

The Balkanization of the High School Reading Specialist: Searching for an Identity

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THE BALKANIZATION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL READING SPECIALIST:
SEARCHING FOR AN IDENTITY

by

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ABSTRACT
THE BALKANIZATION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL READING SPECIALIST:
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Nancy L. Stevens, B.Ed., B.B.A., M.Ed., M.A.

Marquette University, 2010

There is a lack of research on how Wisconsin's high schools are addressing the literacy needs of their students. State Statute 118.015 requires a district reading specialist, but there has been very little research done on compliance; therefore, the first phase of the study was to collect and analyze both demographic and descriptive data via a survey to determine compliance with the Statute, focusing specifically on the secondary level. It is argued that a careful, in-depth study on the role of the secondary reading specialist is needed to understand the current use of professionals in this role. While there is a dearth of research on the role, the research that does exist demonstrates the lack of consistency in role definition. Thus, the second phase of this research was to construct a case study of the role of a reading specialist, Donna, in the context of the high school. The goal was to develop a deep and rich understanding of her role.

A qualitative research design was used because the use of an inductive approach was best suited to the development of a case study. The study was conducted using the constant comparative method in which interviews and observations provided the basis for further investigation and elaboration. Key themes and sub-themes were identified through inductive analysis. Four major themes emerged. The first is the lack of compliance with State Statute 118.015. The three others are the lack of definitive licensure for the evolving role of the high school reading specialist into that of coach, the lack of clear definitions and role responsibilities, and the importance of features that distinguish high schools from elementary or middle schools, thus making them unique.

The present study explores the theoretical shift taking place in the role of the reading specialist in reading and literacy in the 21st century, from an intervention focus to a more broadly defined, schoolwide, professional development model. The results of this study indicate that this shift is resulting in a wide variety of opinions as to the direction of the role; thus, this balkanization is prohibiting a clear definition and understanding of the role of the reading specialist at the high school level. The implications of the survey and case study data for students, teachers and schools are discussed, including suggestions for future research.

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Chapter One

Adolescent Literacy and the Role of the Reading Specialist

As test scores, dropout rates, the achievement gap, and higher literacy requirements in the work place have gained increasing media attention in recent years, adolescent literacy has increasingly become the focus of reading professionals, school administrators, faculty and staff, and the wider community (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999; Rumberger, 1987; Wells, 2000).

While the use of a reading specialist at the elementary school level has long been a part of school programs, this has not been the case in many middle schools and it is even more rare at the high school level. The role of the elementary school reading specialist has been studied by researchers and scholars; accordingly, much is known about the structure and function of the role at the elementary level. However, the same does not hold true for the role of the secondary reading specialist, although professional organizations such as the International Reading Association (IRA) have given more press to adolescent literacy in recent years. Additionally, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) now includes the Striving Readers initiative, which focuses on middle and high school literacy (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Thus, there is mounting impetus for research into how schools are addressing adolescent literacy.

With increased attention directed toward adolescent literacy, the role of the reading specialist may change, suggesting further research into the role. This would be a positive development since the role of the secondary reading specialist is poorly defined and contains many inconsistencies in role definition, responsibilities, and even terminology. “Balkanization” is based on the verb balkanize, which means, “to divide

groups, areas, etc. into contending and usually ineffectual factions” (Random House, p. 159). I would assert that the role of the high school reading specialist as well as the current changes being proposed to the role, including coaching, balkanize groups of reading professionals, administrators, and scholars. While the inconsistency in the licensing, practical application, and framing of the role by school districts and individual schools can result in “pockets of excellence,” it leaves much open to interpretation, causing division among various stakeholders.

Therefore, in these fiscally challenging times, research into this role could ensure that the secondary reading specialist can be utilized in the most effective way. Such research would involve reaching as many students and faculty as possible in order to improve literacy on a schoolwide basis.

