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A Program Evaluation of an After-School Reading Intervention Program in a Small Urban Elementary School

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A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF AN AFTER-SCHOOL READING INTERVENTION PROGRAM IN A SMALL URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of an after-school reading intervention program for reluctant readers. The program is part of a school district initiative to help young students establish positive, productive habits and dispositions toward reading. Program participants included teachers in the after-school program and parents of students who participated for two years. The evaluation questions were designed to assess the perceptions of those stakeholders on the benefit of the program for student participants. Both teachers and parents perceived that the program benefited students' receptive vocabularies. Teachers found that the program significantly improved students' ability to read independently for longer and longer periods of time. Likewise, parents noticed that their children were more willing to initiate reading at home, while many also found that their children would persist at independent reading because they were enjoying it more. The program was credited with improving elements of students' self-efficacy in reading, such as confidence, persistence, and positive emotional responses to challenging tasks. Goal-setting, as a subset of self-efficacy, was a less obvious outcome of the program. Small, relaxed and supportive after-school learning environments where students developed strong relationships with peers and their after-school teacher helped to make the program enjoyable for students and optimized outcomes. Recommendations for further study on the program outcomes at other schools and quantitative outcomes after more years of program implementation are included.

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Adults often ask children, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Regardless of the answer, in order to make their dreams come true, children must first become successful readers and writers. A report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2014) indicated that students who are able to comprehend text on grade level by the end of third grade are more likely to graduate from high school and obtain successful employment in adulthood. Yet, despite efforts to improve reading comprehension for students in the early grades, only 20% of U.S. fourth graders from households of poverty were reading on grade level at the time of the report, compared to 51% of students from households with higher income. In Virginia, results of fourth grade performance on the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), showed similar, although slightly higher, results. While 43% of fourth graders in Virginia were proficient in reading by NAEP standards, the second-highest percentage in the nation, only 22% of students from households of poverty were reading at or above grade level, with 3% scoring at the advanced level. By contrast, 58% of students not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch were reading at or above grade level, with 22% scoring at the advanced level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Both at the national and state levels, the percentages of students reading on grade level are weak, but the sizable gaps between students of poverty and students of economic means (a 31% gap nationally,

a 36% gap in Virginia) suggests that educators have a significant problem to tackle in our nation's elementary schools before we can ensure that all students will become self-actualized, literate adults.

The World Literacy Foundation has described extensively the negative effects of functional illiteracy on quality of life. While complete illiteracy refers to the inability to read and write at all, functional illiteracy refers to an inability to apply reading, writing, or mathematical skills in a way that enables the individual "to accomplish tasks that are necessary to make informed choices and participate fully in every-day life" (World Literacy Foundation, 2015, p. 4). In both developed and developing nations, individuals with lower literacy skills earn about one-third less than their literate peers, with little opportunity to increase their earnings over the course of a lifetime. Additionally, literate individuals can expect to triple their earnings from the start to the end of their careers (World Literacy Foundation, 2015).

Illiteracy is linked to lower quality of life issues beyond individual lifetime earnings. Health problems are more abundant for illiterate or low-literate individuals because they tend to have limited access to preventative health programs that promote good hygiene and proper nutrition. There is a strong correlation between crime and illiteracy, as more than half of incarcerated individuals are functionally illiterate and nearly 40% of adjudicated juveniles have learning problems (Darling-Hammond, 2010). These issues can cycle through generations as well. Illiterate parents cannot read to their children, increasing the chances that their children will start school approximately one year behind children from literate families, thus repeating the cycle of illiteracy and poverty. The cost of illiteracy, not just to the individual, but also to the nation, is

staggering. The World Literacy Foundation (2015) estimated the cost to the U.S. (in welfare, health care, and judicial services) to be $362 billion, or 2% of its annual gross domestic product (GDP).

Because the ability to read is fundamental to success in our U.S. culture and the success of our culture, it is imperative for schools to ensure that all students attain strong literacy skills. They must intervene effectively to close the reading achievement gaps, enabling all students to experience early and lasting success in school and beyond. Many programs, practices, products, and curriculum models are available for schools and districts to choose from, not all of which have sound research backing their effectiveness (see What Works Clearinghouse for examples: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc). The goal of this program evaluation is to determine the worth of a district-developed, after-school intervention program that is designed to improve the reading habits and achievement of elementary-aged students at one elementary school in central Virginia.

Program Description

Prior to 2016, efforts to provide additional, targeted reading support to students at risk of reading failure in Baker City Schools (pseudonym) had been designed by individual schools and dependent upon individual school budget constraints. All elementary schools employed at least one reading specialist to work daily with the lowest-proficiency readers. Most schools employed classroom teachers to provide weekly after-school intervention, although the content and duration of the intervention varied. Some schools also employed hourly tutors, again with varying curriculum targets, instructional approaches, and intensity. Methods of identifying the students for these myriad interventions varied not only from school to school but also from grade

level to grade level within the same school. Likewise, the relative effectiveness of these interventions varied by location and year.

Baker City's strategic plan called for a comprehensive, coordinated approach to intervention that would help guarantee that 100% of students would be on grade level in reading and math by 2017. Reading achievement, as measured by the state's Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, generally held at 75-80% proficient, with sizable achievement gaps between all students and Black students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. To help fulfill the goal of 100% proficiency, the school district applied for and received a grant from the Virginia Department of Education for extended school year/school day funds. This 3-year, $300,000 grant afforded the school district 1 year for planning and 2 years to implement an extended learning program for students in Grades 1-6 aimed at improving students' reading achievement and attitudes about reading. The grant funds were made available in the 2015 Appropriation Act of the Commonwealth following the 2012 publication of a study of year-round schooling by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (2012). That Commission found that in Virginia and other parts of the country, year-round schooling might help to increase the rate of academic improvement for some subgroups such as Black, Hispanic, limited English proficient, and economically disadvantaged students.

A section of the report addressed the lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of Expanded Instructional Time (EIT) in improving student achievement, but noted that very few school districts used EIT to provide intervention for students. Instead, EIT in Virginia was mostly used as a way to accommodate scheduling needs and to bank instructional hours in order to avoid making up time missed due to weather-related school

closures. The program funded under the grant, After-school Reading Club (ARC; pseudonym), is not a year-round school model, but an EIT intervention model specifically designed to improve reading achievement for students from some of the subgroups identified in the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (2012) report. ARC completed its two years of grant-funded implementation in the spring of 2018 at all seven of Baker City's elementary schools.

Context. This program evaluation is focused on the implementation of the ARC program at one of Baker City's elementary schools. Baker City is a small urban school district in central Virginia that serves approximately 4,300 students. Six elementary schools (preK-Grade 4) of about 300-350 students each feed into one upper elementary school (Grades 5-6). One middle school (Grades 7-8) and one high school serve the school district. Class size average for the district is 19:1. In 2015-2016, 53.6% of students in the district were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and five elementary schools received Title I funds (Virginia Department of Education Office of School Nutrition Programs, 2016). The district student body was 40% White, 36% Black, 11% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Asian/Pacific Islander/Hawaiian, and 7% other. Approximately 26% of students received gifted education services and 14% received special education services. English Language Learners comprised 9% of the population.

In 2015-2016, 76% of all students in the district (Grades 3-8, combined) demonstrated reading proficiency, as measured by the state's SOL non-writing assessment; this rate was 4% below the state average. Baker City students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and Black and Asian students all performed below state averages, while English Language Learners, White, and Hispanic

students performed slightly above state averages. As shown in Table 1, Grade 3 pass rates for the district generally trailed state pass rates, while Grade 4 pass rates exceeded that of the state in most demographic subgroups. In both third and fourth grade reading, SOL pass rates were lower than average pass rates in the district and state for Black students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. Students with limited English proficiency achieved higher pass rates in Baker City than the state average, and exceeded the district average pass rate at both third and fourth grades. While the gaps between other subgroups were larger in third grade at the district level than the state level, the opposite was generally true in fourth grade. Proficiency rates for Black students were comparable in fourth grade at the state and district level, but because fourth graders across the district performed better than the state average, the gap in performance for Black students in fourth grade reading was higher at the district than the state level (Virginia Department of Education, 2017).

Table 1

State/District Comparison of Reading SOL Pass Rates in 2015-2016

	Third Grade		**Fourth Grade**	
Group	Virginia	BCS	Virginia	BCS
All Students	76%	71%	77%	80%
Black	62%	51%	64%	63%
SWD	49%	36%	48%	56%
ED	64%	55%	65%	71%
LEP	68%	73%	63%	82%

Note. SOL = Standards of Learning; BCS = Baker City Schools; SWD = students with disabilities; ED = economically disadvantaged; LEP = limited English proficient. Adapted from "Virginia School Quality Profiles," Virginia Department of Education, 2017.

The elementary school that is the focus of this evaluation is the only non-Title I school in the district, with approximately 38% of students in kindergarten through fourth grade qualifying for free or reduced-price meals. Its SOL scores in reading were above the district and state average for all students from 2013-2017. Achievement gaps persist, particularly for Black students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. Table 2 shows that, in 2015-2016, while the school's average pass rate was above that of the state, students from these three subgroups had lower proficiency rates than the state, demonstrating a larger achievement gap within the school than the state. These larger gaps in performance have been noted across several years on both SOL tests and internal formative assessments of reading. Compared to the overall pass rate for the school, in 2016 20% fewer Black students passed the reading SOL, 40% fewer students with disabilities passed, and 23% fewer economically disadvantaged students passed. Membership in one of these subgroups, therefore, was used as a consideration for inclusion in the ARC program at this elementary school.

Table 2

State/District/School Comparison of 2016 Reading SOL Pass Rates by Subgroup

Group	State	District	School
All Students	76%	76%	82%
Black	63%	58%	62%
SWD	48%	42%	42%
ED	64%	62%	59%
LEP	63%	66%	*not reported – small n*

Note. SOL = Standards of Learning; SWD = students with disabilities; ED = economically disadvantaged; LEP = limited English proficient. Adapted from "Virginia School Quality Profiles," Virginia Department of Education, 2017.

Description of the program. During the 2016-2017 school year, the district dedicated extended learning time grant funds to an after-school program called After-school Reading Club, or ARC. It was launched in all the school district's elementary and upper elementary schools in order to provide more coordinated, targeted, and evidence-based reading intervention for identified students. More specifically, the program was intended to serve students with weak vocabulary skills and with reading habits often associated with reluctant readers (lack of stamina, inability to identify reading preferences, frequent abandonment of texts, reported dislike for reading). The logic model for this program (see Figure 1) includes assumptions that if students experience targeted instruction, spend extra time reading highly engaging independent level texts, and connect more deeply with the learning environment, they will experience growth and success that will ultimately lead to reading proficiency and lifelong enjoyment of reading.

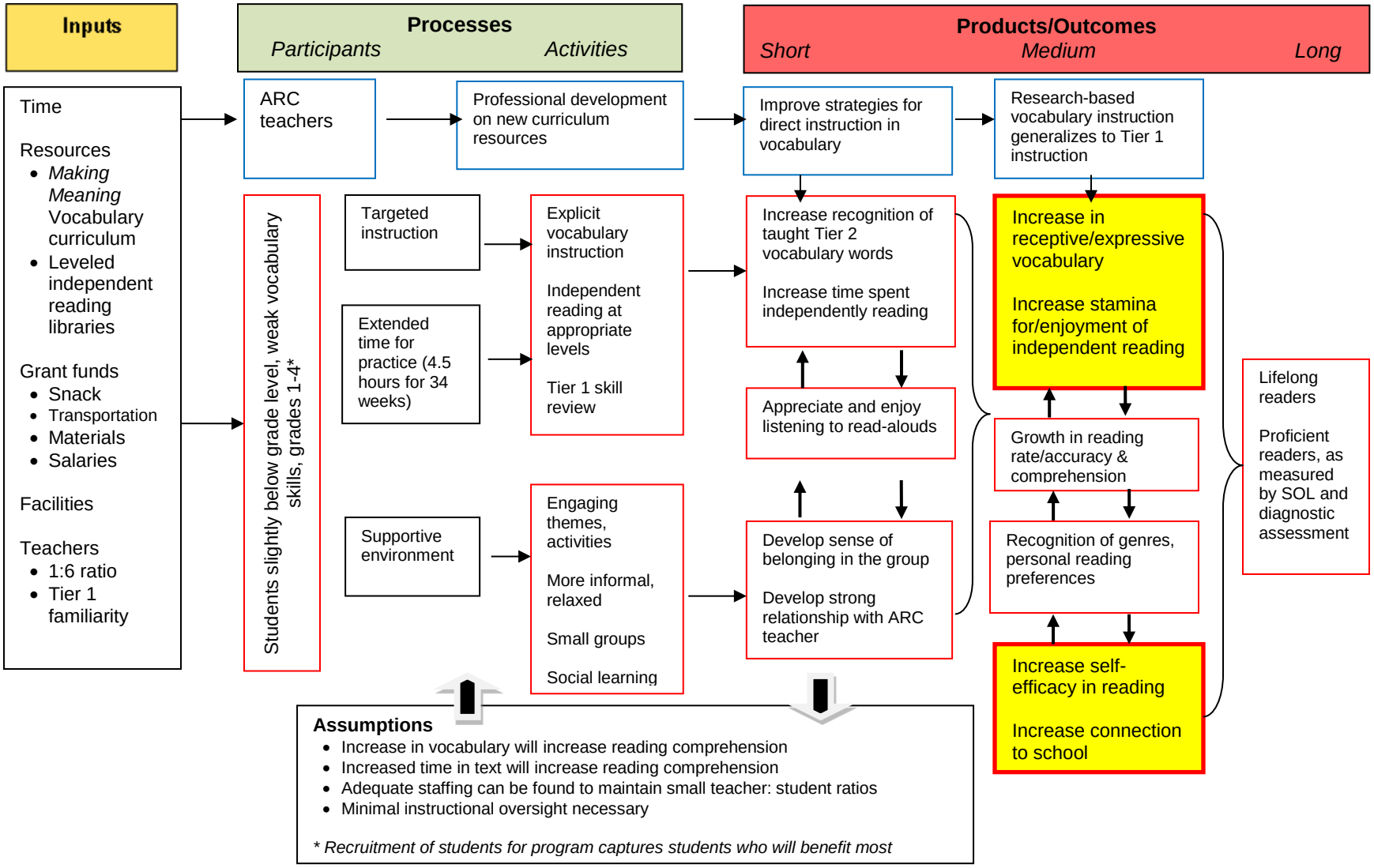


Figure 1. ARC Program Logic Model, based on Stufflebeam's Context-Inputs-Processes-Products model of program evaluation.

Students were selected for ARC based on their need for more support in reading, but certain exclusions applied. Students receiving significant Tier 3 reading interventions and students with significant behaviors that would prevent them from successfully accessing the additional instructional time were not considered strong candidates. Instead, schools were charged with finding "fence sitters" who might just need a little extra boost in order to become confident, competent readers. In 2016, a variety of beginning-of-year assessments were used to find qualified candidates: AIMSweb fluency probes, PALS reading assessments, Spring 2016 SOL scores, and Spring 2016 Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores, in particular. Students who might not yet love reading or see themselves as readers/learners were considered prime candidates for a program that would provide them with an opportunity to connect more frequently and intimately with the content and their teacher. The program was promoted as an extension of Tier 1 instruction (initial, differentiated instruction in the regular classroom intended to cover the general curriculum), and to the extent possible, teachers would teach their own students after school, in order to facilitate overlap between Tier 1 and after-school instruction.

ARC ran three consecutive days per week for 90 minutes per day. For the first 30 minutes, students had recess and snack time. In the third- and fourth-grade groups, recess was unstructured. In first and second grades, the days alternated between a structured movement/literacy program and unstructured free play. The remaining 60 minutes of the program involved five to seven students with a classroom teacher focused on vocabulary development, independent reading with conferencing, and other teacher-designed small group activities. Teachers were provided with a vocabulary development program,

reader's workshop curriculum, and leveled independent reading texts from the *Making Meaning* curriculum (Center for the Collaborative Classroom, 2015).

Overview of the Evaluation Approach

This program evaluation falls within the pragmatic paradigm and use branch of program evaluation. As its name suggests, the pragmatic paradigm is aimed at determining what is useful to the various stakeholders within a specific context. Pragmatists recognize that knowing what works and what is valued within a context is fundamental, as the findings of the evaluation should be meaningful and useful to those who commissioned the evaluation and the evaluand's stakeholders. Mertens and Wilson (2012) cite the axiology of pragmatic program evaluation as being utilitarian; in other words, do the ends justify the means? To that end, the ARC evaluation questions and data collection plan were designed to help determine whether and how the program has been beneficial to specific stakeholders within a specific context, and in relationship to competing wants and needs.

Program evaluation model. Stufflebeam's (2000) CIPP model provides the overarching design of this program evaluation. In particular, the CIPP model helps to examine the degree to which the identified inputs and processes combine effectively to achieve the desired outcomes of the program (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). A product or impact evaluation, interchangeable names for the final part of the CIPP model, can help to identify the benefits as well as unintended consequences of the program for various stakeholders. The perspectives of various stakeholders on the benefit of the program can be evaluated using qualitative research methods. The CIPP model allows for stakeholder involvement—and therefore greater buy-in—at various stages of the evaluation, such as

coming to agreement about the logic model and determining the evaluation questions that are most relevant to the current evaluation cycle. It also allows for both formative and summative purposes to be addressed within the evaluation.

Purpose of the evaluation. At the end of the 3-year grant cycle, the school district will need to determine whether to reapply for grant funds or to terminate the program. The adopted budget for the 2018-2019 school year does not include funding to continue the program absent grant funds. The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine the perceptions of teachers and parents of the benefit of the program for student participants, with a focus on medium-term outcomes. Results of the study are intended to help provide a basis for recommendations regarding the program's continuation, continuation with modifications, or termination.

Focus of the evaluation. This evaluation relied on qualitative data to determine the perceived benefit of the program for its participants, as well as its overall worth in relation to competing wants and needs. Medium-term outcomes of the ARC logic model refer to dispositions and habits that students are meant to develop as a result of program participation. The medium-term outcomes that were the focus of this impact evaluation are highlighted in yellow on the logic model (Figure 1). The long-term outcome of creating lifelong readers is not possible to evaluate. Given the small cohort, short duration of the program thus far, and varied influences on student achievement that cannot be isolated, it would be invalid to assert causation between program participation and the medium-term outcomes related to reading comprehension and fluency reflected in the logic model. Any correlations noted between student achievement and program participation are restricted to perception data from parents and teachers.

Evaluation questions. The theory of action of the ARC program presumes that the processes of targeted vocabulary instruction; additional time for high-interest independent reading; and small, supportive learning environments will lead student participants to demonstrate increased stamina for and enjoyment of reading, experience increased self-efficacy as readers, and demonstrate increased connections to and enjoyment of school overall. The evaluation questions were designed to probe the benefit of these key processes on the intended program outcomes. Research questions for the two stakeholder groups were targeted toward what they are likely to know or have noticed about student participants. Fully understanding the benefits and opportunity costs of the ARC model could help inform the district as it continues to pursue evidence-based approaches to ensuring reading proficiency for all students by the end of third grade. Questions addressed by this evaluation included:

1. What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the benefit of the program for students' receptive and/or expressive vocabulary?
2. What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the impact of the program on students' reading stamina?
3. What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the impact of the program on students' behaviors that are reflective of self-efficacy in reading?
4. What are the perceptions of parents of ARC participants regarding the impact of the program on students' enjoyment of reading?
5. What are the perceptions of parents of ARC participants regarding students' enjoyment of, and willingness to attend school and ARC?

Definitions of Terms

After-school Reading Club (ARC)—An after-school reading program for students in Grades 1-6 developed and implemented through state extended school year funding. The program meets after school 3 days per week for 34 weeks, 1.5 hours each day. Five to seven students work with one teacher.

