shared Reading	17	3.12
Guided Reading Groups	16	3.19
Independent Reading Time	17	3.24
Read Alouds	16	3.38
Conferencing	17	3.29
Reader’s Workshop/Daily 5/CAFÉ	17	3.41
Writer’s Workshop	17	3.29

Staff were questioned as to whether the Balanced Literacy Core Curriculum is easy to implement and use, requires significant planning time, has a positive impact on student achievement, and changes teacher instructional practices. Fourteen staff answered this set of questions, and more than half were classroom teachers. The responses for all four questions were relatively positive, with only one mean score below 3.0. It is clear that staff feel the core curriculum has a positive impact on student achievement. See Table 13.

Table 13*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Balanced Literacy**All Staff*

The Balanced Literacy Core Curriculum...	<i>n</i>	Mean
Is easy to implement/use	14	2.79
Has a positive impact on student achievement	14	3.43
Requires lots of planning time and effort to implement/use	14	3.00
Has changed my instructional practices	14	3.14

The majority of classroom teachers reported that each of the Balanced Literacy components was effective or highly effective in improving student achievement. Conferencing, independent reading, reader’s workshop, and read-alouds all had mean scores of 3.5 or higher, suggesting that classroom teachers thought highly of these components. Conferencing was listed as the most effective component of Balanced Literacy, while shared reading and guided reading were deemed the least effective. See Table 14.

Table 14*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Balanced Literacy*

	Classroom Teacher		Classroom Assistants		Other	
	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>n</i>	Mean
<i>How effective do you believe the following Balanced Literacy components are at improving student achievement in reading?</i>						
Shared Reading	8	3.13	6	3.17	3	3.00
Guided Reading Groups	8	3.13	5	3.20	3	3.33
Independent Reading Time	8	3.50	6	2.83	3	3.33
Read-Alouds	8	3.63	5	3.00	3	3.33
Conferencing	8	3.76	6	3.17	3	3.33
Reader’s Workshop/Daily 5/CAFÉ	8	3.50	6	3.33	3	3.33
Writer’s Workshop	8	3.25	6	3.33	3	3.33

The responses provided by assistants, support staff, and licensed specialists are difficult to report, because not all participants responded to each of the statements. Several assistants, support staff, and licensed specialists wrote “not applicable” on their questionnaires in this section. This caused the number of responses to vary depending on the component. Of the few staff members that did respond, a lower number reported actually using the different components of Balanced Literacy. The perceptions of assistants, support staff, and licensed specialists differed from classroom teachers. While classroom teachers found Conferencing to be the most effective component of Balanced Literacy, assistants and support staff rated it lower. Among classroom teachers, Independent Reading Time had a mean score of 3.5, while classroom assistant responses had a mean score of 2.83. The licensed specialists’ responses were relatively

the same for each of the different components. But, with a mean score of 3.0 or higher on each of the components, it is evident that licensed specialists found each of the components effective in improving student achievement in reading. See Table 14.

Classroom teachers responded in varying degrees to the second set of questions about the Balanced Literacy Core Curriculum. The mean scores to each of the questions ranged from 3.0 to 3.75. All classroom teachers felt that the Balanced Literacy Core Curriculum has changed their instructional practices, and has had a positive impact on student achievement. See Table 15.

Table 15

Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Balanced Literacy

	Classroom Teacher		Other (Assistants/Specialists)	
The Balanced Literacy Core Curriculum...	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>n</i>	Mean
Is easy to implement/use	8	3.00	6	2.50
Has a positive impact on student achievement	8	3.50	6	3.17
Requires lots of planning time and effort to implement/use	8	3.00	6	3.33
Has changed my instructional practices	8	3.75	6	3.17

Four assistants/support staff, one licensed specialist, and one building administrator answered the second set of questions regarding the Balanced Literacy Core Curriculum. Because so few non-classroom teachers responded to these questions, their answers have been grouped together. These non-classroom teachers had differing responses to the questions regarding ease of implementation, impact on student achievement, and impact on teacher instructional practices. The mean scores on each of the questions ranged from 2.50 to 3.33, much less than the range of scores for classroom teachers. Assistants, support staff, and licensed specialists found the Balanced Literacy Core Curriculum more difficult to implement than classroom teachers, and

fewer non-classroom teachers believed that the curriculum had had a positive impact on student achievement or had changed their instructional practices. See Table 15.