In Wisconsin, State Statute 118.015 (Appendix A) requires every district to employ a district reading specialist who is in charge of developing a K–12 reading curriculum. In practice, however, there has been wide variation in how this is carried out; it has been reported that K-5 curriculums are carefully planned, less planning is done at the 6–8 level whereas very little, if any, 9–12 curricular planning is done in reading (Blintz, 1997; Ogle, 2007).

The Wisconsin state statute requires both a district reading specialist and a K–12 reading curriculum, but there has been very little research done on how the mandates of this statute relate to the high school level. After the initial implementation years of 1980–1981, for example, I cannot find any research done on either the position or statutory requirements. The current study, then, was designed to explore the level of compliance with State Statute 118.015, specifically at the high school level. After mapping this

compliance via a survey, purposeful sampling was used to select an informant for an in-depth qualitative study of the role of a secondary reading specialist in the State of Wisconsin.

Rationale for Study

There is a lack of research on how Wisconsin's high schools are addressing the literacy needs of their students. While district reading specialists are required per state statute in Wisconsin, there is little data available as to compliance with the statute. Some high schools have literacy specialists, though the licenses and titles they hold vary greatly, indicating considerable inconsistency within individual schools. Test scores and dropout rates suggest that we are not meeting the critical literacy needs of our students; thus, research is needed in how to address these gaps in the knowledge base related to high school reading.

National/State Test Data

While test scores alone do not reflect authentic literacy, they are one accountability measure used in schools. National test scores do not reflect improvement in adolescent literacy. Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress illustrate trends on a national basis, while scores on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) are used to investigate progress, or lack thereof, in the State of Wisconsin (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2009b).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results for 12th grade showed a decline in reading scores from 1992–2005, with results remaining flat from 2002–2005 (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Further, the report notes that “There

was no significant change in the gaps between White students and their Black or Hispanic counterparts in comparison to either 1992 or 2002” (p. 6). In their discussion of achievement-level profiles, the NAEP reports the percentage of students at or above the “proficient” level in 12th grade reading as follows: 43% of white students; 36% of Asian/Pacific Islander students; 26% of American Indian/Alaska Native students; 20% of Hispanic students; and 16% of black students (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p. 7). These results suggest that changes are needed in the way schools address reading.

Statewide data from the WKCE at grade 10 reveal that 23% of students tested fell below the “proficient” category on the 2002 test, while 71% were at or above the proficient level, and 52% were in the advanced category. The number of students below proficient remained at 23% on the 2007 administration. However, the number of students in the advanced category also dropped from 52% to 41% during the same time period (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008a).

The data are even more disturbing, however, when the gap between white, black, and Hispanic students is taken into consideration. The percentage of black students scoring below proficient increased from 48% in 2002 to 55% in 2007, while the percentage of Hispanic students who scored below proficient increased from 36% in 2002 to 45% in 2007 (DPI, 2008a). The use of one specific test to determine and document student achievement is not good practice. It should be noted that the Department of Public Instruction has a note on their website advising users of WKCE data that “no single test or indicator can tell us whether students have learned everything that is important for students to learn” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008a).

If we assume that the Nation's Report Card test scores are a valid measure of reading success in the nation's schools, we see that the achievement gap persists despite the increased push for evidence-based instruction and strategy integration in the content areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Whether or not this is due to the resistance of content teachers to model and teach strategies, the framework used to teach in the schools, or other factors, the use of a structuralist framework where knowledge is 'neutral' is failing to reach the majority of students.

The above data suggest that current approaches are not reaching all students, and the drop in advanced proficiency levels suggests that students are not learning and/or applying higher-level reading skills. One of the reasons that current approaches may not be working is that the foundational basis of literacy at the elementary level changes in high school as content knowledge acquisition becomes the foundation of instruction. Alvermann, Phelps, and Ridgeway (2007) describe how the focus on reading and literacy not only changes, but also is ignored as students move through the grades:

Think of children in elementary schools, learning to read using narrative text. After several years with little or no instruction in reading expository text, they are expected to read high school textbooks with comprehension. (pp. 3–4)

The ability to apply higher-level reading skills and develop reading proficiency in content areas extends beyond the elementary years as the nature and purpose of reading are expanded.