AIMSweb — An assessment system that provides universal screening and progress monitoring tools in reading, writing, math, and spelling for Grades K-8. Assessments are brief, predictive, and sensitive to improvement. Data reports are norm-referenced and assist teachers in making decisions about which students are most in need of interventions and supports, as well as advancement.

AIMSweb R-CBM—A specific subtest of the AIMSweb system, a Reading Curriculum-Based Measure that records the number of words a student reads accurately on a one-minute timed grade-level passage. R-CBM measures are frequently referred to as "fluency" measures, but are strictly rate/accuracy measures.

Benefit—an advantage, help, or enhancement.

Connection to school—A sense of belonging, a willingness to attend, and/or an affinity for staff, other students, and/or the activities that take place at school.

Extended Instructional Time (EIT)—Additional time provided for instruction, added either as minutes on the end of the day or as additional days in a school year.

Fluency—Reading a text using prosody, expression, and phraseology in a manner that reflects comprehension of the text (Allington, 2009).

Functional literacy—An ability to apply reading, writing, or mathematical skills in a way that enables the individual "to accomplish tasks that are necessary to make

informed choices and participate fully in every-day life" (World Literacy Foundation, 2015, p. 4).

Impact evaluation—"An evaluation that assesses a program's effects and the extent to which the program's goals were achieved" (Mertens & Wilson, 2012, p. 559).

Independent reading—Reading alone, generally a text that is easy to read. Students are independent with a text when they have adequate background knowledge and can decode the words quickly with 99-100% accuracy (Allington, 2009).

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)—Computer-adaptive testing that provides individual student scores compared to a normative national sample. MAP testing is designed to show student growth within a subject area from year to year and as compared to other students with similar score histories. MAP testing was conducted for all students in Baker City Schools in reading and math in Grades 2-4 in 2015-2016.

Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screener (PALS)—A screening, diagnostic, and progress-monitoring tool used for Virginia's Early Intervention Reading Initiative. Students in Grades K-3 are assessed on skills such as phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, letter-sound knowledge, concept of word, word knowledge, and oral reading in context. Students who score below a normed threshold are required to receive intervention services in addition to regular classroom instruction in their schools (University of Virginia Curry School of Education, 2018).

Reading accuracy/rate—The number of words read correctly from a grade level passage within a minute.

Reading comprehension—The ability to understand and make use of what has been read. Comprehension includes the ability to draw conclusions, make inferences and summarize.

Reading stamina—The amount of time a student can read independently without stopping or losing focus.

Reluctant readers—Students who spend little time engaging in independent reading. Poor vocabulary, inability to identify reading preferences, frequent abandonment of texts, and low stamina for reading often characterize reluctant readers. They may or may not articulate verbally that they do not enjoy reading or do not perceive themselves to be good readers.

Rich vocabulary instruction—A type of instruction that introduces words in context, provides definitions, and requires students to use and manipulate the words in new contexts.

Self-efficacy—"A context-related judgment of personal ability to organize and execute a course of action to attain designated levels of performance" (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 218). Sub-functions of self-efficacy include self-monitoring, goal-setting, self-evaluation, strategy use, and time planning and management. Strong self-efficacy contributes to motivation and perseverance in the face of challenging tasks (Bandura, 1995).

Small group instruction—Generally no more than six students working with a teacher at any given time.

Summed score—A score produced by the PALS assessment on the fall and spring assessments that considers the various skills considered foundational to the

reading demands of each grade level. Each assessment window has a normed benchmark summed score. Students who score below the benchmark have significant reading deficits for their grade level and require intervention.

Supportive learning environment—A learning situation in which strong relationships exist between teacher and student. Teachers know about their students' backgrounds, interests, strengths and weaknesses, and can use this knowledge to help students progress academically and socially.

Tier 1 instruction—Regular classroom instruction provided by a certified teacher. All students have access to Tier 1 instruction, which, statistically, enables approximately 80%-85% of students to progress through the curriculum without further intervention. This initial instruction is referred to as Tier 1 in a 3-tiered system of instructional supports often referred to as Response to Intervention (RTI). Instruction at Tiers 2 and 3 is characterized by increased frequency, duration, or intensity, as students demonstrate a need for more targeted instruction in order to meet grade level standards.

Tier 2 instruction—Additional, small group instruction that is required for approximately 10%-15% of the population in order to make adequate progress through the curriculum. Tier 2 instruction can be provided by the classroom teacher or an instructional specialist.

Tier 3 instruction—Individual or small group instruction, often using a systematic, structured, curriculum and delivered by a trained specialist such as a reading teacher or special educator. Tier 3 instruction is reserved for students who are

significantly behind in the curriculum (more than two grade levels below current grade placement), generally 5% of the population.

Virginia Standards of Learning Assessment (SOL)—End of grade tests administered in the Commonwealth of Virginia to determine student proficiency levels in core content. Tests are a combination of multiple choice and technology-enhanced (fill in the blank, matching, drag and drop, etc.) items. Students in third and fourth grade take SOL tests in reading and math each year.

Worth—"The value of the evaluand in a particular context" (Mertens & Wilson, 2012, p. 562).

Summary

Reading is a fundamental skill for lifelong learning and success in adulthood. Yet, on both international and state assessments, large percentages of elementary-aged students fail to demonstrate mastery of reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, some demographic subgroups experience significantly lower reading proficiency pass rates, as measured by tests such as NAEP and the Virginia SOLs. It is significantly more challenging to close gaps in reading comprehension the older students become (Allington, 2009). Effective early intervention is critical for ensuring that all students are able to read and attain functional literacy.

In the 2015-2016 school year, Baker City School District was awarded a 3-year grant to implement an early intervention, extended instructional time program focused on reading comprehension. Students in first through fourth grade were provided the equivalent of 17 additional full days of instruction in reading through a required after-school reading program that focused on vocabulary development; a small, supportive

environment; and additional time to read high-interest, independent-leveled texts. The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine the perceptions of teachers and parents of the benefit of the program for student participants. Specifically, the researcher was interested in learning about the degree to which program participation had a perceived impact on students' vocabularies, on behaviors and skills associated with self-efficacy in reading (stamina, perseverance, goal-setting, strategy use), and overall enjoyment of school. Unintended outcomes and opportunity costs of the program for families and teachers were also explored in order to inform recommendations for programmatic changes that might enhance the program's overall worth.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

What follows is a review of the extant literature surrounding the key elements of the theory of action for the After-school Reading Club (ARC) program—the importance and effectiveness of vocabulary instruction; additional time for high-interest independent reading; and small, supportive learning environments. These programmatic inputs are discussed in terms of their demonstrated potential to have a positive impact on student achievement and self-efficacy in reading. In order to solve the achievement gap in reading and eradicate the problem of functional illiteracy for all students, supplementary programs such as ARC must be supported by strong evidence of effectiveness.

The Case for Vocabulary Instruction

Word knowledge, or vocabulary, and "reasoning in reading" were first suggested by Davis (1942) as the two most important, independently operating processes involved in reading comprehension. He asserted that these processes comprised 89% of the variance in reading comprehension, with word knowledge being the greater of the two factors. The literature continues to describe the strong correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. It is difficult to prove causation between a large oral vocabulary and strong reading comprehension skills because the two processes both hinge on meaning-making, albeit at different levels of syntax. Nonetheless, the National Reading Panel (2000) asserted that even without a significant body of empirical evidence, there is reason to believe that stronger receptive vocabularies can affect greater reading

comprehension. To that end, in their discussion of the five key elements of effective reading instruction—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—vocabulary instruction is paired with, and discussed first, in their chapter titled "Comprehension."

The Vocabulary Gap

Children from wealth have typically been exposed to significantly more words and more complex vocabulary through both conversation and picture book texts, creating a critical vocabulary gap that is evident before students start kindergarten. A common estimate is that by the time they enter kindergarten, children from wealthy homes are exposed to 30 million more words than children growing up in poverty (Hart & Risley, 2003). Differences in the size of children's vocabulary as early as 18 or 24 months of age have been correlated to socioeconomic status (Farkas & Beron, 2004; Fernald, Marchman, & Weisleder, 2013; Weisleder & Fernald, 2013). By the age of 24 months, children from high SES households have been found to be 6 months ahead of children from poverty with regard to language processing skills that are directly related to vocabulary acquisition (Fernald et al., 2013). These differences have been found to be the result not only of the quantity of exposures, but also the quality of verbal interactions between caregiver and child and the degree of language processing involved in those interactions. Overheard or indirect speech is qualitatively inferior to child-directed speech, the latter of which is more prevalent in higher income and professional households.

Significant vocabulary gaps that are present at 36 months between Black and White students and poor and wealthy students have been found to persist through age 13

(Hart & Risley, 2003). The research is contradictory about whether the gap continues to widen over the course of the school years (Hart & Risley, 2003; Pullen, Tuckwiller, Konold, Maynard, & Coyne, 2010) or whether vocabulary growth is fairly comparable for children from different economic and racial backgrounds (Farkas & Beron, 2004), effectively leaving the size of the gap intact. Regardless, the instruction students are receiving in school is not effectively closing the vocabulary gap.

The Importance of Early Oral Vocabulary

Children need to have a strong oral vocabulary as they learn to read. As they begin to decode words, they need to be able to recognize those decoded letter strings as familiar words. "When the word is not in the learner's oral vocabulary, it will not be understood when it occurs in print" (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 4). Vocabulary, therefore, represents the medial ground between decoding and comprehension. Having a strong vocabulary allows a child to more readily self-check in the decoding stages of reading, and then also to make meaning of what is read.

Once a student makes the transition from learning to read to reading to learn, vocabulary continues to play an important role. It is estimated that in order to adequately distill meaning from a text, the reader must have command of 90% to 95% of the words in the text (Hirsch, 2003). Knowing the vast majority of the words in the text allows the reader to comprehend the overall meaning of the text and make appropriate guesses about unknown words. When vocabulary skills do not match the demands of the text, readers might be able to accurately decode the text, but will not understand it. This phenomenon has been suggested as a reason for the growing gaps in reading achievement that become apparent around fourth grade (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Hattie, 2009), as texts

become more complex and students with poor vocabulary can no longer rely primarily on strong decoding skills. Having a schema for both the vocabulary and the text's context is critical to text comprehension.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Instruction

Young children tend to gain their vocabulary knowledge incidentally, through conversation and storybook listening. Even once schooling begins, the vast majority of words that students learn happen incidentally. For those students whose early experiences do not include vocabulary-rich exposures, the challenge for schools becomes finding the best strategies to boost their vocabularies so that both learning to read and reading to learn happen successfully. The National Reading Panel (2000) suggested that the actual kind of vocabulary instruction undertaken is less important than that teachers intentionally and frequently engage in vocabulary instruction. Elleman, Lindo, Morphy, and Compton (2009) also concluded that the type of vocabulary instruction used is less relevant than the fact that vocabulary instruction takes place: "No matter what type of vocabulary instruction was used, it produced the same effects on comprehension as any other type of vocabulary instruction" (p. 25). This finding was also supported in a study of third grade classrooms, where the amount of vocabulary instruction was quantified across all parts of the literacy instructional block. Those teachers who incorporated vocabulary instruction throughout the block—instead of only during the specific vocabulary or guided reading lesson—were found to have increased low-income students' vocabulary knowledge significantly (Carlisle, Kelcey, & Berebitsky, 2013). Likewise, the overall strategy, *vocabulary instruction*—not a specific kind of vocabulary

instruction—was found to have the highest effect size of the five pillars of reading instruction in Hattie's (2009) synthesis of meta-analyses related to student achievement.

Regardless of the kind of instruction, key elements do seem to exist. They include multiple exposures, rich contexts, repetition, high engagement, provision for student discussion, storybook reading and read-louds, and a variety of instructional methods (National Reading Panel, 2000). Rich vocabulary instruction, also known as robust vocabulary instruction, is an approach that incorporates most of these elements and has been suggested as an effective means of boosting the word knowledge of students with low initial vocabularies (Beck & McKeown, 2007). In this form of explicit instruction, children are exposed to new vocabulary words through multiple exposures in rich contexts, and are asked to manipulate those words through discussion and other meaningful activities. Researchers studying the effectiveness of this approach have found that children with reading difficulties and/or low initial vocabularies learn new words at a greater rate using this explicit instruction over incidental exposures (Elleman et al., 2009; Elley, 1989; Nelson & Stage, 2007; Pullen et al., 2010; Vadasy, Sanders, & Herrera, 2015). Few effects have been seen on distal (norm-referenced) measures of vocabulary or reading comprehension, as it is hypothesized that those measures are not sensitive enough to find the differences in vocabulary caused by targeted instruction (Elleman et al., 2009; National Reading Panel, 2000). While teacher-made criterion-referenced measures did show significant increases in vocabulary knowledge, this difference in measures also speaks to the enormity of the vocabulary gap problem that teachers and schools must tackle. Frequency, duration, and intensity of the instruction

are likely key components of successfully increasing vocabulary knowledge to a great degree.

Making Meaning Vocabulary Curriculum

Because of the significant gap in vocabulary skills associated with weaker readers, the school district determined that a vocabulary component would be required in the ARC program. *Making Meaning* is a comprehensive reader's workshop curriculum developed by the Center for the Collaborative Classroom, a nonprofit educational organization that provides curriculum materials and professional development related to early literacy and mathematical learning. Curriculum kits include read-alouds for whole group instruction, a vocabulary lesson for each day of the week related to the read-aloud, and a classroom set of leveled texts that are highly engaging. Reading comprehension and vocabulary lessons complement one another and are unified through a series of pre-selected read-alouds. The district has made the reading comprehension aspect optional, but requires the read-aloud and vocabulary instruction to be included in each ARC lesson. In the introduction to the *Making Meaning* vocabulary program, the authors list seven different components of the vocabulary program that have been gleaned from some of the research on children's vocabulary development. They rely primarily on the work of Beck, McKeown, and Kucan; Buaman and Kame'enui; and Stahl in their selection of fundamental underpinnings of the program. The seven components are:

- Provide explicit instruction in a set of carefully chosen, high-utility words.
- Begin instruction by introducing a word in context.
- Provide a student-friendly definition of the word and examples of the way it is used

- Give students the opportunity to engage actively with the word in meaningful ways when they first encounter it, such as applying it to their own experiences.
- Have students practice using the word through engaging activities.
- Provide multiple exposures to the word over an extended period of time.
- Teach strategies that students can use to learn words independently, such as recognizing synonyms, antonyms, and words with multiple meanings, and using context to determine word meanings. (Center for the Collaborative Classroom, 2015, p.xii)

These seven elements of the program are clearly situated within the seminal work related to vocabulary development and reading comprehension. The expectation is that 102 vocabulary lessons taught from this curriculum will provide a substantial boost to students' vocabulary knowledge.

Extended Time for Learning

The ARC program is designed to provide students with three hours of additional literacy instruction per week for 34 weeks. During this time, students receive direct instruction in vocabulary through the aforementioned *Making Meaning* curriculum. The remainder of the time is to be a teacher-designed combination of review of skills and concepts covered during regular classroom instruction and independent reading in appropriately leveled texts. Teachers are encouraged to conference with students about their reading and to facilitate opportunities for students to discuss their books with one another. The proportion of time spent on various activities is dependent upon the ARC teacher, who, in many—but not all—cases also serves as the students' Tier 1 reading

teacher. (In the ideal situation, the ARC and classroom teacher is the same individual, allowing for more efficient recognition of student needs and coordination between what happens during the day and what happens after school. It also helps to strengthen relationships that are already in place.) In addition to the extended time for literacy, students have 30 minutes per day (the program runs 3 days per week) of snack and recess, some of which is structured for the primary-aged students.

Allocated Versus Engaged Learning Time

Time for learning was one of three issues identified by *A Nation at Risk* (Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) in need of reform in the country's public schools. In that report, a correlation was drawn between the lower test scores of American students and fewer hours spent in school, compared with students from leading industrialized nations. This correlation then prompted the assumption that students will learn more if they have more time in school. Instructional time has been a policy issue that has recurred periodically, paired with perceived crises in the quality of educational outcomes achieved by U.S. public schools. In 1994, the National Education Commission on Time and Learning reported that the country had made significant strides in addressing standards and expectations, but that no progress had been made in increasing the amount of time students spent learning. In 1999, WestEd (Aronson, Zimmerman, & Carlos, 1998) released a study asserting that no empirical data or longitudinal studies yet existed that examined the effects of lengthening instruction time on student learning. They exposed a weak link between allocated time (number of days in the school year, number of hours in a day) and student learning. Time was found to be a factor only to the extent that what is available is used effectively—in the service of academic learning:

"The research suggests that the higher the quality of instruction, especially as it accommodates students' differing educational backgrounds, abilities and learning styles, the greater the academic achievement" (Aronson et al., 1998, p. 4). Karweit (1985) similarly found that not even time-on-task (also called engaged learning) has a causal relationship with learning. Rather, the key to student success is the degree to which teachers differentiate instruction by readiness and interest such that students are actively engaged in learning activities that appropriately challenge them.

The WestEd group cautioned that schools considering extending school time would do well to first analyze the degree to which time is already effectively used (Aronson et al., 1998). Only if it is determined that there is already a high percentage of engaged learning time should additional time for learning be considered as an intervention strategy. With regard to literacy, both Tier 1 instruction and interventions should contain what Allington (2002) referred to as the Six Ts of Reading Instruction—Time, Texts, Teach, Talk, Tasks, and Tests. He postulated that since students who are behind in reading require significant additional time in appropriately leveled text, it only makes sense that that time should be provided outside the regular school day. Otherwise, as far too often happens in classrooms, the students are pulled from time in Tier 1 reading instruction for their intervention, thereby denying them the extra time they need to catch up to grade level standards (Allington, 2002, 2009).

Characteristics of Effective After-School Programs

After-school programs have long been seen as a solution to the failure of major American institutions (the family and schools) to properly supervise, support, and ensure the safety of low-income children (Lauer, Wilkerson, Apthorp, & Snow, 2006).

Academic remediation or acceleration became a new goal of after-school programs in the 1990s, as schools experienced a more urgent need to ensure all students achieved at equal levels (Fashola, 1998). In his early review of after-school and extended school day programs, Fashola (1998) described the difficulty in analyzing the effectiveness of the programs in terms of academic results for at-risk students: diversity of programming, non-at-risk populations served, variance in attendance policies, and lack of methodologically sound evaluation procedures.

Given the goal of many after-school programs (including ARC) to improve academic outcomes for students at risk of learning problems or failure, programs need to be evaluated with these specific student populations. Fashola (1998) identified features of 34 programs he reviewed with the greatest promise of positive results for at-risk students. For academic components to be effective, the curriculum of the after-school program should be closely aligned with that of the regular school day. In addition, effective teachers should be retained to teach in the after-school program and time should be allotted for some one-on-one tutoring between teachers and students. In a later meta-analysis of after-school programs targeting reading, the presence of individual tutoring was found to be one of the most positive moderating effects on student achievement in reading (Lauer et al., 2006). Staff training and a structured program with accompanying curriculum materials tend to have better outcomes for at-risk students. Finally, evaluation should be embedded within the program, and community and student groups should be involved in identifying needs and planning to meet those needs.

Expanding upon Fashola's (1998) work, Lauer et al. (2006) described several other elements of effective after-school academic programs. In their meta-analysis of 35

out-of-school-time programs, they found that interventions targeting primary-aged students (Grades K-2) had a greater impact than those targeting upper elementary students (Grades 3-5). Activity focus was not a significant moderator of effect size in the Lauer et al. (2006) study. In other words, students could participate in activities other than those targeting literacy explicitly and still make statistically significant gains in reading achievement over the control group. Some researchers advocate providing students with activities that do not follow the mold of the traditional school day, particularly for upper elementary and middle school students from minority and/or at-risk populations (Hall, Yohalem, Tolman, & Wilson, 2003; Miller, 2003). Instead, students should have more opportunities to choose activities that promote leadership, collaboration, and problem-solving, all foundational skills to success in school. With regard to amount of time, students benefitted most when the intervention lasted for more than 45 hours and fewer than 210 hours for the school year (Lauer et al., 2006).