Interventions

All staff were surveyed regarding the multi-tiered interventions that are an essential component of the Literacy Program. However, the majority of assistants/support staff and licensed specialists chose not to respond to this section of the questions, and instead wrote “not applicable.” All classroom teachers reported teaching at least one Tier II or Tier III intervention, and all classroom teachers chose to respond to the first set of survey questions on multi-tiered interventions. Very few non-classroom teachers (assistants/support staff, licensed specialists, and administrator) chose to answer these questions.

All staff were asked about the effectiveness of the Tier II (strategic) and Tier III (intensive) interventions, focusing specifically on the impact these interventions have on improving student fluency and comprehension skills. Staff stated that the interventions were more effective at improving reading fluency than reading comprehension. Additionally, staff responded more positively to the Tier III interventions than those of Tier II. See Table 16.

Table 16*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Multi-Tiered Interventions*

All Staff

How effective are...	<i>n</i>	Mean
The Tier II (strategic) interventions at improving student reading comprehension skills?	12	2.58
The Tier II (strategic) interventions at improving student reading fluency skills?	12	3.08
The Tier III (intensive) interventions at improving student reading comprehension skills?	14	2.79
The Tier III (intensive) interventions at improving student reading fluency skills?	14	3.21

Later in the questionnaire, staff were again surveyed about the multi-tiered interventions. These questions focused on the ease of implementation, the impact on student achievement, and the impact on teacher instructional practices. One of the eight classroom teachers did not respond to two of the survey questions in this section, while seven non-classroom teachers (assistants/support staff, licensed specialists, and administrator) replied. Based on the mean scores listed in Table 16, it is evident that staff believed the interventions had a positive impact on student achievement and changed how they worked with struggling readers. See Table 16.

Table 17*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Multi-Tiered Interventions*

All Staff

The Multi-Tiered Interventions...	<i>n</i>	Mean
Are easy to implement/use	15	2.60
Have a positive impact on student achievement	14	3.36
Require lots of planning time and effort to implement	14	2.86
Have changed how I work with students who have reading difficulties	14	3.29

Classroom teachers accounted for more than half of the group responses, so when looking specifically at classroom teacher responses, it is no surprise that their answers almost mirror the group responses. Interestingly though, classroom teacher responses were less positive than non-classroom teachers. The non-classroom teacher respondents included the one building administrator and several assistants and support staff. All of the licensed specialists wrote “not applicable,” or left this section of the questionnaire blank. Non-classroom teachers’ responses for each of the questions had mean scores of 3.0 or higher, while the mean score of classroom teachers’ responses ranged from 2.38 to 3.0. See Table 18.

Table 18*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Interventions*

How effective are...	Classroom Teacher		Other (Assistants/Specialists)	
	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>n</i>	Mean
The Tier II (strategic) interventions at improving student reading comprehension skills?	8	2.38	4	3.00
The Tier II (strategic) interventions at improving student reading fluency skills?	8	3.00	4	3.25
The Tier III (intensive) interventions at improving student reading comprehension skills?	8	2.38	6	3.33
The Tier III (intensive) interventions at improving student reading fluency skills?	8	3.00	6	3.50

When questioned about the ease of implementation, the impact on student achievement, and the impact on instructional practices, classroom teachers' responses were almost identical to the group responses, and had slightly lower mean scores than non-classroom teachers' responses. Classroom teachers and non-classroom teachers agreed that the interventions had a positive impact on student achievement. Additionally, both groups reported that the interventions were not as easy to implement. As in the previous section, non-classroom teachers responded more positively than classroom teachers. See Table 19.