Alexander (2005) has proposed a "lifespan developmental perspective" in which she identifies three stages of reading development—acclimation, competence, and proficiency/expertise (p. 2). While the detailed steps are not the focus of this research, it

is important to consider her perspective because it illustrates the importance of the continuation of reading beyond the early years:

The need for such a lifespan orientation toward reading within our educational institutions is great. Until we adopt this lifelong perspective, we continue to run the risk of turning out undeveloped, unmotivated, and uncritical readers unable to fulfill their responsibilities within a democratic society. (p. 2)

Both Alvermann et al. (2007) and Alexander (2005) provide reasons that may explain why test scores are flat or declining. I argue that research in the school setting is necessary to provide insight into how these higher literacy needs are being addressed within the high schools. Further, once we recognize the need for increased attention to literacy we must ask, “What role does the reading specialist (or other literacy professional) play in such literacy efforts?”

While much is known about reading theory, there appears to be a gap between what is known, and how it is applied at the school level, particularly in high schools.

Theory to Practice

A shift from a modernist (i.e., knowledge is viewed as neutral) to a sociocultural (i.e., knowledge is situated in context) perspective in the teaching of reading is important in bridging the gap between reading theory and its application. While social and cultural perspectives are intuitively appealing and scholars in academia are incorporating them into graduate programs, sociocultural perspectives have not filtered down to the grass roots level in the public schools. Wells (2000) states:

Without doubt, a major influencing factor is the increasing pressure of accountability for delivering a centrally determined curriculum and for increasing students' scores on standardized tests of 'basic' skills and memorized items of information. As Edwards and Mercer (1987) have argued, when there is a conflict between espoused beliefs and perceived external requirements, teachers' actual practices are likely to be swayed by the latter. It is difficult for them to

adopt innovative practices when these practices are not supported by educational administrators and by the wider community of parents and other interested stakeholders. (p. 52)

Langer (as cited in Alvermann et al., 2007) has studied the dichotomy between being literate for standardized testing purposes and being able to engage in literate thinking; they describe her differentiation of literate thinking from reading and writing as follows:

She argues vigorously against the tendency to equate literate thinking with the ability to analyze or synthesize large chunks of print, a common but uninformed notion of what it means to be literate. (p. 12)

It is important to understand that a shift in theoretical perspective is not easy to accomplish. For example, Wells (2000) asserts that despite the internal beliefs of educators toward innovative practices and more culturally relevant learning, teachers and administrators often view changes in pedagogical approaches as one more “pendulum” initiative, whose time will come and go, as with other “innovations.” Additional pressures from politicians and the public regarding standardized curriculums and testing are contributing factors. Alvermann (2002) describes what happens when the public becomes convinced that a literacy crisis exists:

Among other things, a search begins for the ‘best’ way to teach adolescents to read and study the print-based texts their teachers assign. Unfortunately, what starts out as a quest for better instruction sometimes ends up looking more like a search for the proverbial ‘skills in a box solution.’ (p. 191)

Alvermann (2002) points out that teachers are generally wary of this “one size fits all” approach to instruction, and asserts that students in today’s world need to develop multiple literacies. Current best practices support schoolwide literacy efforts focused on the complex and varied strategies readers need to be successful with difficult texts. Ogle (2007) suggests that the scaffolding and modeling required to help students achieve independence is often missing. Reading materials at the students’ instructional levels are

necessary to successful programs, as is the energy and motivation that comes from students working collaboratively. Many of these ideas are found in sociocultural approaches. For example, joining the affective and cognitive domains through the making of connections between students' lives and the content to be covered, as well as incorporating student choice into that instruction, makes learning meaningful, relevant, and purposeful (Alvermann et al., 2007; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). Working in groups, rather than working independently, is a key to sociocultural approaches; Vygotsky's theory, as it relates to education, is centered upon the learner working with a more knowledgeable person who guides the learner to extend his or her learning.