Lauer et al. (2006) cautioned that while modest effect sizes can be achieved with after-school literacy programs for at-risk students, the effects from these programs themselves are not likely adequate for closing the achievement gap between at-risk and on-grade-level students. However, others have found that when at-risk students participate in after-school enrichment programs, they have better social and academic outcomes, even 2 years after participation (Miller, 2003). Specifically, in a study of at-risk third graders, Posner and Vandell (as cited in Miller, 2003) found that "time in enrichment activities was associated with better grades, work habits, adjustment, and relationships with peers, while time with adults was associated with improved conduct

ratings by teachers and better grades in school" (p. 48). These "soft skills" are complementary to academic skills, and equally critical to student success.

Relationships and Belonging

While many of the researchers investigating the links between time and learning focus on the quality of the instruction as it meets the needs of individual learners, other factors of Out of School Time programs have been found to benefit students, particularly those at risk of learning failure. The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (Hall et al., 2003) suggested that the quality of the relationships between individuals is another significant factor in the ability of after-school programs to increase student achievement: "They also need personal attention; strong, respectful relationships with adults; a culture of peer support, clear rules, high expectations and real assessments; and challenging experiences and opportunities for self-direction, participation and contribution within the organization and the community" (Hall et al., 2003, p. 21).

Supportive environments are critical to student success not only in after-school programs, but also in all formal school settings. Much of the research on the connection between relationships and learning has focused on the affective aspects of learning, or student habits of mind influenced by those relationships. When students experience supportive, caring high-quality relationships with adults at school, they have a stronger connection to school, motivation to succeed, pro-social values and behaviors, and perseverance in learning and life tasks (Hall et al., 2003; Miller, 2003; Werner & Brendtro, 2012). This "connectedness," thus, is a key element of future success in school and beyond. While some students come to school already pre-disposed to be connected

or find a trusting adult, for other students, that connection must be intentionally made for them.

In addition to a positive effect on student motivation and attitude toward schooling, there is also evidence that strong relationships with teachers are correlated with increases in reading achievement for typically developing elementary-aged readers. In a study of the effects of both the quality of relationships and quantity of instructional exposures in reading and math, Pianta et al. (2008) suggested that positive emotional relationships between teachers and students "matter somewhat" when it comes to reading achievement for third and fifth grade students (p. 388). Using the data from their earlier NICHD Study of Early Child Care, where 1,364 children from 10 different states in the country were followed from birth through fifth grade, Pianta et al. noted that for every one point gain in emotional climate, third graders outscored national reading growth norms by 1.6 points, while fifth graders outscored norms by 3.7 points. These gains were realized even after controlling for poverty level, gender, or baseline reading levels. The authors posited that the non-experimental field study they conducted provides evidence that improving the emotional quality of classroom interactions will cause, to some extent, greater achievement gains in elementary-aged students. Hattie (2009) also suggested that there are some significant academic effects created by supportive environments. Strong interpersonal relationships between students and teachers have an effect size of $d = 0.72$, suggesting that the small, focused environment that allows for deeper relationships in a less formal setting may also help to boost student achievement.

It has been conjectured that connectedness through strong relationships can more easily be established when class sizes are small (Miller, 2003). Teachers are more likely

to have more time to get to know their students informally and to become familiar with their learning preferences and areas of strength and weakness. Further, smaller classes afford students more opportunities to engage and discuss with peers and for teachers to provide individual attention to students, two elements of effective reading instruction (Allington, 2002). Small classes also promote better peer relations and sense of belonging within the group (Bascia, 2010). Smaller group sizes can foster shared goals and positive experiences around learning, facilitating a group identity characterized by positive orientation to school and greater academic achievement. Said differently, group cohesion (called *peer influences* by Hattie), created through a focus on a common task or goal, has an effect size of $d = 0.53$ (Hattie, 2009). Cohesion is often found to be stronger in smaller groups, such as those used in ARC. Morrison and McDonald Connor (2002) posited that schooling effects are strongest on early literacy when teachers can take an individualized approach to literacy instruction, based on students' initial vocabulary and decoding skills. In their 10-year longitudinal study of kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms in one school district, they found that 72% of literacy instruction tended to involve child-managed activities, such as sustained silent reading, but that students who entered school with weaker literacy skills required more teacher-managed instruction. Morrison and McDonald Connor suggested that designing the optimal balance between teacher-managed instruction and child-managed instruction for each individual student would produce the greatest gains in literacy. While class size has a more distal effect on student learning than teacher instruction, teachers are better able to attend to individual needs when they are instructing smaller groups of students.

The theory of action for ARC posits that strong relationships should be forged between students and teachers in order to connect students, not just to ARC, but to school in general. The initial goal was for all students in ARC to have their classroom teacher also be their after-school teacher. Spending time on activities more individually aligned to student needs and interests in a more relaxed environment that promotes informal conversation and relationship-building was intended to increase the student's connection to his or her teacher and to the learning (reading) process. While not all students were ultimately matched with their classroom teachers after school, ARC theory rests on the research that suggests that a connection with any meaningful adult in school will have positive benefits for students' learning trajectories. It also subscribes to the idea that the smaller group setting will allow for greater access to individualized, more meaningful and potent instruction for students at risk of learning failure.

Self-Efficacy

The social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura has made a compelling case for the importance of self-efficacy in academic achievement. Self-efficacy is defined as "a context-related judgment of personal ability to organize and execute a course of action to attain designated levels of performance" (Zimmerman, 1995, p.281). Self-efficacy is task-specific, related to one's judgment of ability to perform a specific set of tasks, as opposed to general conceptions of self-worth or personal qualities. It is also multi-dimensional, meaning that an individual's self-efficacy beliefs may be different for math, English, or tasks related to performing arts. Self-efficacy is likely influenced by external factors such as the level of competitiveness versus cooperation, or noise level of the educational environment, and is thus context-specific. It is relevant only to mastery

criteria, rather than normative or other criteria; thus, an individual perceives his or her self-efficacy with regard to his or her ability to complete an activity at a designated level of mastery, not in comparison to his or her peers. Social comparisons, however, have an impact on one's self-efficacy. Observing a peer of perceived equal skill fail or succeed has a correlative effect on one's self-efficacy. In other words, if a student watches a friend of perceived similar skill fail, his or her own self-efficacy might be diminished: he is likely to think to himself, "if he can't do it, I certainly can't." Self-efficacy is also measured prior to task initiation, thus having a causal impact on academic motivation (Bandura, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995, 2000).

Much of the research on self-efficacy has focused on adolescents and adults and math self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995; Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2016; Zimmerman, 2000), but there is also evidence that students as young as first grade can accurately report self-efficacy and distinguish it from related but different concepts such as self-concept and motivation (Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2016). Self-efficacy has been found to have a reciprocal relationship with perseverance, effort, and motivation. It is a mediator of student achievement and emotional responses to learning tasks, regardless of student aptitude or ability. A student with high self-efficacy is more likely to have reduced stress and anxiety when presented with academically challenging tasks (Zimmerman, 2000).

Self-efficacy research converges with research on small educational environments with regard to the benefits of promoting strong relationships and a sense of belonging for students at school. Students who are better able to self-regulate their behavior and form positive relationships with classmates are characterized by greater self-efficacy in social functioning and self-regulatory functioning, both of which contribute to academic

achievement (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). Knowing students well is fundamental to teachers who will enhance student self-efficacy. Teachers who know their students well can provide explicit instruction related to content-based strategies and meta-cognitive skills in order to facilitate students' increasing awareness of the tools they possess to solve challenging tasks, thus promoting greater self-efficacy to tackle similar tasks in the future. They can also create opportunities for students to set their own short-term goals and to correlate their level of effort with performance outcomes. Short-term goals are more effective at increasing self-efficacy compared to long-term goals because they are more quickly achieved and immediate feedback can be linked to specific performance criteria (Schunk & Meece, 2006; Zimmerman, 1995, 2000). Zimmerman (2000) reported that self-efficacy has been shown to account for up to 25% of variance in achievement outcomes beyond variance caused by instructional influences, demonstrating the importance of implementing strategies that enhance self-efficacy. Bong (2006) noted that when strategies such as modeling, goal-setting, and attributional feedback (feedback that attributes progress or growth to specific student actions) are used consistently, self-efficacy can be enhanced fairly quickly.

While one's own performance, or mastery experience, is the primary influence on self-efficacy, vicarious experiences, social comparisons, and physiological reactions also influence self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares, 2006). The social influences on self-efficacy suggest that creating environments where students of perceived similarities experience frequent success, guided by ongoing feedback and clear success criteria, is critical to enhancing this powerful driver of student motivation and achievement. Teachers should use caution to select appropriate peer models for their students so that vicarious

experiences of success can support self-efficacy beliefs in students. Grouping practices should be used carefully in order to maximize opportunities for equal participation and success. Additionally, comparative information about student performance should be minimized, focusing instead on students developing internal standards for evaluating their academic performance. Self-efficacy within a cohesive group identity should be promoted, as it has been found to mediate the influence of socioeconomic status, prior academic achievement, and teacher longevity on academic outcomes of middle school students (Pajares, 2006). While these practices affecting social influences of self-efficacy are possible in a large group setting, they might be even more likely in relatively homogenous, small group settings such as those used in ARC.

Summary

Ensuring that all students master the literacy skills necessary for a self-actualized, productive life characterized by economic and social freedom is the key mission of elementary schools. When the time and resources available during the school day prove inadequate for some students, schools must look for other solutions to closing reading achievement gaps. The ARC program has been launched at seven different elementary schools across Baker City Schools in order to address this problem. While there are similar structures in place at each school—time allocated, class size limitations (maximum of six students per teacher), vocabulary and read-aloud activities provided, snack, recess, and transportation provided—there is also significant variation in the ways that the program is implemented. Variations occur both between and within schools, depending on the teachers, their access to real-time data about their students, and the professional decisions they make about what the students need each week.

The ARC program's design is supported by theoretically sound, evidenced-based practices. While the specific kind of vocabulary instruction might not be important, research supports the fact that students receive specific vocabulary instruction to improve comprehension and reading fluency. Additional time for instruction, assuming that the majority of instructional time during the day is already used for academic learning, should benefit students. Given the lack of evidence that more time promotes more learning, however, this is one variable that requires analysis of the opportunity cost associated with running this program three days a week for an additional 1.5 hours. Finally, the ability to forge closer, stronger, more positive relationships with teachers and peers in an informal setting has the potential to improve students' habits of work, dispositions toward school, self-efficacy in reading, and academic achievement.

The purpose of this study was to explore these ideas and determine the extent to which ARC has achieved its intended medium-term outcomes. In the chapters that follow, the research methods used, tentative findings, conclusions, and recommendations are discussed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this program evaluation was to examine the benefit of 2 years of after-school reading intervention on a select group of students in a small urban school district. It focused on the final component of CIPP, or outcomes evaluation, as it aimed to uncover the degree to which medium-term outcomes of the program had been achieved. The findings of this study provide school district leaders—including the Superintendent, the Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the Elementary Literacy Coordinator, and school board members—with information and recommendations to help determine whether and how the program should continue to be offered for students at risk of reading failure in that school district. This program evaluation relied on a qualitative methods design to capture perceptions of the program from key stakeholder groups. It probed the degree to which the program achieved medium-term outcomes as stated in the logic model and the program evaluation questions (Mertens & Wilson, 2012).

Open-ended questions for the parent and teacher focus groups were designed to elicit meaning-making from individuals in the group. While the logic model provides a theory of action and intended outcomes, there was also a need to capture unintended or unforeseen outcomes of the program in order to more fully describe the worth of the program as perceived by various stakeholders. Capturing the values and perspectives of the stakeholders, particularly parents, and the meaning and value they attributed to the

program, was something that the Superintendent and school board would find useful. In this school district, programmatic and budgetary decisions are often made based on those values and the worth that parent stakeholder groups attribute to programs. The political nature of program evaluation (Mertens & Wilson, 2012) is thus a key aspect of the program evaluation's utility in this context.

Because the ARC program requires significant investments in time and money, and because it was launched as a pilot program, the school district will need to determine whether or not the ARC program is worthwhile in furthering its mission of ensuring that all students master foundational literacy skills (as evidenced by the Strategic Plan goal of 100% of students scoring proficient on end of year reading assessments). Structured interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders informed this qualitative, pragmatic program evaluation. Five research questions guided the selection of program participants and accompanying data collection and analysis:

1. What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the benefit of the program for students' receptive and/or expressive vocabulary?
2. What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the impact of the program on students' reading stamina?
3. What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the impact of the program on students' behaviors that are reflective of self-efficacy in reading?
4. What are the perceptions of parents of ARC participants regarding the impact of the program on students' enjoyment of reading?
5. What are the perceptions of parents of ARC participants regarding students' enjoyment of, and willingness to attend school and ARC?

Program Evaluation standards of propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy guided the design, implementation, and communication of findings (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 2011). The participants, data sources, data collection, and data analysis protocols are discussed in this chapter, as well as delimitations and limitations of this program evaluation. Finally, assumptions and ethical considerations of the study are discussed.

Participants

Two primary stakeholder groups were identified for this program evaluation based on their proximity to program activities. Participants for the evaluation were selected from each of the groups: teachers in the ARC program and parents of students in the ARC program.

Teachers. A total of eight teachers provided after-school literacy instruction in the ARC program the first year, and seven teachers staffed the program during the second year. The program goal was for two groups of students to be served at each grade in first through fourth grades. However, staffing was inadequate in the second year to offer more than one group in fourth grade. In the 2 years of the program, 13 different teachers served as ARC program teachers. Four of those teachers taught ARC for both years. An effort was made to assign students to their homeroom teachers, when their teachers were also serving as ARC teachers; however, this was not always possible. For example, one teacher (who taught both years) taught kindergarten during the school day, but was an ARC teacher for second graders the first year and first graders the second year. During the 2016-2017 school year, the English as a Second Language teacher served as an ARC teacher, and in 2017-2018, a preschool special education teacher served as an ARC

teacher for half the year, followed by a graduate student contracted by the school district to work on an hourly basis the second half of the school year. The nine remaining teachers taught ARC groups that matched the grade level they also taught during the school day. These nine teachers were selected for participation in the study due to their familiarity with the quotidian habits, skills, and dispositions of students at that grade. It was assumed that such familiarity would better inform their ability to compare outcomes for program participants and non-participants at the grade level.

The nine teachers selected to participate in this program evaluation represented an experienced cohort of teachers. Six of the teachers had taught elementary school for more than 20 years; two had taught or worked in an instructional capacity (such as instructional assistant) for 10-19 years, and one was in her fourth year of teaching. Five of the teachers held Master's level professional licenses and one was certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. All but three of the teachers had been teaching at the school that was the focus of the study for at least 10 years. In addition to the experienced nature of the group, many participants were also teacher leaders within the school. Five of the nine had served on the school's leadership team (designating them as team leaders and Professional Learning Community facilitators for their grade) at some point within the last 5 years, and one served on the leadership team at her former school within the same school district.

Parents of program participants. Between fall of 2016 and spring of 2018, 79 different students participated in the ARC program, each for up to two years. Classroom teachers nominated the initial cohort of students in the spring of 2016 based on loose criteria articulated by district literacy leaders. The program was designed to serve

students who could benefit from additional time in text and explicit vocabulary instruction in order to demonstrate proficient reading comprehension. Students may or may not have received additional in-school Tier 2 services, such as small group reading intervention with the reading specialist, ESL teacher, a tutor, or special education teacher. Students receiving Tier 3 intervention services were not generally recommended for the program, as they were already receiving intensive, systematic, targeted instruction during the school day. Students with a history of disciplinary issues also were not recommended.

The total ARC student population is described in Table 3 using the following demographic and academic categories: race, socio-economic status (participation in free/reduced-price lunch program), English language services received, and other reading interventions received. Black students were slightly more represented in the ARC population (47%) compared with the overall school population (38%), and economically disadvantaged students were also over-represented in the ARC population (61% compared to 38% total school population). Appendix A shows beginning-of-the-year reading rates, guided reading levels, and PALS summed scores (where applicable) for students by grade level compared to grade level benchmarks.

Table 3

Characteristics of All ARC Participants

Subgroup	Number	Percent
Race		
White	34	43%
Black	37	47%
American Indian/Alaska Native	5	6%
Asian	1	1%
Unknown	2	3%
Language/Disability/Economic Indicators		
SWD	9	11%
ED	48	61%
LEP	10	13%
In-School Reading Interventions		
Tier 2 In School	22	28%
Tier 3 In School	15	19%

Note. SWD = students with disabilities; ED = economically disadvantaged; LEP = limited English proficient. In-School Reading Interventions account for students who had such interventions at least 1 out of the 2 years included in the study.

Some attrition occurred each year due to students moving, exiting the program due to on-grade-level performance, or other reasons (e.g., schedule conflict, behavioral problems, parent request). Because it is the terminal grade level for the school, students in the 2016-2017 fourth grade cohort (n=12) only had access to the program for one year. Similarly, students in the 2017-2018 first grade cohort (n=14) only had access to the program's final year (unless additional funds are allocated in the future to continue the program beyond the initial grant-funded period). Seventeen students participated for the full two years of the program. It is from this cohort of 17 students that parent participants were invited to engage in one-on-one interviews and a follow-up focus group. The demographic characteristics of the 17 students who completed two years of ARC are represented in Table 4. This table also shows the extent to which these students were

representative of the entire group of ARC participants at the school of study. Students in the smaller cohort shared proportional language, disability, and economic indicators to that of the larger group. However, the smaller group was more likely to have received at least one year of in-school reading intervention in addition to the after-school program. There was also a higher proportion of Black students in the smaller cohort than in the full ARC participant group.

Table 4

Characteristics of 2-Year ARC Cohort Compared to Total ARC Population

Subgroup	2-Year Cohort Number	2-Year Cohort Percent	Total ARC Percent
Race			
White	6	35%	43%
Black	11	65%	47%
Language/Disability/Economic Indicators			
SWD	3	18%	11%
ED	13	76%	61%
LEP	2	12%	13%
In-School Reading Interventions			
Tier 2	11	65%	28%
Tier 3	6	35%	19%

Note. SWD = students with disabilities; ED = economically disadvantaged; LEP = limited English proficient. In-School Reading Interventions account for students who had such interventions at least 1 out of the 2 years included in the study.

Data Sources

Data sources correspond to the participants in the program evaluation. Table 5 outlines the various data sources and their corresponding data collection and data analysis plans as they correlate to the overarching evaluation questions.

Table 5

Analysis Methods for Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Question	**Data Source**	**Data Collection**	**Data Analysis**
1. What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the benefit of the program for students' receptive and/or expressive vocabulary?	ARC Teachers	Focus Group responses	Qualitative analysis and interpretation of teachers' Focus Group responses
2. What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the impact of the program on students' reading stamina?	ARC Teachers	Focus Group responses	Qualitative analysis and interpretation of teachers' Focus Group responses
3. What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the impact of the program on students' behaviors that are reflective of self-efficacy in reading?	ARC Teachers	Focus Group responses	Qualitative analysis and interpretation of teachers' Focus Group responses
4. What are the perceptions of parents of ARC participants regarding the impact of the program on students' enjoyment of reading?	Parents of 2-year ARC cohort	1:1 Interview responses Focus Group responses	Qualitative analysis and interpretation of parents' Interview and Focus Group responses
5. What are the perceptions of parents of ARC participants regarding students' enjoyment of, and willingness to attend school and ARC?	Parents of 2-year ARC cohort	1:1 Interview responses Focus Group responses	Qualitative analysis and interpretation of parents' Interview and Focus Group responses

Qualitative data: Teacher perceptions. The first measure utilized a structured focus group interview, designed to encourage reflection on the ARC program and its effectiveness in producing medium-term outcomes (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Focus groups are designed to solicit individual reflections and to have others' responses stimulate further insights from participants (Casey & Krueger, 2000; Center for Program

Evaluation and Research, n.d.). All nine teachers who taught an ARC group at the same grade level as their regular classroom assignment were invited to participate in the single focus group. This was a familiar context for the teachers, as they had periodically gathered for informational and problem-solving meetings with district and school leadership about the ARC program.