Table 19*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Interventions*

	Classroom Teacher		Other (Assistants/Specialists)	
	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>n</i>	Mean
The Multi-Tiered Interventions...				
Are easy to implement/use	8	2.50	7	2.71
Have a positive impact on student achievement	7	3.29	7	3.43
Require lots of planning time and effort to implement	8	2.75	6	3.00
Have changed how I work with students who have reading difficulties	7	3.43	7	3.14

Formative Assessment and Progress Monitoring

Staff were questioned regarding the tools and frequency of progress monitoring and formative assessment. Staff reported utilizing a variety of tools to monitor student progress. These formative assessment tools include DIBELS, IRI, Miscue Analysis, Running Records, ERSI, DRA, conferencing, and teacher observations. DIBELS and conferencing were the most widely used formative assessment by staff. Thirty-three percent reported that they conference with students on a daily basis. Thirty-one percent of staff reported using DIBELS once a week, while 38% stated they use DIBELS at least once a month. Conferencing was the most often used formative assessment, while 75% of staff stated that they do not use Miscue Analysis. See Table 20.

Table 20*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire - Progress Monitoring and Formative Assessment*

How often do you use the following to monitor student progress?	<i>n</i>	Daily	At least 1x a week	At least 1x a month	At least 1x a year	Do not use
DIBELS	13	-	31%	38%	8%	23%
IRI	12	-	-	17%	50%	33%
Miscue Analysis	12	-	-	17%	8%	75%
Running Records	14	14%	-	7%	21%	57%
Conferencing	12	33%	25%	25%	-	16%
Other	8	13%	-	13%	25%	50%

Roughly, the same number of staff members also answered the last series of questions about formative assessment and progress monitoring. These questions focused on the ease of implementation, impact on student achievement, and impact on teacher practices. Staff responded relatively consistently to this section, with mean scores ranging from 2.92 to 3.15. The most positive response was with respect to the impact on student achievement, where the mean score was 3.15. See Table 21.

Table 21*Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Formative Assessments and Progress Monitoring*

<i>All Staff</i>		
Frequent formative assessment and progress monitoring...	<i>n</i>	Mean
Are easy to implement/use	13	2.92
Have a positive impact on student achievement	13	3.15
Require lots of planning time and effort to implement	11	2.91
Have changed how I assess and track student progress	11	2.91

Although all staff were surveyed about formative assessment and progress monitoring, classroom teachers are solely responsible for assessing student progress. It is interesting to note that when looking specifically at classroom teacher responses, it is evident that they have a differing view of progress monitoring and formative assessment. Classroom teachers report using multiple formative assessment tools to monitor student progress in reading. These include DIBELS, IRI, Miscue Analysis, Running Records, ERSI, DRA, conferencing, and teacher observations. All eight classroom teachers reported using DIBELS to monitor student progress in reading. Additionally, 75% utilized conferencing and 50% used IRIs. Fifty percent of the classroom teachers stated they use DIBELS at least once week, while the other 50% report using DIBELS once a month. All classroom teachers described conferencing with students at least once a month, with 75% of classroom teachers stating they conference with students at least once a week. See Table 22.

Table 22

Staff Perceptions Questionnaire - Progress Monitoring and Formative Assessment

Classroom Teachers	<i>n</i>	Daily	At least 1x a week	At least 1x a month	At least 1x a year	Do not use
How often do you use the following to monitor student progress in reading?						
DIBELS	8	-	31%	38%	8%	23%
IRI	8	-	-	17%	50%	33%
Miscue Analysis	8	-	-	17%	8%	75%
Running Records	8	14%	-	7%	21%	57%
Conferencing	8	33%	25%	25%	-	16%
Other	8	13%	-	13%	25%	50%

Few non-classroom teachers answered the series of questions regarding formative assessment and progress monitoring. Respondents included one building administrator, one licensed specialist, and several assistants/support staff. Of these respondents, 20% reported using DIBELS at least once a month, while an additional 20% stated they used DIBELS at least once a month. Sixty percent of non-classroom teachers reported never using DIBELS. Similarly, 20% stated they use IRIs at least once a year, while the remaining 80% claimed to never use IRIs. The most often utilized assessment tool by non-classroom teachers was conferencing, with 25% reported conferencing with students at least once a week, and an additional 25% met with students at least once a month. See Table 23.