Wells (2000) contends that if Vygotsky's ideas as applied to education were to be taken as an overarching theory of human development, schooling would contribute much more to individuals and society. Referencing our history that continues to exist in our schools into the 21st century, Wells states:

Today, under the descriptors sociocultural and social constructivist, the theory that he [Vygotsky] originated is coming to have a growing influence on those who are trying to envision and enact a form of education better suited to the increasingly diverse and changing world in which we live compared to the one that we inherited from the Industrial Age of the 19th and early 20th centuries. (p. 53)

It would seem that too many of our schools are living in the world Wells (2000) suggests we "inherited" from the Industrial Age of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Initially, instruction consisted of recitation and memorization. By the 1920s, the schools were based on a business model analogous to factories, using a commodity "input-process-output" format. Both approaches have had significant and lasting effects in secondary schools. We continue to take groups of students through a program designed to take students in, channel them through twelve grades, and fit them into a core group of

classes with some options that are often decided upon based on the student's ideas for future work. This approach to education has been, and continues to be, reflected in literacy instruction (O'Brien, Stewart, & Moje, 1995). The persistence of transmission-based instruction and the focus on dissemination of content knowledge may be reasons for flat and declining test scores and the inability of high school students to acquire higher-level thinking skills. Alvermann (2002) notes:

Adolescents' evolving expertise in navigating routine school literacy tasks suggests the need to involve them in higher-level thinking about what they read and write than is currently possible within a transmission model of teaching, with its emphasis on skill and drill, teacher-centered instruction, and passive learning. (p. 201)

Because traditional approaches may be part of the problem in improving adolescent literacy, I will discuss these pedagogical approaches in high schools in the next section.

Traditional Approaches to Teaching Literacy

Traditional approaches to education in high schools have consisted primarily of teacher-directed learning in the content areas. Cuban (1984) studied classroom instruction and "how teachers taught" between 1890–1980. He notes the continued persistence of teacher-directed learning, particularly in high schools, even during the Progressive Era and again in the "alternative school/informal learning" movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Although administrators and superintendents touted the new student-centered focus in the schools during these times, Cuban maintains that the traditional mode of instruction was practiced "behind closed doors." Additionally, he notes that the higher the grade level, the more traditional and teacher-directed the instruction. The isolation of teachers at the high school level, as well as the structure of the high school, have been found by many researchers to contribute to the continuation of the "factory

model” of teaching that is, in turn, seen as a barrier to collaboration and more participatory-based pedagogies in the high school setting (Apple, 2004; O’Brien et. al., 1995; Sarason, 1996).

School districts have traditionally focused literacy efforts at the secondary level on the use of strategies in the content areas. However, this focus on strategy instruction, examples of which include “KWL,” concept mapping, and QARs (question-answer relationships) may or may not be meaningful or authentic to the students who are expected to learn and use them (Ogle, 2007; Rumberger, 1987; Santa, 2006). Alvermann, Phelps, and Ridgeway (2007) extend the point that strategies are an element in building good readers:

Readers who engage in an active search for meaning use multiple strategies, including self-questioning, monitoring, organizing, and interacting with peers. In each instance, researchers believe, it is the cognitive processing that is induced in the strategic reader—*not the strategy itself* (emphasis added)—that is responsible for promoting active reading. (p. 6)

I concur with the argument set forth by Alvermann et al. (2007). While I agree that strategies are important, students should not be led to view them as isolated tasks that they do not learn to transfer and apply flexibly to other areas of reading.