The Teacher Focus Group Protocol (Appendix B) was pilot tested prior to implementation using a panel of teachers and administrators familiar with ARC. The goal of the pilot test was to ensure that participants would understand the questions, understand them in the same way, and avoid discomfort through the process (Center for Program Evaluation and Research, 2011). Utilizing the retrospective interview method, the pilot test panelists responded to survey questions and afterward reported what they were thinking as they were formulating responses. The interviewer noted hesitations or requests for clarification to specific questions in order to determine what might need to be modified for clarity or participant comfort. The retrospective interview method was conducted individually with panelist members in order to accommodate their schedules and to attend to individual nuances in response behaviors. Once revisions were made to the focus group interview questions, they were field tested with a group of ARC teachers not selected for the formal evaluation. The pilot, revisions, and field test methodologies were in place in order to enhance feasibility standards for program evaluation of practical procedures and contextual viability, as well as clarity and fairness (propriety standard) and validity and reliability (accuracy standards; Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 2011).

The questioning route for the focus group interview proceeded from an informal, general opening to open-ended questions aligned with the specific evaluation questions (Casey & Krueger, 2000). Five types of questions, in order, characterize an effective focus group questioning route (Rennekamp & Nall, 2002):

1) Opening questions—Open dialog and make people feel comfortable.

2) Introductory questions—Begin to focus the conversation on the main topic.

3) Transition questions—Link introductory questions to key questions, asking for more depth or clarification of introductory questions.

4) Key questions—Focus on the major areas of the evaluation.

5) Ending questions—Bring closure to the interview, but also provide for issues to be raised that were not explicitly asked for.

The teacher focus group questioning route was designed to support the logical, natural flow of questions and allow for maximum time spent on key questions. Most key questions in the focus group questioning route aligned directly with evaluation questions. The construct of self-efficacy was explored by breaking it into some of its component parts. Table 6 specifies the types of questions represented in the questioning route; it also shows the alignment between teacher focus group questions and evaluation questions.

Table 6

Alignment of Teacher Focus Group Questions and Evaluation Questions

Teacher Focus Group Question	**Question Type**	**Evaluation Question**
In which years did you teach an ARC group, and which grade?	O	1, 2, 3
Think back to when the idea of ARC was first introduced to our staff. What were your initial impressions?	I	1, 2, 3
What made you decide to teach an ARC group?	T	1, 2, 3
What, in your mind, are the goals of ARC?	T	1, 2, 3
What benefit, if any, have you noticed that ARC has had on students' receptive and/or expressive vocabulary?	K	1
What is your perception regarding the impact of the program on students' reading stamina?	K	2
To what extent have you noticed a change in students' willingness to persist at challenging reading tasks over the course of ARC?	K	3
To what extent have you noticed students responding positively to appropriately challenging work in literacy, either during ARC or the regular school day?	K	3
How would you characterize students' confidence in reading as a result of participation in the ARC program?	K	3
What kind of goal-setting in reading have you noticed students engaged in during ARC or as a result of ARC in the regular classroom?	K	3
What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) resulted from this pilot program?	K	1, 2, 3
Is there anything else we should have talked about but didn't?	E	1, 2, 3

Note. O = Opening question; I = Introductory question; T = Transitional question; K = Key question; E = Ending question.

In order to ensure propriety standards of program evaluation, norms were established to ensure equity of voice, openness to disparate opinions, and confidentiality of participants and the content of their discussion. In addition, member-checking of transcripts and themes was used to ensure accuracy and reliability of results (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 2011). During the focus group,

follow-up questions were used to seek clarification of responses; after the focus group, teachers were sent a copy of the transcript and asked to verify its accuracy.

Qualitative data: Parent perceptions. A two-step interview process was used to gather perceptions on the benefit of the program from the parents of student participants. The purpose of the two-step process was to strengthen pre-existing relationships that the parents had with the evaluator, convey the goals of the program evaluation, and establish trust and transparency through the structured 1:1 process before asking parents to reflect in a group with others whom they may not know. Providing the context, purpose, and connection for parents to the goals of the evaluation was theorized to increase their engagement and willingness to speak openly and honestly in a focus group.

Parents of the 17 students in the two-year cohort were invited to participate initially in 1:1 interviews with the evaluator. A structured interview protocol (Appendix C) guided respondents through a series of questions similar to that of the teacher focus group. In order to maximize validity, questions on the protocol were aligned with research questions and were pilot tested with a group of representative parents from the general ARC population. After the pilot test, questions were revised for clarity and to enhance respondents' elaboration of their ideas. The initial pilot test group of parents then vetted the revised questions. The questioning route opened with a general question that led to more specific, key questions:

1) What grade is your child currently in? (Opening question)

2) Think back to when ARC was first introduced to you. What were your initial thoughts about it? (Introductory question)

3) Why did you decide to have your child participate in ARC? (Transitional question)

4) On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "my child will not ever pick up a book" to 10 being "my child would rather read than do anything else in his or her free time," how would you rate your child's love of reading? (Key question)

5) What makes you give your child that rating? (Key question)

6) To what extent do you think ARC has affected how much your child likes to read? (Key question)

7) How confident is your child about his or her ability to read? (Key question)

8) How do you know how confident your child is about reading? (Key question)

9) To what extent do you think ARC helped or harmed his or her confidence in reading? (Key question)

10) How willing is your child to come to school every day? On ARC days? Is there any difference? (Key question)

11) What did your child say he or she liked about ARC? (Key question)

12) What did your child dislike about ARC? (Key question)

13) What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) resulted from this program? (Key question)

14) Is there anything else we should have talked about but didn't? (Ending question)

In order to ensure accuracy, transcripts were provided to participants within 48 hours of their interview. They also received a return receipt to verify in writing the content of the transcripts and to reserve a space in one of two planned focus groups. At the end of the

interview, the participants were asked to consider participating in a follow-up focus group that would allow the parents to hear perspectives of others and potentially generate new ideas. Focus group reservations indicated that only one group would be needed in order to maintain the recommended size of 6-9 individuals (Mertens & Wilson, 2012).

As an introduction to the focus group, parents were provided with a general overview of the theory of action of the ARC program and some initial themes that emerged from their 1:1 interviews. After the overview, parents were invited to discuss the changes they had witnessed in their children as a result of their participation in ARC. The protocol for the focus groups (Appendix D) was based on the Most Significant Change protocol described by Mertens and Wilson (2012) and developed by Rick Davies and the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh. In this protocol, each participant was asked to describe the most significant change they had witnessed in their child's habits or attitudes about reading. The group then discussed which of the shared changes they would put forward as the most significant. This process captures the perceptions and values of individuals as well as the group. It also helps to capture unforeseen or unintended consequences of the program, as well as contextual elements that may not have emerged during the 1:1 interviews.

Data Collection

This program evaluation used a qualitative methods design in order to capture perception data from teachers and parents of student participants. Participants for both the teacher and parent interviews were invited through written and personal contact with the evaluator. Assurance of participant rights, confidentiality, anonymity, and ability to withdraw from the evaluation without harm were given both orally and in writing through

informed consent forms (Appendix E). The sample for each of the focus groups included all teachers with daily direct contact with students in the same grade level as their ARC students and all parents of students who completed 2 years of the program. The focus groups were scheduled to remain with the recommended range of 6-9 people per group. This group size helps to ensure that all participants have opportunities to speak and that robust discussion can emerge through hearing and considering diverse perspectives (Casey & Krueger, 2000; Mertens & Wilson, 2012; Rennekamp & Nall, 2002). The open-ended nature of the questions was designed to allow participants to offer their personal insights as they relate to specific questions of the program evaluation. Food and childcare were provided, and focus groups were scheduled at a time that was convenient for the participants (Appendix F).

The results from the interviews and focus groups yielded codes and themes regarding the perceptions that teachers and parents had related to the benefit of the ARC program for student participants—their reading habits, dispositions, and achievement.

Data Analysis

The 1:1 and focus group interviews served as the primary qualitative data collection method. The subsections that follow describe the coding process used to analyze the data collected in interviews and focus groups.

Teacher perception data. Results of the teacher focus group discussion were analyzed to discern teacher perspectives regarding the benefit of the ARC program on specific program outcomes as outlined in the program logic model (e.g., impact on expressive/receptive vocabulary, stamina, self-efficacy in reading). The process of data analysis from focus groups entails examining, categorizing, and recombining the

information to answer specific questions of the study (Rennekamp & Nall, 2002). The data mined from the focus group responses were based on the perceptions of the teachers after 2 years of program implementation and cannot be generalized to other teachers or schools that have implemented the program in the school district.

Emergent themes related to each of the research questions were culled from the teacher focus group. A process described by both Creswell (2014) and Rennekamp and Nall (2002) for emergent coding guided the process. First, transcripts were read for each question and a general sense of the overall meaning or gist of the response was recorded. From this list of topics, a set of codes was generated that were then used to annotate the transcripts. As new codes emerged, text was re-read and re-annotated to reflect the new codes. Next, the extracts from each transcript relevant to each code were gathered together. Using inductive reasoning, summary statements were generated based on the combined information under each code. These summary statements then became key themes of the program evaluation. Before reporting them as evaluation results, themes were shared with the participants with request for feedback, as a means of strengthening the validity and propriety (transparency) of the evaluation.

Parent perception data. With participant permission, 1:1 interviews and focus groups were recorded so that they could be transcribed. Transcripts of both the interviews and the focus groups were coded and scanned for emergent themes using the process described for teacher perception data. Similarly, the responses are the perceptions of the parents whose children attended ARC for 2 years at one particular school of study and cannot be used to predict parent perspectives beyond this school of study.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

Delimitations. Delimitations are decisions made by the researcher that affect the boundaries or scope of the study. The delimitations that influence this study include the choice of context for the program evaluation. While the ARC program has been a district-wide pilot, the evaluation was narrowly focused on the outcomes of the program at one elementary school in the district. That elementary school is socioeconomically distinct from the other schools, as it is the only non-Title I school in the district.

Perhaps the most significant delimitation and ethical consideration for this study involved the embeddedness of the program evaluator in the context of the study. As a school leader within Baker City Schools, I held an evaluative role over the teachers in the program. This relationship had the potential to influence the responses of interview and focus group participants. This was more likely to be a factor influencing teacher responses, which was one reason for choosing to use focus groups rather than individual interviews with that stakeholder group. However, one mitigating factor is that the majority of the school's staff (90-95%) reported administration to be responsive to staff needs and supportive of ongoing instructional efforts (see Appendix G). In addition, five of the teachers in the group served or had served on the school's leadership team, which practices open dialog and has norms for interaction that encourage seeking clarification, even if it has the potential to spark conflict (see Appendix H). They reported being comfortable speaking their minds, and with the norms established at the beginning of the focus group, it is likely that others followed suit.

Another delimitation is the choice of focus groups due to time constraints on teachers. Further, phone interviews were offered rather than in-person interviews with

parents in order to provide more flexibility in scheduling the interviews. By its nature as an outcome evaluation, the quality or adequacy of inputs and fidelity of implementation were not part of the scope of this program evaluation.

Limitations. Limitations refer to aspects of the research design or characteristics of/variables within the evaluand that influence the study's findings. By their nature, qualitative studies are descriptive and lack statistical findings that can be extrapolated to broader populations with as much certainty as quantitative analyses (Creswell, 2014). The findings of this program evaluation could be significant for the individuals and the school that is the subject of the study. They might not be generalizable to all the other elementary schools in the school district, given the different demographics served by each of the schools. However, there could be a degree of transferability, particularly to other schools within the school district, as determined by school and district leadership (Casey & Krueger, 2000).

Another limitation is changes to the program structure from the first year to the second year, causing different numbers of students to be served in fourth grade and several groups of students having different teachers each semester of the program. Additionally, hours engaged in literacy-specific activities changed somewhat between Year 1 and Year 2. In order to entice higher rates of student and teacher participation, breaks were built into the program from the first year to the second year, and different staff members were engaged to teach STEM-related lessons to students during 1-week interims at the end of each quarterly grading period.

Assumptions. Assumptions and external factors embedded in the program itself are listed at the bottom of the logic model (Figure 1) and show a reciprocal relationship

with the inputs, processes, and outcomes of the program. Pedagogically, it was assumed that an increase in vocabulary and extended time in text would increase a student's reading comprehension. Operationally, it was assumed that adequate staffing could be found to maintain the required teacher: student ratios and that minimal instructional oversight would be necessary for the program.

Other assumptions that influenced this study include the belief that parents of students who completed 2 years of ARC are attuned to their children's attitudes about reading and about school overall. The researcher assumed that no single measure of reading can definitively assess a child's proficiency, but that several measures, including teacher observation and informal assessment, can be triangulated to make a more accurate determination. The researcher assumed that teachers implemented the basic aspects of the program's design with fidelity—vocabulary instruction through read-alouds and rich vocabulary instruction, and extended time in high-interest, independent texts in a supportive classroom environment. It was also assumed that the culture of the school was one in which stakeholders would be eager to understand the impact of the program and would be supportive of the evaluation process.

Ethical Considerations

Propriety. Propriety standards for program evaluation require researchers to be responsive to stakeholders, to be transparent and fair in their research methods and communication of findings, to protect the rights of participants, and to disclose any conflicts of interest. Conflict of interest was openly acknowledged with teacher and parent participants, who were assured that there were no right or wrong answers to questions and no penalties for sharing honest perceptions, even if they were not

complimentary of the program in some way. Participants were assured that they could disengage from the study at any time. In addition to sharing and vetting initial themes with the participants, themes and initial recommendations for the program were shared with the school's instructional coach and the district literacy coordinator, who had each individually and concurrently engaged teachers at the school of study and at several other Baker City elementary schools to learn their perspectives about the program. This member-checking served as an informal triangulation of data, and verified the dependability of data gleaned from the teacher focus group, the most at risk of conflict of interest.

Clarity, fairness, transparency, and disclosure were built into the program evaluation at several steps. Focus group interview questions were piloted and field tested prior to implementation, in order to best ensure that respondents would understand the questions, and understand them in the same ways. Transcripts of interviews and resulting themes from the parent focus groups were provided to participants for review and feedback prior to being incorporated into evaluation findings. Focus group introductions clearly stated that findings would be presented to district leaders for the purpose of informing a decision about whether and how the program should continue in the future. All participants were informed of the confidential nature of their responses and their ability to withdraw without penalty at any time.

Utility. The utility standards for program evaluation refer to the degree to which both the process and the product of the evaluation are useful to the stakeholders in meeting a perceived need. "Evaluation processes and products become meaningful when participants use them to rediscover, reinterpret, or revise their understandings of both

their programs and their roles in them (U6 Meaningful Processes and Products)" (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 2011, p. 8). From the inception of the ARC program, teachers expressed interest in weighing the opportunity costs presented by the program. They were eager to know if it was working, given that the time involved for teachers and students meant a decrease in other after-school activities such as informal planning, professional learning, and culture-enhancing events such as clubs and talent shows for children. By utilizing the focus group interviews with teachers, they were provided a structured forum in which to negotiate meaning and revise or reinterpret their perceptions of the program's benefit for students and worth to the school. The evaluator had pre-established credibility with the staff and parents, and was thoroughly embedded in the life of the school as a district leader.

Feasibility. An evaluation is feasible when it can be managed effectively and efficiently given the time and resources available (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 2011). The delimitations previously mentioned enhanced feasibility. Because the ARC teachers already worked an extra 4.5 hours per week in the program, efforts were made to minimize the amount of time they would spend responding to research questions. Surveys were considered, but they are plentiful at the end of the school year in the school district of study and not likely to be given full time and consideration. Individual teacher interviews were also considered, but were rejected due to propriety concerns and because scheduling individual interviews with teachers at the end of the year proved challenging, given the many other demands on their time both during and after school. Most teachers had the same single day or two available after school, making individual interviews with a single researcher impossible. Giving parents

the option of completing the 1:1 interviews by phone allowed them greater flexibility and increased the chances that 100% of the parents would agree to participate. Finally, offering childcare and food at the parent focus group was a way to maximize participation in that part of the process.

Values clarification is an important aspect of feasibility, and there were multiple opportunities for values to come to the forefront in this program evaluation. Asking the open-ended question about why people chose to teach or enroll their children in the program was a means of accessing their values. Further, asking about unintended outcomes was likely to uncover values that were not explicitly stated in the program goals. By allowing for those perceptions, the evaluator showed transparency and interest in understanding the values of the community as they interact with the program.

Accuracy. Accuracy standards support sound evaluation design and analyses based on reliable information; explicit description of context; and clear procedures for collecting, verifying, and storing information. Throughout the evaluation process, it was emphasized that the context of the evaluation is a single elementary school's implementation of the district's pilot program. Findings are specific to the experiences and perspectives of the stakeholders at that school and are not considered generalizable to other schools in the district. Findings might offer a springboard for questions or evaluation of aspects and contexts of the program that are outside the scope of this evaluation.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

After-school Reading Club (ARC) is an after-school reading intervention program designed by Baker City Schools to promote a lifelong love of reading beginning with its youngest students. Children at the elementary level are selected based on a variety of reading assessments, as well as teacher observation of their habits and dispositions toward reading. Specifically, the program is designed to engage reluctant readers in such a way that they develop more positive attitudes and more productive habits with regard to reading. After 2 years of implementation, the program has reached the end of the initial grant cycle. The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine the degree to which ARC provided intended benefits to the student participants at one of the elementary schools in which it was implemented. Results of this qualitative study are limited to the specific school's context, but could help inform changes the school district might consider in order to increase the value and worth of the program for its constituents in subsequent years.

Participants

Adults most familiar with the impact of the program on student participants were invited to participate in this qualitative study, through a series of interviews and focus groups.

Teachers. Nine teachers who taught a group of students in the ARC program whose grade level matched that which the teachers taught in the regular school day were invited to participate in the teacher focus group. Face-to-face conversations with the eight teachers still working in the school were followed up with a group email to all nine individuals. All eight still employed at the school participated in the focus group, with one teacher leaving partway through the discussion due to another commitment. The teacher focus group participants represent some of the most senior members of the school's staff and most had served on the school's leadership team at some point in the previous 5 years. Table 7 provides a profile of the teacher focus group participants. Three of the participants taught in the program for 2 years, three for 1 year, and two taught for a semester each, sharing a group at the same grade level.

Table 7

Characteristics of Teacher Focus Group Participants

Participant	Race	Years of Experience	Grade Level	Leadership Team Member	Years Teaching ARC
Teacher 1	Black	30+	2nd	Yes	1 (17-18)
Teacher 2	Black	30+	1st	Yes	2 (16-18)
Teacher 3	White	20-29	3rd	No	.5 (16-17)
Teacher 4	White	20-29	4th	Yes	1 (16-17)
Teacher 5	White	5-9	3rd	Yes	.5 (16-17)
Teacher 6	White	20-29	3rd	No	2 (16-18)
Teacher 7	White	30+	4th	Yes	1 (17-18)
Teacher 8	White	30+	2nd	Yes	2 (16-18)

Parents of program participants. A cohort of 17 students participated in the school's ARC program for 2 full years. Parents of these students were invited to

participate in both a structured 1:1 interview and a subsequent focus group discussion. Written invitations describing the project were hand-delivered to each of the families at the program's culminating celebration at the school in May 2018. A follow-up phone call, text, email, or in-person interaction resulted in 14 positive responses to the invitation. Table 7 summarizes the characteristics of the participants, comparing the whole cohort with the smaller participant groups. Initially, five second-grade families, six third-grade families, and six fourth-grade families were invited. Interview participants included four families each from second and fourth grade and all six of the third-grade families. Following the interviews, transcripts of the interview were sent to each participant, along with a return form to confirm the transcript's accuracy and their willingness to participate in one of two scheduled focus groups. Food and childcare were secured for each of the focus group dates, but the two were consolidated into one event, as fewer families elected to participate in the focus group; of the eight focus group families, two each were from second and fourth grades, and four were from third grade. Both families of English Language Learners participated in the 1:1 interview, but did not participate in the focus group. The racial demographics as well as the language, disability, and economic indicators of interview respondents and focus group participants were similar to that of the full 2-year cohort, with the greatest discrepancy being a 14-point difference between the percentage of families considered economically disadvantaged in the focus group (62.5%) and the full cohort (76%).