Table 23

Staff Perceptions Questionnaire - Progress Monitoring and Formative Assessment

Non-Classroom Teacher Respondents	<i>n</i>	Daily	At least 1x a week	At least 1x a month	At least 1x a year	Do not use
How often do you use the following to monitor student progress in reading?						
DIBELS	5	-	-	20%	20%	60%
IRI	5	-	-	-	20%	80%
Miscue Analysis	4	-	-	-	-	100%
Running Records	6	33%	-	-	-	66%
Conferencing	4	-	25%	25%	-	50%
Other	0	-	-	-	-	-

It is important to note that classroom teachers are solely responsible for monitoring student progress. Therefore, it is not surprising that the non-classroom teachers reported using progress monitoring tools less often than classroom teachers.

One of the eight classroom teachers did not respond to the last set of questions. However, the remaining seven teachers had positive responses to the questions regarding the implementation of the Literacy Program and its impact on instructional practices and student achievement. The means scores ranged from 3.0 to 3.29. Classroom teachers reported that frequent formative assessments and progress monitoring had a positive impact on student achievement, and have changed how they assess and track student progress in reading. Non-classroom teacher respondents had a slightly different view of formative assessment and progress monitoring, and had significantly lower mean scores with respect to ease of implementation and impact on instructional practices. Again, it is important to note that most non-classroom teachers have little experience using the formative assessments and progress monitoring tools associated with the Literacy Program. See Table 24.

Table 24

Staff Perceptions Questionnaire Results – Formative Assessments and Progress Monitoring

	Classroom Teacher		Other (Assistants/Specialists)	
	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>n</i>	Mean
Frequent formative assessment and progress monitoring...				
Are easy to implement/use	7	3.14	6	2.67
Have a positive impact on student achievement	7	3.29	6	3.00
Require lots of planning time and effort to implement	7	3.00	4	2.75
Have changed how I work with students who have reading difficulties	7	3.14	4	2.50

Open-Ended Questions

At the end of the questionnaire, all staff were asked four open-ended questions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the Literacy Program. These questions included:

1. What do you see as the strengths of the Literacy Program?
2. What do you see as the weaknesses of the Literacy Program?
3. What aspects of the program are essential to student improvement and achievement?
4. What aspects of the program can be eliminated with little or no impact to overall program effectiveness?

Several common themes were present in responses from all staff members, including responses from classroom teachers, assistants and support staff, licensed specialists, and the building administrator. These themes were shared with one of the classroom teachers who participated to verify that the researcher was accurate in understanding what staff was reporting. Student independence and meeting the individual needs of students are the two main themes that showed up in staff responses to the strengths of the Literacy Program. Multiple staff members commented on how they now observe students reading and working more independently. One staff member stated, “Students are reading and learning to work independently.” Other staff members went on to say that students are “practicing their skills in real ways,” and “taking responsibility for their own learning.” Essentially, “students are reading, using good strategies with better understanding.” In addition, several staff claimed that the Literacy Program meets the individual needs of students, and cited the fluidity of the interventions and the fact that certain components of the Literacy Program focus on providing support to struggling students.

When asked about the weaknesses of the Literacy Program, a lack of cohesion and consistency stands out as the main theme. Multiple staff commented on how the extensive professional development training provided when the program was first implemented has not been provided to the new and incoming staff members. A new staff member wrote, “I’m new to the program so it has been challenging for me to learn all the new ways of implementation.” In

addition to not all staff having had the same initial training, it was also noted that the rate of change among staff members varies. One staff member mentioned that teachers are “progressing at different speeds.” Two other staff members noted that “everyone is working on something different,” and that classrooms “lack horizontal and vertical alignment.” Staff member responses have made it clear that teachers are focusing on different aspects of the program, and not all are following the same approach. Some staff believe that they are not cohesive as a school.