Current best practices are based on extending strategy instruction and include the use of multiple texts, evaluating text accuracy, determining authors’ point of view, and actively engaging students with the text and their peers. Ogle (2007) says that, “coordinated efforts across school departments are needed to support students’ literacy development” (p. 129). While these suggestions are promoted in the literature, the gap between theory and practice suggests that these more interactive, schoolwide approaches

are not yet widely practiced. Many reasons have been suggested for the lack of authenticity in learning.

Cuban (1984) comments on external pressures, citing content coverage, external pressures from certifying agencies, Carnegie Units, and Advanced Placement testing as some of the reasons that structural changes at the high school level are more difficult to make than those at the elementary level. While the elementary level is more flexible since the instruction is geared toward the acquisition of basic skills, as students move to the high school level, subject matter drives methodology and teachers are expected to dispense knowledge (Cuban, 1984).

The necessity to use approaches geared toward the needs of the 21st century, including the use of technology, multiple texts, collaboration among peers, and the ability to make inferences, make it imperative that we continue to work toward more participatory approaches that make learning meaningful to the diverse student population in our schools today. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2007b) organized focus groups to determine what skills students need in the 21st century. Among the necessary proficiencies, they concluded that critical thinking and problem solving, collaborative and effective communication skills, and technological proficiency are needed skills. It is clear that higher-level literacy abilities such as making inferences are needed to achieve these competencies (Moore et al., 1999). However, Moore et al. (1999) found that, while the majority of adolescents can comprehend factual information, few are able to extend and elaborate on what they have read; such activities require them to use the 21st century skills outlined above. As we progress into the 21st century, and the

requirement for advanced literacy increases, there is a need for research into the ways literacy instruction can be extended into the upper grade levels.

All this suggests that the literacy instruction needed in today's high schools requires expertise in secondary literacy, and initiatives to address literacy needs can be carried out by the use of a reading specialist. However, the dearth of research in the field regarding the role of the secondary reading specialist in the three areas identified by the IRA (2000), specifically, instruction, leadership, and assessment, limits the knowledge base that may provide access into high school classrooms. Such knowledge might be beneficial in moving forward with secondary literacy leadership and instruction.

The Need for Research

In his chapter in *Adolescent Literacy Research and Practice* entitled "The Need for Research," Michael Pressley (2004) makes several salient points about the paucity of research into secondary literacy. He concludes by asking: "What do we need to know?" His answer is very telling: "Basically, almost everything, given this history of understudy of literacy development in secondary schools" (p. 497). In addition, he points out: "Beyond this is the need for instructional research that can improve the situation" (p. 430). Pressley asserts that instructional research is needed so that we can learn what our greatest literacy needs are, and we "must do research on how to motivate teachers to teach literacy processes" (p. 430). Thus, I would argue that reading specialists are in a unique position to help expand teachers' knowledge of literacy practices. It is with this focus that I began my study of the role of the secondary reading specialist.

Study Framework

In this section I outline my study, which was designed to provide detailed knowledge on the high school reading specialist in the State of Wisconsin. Its primary purpose was to investigate the statutory requirements related to reading specialists, the terminology and definitions surrounding the role, and to explore how the role is implemented with respect to role definitions found in the professional literature; thus, I searched for an exemplary informant (i.e., one who performs the role according to the professional literature).

While Wisconsin State Statute 118.015 (Appendix A) delineates the role of the district reading specialist required in K–12 districts, the role of the high school reading specialist in individual high schools contains many inconsistencies in definition and responsibilities. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2007a) addresses the wide scope of the reading specialist position, particularly in light of the newer term “literacy coach,” for which there is no license in the State of Wisconsin at the present time. This point is particularly emphasized in the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction *Adolescent Learning Toolkit* (2007):

Although many reading specialist jobs have been expanded or redefined to include the title of literacy coach, the role of literacy coach is even more widely defined and misunderstood than that of the reading specialist. (p. 287)

It is clear from this quote that the role of the reading specialist, as well as the concept of the literacy coach, is lacking in clarity. Therefore, the focus of this study is a detailed examination of how the role is carried out in the schools. Since educators and members of the school community construct knowledge through their backgrounds in the same manner as their students, the study was conducted from a sociocultural perspective,

which means that we must acknowledge that ways of thinking and acting are influenced by social and cultural factors. Considering approaches to content instruction along with pedagogy, including the way reading is infused into the curriculum, provides insight into the relationship between theory and practice.