The focus group exceeded the maximum recommended group size (nine) by one individual due to a communication oversight. Eight individuals who participated in the interview responded that they would attend the focus group. Two of those individuals

brought their spouses to the focus group, bringing the total to 10. The couples responded as a family unit, effectively representing eight different perspectives around the table. The facilitator used norms and facilitation techniques to maintain equity of voice among family units.

Table 8

Characteristics of Parent Respondents

	2-Year Cohort		Interview Respondents		Focus Group Participants	
Subgroup	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Race						
White	6	35%	6	43%	3	37.5%
Black	11	65%	8	57%	5	62.5%
Language/Disability/Economic Indicators						
SWD	3	18%	3	21%	2	25%
ED	13	76%	11	79%	5	62.5%
LEP	2	12%	2	14%		
Grade						
2nd	5	29%	4	29%	2	25%
3rd	6	35%	6	43%	4	50%
4th	6	35%	4	29%	2	25%

Note. SWD = students with disabilities; ED = economically disadvantaged; LEP = limited English proficient.

Summary Findings for Study

Findings of this study are presented for each of the five evaluation questions. Codes were developed through repeated reading and reorganization of the transcripts, and themes were generated from the individual responses that correlated with each of the codes. Themes are reported for each evaluation question.

Evaluation question #1: What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the benefit of the program for students' receptive and/or expressive vocabulary?

Teachers identified expanding students' vocabularies as one of the goals of the ARC

program and expressed confidence in the curriculum materials provided for that purpose. Receptive vocabulary refers to words that are read or heard and understood out of context or discovered in context. Expressive vocabulary refers to the bank from which an individual can immediately retrieve a word and correctly apply it in speaking or writing.

The benefit of the materials and instructional strategies seemed strongest for students' receptive vocabularies, and this benefit extended beyond ARC into the regular classroom (Tier 1 instruction) as well. Teachers cited examples of students recognizing taught words in the read-alouds associated with the *Making Meaning* curriculum, as well as other texts they encountered in both ARC and the regular classroom. Teachers of the younger students (first and second grades) indicated that the emphasis on vocabulary words gave students new ways to listen to stories, listening specifically for those words in the read-alouds or their independent reading texts. When they did notice those words, they would exclaim, "Oh, we used that word in ARC!" Because of the daily emphasis on vocabulary in the program, students were primed to find *strong words* in a story that provided enhanced or nuanced meaning. Strong words are words that provide more nuance, description, or imagery for readers. The teachers of the third and fourth graders noted that students seemed to pay more attention to words they did not know as they were reading, even if they were not the words introduced in ARC. They demonstrated greater curiosity about unknown words, and over the course of ARC, began using skills and strategies to figure out their meaning, asking for help when appropriate. This interest carried over from ARC into the regular classroom.

Effects on expressive vocabulary were more limited to the ARC setting, where students were required to use and manipulate the words in various contexts as part of the

explicit vocabulary instruction. Several teachers heard students using the new vocabulary words in ARC as they discussed their books or had more informal conversation with peers. One teacher remembered students using specific ARC vocabulary words orally in the regular classroom. A more common effect on expressive vocabulary was a general interest in using strong words in their writing. While specific words from ARC might not have shown up in students' writing, they were more eager to use the thesaurus or dictionary in second and third grade to incorporate strong words into their narratives. Teachers' perception was that students experienced an increased motivation for expanding their vocabulary, receptive and expressive.

Teachers concurred that the instructional materials provided to them for vocabulary instruction were beneficial and of high quality. They indicated that they liked the materials and believed that all students could benefit from the additional vocabulary instruction, not just students in ARC. One of the teachers who only taught ARC for one semester, and therefore did not have the curriculum available to her at all times, indicated that she wished she could have used it in her Tier 1 instruction. (Recall from previous discussion that Tier 1 instruction refers to classroom instruction expected to meet the learning needs of 85% of students.) One of the teachers who taught ARC for 2 years responded that she did use the materials in her classroom; a few others concurred. While investigating the impact of the curriculum and training on teachers' Tier 1 instruction is outside the scope of this program evaluation, part of the logic model proposes that teachers will begin to adopt some of the high-leverage practices they learn through ARC into the regular literacy block during the day. These reflections, as well as statements several teachers made about intentionally highlighting words discussed in ARC during

the regular school day, suggest that teachers might have begun to develop new insights and habits about teaching vocabulary in Tier 1 instruction. Further, a positive impact on vocabulary acquisition likely extended to non-ARC students in the regular classrooms of some ARC teachers.

Evaluation question #2: What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the impact of the program on students' reading stamina? The topic of stamina received a great deal of attention during the teacher focus group, with most teachers identifying specific student behaviors that led them to assert that stamina was improved for students over the course of their participation in ARC. Students seemed to find pleasure in reading for extended periods of time. Further, this impact extended for all ARC students beyond the after-school program into the regular classroom.

Reading stamina is defined as the amount of time a student can read independently without stopping or losing focus. One fourth grade teacher asserted that her group of six students became less likely to wander—"you know, the wanderers…the kids who always have to get up when it's time to read or…have to go to the bathroom"—over the course of the year, both in ARC and the regular classroom. Others concurred immediately with her observation, noting that the excuses for stopping or interrupting lessened over the course of the year, and eventually disappeared. One teacher noted that more students in her class of second graders this year (several of whom had been in ARC the year prior) seemed to gravitate toward reading to fill their spare time in the regular classroom:

> It used to be, they would grab a piece of paper and want to color or draw a picture. But my kids, they seem to grab a book, and they love to read, and they love to tell you about it, even after school.

Both during Tier 1 and during ARC, reading independently was something more students appeared to enjoy.

Several teachers noted that students in ARC looked forward to the independent reading time for a number of reasons. Environmental conditions seemed to enhance the experience for students. They could choose where they sat—on the carpet, on pillows, under a table, alone or with a friend. They had the option to remove their shoes and use noise-cancelling headphones in some classrooms. They learned how to pick *just right books*, but also had latitude to try something harder or stick with something easy for a little while, if it was particularly interesting. Just right books are books that students can decode, comprehend, and enjoy independently. They had a large selection of books from which to choose, and did so without teacher directive or interference. Finally, the setting was quiet, relaxed, and comfortable. Everyone read and everyone focused. Many teachers noted that a frequent response to the end of independent reading time was a refrain of complaint from students. They wanted to keep reading.

The magnitude of increase in stamina might have been inversely proportional to the amount of independent reading already expected of students in Tier 1 instruction. In most classrooms at Baker City, there is little time allotted for independent reading in a distraction-free environment. The first-grade teacher noted that a change in Tier 1 instruction in her grade level between the 2 years of ARC made her think differently about the ARC effect on stamina. First grade transitioned from guided reading groups

and stations in the 2016-2017 literacy block to a reader's workshop model in 2017-2018, which meant that students were already doing a lot more independent reading in 2017-2018 during Tier 1 than they were the previous year. In the guided reading/station model of literacy instruction, students rotate every 15-20 minutes through different teacher-designed literacy stations, one of which is often independent reading (others include word study, handwriting, and guided reading). An instructional assistant, volunteer, or reading specialist might lead or supervise a group while the teacher leads another group. In a reader's workshop model, students read to themselves or with a buddy for a much longer block of time (30-40 minutes), during which they might have a brief (2-3 minute) conference with the teacher about their reading or a small strategy group (5-10 minutes). She reflected that while stamina was improved for her ARC students in the first year of ARC (when they were not accustomed to long stretches of independent reading time in the regular classroom), it remained about the same over the course of the year for the second ARC cohort. What was different in the second year, however, was the degree to which students were "developing a better sense of just reading for enjoyment." She noted, "I'm not sure if they were reading a lot more but they were just doing it a more relaxed, sort of enjoyable, setting" (Teacher 2, personal communication, May 30, 2018).

While all teachers were successful in getting students to read independently at the start of ARC, the change they perceived in students was from compliant readers to internally motivated readers. Words that were repeated frequently in the discussion about stamina included *enjoyment*, *independence*, and *habits*. Teachers perceived that as students were developing good habits related to reading (picking *just right books*; finding

a quiet, comfortable spot; discussing interesting words and plot twists with friends), they were finding that they enjoyed it more.

The new habits and attitudes translated from ARC into the regular classroom, but not all teachers believed that those habits extended into the home. Some teachers at Baker City require students to have a parent sign their agenda or a reading log to verify that students have completed 20 minutes of required reading each night. One teacher observed that the ARC teacher had signed her students' agendas every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday (the days of ARC). The agendas were not signed on Thursdays (there was not a requirement for them to be signed on Fridays). Another teacher concurred, and said that her students admitted that they did not read at home. A third teacher challenged the assertion that no signature on a reading log meant that the student hadn't read. She said that often the logs just came back blank but that the child had read. She would give them credit if they could tell her what they had read: "They will come in and say 'I read last night, but mom forgot to sign it.' So, it is…the kids really enjoy reading" (Teacher 1, personal communication, May 30, 2018). As their stamina built, students began to internalize that they could get through a whole text and derive enjoyment out of it. This made them more motivated to keep reading and to find other books in a series or by the same author that they might enjoy.

Evaluation question #3: **What are the perceptions of ARC teachers regarding the impact of the program on students' behaviors that are reflective of self-efficacy in reading?** Self-efficacy is generally a self-reported judgment of one's perceived ability to perform a task at a designated level of proficiency prior to actually performing the task. There are certain behaviors that students exhibit that can provide insight into their level

of self-efficacy when observed by teachers and parents. The construct of self-efficacy in reading for ARC students was explored through four such behaviors that served as the basis for specific questions in the teacher focus group protocol: willingness to persist at challenging reading tasks, positive responses to appropriately challenging work in literacy, confidence in reading, and goal-setting in reading. The results of teacher reflections related to student self-efficacy support Bandura's assertion that self-efficacy is context-specific. In other words, in the ARC setting and with the tasks specific to that program, students demonstrated heightened self-efficacy in reading. Some elements of self-efficacy eventually carried over into the regular classroom, particularly persistence, effort, motivation, and confidence.

Persistence. Teachers noted persistence mostly as it related to the idea of stamina. Students were observed to persist at independent reading more successfully over the course of ARC, in both ARC and the regular classroom. Teachers noted that students were more willing to pick up *just right books* because they were in a non-judgmental, non-competitive environment. The small groups were designed as fairly homogenous with regard to reading levels, so there was no fear of embarrassment about the complexity of texts that students were reading. Teachers held 1:1 conferences with students, which served to reinforce the expectation that students continue making progress in their texts, make meaning from those texts, and derive pleasure from new knowledge or narratives presented in the texts.

This willingness to sit and persist at the task of reading was observed to translate from ARC to the regular classroom. However, one teacher of third grade who did not teach ARC in 2017-2018, but who had students in her regular classroom who participated

in two different ARC groups, noticed a difference in students' willingness to persist in the classroom based on which ARC group the students were in. One group was led by a different third grade teacher, while the other group was led by a graduate student contracted for the after-school position. The teacher's implication was that students whose ARC teacher was not a regular classroom teacher at the school were less likely to persist at independent reading during Tier 1 instruction. They seemed less motivated, sharing fewer stories of excitement or enjoyment in class about what they read and did in ARC the day before. The teacher did not speculate whether the graduate student's lack of familiarity with the general curriculum, her lack of prior relationship with the students, or some other factor hindered her ability to motivate the students to persist and engage.

Students in ARC were described as not ever giving up. They were eager to decode challenging texts, look up unfamiliar words, and persevere with reading a text assigned to them in the regular classroom. Where persistence was less noticeable was when the reading tasks were presented more formally, such as in a test-taking format. One teacher said that when she would try to incorporate skill-based questions in ARC related to story elements, drawing conclusions, or "meaty comprehension questions," students were more likely to shut down and declare, "this is hard." Others concurred that when students left Tier 1 guided reading groups to do follow-up skill-based seatwork, the students in ARC did not demonstrate much persistence, or growth in persistence from baseline, on those kinds of tasks. Growth in persistence was observed specifically on that which was targeted in ARC—learning new words and reading independently for enjoyment.

Positive response to challenging work. With the exception of one student from third grade in each of the 2 years of the program, all students demonstrated positive responses to being in the ARC program and engaging in the instructional activities designed for them. Students were seen bounding out of the building with smiles on their faces at the end of each session, still full of energy and enthusiasm 90 minutes after their regular school day ended. One teacher indicated that it was the enthusiasm of the students she saw across the hall every afternoon in 2016-2017 that convinced her to teach in ARC during 2017-2018. She said she would hear students who normally struggle in the classroom talking with one another about the books they were reading, using phrases like, "I wonder…" and she was impressed by the curiosity and positive affect that she observed from afar. Teachers perceived that students were growing more positive about the program over time. Students expressed disappointment when the program was ending for the year in May. They liked the routine, the relaxed atmosphere, and the opportunity to read independently.

The positive response to reading more and more challenging texts spilled over from ARC into the regular classroom with similar instructional activities. Students were eager to participate in guided reading groups in Tier 1 instruction, especially if some of their peers from ARC were also in the group. Camaraderie and shared experiences seemed to enhance students' willingness to continue to engage in reading.

On the whole, teachers felt that the students in ARC were perfectly chosen for the program. They began as reluctant readers and transformed into willing readers. Given the right combination of environmental, structural, and instructional supports, they responded positively to the challenge of engaging with texts for longer periods of time.

One teacher noted that in 2016-2017, she had several English Language Learners from other first grade classes in her ARC group, and she could tell that the students looked forward to being together in the afternoons to support one another in learning new words and unlocking the reading code with one another. She reflected,

> In some measure, they developed more stamina, more ability to face challenges, just because they knew that there was that support there in the afternoon. They were going to have their group. And then, read together. I think that part of it was, has been, especially powerful. The kids really liked being together and supporting each other in reading.

Only two students did not respond positively, and had to be exited from the program during the second semester. It was noted that both students struggled with emotional regulation during the school day and needed more specialized support than what was available during the after-school program. The challenge of attending to academic work for an extra 60 minutes per day overwhelmed them, whereas it energized the others.

Confidence in reading. Teachers understood one of the goals of the ARC program to be that students would feel that books in general were more accessible to them. Over the course of ARC, confidence in reading was noted to increase among all the students who remained in the program.

One of the ways that confidence was fostered in the program was through the grouping and instructional practices of ARC. Students were in a small group with other students with similar reading habits and skills. They were all learning new words together, and being required to stand up in front of the group at times to use the words in a different context or apply it in some novel way. It was a safe space to take risks and

make mistakes. Without the pressure of judgment or consequence, students became more willing to attempt more challenging tasks. Their voices became stronger and louder as their confidence grew. As they gained new repertoire in their vocabulary, they had more ways to express their ideas, which they did more and more willingly.

One of the ways that teachers supported student confidence was to use the ARC program to pre-teach what was coming up in Tier 1 instruction. For example, teachers would introduce Reader's Theater in ARC and have students practice reading orally with expression and volume. In Reader's Theater, small groups of students form a "cast" that reads aloud a story that has been turned into a script. It allows students to perform for an audience, practicing fluency, articulation, and voice projection in an engaging and authentic way. The ARC students would present their plays first to another ARC group, and then when the time came to do Reader's Theater in the classroom, they were already familiar and comfortable standing in front of their peers and reading.

Teachers correlated the level of conversation in the ARC classroom with the level of student confidence. As they became more confident in their reading, students were more willing to share and talk about what they were reading with other students in ARC. At first, this happened formally when teachers asked students to speak about their books to the small group. When they saw that their peers were interested in what they had to say and asked questions, it served as positive reinforcement for the student sharing. Over the course of ARC, students were observed to engage more informally with one another over their books, pointing out funny or interesting passages to their reading buddy, making suggestions to their peers for what they should read next, and generally engaging in rich conversations about books they were reading.

These behaviors also spilled over into the regular classroom. Students eventually started talking with their classroom peers about books, in addition to the other topics typical of elementary-aged students. A fourth-grade teacher noted that a few of her students were eager to read some of the more challenging books that their peers had been reading in the regular classroom. Rather than tell them that the books were too hard, she conferenced with them frequently, monitored their comprehension, and supported them to go back and make meaning when their comprehension lagged. She noted that it seemed to give them a great boost of confidence to be able to tell their peers that they, too, were reading some of the popular yet more challenging books that other fourth graders were reading. Other teachers also observed students who initially selected easier books in their comfort range begin to tackle more challenging texts in the regular classroom as their confidence grew through ARC.

Goal-setting in reading. Goal-setting was not something that most teachers explicitly talked about in ARC with their students. One teacher had students keep a log of all the books they read in ARC, and students were excited to see that list grow longer than they imagined it could, but they did not have an explicit goal related to number of titles read in a year. Instead, goal-setting seemed to be something internal that happened as students' confidence in their abilities grew.

Without formally introducing goal-setting, teachers noticed students pushing themselves to read more and more complex texts over the course of the year. At the beginning of the year, ARC teachers traded classroom libraries such that each teacher had a set of independent readers from the grade level below their assigned grade level group. About halfway through the year, students began looking for the more challenging books.

First and second graders demanded chapter books of their teachers, prompting the teachers to reclaim their grade level libraries in order to give students the kinds of books they were craving.

One teacher shared an anecdote about goal-setting that happened organically in her ARC group. A few boys in her group created their own challenge with one another related to decoding. When they used the buddy reading strategy, each student would read a page at a time out loud. The student not reading aloud followed along and counted the number of words pronounced incorrectly. He then assigned his partner to complete the number of push-ups correlated to the number of incorrectly decoded words. It was a happy competition that represented a goal for them to be more accurate in their reading with one another. It also motivated them to continue reading, as they wanted to best one another with their decoding skills.

Evaluation question #4: What are the perceptions of parents of ARC participants regarding the impact of the program on students' enjoyment of reading? Most parents credited ARC with improving their children's enjoyment of reading, even if the child already liked reading. Only one parent indicated that the program had no impact on her child's enjoyment of reading, which she rated in the lower range (3 on a 10-point scale). Another parent, who said her child liked to read even before ARC, credited the program with about a 10% increase in his love of reading. Others, however, perceived a significant positive change in their child's enjoyment of reading as a result of participating in ARC. Figure 2 shows the results of parent perceptions of the level of their child's reading enjoyment after 2 years in ARC. Most parents reported that their child's enjoyment of reading was somewhere in the middle of

not ever wanting to pick up a book (1 on the 10-point scale) and *preferring reading over any other activity* (10 on the 10-point scale). Of the 14 parents who responded, 11 indicated that their child enjoyed reading at a Level 5 or above.