Collaboration and data driven decision-making are the two themes highlighted by staff, when asked about the aspects of the program that are essential to student improvement and achievement. Numerous staff mentioned that collaboration with peers and colleagues was essential to student improvement and achievement. Collaboration –related matters listed by staff members include teacher observations, discussions with staff, classroom visitations, and time to collaborate with others. Using data to monitor progress and make decisions was another essential component that was underscored by multiple staff members. Several staff mentioned looking at student data, including DIBELS, as an essential component of the Literacy Program. Other staff wrote that following a Professional Learning Community model, where “constant monitoring and adjustment based on student performance” takes place, is an essential component to student improvement and achievement.

Only one theme arose from the question regarding program components that can be eliminated with little or no impact to overall program effectiveness. Multiple staff members responded that the training from outside the district could be eliminated. Specifically, staff were focusing on the literacy coaches and training provided by the National Louis University, because that support only comes several times a year and the coaches are in the school building for only one or two days during each visit. Staff mentioned that it is better to have coaches in the

buildings more often and with less disruption. One staff member observed, “just hire a reading specialist already.”

An attempt was made to do a follow up group interview focusing on the themes mentioned above. An invitation was sent out to all classroom teachers. However, participation in the group interview was completely voluntary and no classroom teachers chose to take part.

Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment Results:

A Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment Rubric was administered to all classroom teachers and the building administrator. The rubric is used to determine the level of implementation for the different components of Balanced Literacy, including classroom library, independent reading, shared reading, guided reading groups, read-alouds, and conferencing. Classroom teachers were asked to mark where on the rubric they fall in each of the different components of Balanced Literacy. The building administrator was asked to fill out a rubric for each classroom teacher, based on the administrator’s observations. Scores range from one to five, with a one meaning the component is not implemented at all, a three meaning the component is partially in place, and a five meaning the component is fully implemented.

Based on classroom teacher responses, 50% stated that they have fully implemented, with a score of five, independent reading and a classroom library. Sixty-three percent claimed to have fully implemented read-alouds, and 25% reported that they have fully implemented shared reading, guided reading groups, and conferencing, in their classrooms. Thirteen percent claimed that they had partially implemented, with a score of three, classroom library, shared reading, and read-alouds. Only one teacher reported not implementing a component of Balanced Literacy. See Table 25.

Table 25*Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment - Classroom Teachers*

Area in Literacy	<i>n</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Classroom Library	8	-	-	13%	38%	50%
Independent Reading	8	-	-	-	50%	50%
Shared Reading	8	-	-	13%	63%	25%
Guided Reading Groups	8	13%	-	38%	25%	25%
Read-Alouds	8	-	-	13%	25%	63%
Conferencing	8	-	-	38%	38%	25%

The building administrator was asked to fill out the Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment for each classroom teacher, based on the administrator's observations. The building administrator's rubric scores differ slightly from the classroom teachers' scores. In fact, according to the building administrator, the overall level of implementation for each of the different Balanced Literacy components is lower than was reported by the classroom teachers.

The building administrator reported that 88% of classroom teachers had fully implemented Independent Reading. In addition, she stated that 50% of the classroom teachers had fully implemented classroom library, guided reading groups, and read-alouds. The building administrator claimed that all eight classroom teachers had not implemented shared reading within their classrooms. See Table 26.

Table 26*Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment - Building Administrator*

Area in Literacy	<i>n</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Classroom Library	8	-	-	25%	25%	50%
Independent Reading	8	-	-	-	13%	88%
Shared Reading	8	100%	-	-	-	-
Guided Reading Groups	8	-	-	13%	38%	50%
Read-Alouds	8	-	-	25%	25%	50%
Conferencing	8	13%	38%	-	25%	25%

Summary

This evaluation of the Literacy Program at Garibaldi Grade School utilized OAKS and DIBELS Assessment Data, Staff Perception Questionnaires, and the Balanced Literacy Self-Assessment rubric. The results from each of these measures were presented and summarized. The findings provide insight into whether program objectives were met, highlight the teachers perceptions of the program, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program.