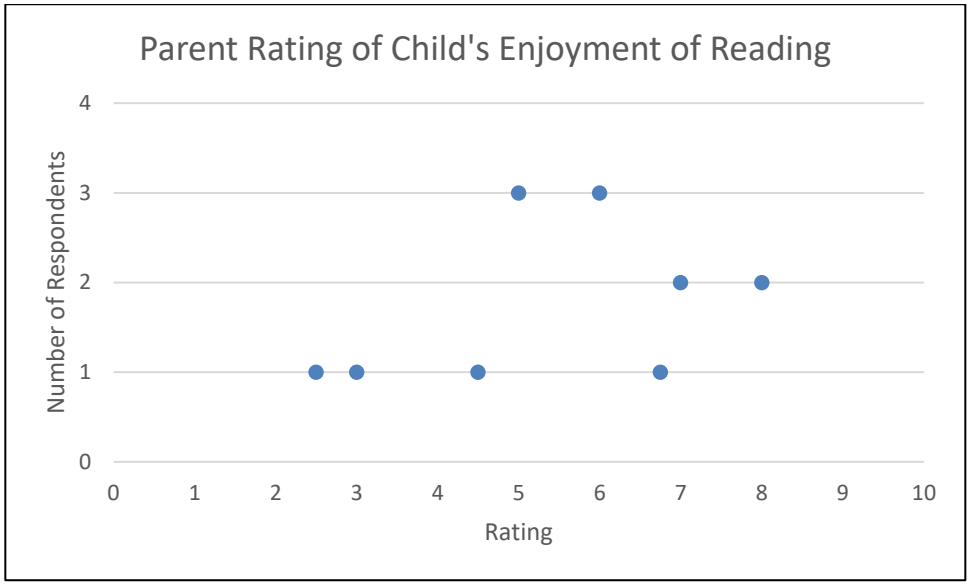


Figure 2. Distribution of individual responses to the question, "On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being 'my child will not ever pick up a book' to 10 being 'my child would rather read than do anything else in his free time,' how would you rate your child's love of reading?"

During the interviews and focus group, several parents indicated that they knew their child was beginning to enjoy reading more because more and more books were coming into the home. Whether they were asking to go to the library, the book fair, or the bookstore, they were seeking reading opportunities at home. One parent said that her child specifically visited the book giveaway table at every school event and always came home with a lot of books. Several said that their children were possessive of the books they brought home, not wanting them to be stored in a shared family space, but in their own bedrooms.

Other evidence that parents provided for their children's improved enjoyment of reading corresponded to some of the areas of self-efficacy described by teachers. Specifically, parents noted increased persistence, more positive responses to challenging tasks, and increased confidence in their ability to read. Parents also found it easier to motivate their children to read, and described the process of motivating students in terms similar to those educators would use to describe goal-setting, a subset of self-efficacy. For example, several parents noted that their children were motivated to read captions on a television program, texts on a phone, or complex directions for a game they wanted to play. The students appeared to become more aware that if they practiced reading the books their teachers gave them, it would help them read the other things they wanted to read.

Persistence. Prior to ARC, most parents indicated that it was a battle to get their children to initiate reading at home, much less persist at it. For many families, there were often tears and tantrums at home when parents would insist that their child read for the required 20 minutes per night for homework. Since ARC, however, the battles disappeared. In addition to being willing to pick up a book when told at home, some children would continue to read for much longer periods of time than in the past. The children might continue to ask how much longer they have to read, but parents found it easier to encourage their reading for longer and longer stretches of time. While some students still required the push from their parents to read, all parents found that their children were reading more than they used to at home. For some, that meant that they were now able to fulfill the teacher's expectation of reading for a minimum of 20 minutes a night. For others, that meant students were engaged for much longer periods of time

than before, but maybe not the full 20 minutes and maybe still requiring adult support or supervision. Some of the same barriers continued to exist at home, even after students became more engaged readers through ARC. Several parents said that even though their children were reading more at home, it was not as much as they would read in ARC. Conversely, several examples were shared of leaving a child to read and forgetting to tell him that time was up, only to find an hour or so later he was still immersed in the book.

Positive response to challenging work. Every parent indicated that his or her child loved being in ARC. One parent said that her child was not pleased at first when she signed him up, but after the first week, "all he could talk about was how much he loved it and wanted to keep going to ARC." Another parent noted that her child is "always super-happy when he comes out—wants to tell me what he did in ARC, what books he read, and everything else. I've seen growth." Many said that when it was time for ARC to end, their children were disappointed. They cited the relationships that teachers developed with their children and the individualized attention and support as being exactly what their child needed in order to tackle the hard work of reading and feel good about it.

In addition to loving ARC, parents noted a qualitative difference in their children's response to reading challenging texts. Some parents indicated that their child was much more comfortable reading out loud to them or to their siblings after starting ARC. Prior to ARC, many children were averse to making errors, read slowly or without fluency, and became easily frustrated or embarrassed to the point of shutting down when reading aloud. While not all reading problems were solved as a result of ARC, parents noted that ARC encouraged the students to take more risks and understand that making

mistakes is part of the learning process. They were not judged when they made mistakes, which allowed them the emotional space to keep trying and self-correct. Parents noted that in the larger class, their children were self-conscious about their pronunciations and being less accurate than their peers. After participating in ARC, they became more comfortable finding their own mistakes and using the tools and strategies they had learned to correct them. They were more willing to tolerate their parents saying "figure it out for yourself" than they had been in the past, and more likely to use decoding strategies than to just guess. They were more willing to tackle challenging texts. Parents perceived the combination of emotional, social, and instructional supports improved their children's response to appropriately challenging tasks.

Not only were students better able to tolerate frustration, they were also perceived by their parents as gleaning greater satisfaction from reading and being proud of their growing skills. Parents, too, expressed pride as they discussed how they knew their child liked to read. Several parents noted that their children began bringing home books they had read during ARC and wanted to show off how well they could read them. New words seemed to delight the children, especially when they were able to impress their parents with particularly big vocabulary words they had learned either directly from the teacher or indirectly from their reading. Parents also noted that the students were more interested in talking about the books they were reading and what they were learning from them. This interest seemed to coincide for many students with their improved ability to read more complex texts with more age-appropriate, engaging content. The parents of the two English Language Learners indicated that their children were most pleased to learn a lot of new words that helped them better understand what they were reading.

Confidence in reading. When asked how they knew their children enjoyed reading, most parents immediately pointed to a sense that their child felt more confident. This increase in confidence meant that they were more willing to give it a try, and the more they did it, the better they got at it, which, in turn, gave them even more confidence. It was described as a beneficial circle of influence. Children who used to read word-for-word and look at their parents for validation that they were decoding correctly began to read longer phrases, sentences, and paragraphs without stopping. Children who did not like to read out loud to other family members began doing so more willingly. They seemed to have more strategies to draw on so that when they did struggle, they had a plan to work through it. They were seen as eager to show off what they could read or what they had learned from reading in a book much more than before they participated in ARC. One parent, who characterized her child as lacking confidence in general, noticed a turnaround in his perception of his abilities:

> Before ARC, I would hear things you know, like, "I'm dumb. I'm not a good reader." And we would just encourage him to practice and practice. But with ARC, not only did he get the practice with reading, he got the support and tools by somebody who is an educator. Not just Mom and Dad trying to figure out how to help him. So, I think overall, the program has made him more confident…He doesn't still say, "I'm dumb. I can't read" anymore. This year he hasn't been saying these things. He's not as down on himself.

Parents who participated in the focus group agreed a boost in confidence was the most significant change witnessed in their children as a result of their participation in ARC. After each parent shared his or her own story about the most significant change

they witnessed in their child, the group was asked to come to consensus regarding what they perceived as the most significant change from what was shared. Immediately, a parent responded, "confidence," and all parents asserted agreement. One noted that, "[confidence is] the root of all the other outcomes." Another added, "It makes you more willing; it speeds you up; it makes it fun. It makes less complaining." Confidence was seen as contributing to persistence, positive response to challenging tasks, and use of known strategies: "Confidence makes it so you don't care if you mess up. It's okay; we'll just start over. Or just keep going. It's not the end of the world." All eight families indicated increased confidence in reading was the greatest benefit of ARC for their children.

Teachers were skeptical that improvements in student attitudes toward and habits regarding reading could be solely attributed to ARC, suggesting they were more likely a byproduct of classroom instruction, other interventions, and ARC combined; however, parents perceived the improvement as arising primarily because of ARC. They noted that the enjoyment and confidence only happened once ARC started, and pointed to the small group environment and camaraderie with like-ability peers as things that generally did not happen during the regular school day. They noted that their children were more compliant about reading at home when they were enrolled in ARC, even when that was a regular homework expectation of different teachers each year.

Motivation/goal-setting in reading. As they discussed the benefits of ARC in the focus group, parents shared anecdotes that suggested that children were more easily motivated to read more challenging text at home, and that children were beginning to set goals for themselves that their parents could capitalize on. One parent indicated that her

child wanted to be able to text on his phone, but that first he had to be able to read what people were writing. Another indicated that she turned the volume down on the television and kept the subtitles on so that if he wanted to watch TV and know what was going on, he had to read. Similarly, one child enjoys a Japanese anime show, but he had to read the captions in English in order to understand the plot. Others found that they were better able to motivate their children to read as they learned more about their interests and could find books that matched those interests. The student whose parent rated him the lowest on enjoyment of reading was so pleased that he read a book about Minecraft cover to cover in about three days because it held his interest, despite it being a challenging text.

Evaluation question #5: What are the perceptions of parents of ARC participants regarding students' enjoyment of and willingness to attend school and ARC? All parents characterized their children as liking school and happily attending both school and ARC. For most parents, there was not a discernible difference in their child's willingness to attend school on an ARC-day versus a non-ARC day. Some parents could tell that their children were eager not to miss ARC because they gave reminders that they were to be picked up later those days and received more thorough, excited reports about what they did in ARC than what they did in the regular school day. Three themes emerged from parents as explanations for why their children were excited to extend their school days: appropriate supports, engaging resources, and positive student-teacher relationships.

Supports for students were characterized as both academic and social. Parents identified the small group or 1:1 environment with targeted vocabulary and reading instruction as being just what their child needed to thrive. Parents perceived their

children to be less willing to speak up in a whole class setting and easily overlooked in a class full of diverse needs. In the small group, they had to speak up and were constantly monitored by the teacher. In addition to academic supports, parents also mentioned that the structure allowed for social supports for their children. Children forged friendships and interacted with one another, on the playground and in the classroom, without judgment. They were encouraging of one another and enthusiastic about their work and play together. Parents named other children that they felt their child had become friends with because of ARC. One family, who shared that their child said that snack and recess were his favorite parts of ARC, took that to mean that the bonds that he was forging with other children were really important to him.

Resources were another feature that led to children enjoying ARC. Parents found that their children were engaged by the activities that the teachers planned for them, particularly those involving vocabulary. They also indicated that their children enjoyed the variety of books that they could choose from during independent reading time.

Teachers were mentioned frequently as having a positive effect on the students' willingness to attend ARC. Whether the teacher was their child's own homeroom teacher or a different teacher, parents indicated that their child enjoyed the relationship that he or she developed during ARC with the teacher.

Parents were unable to name anything that their child did not like about ARC. However, several parents mentioned that there were opportunity costs of the program that did sometimes cause temporary disappointment about attending ARC. Students who were also enrolled in other after school programs articulated regret that they could not participate in a club or special activity that was taking place on a Monday, Tuesday, or

Wednesday in the other program. Two parents indicated that when they removed their children from the competing program the second year of ARC, those concerns disappeared. A few others indicated that activities at home such as playing with neighborhood friends or siblings, or having more time to play video games, were sometimes more enticing than going to ARC. When they mentioned these competing interests, parents were consistently clear that they did not perceive anything negative about ARC, but that there were sometimes other activities of interest that students had to delay or give up temporarily in order to participate in ARC.

Other/unintended outcomes. Three other themes emerged from the study that were outside the original evaluation questions: time, home-school communication, and data.

Time. Teachers signaled that teaching in ARC required a significant time commitment that they worried interfered with their ability to meet the demands of Tier 1 instruction. While the resources provided for ARC were user-friendly and not too time-consuming to plan, the extra 90 minutes of time with students 3 days a week for the entire year meant that they had to do their Tier 1 planning later in the afternoons. Thursdays were reserved for faculty and committee meetings at the school, which also regularly lasted until 4 p.m. Several teachers mentioned being exhausted when they would turn to planning and feared that they were not able to give their best to their full class of students. Of the eight teachers who participated in the focus group, only three taught for both years of ARC, with others citing the need to have time to plan, meet with colleagues and parents, and attend to personal obligations as preventing them from committing to more semesters teaching ARC.

Home-school communication. Both teachers and parents noted communication between home and school was something that could be improved. When the program was first launched, the district literacy coordinator held a meeting for all parents whose children were recommended to participate in ARC. She provided an overview of the program's logistics, goals, and instructional approach, as well a profile of the learners selected for the program. Classroom teachers and administrators answered specific questions about individual students and the assessments that led to the recommendation for participation. After that, however, there was little communication from the school outside of logistical updates. One teacher said that she sent home weekly updates to parents about the words the children were learning and the books they had read, but no one provided information to parents about progress students were demonstrating. Parents indicated that they would have appreciated more communication about progress and about ways that they could support their children with reading at home. A need for this kind of communication also emerged in the teacher focus group. While not required, it was agreed that helping parents support the newly acquired reading habits and dispositions at home could further accelerate the students' growth.

Data. Related to the idea of communicating progress, both teachers and parents acknowledged that there was no empirical evidence of reading growth in the form of assessment results. While they observed positive changes in students' habits and dispositions, teachers openly wondered how they could know that ARC was actually working (as opposed to what was being already provided in the classroom) absent test scores that proved it. Parents, on the other hand, communicated a gut instinct that "it worked," even absent assessment data. Parents were more focused on the way their

children reacted to being told to read at home than on reading levels and comprehension measures, and they could discern a significant positive difference in their child's enjoyment of and persistence at reading.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After-school Reading Club (ARC) is an after-school reading program designed by Baker City Schools to foster positive dispositions and productive habits related to reading for reluctant or struggling elementary-aged readers. The program's logic model hinges on three primary processes—targeted vocabulary instruction; small, supportive learning environments; and extended time for high-interest independent reading—in order to help students become lifelong readers. Perceptions of both teachers and parents suggest that the structure, resources, and supports provided during ARC helped to contribute to an increase in students' enjoyment of, confidence in, and stamina for reading. Improvement in elements of self-efficacy in reading such as positive response to challenging reading tasks and goal-setting were more apparent to parents than teachers. Parents were more likely to attribute these outcomes to their child's participation in ARC, as opposed to classroom experiences. Teachers, on the other hand, were less likely to perceive significant changes in aspects of self-efficacy such as ARC participants' positive responses to challenging tasks or participation in goal-setting, as ARC was not seen as explicitly focused on those aspects of self-efficacy. Teachers ascribed positive changes in students' confidence and stamina not just to ARC, but also to a combination of classroom instruction and ARC participation. Parents perceived improvement in students' confidence in their reading ability as the most significant change resulting from participation in ARC.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this program evaluation suggest that the key processes of explicit vocabulary instruction, increased time reading independently, and a supportive learning environment helped to facilitate improvement in students' receptive and expressive vocabularies, their stamina for and enjoyment of reading, and some aspects of self-efficacy in reading.

Vocabulary. When children in school present with weak vocabulary development, they must be presented with both incidental exposure to new words through storybook listening and conversation, and formal instruction that requires them to hear, read, and manipulate new words in a variety of contexts (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Elley, 1989; National Reading Panel, 2000; Nelson & Stage, 2007; Pullen et al., 2010; Vadasy et al., 2015). The ARC program design incorporated elements that research indicates are the key to effective vocabulary instruction. Through robust vocabulary instruction, teachers presented a fixed set of new words each week, required the students to use and manipulate the words, and then reinforced those words through read-alouds. Students had opportunities to discuss the words with one another, practice using them in a small, safe environment, and apply them in other contexts as they were discussing their independent reading with peers. In addition, teachers made efforts to highlight the words featured in ARC during Tier 1 instruction, in order to provide multiple exposures in rich contexts for students.

Both teachers and parents found that students experienced a heightened awareness of and appreciation for the taught words. Students were able to recognize the words used in different contexts, both in ARC and the regular classroom, and the older students

applied those words in their writing. They were excited to share new words they could both define and decode successfully with their parents. This effect is in keeping with studies that indicate that explicit vocabulary instruction has a proximal effect on student vocabulary—words taught are retained (Elleman et al., 2009; National Reading Panel, 2000). In addition to understanding and appreciating the words out of context, both teachers and parents found there to be a corresponding positive effect on reading enjoyment and comprehension, an effect that aligns with theories suggesting that vocabulary serves as a mediator between decoding and comprehension (Davis, 1942; Hirsch, 2003; National Reading Panel, 2000).

While the use of taught words was the most obvious to parents and teachers, students also seemed to gain understanding that *strong words* make writing more interesting to read. They began listening for other strong words they might hear in read-alouds, asking for help understanding the meaning of words they came across in their independent reading, and using tools such as the thesaurus to find new words to use in their writing. They appeared motivated to continue to expand their vocabularies even beyond the words explicitly taught in the ARC lessons.

Teachers at Baker City Elementary reported using *Making Meaning* vocabulary lessons each week of the program. The consistent routine and varied activities that students engaged in to develop deep understanding of taught words corresponded to a noticeable increase in students' receptive vocabularies at school. Students were observed to recognize the new words and use context clues more effectively to determine word meanings. Expressive vocabulary was observed to expand somewhat at school, where

students attempted to use the new words in their writing, and at home, where they shared their excitement with parents about words they had learned.

Stamina. Reading stamina refers to the amount of time that students can read independently without stopping or losing focus. Reluctant readers often spend little time engaging in independent reading. At home, they may not read at all. At school, they may select books and abandon them quickly, or keep the same book but become distracted by other tasks that interrupt their progress. One teacher in the focus group described such readers as "the wanderers"—students who get up to use the restroom, get a tissue, assist a peer or the teacher with a non-emergency task in the middle of reading, or engage in some behavior other than reading. The effect of frequently abandoning texts or interrupting the flow of a single text is to disrupt meaning-making, the core purpose of reading. When students cannot make meaning of the text they are reading, they lose interest and stop reading. When they stop reading, they lose critical skills and fluency, thus creating a cycle of disengagement.

Both teachers and parents credited ARC with creating the conditions that allowed students to develop greater stamina for reading and to fulfill the requirement of reading outside of school for at least 20 minutes per day. Environmental conditions in support of this habit included a quiet, relaxed, distraction-free setting. The small group of six students settled down to read at the same time in a large classroom, and had options for removing their shoes and sitting wherever they felt comfortable, including pillows, chairs, or the floor. Further, the time for this reading was early in afternoon following a recess and snack break, when students still had plenty of energy and patience. Perhaps even more important than the environment and time of day, students had a wide range of

books to choose from at varying levels of text difficulty. They learned about how to match their interests and reading abilities with texts, finding *just right books* for themselves. They found books that were compelling to them, shared those books with their peers, and began to expand upon what they found engaging and interesting to read.

Plentiful, engaged reading is critical to student growth in reading proficiency (Allington, 2009; Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 2010), and the ARC program design emphasized increased time to read engaging books. Students need books that are compelling to them and that they can connect with meaningfully. They need to be provided with opportunities to read both during and outside of school time. Anderson et al. (2010) found that reading outside of school was the most highly correlated with growth in reading from second to fifth grade. Students who read more were found to have greater increases in measures of comprehension, vocabulary, and rate of reading. To that end, the school has a homework policy of reading for 20 minutes per night in order to support reading growth, and teachers have various means of monitoring compliance with this expectation. However, reluctant readers often do not meet this requirement, per self-report and teacher observation. Parents reported in both interviews and the focus group that it was often challenging, if not impossible, to get their children to read at home prior to ARC. Sometimes the barriers had to do with time of day—by the time the family was home for the evening, it was late, there was much to do, and everyone was exhausted and short on patience. Other barriers had to do with students' perceptions of themselves as poor readers and attempts to avoid that which was challenging for them, regardless of time of day. Distractions such as siblings, video

games and other more preferable activities, and friends to play with also made it difficult for parents to enforce reading at home.

Finally, another key element of improving stamina was the relationships that students had with their teacher. In keeping with research on the effects of strong relationships between teachers and students (Hattie, 2009; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004), parents shared that their children loved their ARC teachers, felt valued and respected by them, and inevitably wanted to meet their expectations. Teachers reported getting to know the students better as learners, and finding ways to interest them in certain books and words, as well as to conference with them to improve reading comprehension. As stamina increased for students at school, time changed from allocated time to differentiated, engaged time. Recall from Chapter 2 that engaged reading time has a more significant impact on student learning and growth (Aronson et al., 1998; Karweit, 1985).

Self-efficacy. While self-efficacy was an intended medium-term outcome of the program's logic model, there were few program processes that specifically targeted self-efficacy in the way that vocabulary was targeted. Subsequently, outside of improved stamina for and confidence in reading, improvements in other aspects of self-efficacy in reading were less noticeable to teachers and parents.

Self-efficacy has been found to have a significant positive effect on student achievement, regardless of ability or initial achievement levels (Pajares, 2006; Zimmerman, 2000; Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). Students with strong self-efficacy are likely to demonstrate perseverance, effort, and motivation to learn. As a mediator of student achievement and emotional responses to learning, self-efficacy is important to

enhance alongside academic skills and knowledge (Pajares, 2006). While self-efficacy is a self-reported phenomenon, certain behaviors can be observed that are reflective of self-efficacy in reading: persistence at challenging tasks, positive emotional responses to appropriately challenging work, confidence in reading, and goal-setting within the context of reading.

Two closely related questions were posed to teachers regarding persistence in learning: the question about stamina and the question about persistence in challenging tasks. When discussing stamina, teachers reflected on students' increased enjoyment of reading as well as their ability to read for longer periods of time without interruption. When asked about persistence at appropriately challenging tasks, teachers referred back to stamina for independent reading as the primary task at which students became more persistent. Because vocabulary development and independent reading filled most of the ARC instructional time, there was little opportunity for students to practice persisting at other challenging tasks. Teachers could not recall situations where challenging reading tasks (other than reading independently with stamina) presented in the Tier 1 classroom were met with persistence from their students who participated in ARC. Examples that some of the third and fourth grade teachers gave of Tier 1 literacy tasks at which their students did not persist were skill-based tasks more aligned with traditional comprehension questions than the organic conversations that emerged from reading conferences and partner sharing in ARC. While teachers had multiple examples of students engaged in meaning-making with their texts in ARC, they did not offer these discussions or conversations as examples of rigorous or challenging tasks that they observed. Rigor, particularly for the intermediate teachers, appeared to be associated

with activities such as answering skill-specific (e.g., main idea, cause/effect, inference, author's purpose, etc.) teacher-directed questions.

The different perspectives between the primary (Grades K-2) and intermediate (Grades 3-4) teachers with regard to the effect on students' persistence suggest a difference in approach to Tier 1 instruction. Primary teachers regarded the act of reading—decoding and making meaning—as the challenge that they observed their students meeting with greater stamina and persistence in both settings. Intermediate teachers, on the other hand, seemed to regard the act of reading texts as a prerequisite for the challenge of traditional comprehension work. They observed the prerequisite habits and dispositions (stamina and enjoyment) improving, and distinguished those from persistence or positive emotional response to the grade-level tasks assigned in the classroom.

Without a strong foundation of reading habits and dispositions, struggling and reluctant readers are more likely to disengage and fall further behind when reading tasks are less meaningful to them (Allington, 2002, 2009; Harvey & Ward, 2017). They need abundant opportunities, such as those provided by ARC, to become immersed in good books and connect with them on a personal level in order to be able to persist at the more formal, traditional assessments of their reading ability. The difference noted between intermediate students' stamina for reading and persistence at challenging tasks suggests that, while their confidence and enjoyment of reading was growing, it was not yet at the point where they could transition independently and confidently to the kind of comprehension tasks one might see on a standardized test of reading. To some extent, this was design-driven: while teachers had latitude to reinforce topics and skills from

Tier 1 instruction during ARC, they were discouraged from using ARC for test preparation or practice. The immediate goal was not proficiency by measure of achievement testing, but love of reading and ability to access and enjoy books from a variety of genres.

Proximal goal-setting is an important aspect of self-efficacy, as short-term goals provide opportunities for more immediate feedback and more frequent success (Pajares, 2006; Zimmerman, 2000). Teachers observed students wanting to challenge themselves with longer and harder texts as they gained confidence in their abilities. Students also wanted to increase their volume of reading, as evidenced by a third-grade teacher's comment that her students were incredulous and excited by how many books they had read as a group. Other teachers noted that students were asking for more books by certain authors or within a certain series. While implicit goal-setting seemed to be a residual effect of students' growing confidence and competence, it was not an explicit part of the instructional program. The students' inclination to push themselves harder and learn more and more strong words, the parents' and teachers' recognition that some of the students could read even more independently at home, and the compelling research behind the power of goal-setting and feedback, suggests that the students would likely benefit from more explicit instruction and support around focused, specific goal-setting in reading (Bong, 2006; Hattie, 2009; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006).

While goal-setting was not explicitly taught, self-efficacy development was supported through ARC in other ways. Student groupings allowed for children to observe success in others of perceived similar ability levels (Bandura, 1995). The schedule provided time for students to bond with one another both socially and

academically, and the group size allowed the teachers to get to know the students as learners far better than they could in the much larger Tier 1 classes. Cooperation and efficacy of the group (Pajares, 2006) were highlighted in activities such as Reader's Theater, lists of vocabulary words mastered and books read by the group, and joke-telling (one teacher had her students practice fluency by traveling around the school reading riddles and jokes to staff members). Parents also conjectured that teachers must have been reinforcing strategies for decoding that the children had been exposed to previously, because they found that the students became more likely to use those strategies when they read aloud at home. Self-initiation of known strategies in the context of reading is also an observable feature of self-efficacy in reading (Pajares, 2006). Although it was not a theme that emerged from teachers as a direct result of ARC program participation—likely because teachers considered use of child-initiated strategies more of the domain of their Tier 1 instruction—strategy use was evident to parents as a benefit of ARC.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that the processes of explicit vocabulary instruction, increased time for independent reading, and a supportive environment helped to facilitate the intended medium-term outcomes for students at the elementary school that served as the context for this study. It is recommended that the district continue to provide the ARC program for young, reluctant readers in order to improve their habits and dispositions toward reading. Recommendations for practice include key elements of the program that should continue in their current form, as well as small changes that could be made to better enhance students' self-efficacy in reading and the long-term

sustainability of the program from a staffing perspective. Table 9 provides an overview of the recommendations as they correspond to the evaluation questions.

Table 9

Recommendations for ARC Program Continuation

Findings	**Related Recommendations**
Positive impact on receptive vocabulary seen by teachers in both ARC and classroom; expressive vocabulary impact seen primarily in ARC.	Continue use of *Making Meaning* curriculum materials during ARC and make it available for Tier 1 instruction.
Reading stamina and enjoyment increased and impact was seen in both ARC and classroom.	Continue to provide students with time for independent reading of their choosing in a relaxed, positive, quiet setting. Emphasize consistent attendance as a requirement of ARC.
Students demonstrated heightened self-efficacy in reading in the ARC setting. Persistence, effort, motivation, and confidence also improved in the classroom.	Incorporate more explicit goal-setting and student monitoring of progress toward goals in ARC to enhance self-efficacy in reading.
Most parents perceived a positive change in their child's enjoyment of reading as a result of participating in ARC.	Seek ways to increase students' personal libraries at home. Continue to provide after-school access to expert instructors who can provide support and feedback to students in reading.
Parents reported that their children enjoyed coming to school and ARC, crediting appropriate supports and resources, as well as teacher-student relationships for the students' enthusiasm about ARC. Opportunity costs were present.	Continue to provide snack and recess as part of the program. Maintain the small, relatively homogenous student groupings. Communicate with parents about student progress and ways to support that progress at home.

Recommendation 1: Continue use of *Making Meaning* curriculum materials during ARC and make it available for Tier 1 instruction. Ongoing vocabulary development is critical for students to comprehend increasingly challenging texts as they advance in school. Students from poverty tend to enroll in school already well behind their peers in volume of receptive vocabulary, making it critical for schools to include vocabulary instruction as a routine part of the school day (National Reading Panel, 2000). Teachers found that the *Making Meaning* curriculum provided engaging texts and adequate support for them to implement a coherent and cohesive program in ARC. They also indicated that the program would be beneficial for the regular classroom. Further, since the ARC cohort does not represent all students from poverty, all students with weak vocabulary skills, or all students with poor comprehension, making the curriculum available as a Tier 1 intervention could help improve more students' knowledge of strong words. There are enough lessons in *Making Meaning* to allow for its use in both Tier 1 and ARC without redundancy.

Recommendation 2: Continue to provide students with time for independent reading of their choosing in a relaxed, positive, quiet setting. Teachers indicated that students were often reluctant to end independent reading time. After helping them learn to select just right books—books that appeal to their interests and match or slightly stretch their decoding skills and background knowledge—allowing students flexibility and choice about what to read gives them needed control and helps foster competence and confidence. High volume reading is more likely to happen when students are engaged and find meaning in what they read, and it is critical for continued growth in reading (Allington, 2009; Harvey & Ward, 2017). Per parent and student reports,

reluctant readers, even after they gained confidence and enjoyment of reading, were more likely to read independently at school under the direction of their teacher than they would at home. They benefited from additional engaged, differentiated, purposeful practice reading outside the school day such that did not supplant Tier 1 instruction.

Recommendation 3: Emphasize consistent attendance as a requirement of ARC. As a corollary to Recommendation 2, in order for independent reading habits to develop, consistent support needs to be in place. During the discussion with the district literacy coordinator regarding initial themes and recommendations, she shared that other schools struggled with student attendance at ARC, despite tickets for attendance entered into a monthly raffle for prizes and awards for parents of students who maintained perfect attendance. At Baker City Elementary, school leaders emphasized to parents that regular attendance was mandatory, and that failure to attend would result in a student's spot being given to another student. Similarly, students whose behaviors consistently detracted from the group's work were dismissed so that other students could take advantage of the extra help. Raffle prizes and awards were made public and important in the eyes of the students' peers, and perfect attendance was celebrated for everyone. These leadership moves, in addition to the way teachers made ARC special and fulfilling for students, helped to maintain strong attendance for the Baker City Elementary program, despite opportunity costs described by parents.

Recommendation 4: Incorporate more explicit goal-setting and student monitoring of progress toward goals in ARC to enhance self-efficacy in reading. When students are able to set reasonable, meaningful short-term goals for themselves and then receive feedback on those goals, it can convey a sense of mastery quickly. As

students meet proximal goals, they accumulate evidence of growth that is motivating and propels greater persistence toward future goals (Pajares, 2006). Self-monitoring goals related to vocabulary words mastered, number of pages or books read, types of genres explored, and even reading rate or fluency could help students attribute their effort to growth, which has a beneficial impact on self-efficacy in reading. Helping students maintain a personal list of reading strategies that they can use to decode and monitor meaning-making could also enhance self-efficacy in reading.

Recommendation 5: Seek ways to increase students' personal libraries at home. Parents indicated that one of the ways that they knew their children were experiencing an increase in confidence and enjoyment of reading was that the children were seeking ways to increase the number of books they had at home. They became possessive of the books that they knew how to read, wanting to keep them in their bedrooms. During ARC at Baker City Elementary, the teachers took the students to the annual library book sale each year. Students enjoyed selecting three books they could take home. One teacher used Scholastic Book Order points to buy books for her students and send them home each month. Parents noted that when their children could finally read something of interest to them, they were much more willing to initiate and persist at reading. Students need unfettered access to engaging books they can read, both at school and away from school.

Recommendation 6: Continue to provide after-school access to expert instructors who can provide support and feedback to students in reading. Students will become better readers simply by increasing their volume of reading. However, this process can be expedited when a person knowledgeable about reading development and

children's literature can help pair reluctant readers with books that they will not want to put down. In addition, from the parent perspective, teachers with strong student relationships potentially hold more motivational influence over students to persist at academic tasks than do parents or reporting tools such as reading logs. When students struggle with some aspect of reading, trained teachers can quickly diagnose and provide what Pajares (2006) calls instrumental help—"just enough information to enable young people to succeed on their own" (p. 358)—that is aligned with strategies previously taught. Instrumental help avoids over-helping and allows students to gain a stronger sense of self-reliance and intrinsic motivation to persevere in the face of future reading challenges.

Recommendation 7: Continue to provide snack and recess as part of the program. Camaraderie and peer support are important aspects of the ARC program that motivated students to work hard and practice reading. Some of these peer relationships developed on the playground and during snack time. Parents indicated that some of their children found recess to be their favorite part of ARC, and noted that movement and exercise were critical for their children, particularly after school. Teachers indicated that it was just the right amount of play time to refresh the students and prepare them for another hour of work. There was no distinction made between the benefit of the structured versus unstructured recess activities for primary students (intermediate students only had unstructured recess). One way to reduce the burden on teaching staff could be to eliminate the structured recess element (and the planning and set-up time required for it) and allow all students unstructured recess each day of ARC. This could

also reduce the opportunity cost of students missing time for free play with peers after school.

Recommendation 8: Maintain the small, relatively homogenous student groupings in ARC. Teachers indicated that, with the exception of two students, the students chosen for the ARC program were a perfect match for the program. The groups of students supported one another personally and academically. While each group had students from a range of reading levels, the range was small enough that students avoided feeling judged or embarrassed about their reading skills in front of their ARC peers. They gained confidence to speak in front of others and overcame the fear of making a mistake. They formed a group cohesion and sense of efficacy that helped motivate each of the students to work hard and focus. As schools develop class rosters for the upcoming year, clustering students who will be in ARC together in a class with a teacher who will teach ARC could help maximize the benefit of both strong student-teacher relationships and peer supports.

Recommendation 9: Communicate with parents about student progress and ways to support that progress at home. Teachers at Baker City Elementary already send home at least monthly communication to parents about what students are learning during Tier 1 instruction. A section could be added to these reports to include the vocabulary words introduced in ARC and correlating read-aloud titles. This would provide all parents with age-appropriate strong words that they could practice using at home with their children, thereby benefitting all students. In addition, more personalized documentation of students' short-term goals and progress toward those goals would be a relevant topic of communication between the ARC teacher and parents that could be sent

home twice per semester. Another suggestion is to include specific prompts or strategies parents could use when their child is struggling with some aspect of reading, as well as tips for creating an environment at home conducive to independent reading. Titles, genres, and authors the child might enjoy could be offered each month, along with reminders about public library hours. This kind of communication would better inform parents about their child's reading and provide additional data about the effectiveness of the program.

Additional Recommendations

One of the assumptions of the ARC logic model is that there will be adequate staffing to maintain small teacher: student ratios. Discussions with the district literacy coordinator and Baker City teachers indicated that the opportunity costs teachers experience when teaching in ARC call this assumption into question. In order to make the program sustainable, structural changes might be necessary. The following recommendations fall outside the initial evaluation questions, but emerged from the study and are designed to help improve the program's overall worth for the school and school district.

Consider shortening the program and providing more incentives/resources for teachers in order to reduce opportunity costs. Teachers indicated that the time commitment to teach ARC stressed their ability to feel fully prepared or energized for their regular teaching duties. The additional pay was a strong motivating factor for a number of the teachers to take on the responsibility, but it was not always enough to retain them in the program. In the second year of the program, a 1-week break for teachers was inserted at the end of each quarterly marking period and other staff members

provided other activities. After the first quarter, Baker City Elementary did not have enough teachers to staff the interim weeks, so ARC was cancelled the weeks that ended second quarter and third quarter. This did not seem to have a significant impact on program outcomes and kept the program easily within the range of effective additional learning time (Lauer et al., 2006). Reducing the program from 34 weeks to 24 weeks would still provide 108 hours of additional learning time and would allow for a later start date and longer winter break, times of the year that are busy for teachers, both personally and professionally. It would also give students involved in other after-school activities longer time periods in which to fully participate in those programs, reducing some of the opportunity cost associated with ARC participation. Maintaining salaries at the current level or even raising them somewhat for the reduced number of ARC days could further incentivize teachers to participate.

Other resources could be considered for teachers as a perquisite for teaching in ARC. Teachers could be provided additional funds (from the grant source) to upgrade and diversify their classroom libraries. They could be given travel grants to attend a high-quality professional learning conference focused on literacy and connected to the school's school improvement goals. With a policy change, they could be provided the support of an instructional assistant during the school day to remove some of the more administrative or purely supervisory tasks teachers must undertake every day. Assistants in the district are typically assigned to a single classroom, but job descriptions could be re-written to make them floating positions to be assigned where needed in the school. Assistants could perform daily tasks for teachers who work in ARC such as recess duty,

money receipting, facilitating student transitions during teachers' planning periods, or monitoring students using online instructional programs.

Consider making ARC a K-2 program. In the event that further incentivizing teaching in ARC is not effective and schools are unable to fully staff the program, early intervention should be prioritized (Lauer et al., 2006; National Reading Panel, 2000). Learning to read is the primary focus of literacy instruction in Grades K-2, and promoting stamina and enjoyment of reading is paramount. As students transition to third grade, other reading tasks and traditional comprehension-type measures become more prominent in Tier 1 instruction and can frustrate and disengage students who do not have strong habits and dispositions toward reading. Kindergartners, while not ready for the independent reading component of ARC, could focus primarily on vocabulary, background knowledge, and comprehension through storybook listening. The goal would be to lay a strong foundation for reading skills when they are introduced in Tier 1.

Incorporate effective elements of ARC into Tier 1 instruction as much as possible. Interventions work best (and fewer students are likely to be identified as needing intervention) when students have already received high-quality first instruction in the classroom. Teachers and parents both noted that the enhanced relationships with students and some of the instructional formats were key elements of the success of ARC. Several teachers began to adopt some of those strategies into their Tier 1 classroom because they considered them likely to be effective for all students. As the school district engages in periodic reviews of curriculum resources and instructional frameworks for literacy, revisions and adoptions that support vocabulary development, significant time for independent reading, and student-teacher conferencing should be considered.

Resources and professional learning opportunities should target improving teachers' skills at enhancing social relationships in the classroom, increasing student self-efficacy in literacy, and eliminating practices that encourage competition or unhealthy social comparisons.

Recommendations for Future Research

The design of this research study prevents generalizations about the benefit of the ARC program in any other elementary school in the district. Because each elementary school in the district has a distinct culture and demographic, and implementation has been handled differently at each school, the benefit and worth of the program could be perceived differently by stakeholders at other elementary schools. The following recommendations for future research are provided:

1. Conduct interviews and focus groups with parents and teachers at other elementary schools, focusing on the impact of the key processes on medium-term outcomes outlined in the logic model. Include open-ended questions for teachers regarding incentives that might work to recruit and retain teachers for the program.
2. Research fidelity of implementation of the program across schools. Compare fidelity results with teacher and parent perceptions of program impact in order to determine elements most aligned with program outcomes. Aspects of fidelity to consider include group size, student attendance, use of prescribed vocabulary lessons and read-alouds, and time allotted for independent reading and conferencing with the teacher and peers about reading.

3. After 5 years of implementation, consider using a time-series analysis of extant student reading achievement data to determine whether correlations exist between student achievement in reading and participation in the ARC program. While it is impossible to isolate ARC as a variable affecting student achievement in reading, after 5 years of implementation at six elementary schools, time-series analysis could help provide some quantitative estimate of the program's influence. Time-series analysis allows for variability in some of the assumptions in the ARC logic model—adequacy of staffing, quality of instruction, fidelity to curriculum, learner characteristics—while still estimating programmatic impact. By taking periodic measurements of a variable over time, the time-series analysis is able to take into consideration prior observations that likely influence current and future observations (Linden, Adams, & Roberts, 2004).

Summary

Teachers and parents at Baker City Elementary perceive the ARC program to have benefitted participants in overcoming reluctance to read, expanding their vocabularies, increasing their self-confidence in and stamina for reading, and strengthening social relationships at school. It is recommended that the program continue in its current form with a few adjustments to enhance student self-efficacy in reading and supports at home for the continued development of good habits and dispositions toward reading. One barrier to the program's sustainability is teacher retention. Several options should be explored to help retain teachers, such as shortening the program somewhat and providing additional resources and timesaving measures during the school day for

teachers. If those incentives do not prove adequate, the program should shift its focus to very early intervention, assigning interested teachers to groups in K-2, where fostering a love of reading and solidifying habits that promote reading growth, are likely to have the greatest impact on future success in reading.

APPENDIX A

Student Reading Assessment Data for All ARC Participants
Fall 2016-2017 and Fall 2017-2018

		Fall 16-17 Data				Fall 17-18 Data			
16-17 participant	17-18 participant	**Grade Level**	**AIMS WCPM**	**Guided Reading Level**	**PALS Summed Score**	**Grade Level**	**AIMS WCPM**	**Guided Reading Level**	**PALS Summed Score**
					benchmark: 29			***benchmark: C/D***	***benchmark: 41***
	x	K	n/a	n/a	38	1	n/a	A	50
	x	K	n/a	n/a	36	1	n/a	A	46
	x	K	n/a	n/a	45	1	n/a	B	37
	x	K	n/a	n/a	43	1	n/a	E	71
	o	K	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	C	66
	x	K	n/a	n/a	36	1	n/a	A	33
	o	K	n/a	n/a	53	1	n/a	F	60
	x	K	n/a	n/a	42	1	n/a	E	63
	x	K	n/a	n/a	55	1	n/a	C	52
	x	K	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	C	42
	x	K	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	D	60
	x	K	n/a	n/a	34	1	n/a	A	46
	o	K	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	D	62
	o	K	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	B	35

		16-17 Data				17-18 Data			
16-17 participant	17-18 participant	Grade Level	AIMS WCPM	Guided Reading Level	PALS Summed Score	Grade Level	AIMS WCPM	Guided Reading Level	PALS Summed Score
Benchmarks				***C/D***	***41***		***35***	***I/J***	***35***
x	x	1	n/a	A	28	2	58	G	52
x	x	1	n/a	COW	35	2	62	K	50
x		1	n/a	COW	18	2	11	E/F	18
	x	1	n/a	A	47	2	37	J	54
o		1	n/a	A	40	2	n/a	n/a	n/a
	x	1	n/a	D	59	2	26	J	48
x	x	1	n/a	COW	27	2	21	G	34
	x	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	28	H	45
	x	1	n/a	n/a	23	2	8	G	16
x		1	n/a	C	56	2	45	J/K	57
o		1	n/a	E	64	2	87	L/M	57
	x	1	n/a	D	58	2	31	J/K	48
x		1	n/a	C	52	2	15	G	23
x	x	1	n/a	C	65	2	24	J	42
o		1	n/a	C	46	2	13	G	21
x	x	1	n/a	B	47	2	54	J	45
x		1	n/a	C	58	2	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		1	n/a	COW	md	2	n/a	n/a	n/a
	x	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	53	J/K	51
o		1	n/a	n/a	57	2	n/a	n/a	n/a
	x	1	n/a	n/a	48	2	47	J/K	45
o		1	n/a	A	37	1	n/a	n/a	n/a

		16-17 Data				17-18 Data			
16-17 participant	17-18 participant	**Grade Level**	**AIMS WCPM**	**Guided Reading Level**	**PALS Summed Score**	**Grade Level**	**AIMS WCPM**	**Guided Reading Level**	**PALS Summed Score**
Benchmarks			***35***	***I/J***	***35***		***38***	***M***	***54***
	x	2	n/a	n/a	40	3	42	J	60
x		2	43	E	36	3	78	M	61
	o	2	md	md	30	3	40	J	53
x	x	2	63	H	41	3	87	P	70
x		2	59	H	46	3	66	M	61
x	x	2	38	I	35	3	48	M	59
	x	2	8	E	16	3	71	P	74
x		2	40	I	41	3	86	M	73
x		2	21	F	34	3	62	J	63
x		2	28	E	24	3	24	F	45
x	x	2	22	E	28	3	40	F	40
x		2	75	K	41	3	149	Q	73
x		2	71	J	35	3	73	P	57
x	x	2	42	E	42	3	70	J	65
x	x	2	61	I	50	3	85	J	60
x	x	2	32	I	52	3	62	M	76
	x	2	n/a	n/a	36	3	42	F	36
	x	2	n/a	n/a	32	3	72	M	61
	x	2	18	E	34	3	36	M	55
	x	2	12	C	21	3	41	J	52

		16-17 Data				17-18 Data			
16-17 participant	17-18 participant	Grade Level	AIMS WCPM	Guided Reading Level	PALS Summed Score	Grade Level	AIMS WCPM	Guided Reading Level	PALS Summed Score
Benchmarks			***38***	***M***	***54***		***58***	***P***	***65***
x		3	58	md	43	4	70	J	61
x	x	3	85	K	48	4	100	Q	79
x	x	3	96	md	56	4	103	P	81
o		3	md	md	md	4	n/a	n/a	n/a
x	x	3	50	md	52	4	59	J	59
x	x	3	72	md	40	4	77	N	52
x		3	95	md	57	4	103	N	85
o		3	94	md	54	4	126	Q	83
x	x	3	19	md	46	4	41	N	66
x		3	111	K	69	4	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		3	95	md	56	4	111	P	69
x	x	3	88	K	42	4	99	Q	68
Benchmarks			***58***	***P***	***65***				
x		4	120	O	90	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		4	71	M	74	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
o		4	121	P	95	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		4	184	Q	90	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		4	103	P	93	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		4	119	P	81	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		4	99	O	79	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		4	112	N	81	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		4	36	I	37	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		4	79	M	85	5	n/a	n/a	n/a
x		4	86	P	74	5	n/a	n/a	n/a

Note: x = participated in ARC for the full academic year; O = participated in ARC for a partial academic year; blank = did not participate that academic year; n/a = not assessed; md = missing data; yellow highlight = participated for two full academic years.

APPENDIX B

Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Thank you for taking the time this afternoon to speak with me about the ARC program at our school. You were selected to participate based on at least one year of experience teaching ARC to students of the same grade level as your regular classroom assignment. This is important because I want to gain your insights and perceptions about the impact of the program on students as readers and writers in your grade level. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. I am seeking the range of perspectives that can emerge from your varying experiences, so please feel free to share your point of view, even if it differs from that of others you may hear. Feel free to engage in conversation with one another about the questions. I am here to listen, ask questions, and make sure that there's equity of voice. Your responses will become part of my doctoral research on ARC program outcomes for our school, and in aggregate, will likely be shared with division leadership. Our conversation today should take no more than one hour. I am audio-recording our session for transcription and analysis, and will provide a transcription to each of you to verify accuracy. Please note that all of your responses will remain confidential, and identifying information will be redacted from the transcript. You may withdraw from this interview at any time without penalty.

Before we begin, I'd like to ask that you maintain several norms for this conversation. Two of them come directly from our staff norms, and the other two are particular to this research exercise:

- Speak your truth. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Listen fully & seek clarification, if needed.
- Avoid identifying yourself or others by name. You may refer to them instead as "a student," "an administrator," or "a teacher."
- In order to maintain group confidentiality, what is said in the group should remain in the group. Please do not share or discuss ideas or information from this session with others.

Interview Questions:

1) In which years did you teach an ARC group, and which grade?
2) Think back to when the idea of ARC was first introduced to our staff. What were your initial impressions?
3) What made you decide to teach an ARC group?
4) What, in your mind, are the goals of ARC?
5) What benefit, if any, have you noticed that ARC has had on students' receptive and/or expressive vocabulary?
6) What is your perception regarding the impact of the program on students' reading stamina?
7) To what extent have you noticed a change in students' willingness to persist at challenging reading tasks over the course of ARC?

8) To what extent have you noticed students responding positively to appropriately challenging work in literacy, either during ARC or the regular school day?
9) How would you characterize students' confidence in reading as a result of participation in the ARC program?
10) What kind of goal-setting in reading have you noticed students engaged in during ARC or as a result of ARC in the regular classroom?
11) What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) resulted from this pilot program?
12) Is there anything else we should have talked about but didn't?

APPENDIX C

Parent Interview Protocol

Project: A Program Evaluation of an After-School Reading Intervention Program in a Small Urban Elementary School

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place: Principal's Office (phone interview)

Interviewer: Erin Kershner

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee: Parent of _____ (grade level student) ARC participant

Thank you for taking the time this afternoon to speak with me about the ARC program at our school. You were selected to participate because your child has completed two years of the ARC program. This is important because I want to gain your insights and perceptions about the impact of the program on your child. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Please feel free to share your point of view, even if it may not be complementary of the program in some way. Your responses will become part of my doctoral research on ARC program outcomes for our school, and in aggregate, will likely be shared with division leadership. Our conversation today should take no more than 30 minutes. I am audio-recording our session for transcription and analysis, and will provide a transcription to you to verify accuracy. Please note that all of your responses will remain confidential, and identifying information will be redacted from the transcript. You may withdraw from this interview at any time without penalty.

[Confirm that I have received the consent form ahead of the interview.]

[Turn on the digital recorder and test it.]

Do you have any questions before we begin?

<u>Interview Questions:</u>
1) What grade is your child currently in?

2) Think back to when ARC was first introduced to you. What were your initial

thoughts about it?

3) Why did you decide to have your child participate in ARC?

4) What impact do you think the program has had on your child's enjoyment of reading?

5) How would you describe your child's confidence in his or her reading ability?

6) To what extent do you think the ARC program has affected his or her confidence in reading?

7) How willing is your child to come to school every day? On ARC days?

8) What did your child say he or she liked/disliked about ARC?

9) What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) resulted from this pilot program?

10) Is there anything else we should have talked about but didn't?

[Thank the individual for his or her cooperation and participation in this interview. Assure him or her that you will provide a transcript of the interview and the final research product. Ask if he or she would be willing to participate in a follow-up parent focus group.]

APPENDIX D

Most Significant Change Parent Focus Group Protocol

Thank you for taking the time this afternoon to speak with me about the ARC program at our school. You were selected to participate because your child has completed two years of the ARC program and you have agreed to join this group of parents to discuss changes you've noticed in your children as a result of their participation in ARC. This is important because I want to gain your insights and perceptions about the impact of the program on your child. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Please feel free to share your point of view, even if it differs significantly from that of others in the group or is not complementary to the program in some way. Your responses will become part of my doctoral research on ARC program outcomes for our school, and in aggregate, will likely be shared with division leadership. Our conversation today should take no more than one hour. I am audio-recording our session for transcription and analysis, and will provide a transcription to you to verify accuracy. Please note that all of your responses will remain confidential, and identifying information will be redacted from the transcript. You may withdraw from this interview at any time without penalty.

There is only one question for this focus group: During the last two years, in your opinion, what do you think was the most significant change that took place in your child's attitudes or habits about reading as a result of participating in ARC?

Each participant will be asked to share his or her response to that question. Follow-up questions may be asked by me or by members of the group as you share your perceptions.

After each participant has shared, we will go through a process of selecting what the group feels is the most significant change from among the stories we've heard.

Before we begin, I'd like to ask that you maintain several norms for this conversation:

- Speak your truth. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Listen fully & seek clarification, if needed.
- Avoid identifying yourself or others by name. You may refer to them instead as "my child," "an administrator," or "a teacher."
- In order to maintain group confidentiality, what is said in the group should remain in the group. Please do not share or discuss ideas or information from this session with others.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

APPENDIX E

Parent Participant Informed Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study involving parents whose children have been a part of the ARC program for two years. The purpose of this study is to gain teachers' and parents' perspectives on the benefits of the program for specific student behaviors and skills linked to self-efficacy and achievement in reading.

As a participant, I understand that my participation in the study is purposeful and voluntary. Participants were selected to represent individuals whose children have participated in the ARC program for the last two years. I understand that approximately 17 parents will be selected to participate in this study.

I understand that I will be expected to participate in one (1) semi-structured, phone interview and one (1) semi-structured focus group interview related to my perspectives on the impact of the ARC program on my child's reading habits and general feelings about school.

I understand that the interviewer has been trained in the research of human subjects, my responses will be confidential, and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study. I understand that the data will be collected using an audio recording device and then transcribed for analysis. Information from the audio recording and transcription will be safeguarded so my identity will never be disclosed. My true identity will not be associated with the research findings.

I understand that there is no known risk or discomfort directly involved with this research and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time. I agree that should I choose to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the study that I will notify the researcher listed below, in writing. A decision not to participate in the study or to withdraw from the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher, the College of William and Mary generally or the School of Education, specifically.

I understand that in return for my participation in both interviews, I will be provided with a $20 gift card. I understand that childcare and food will provided during the focus group interview.

If I have any questions or problems that may arise as a result of my participation in the study, I understand that I should contact Erin Kershner, the researcher at 434-760-6550 or ekershner@email.wm.edu, Dr. Michael DiPaola, dissertation chair at 757- 221-2344 or mfdipa@wm.edu, or Dr. Tom Ward, chair of EDIRC, at 757-221-2358 or EDIRC-L@wm.edu.

My signature below signifies that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have received a copy of this consent form, and that I consent to participate in this research study.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of Researcher Date

Teacher Participant Informed Consent Form

I,_____ , agree to participate in a research study involving teachers who have been instructors in the ARC program. The purpose of this study is to gain teachers' and parents' perspectives on the benefits of the program for specific student behaviors and skills associated with self-efficacy and achievement in reading.

As a participant, I understand that my participation in the study is purposeful and voluntary. Participants were selected to represent individuals who have taught students in the ARC program at the same grade level as their classroom teaching assignment. I understand that approximately nine teachers will be selected to participate in this study.

I understand that I will be expected to participate in one (1) semi-structured, focus group interview related to my knowledge and implementation of ARC as well as Tier 1 classroom instruction.

I understand that the interviewer has been trained in the research of human subjects, my responses will be confidential, and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study. I understand that the data will be collected using an audio recording device and then transcribed for analysis. Information from the audio recording and transcription will be safeguarded so my identity will never be disclosed. My true identity will not be associated with the research findings.

I understand that there is no known risk or discomfort directly involved with this research and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time. I agree that should I choose to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the study that I will notify the researcher listed below, in writing. A decision not to participate in the study or to withdraw from the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher, the College of William and Mary generally or the School of Education, specifically.

If I have any questions or problems that may arise as a result of my participation in the study, I understand that I should contact Erin Kershner, the researcher at 434-760-6550 or ekershner@email.wm.edu, Dr. Michael DiPaola, dissertation chair at 757- 221-2344 or mfdipa@wm.edu, or Dr. Tom Ward, chair of EDIRC, at 757-221-2358 or EDIRC-L@wm.edu.

My signature below signifies that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have received a copy of this consent form, and that I consent to participate in this research study.

_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Researcher	Date

APPENDIX F

Checklist for Focus Group Interviews

Advance Notice
____ Contact participants by phone two weeks (or more) before the session.
____ Send each participant a letter confirming time, date, and place.
____ Give the participants a reminder phone call prior to the session.

Logistics
____ The room should be satisfactory (size, tables, comfort, sound, etc.).
____ Arrive early.
____ Check background noise so it doesn't interfere with tape recording.
____ Have name tents for participants.
____ Place a remote microphone on the table.
____ Place the audio recorder off the table.
____ Bring back-up audio recorder and power source.
____ Plan topics for small-talk conversation.
____ Seat experts and talkative participants next to the moderator.
____ Seat shy and quiet participants directly across from the moderator.
____ Serve food.
____ Provide childcare.
____ Bring enough copies of focus group questions for each participant.
____ Bring enough copies of incentives for each participant and receipt form.

Moderator Skills
____ Practice introduction without referring to notes.
____ Practice questions. Know the key questions. Be aware of timing.
____ Be well rested and alert.
____ Listen. Are participants answering the question?
____ Know when to probe for more information and when to move on.
____ Avoid head nodding.
____ Avoid verbal comments that signal approval.
____ Avoid giving personal opinions.

Immediately After the Session
____ Check to see if the audio recorder captured the comments.
____ Prepare a brief written summary of key points as soon as possible.
____ Send follow-up thank-you notes to participants.

Adapted from M. A. Casey and R. A. Krueger. (2000). *Focus groups* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

APPENDIX G

Fall 2017 Staff Survey Items Related to Propriety Standards

Full Results of Admin Survey can be found here.

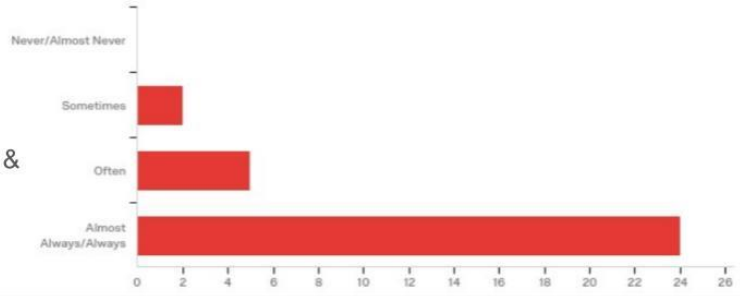
Is honest. Administrator's actions match the shared values of the staff. Honoring commitments and agreements, truthfulness and accepting responsibilities are the norm.

Is open. Administrator shares information and decision-making as appropriate. All ideas are considered and valued.

Is reliable. Administrator is committed to all staff and students. Administrator is dependable and consistent in all interactions.

Is competent. Administrator demonstrates their ability to perform tasks to a high standard.

Fall 2017 Admin Survey Highlights: Teacher Learning & Development in a Trusting & Caring Environment



Full Results of Admin Survey can be found here.

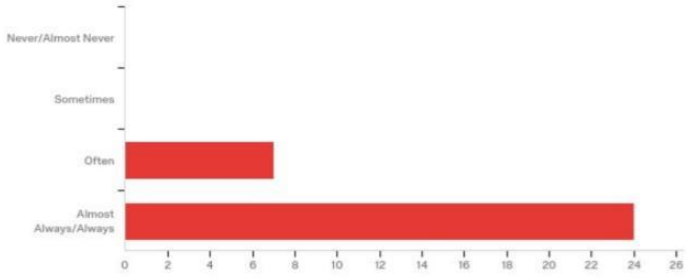
Keeps instruction and students at the forefront of everything by participating in PLC meetings (periodically, per [redacted] directive 2017), EIT meetings, PBIS meetings, and other team and individual meetings.

Uses frequent walk-throughs to give honest, constructive, supportive feedback and praise on lessons, observed practices and student behavior.

Provides a safe environment to listen and collaboratively problem solve as needed by maintaining an open-door policy, listening without judgement, and modeling positive nonverbal cues.

Maintains [redacted] Canvas site with up-to-date information about curriculum and instruction at the school, division and the state levels.

Fall 2017 Admin Survey Highlights: Curriculum & Instruction Oversight



APPENDIX H

Sample Leadership Team Agenda Heading with Emphasis on Open Dialog

Leadership Team Meeting
March 22, 2018
Room 206

2017-2018 Staff Norms

In order to create the working environment that will best support all of us in meeting our goals, we agree to:

- Listen fully and seek clarification even if it's uncomfortable.
- Assume good intentions.
- Put students front and center.
- Stick to times & designated outcomes of meetings, avoiding sidebars.

DESIRED OUTCOMES: *By the end of this meeting we will be able to*

- ***Provide initial feedback on this year's SLCs and articulate a plan for soliciting feedback from the whole staff.***
- ***Articulate a revised or new norm, if necessary, to promote open dialog and exploration of issues.***
- ***Share steps that PLCs have taken since our last meeting to learn from one another.***
- *List items that need to be addressed before the end of the school year.*

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EXPERIENCE

2011-present	School Leader in Virginia
2008-2011	Principal Wiley International Studies Magnet Elementary School Wake County Public School System, North Carolina
2006-2008	Human Resources Senior Administrator Wake County Public School System, North Carolina
2003-2006	Assistant Principal Estes Hills Elementary School, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
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2000-2003	Summer Institute Leadership Roles Teach For America, Houston, Texas
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