The use of qualitative research further enhances and enriches our understanding of literacy learning, and ways students both construct and use literacy strategies in high schools. In-depth observations and extended interviews with a secondary reading specialist, in particular, help shed light on the role of secondary reading specialists overall, and provide insight into ways that they contribute to literacy efforts in the schools.

Qualitative Research

Due to the connotation of the term, it is necessary to delve into the meaning of “evidence-based” as it is used in literacy study. The IRA (2002a) notes that, “When evaluating studies and claims of evidence, educators must not determine whether the study is quantitative or qualitative in nature, but rather if the study meets the standards of scientific research” (p. 233). I undertook a qualitative study because this research design best fit the purpose of my research, to determine the role of the high school reading specialist in the natural setting. In addition to leadership and assessment, one of the roles of the reading specialist, according to the IRA (2000), is instructional. In one of their multiple roles, reading specialists generally provide direction and support for struggling students. The IRA (2002b) addresses the use of qualitative approaches for use with these students:

Qualitative studies typically focus on small samples or on individuals and are especially valuable in helping teachers understand how particular programs or approaches affect individuals who may not represent the mainstream or average student. (p. 1)

The IRA Position Statement (2002b) on evidence-based reading instruction does point out that no single study should be used to determine program effectiveness, and that “it is the convergence of evidence from a variety of study designs that is ultimately scientifically convincing” (p. 1). Therefore, adding to the knowledge base of qualitative research, my study will contribute to understanding the role of leadership in adolescent literacy, particularly at the high school level. In the next section, I will describe my background and beliefs about reading instruction. This chapter will conclude with a detailed explanation of the problem that was explored in this study.

Researcher Identity

It is important to outline my reading philosophy and teaching background so that readers understand my potential bias toward a sociocultural approach to reading instruction and reading in the content areas, and thus, my preference for this approach to literacy at the secondary level. I have worked as a reading specialist at the elementary level for two years, and at the middle and high school levels for the past eight years. Prior to that time, I worked as a classroom teacher in grades six through nine. I also serve on the High School Reading Committee of the Wisconsin State Reading Association, and I have participated in two district staff development committees in large suburban school districts in Wisconsin. These experiences, along with my academic pursuits, have shaped my beliefs about literacy instruction.

Literature in the field of literacy provides evidence that the needs of adolescent readers are different from those of elementary readers; programs at the upper levels need to reflect these differing needs (IRA, 2000; Wisconsin State Reading Association, 1987–2007). However, research has illustrated that when programs do exist in the upper grades, they are often molded in the same manner as elementary programs. Thus, it would appear that readers in the upper grades are not receiving the instruction they need to become reflective and critical readers. My experiences with adolescent literacy confirm these observations, and have shaped my reading philosophy, which is outlined below.

My reading philosophy is based upon the experiences I have had in my own classrooms and the classrooms of others, as well as my extended study of the reading process. I see reading as a complex activity and note that there are many theories that must be considered when developing a personal reading philosophy. My perspective blends cognitive processing and social constructivism because they both recognize the importance of background experience and schema, while understanding that social and cultural backgrounds negate the concept that students build on a neutral common body of knowledge (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Graves, 2004). I believe in the importance of teachers as facilitators in content knowledge acquisition. In fact, this is an important part of their role. Thus, I argue that using sociocultural theory and understanding Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is key in instructional design. If used thoughtfully, both peer learning and collaboration can be integrated into both meaningful and authentic instruction (Graves, 2004).

I am convinced that the relationships between students and context, students and content, students and peers, teachers and students, and among colleagues all affect the nature and scope of the reading “programs” (if any) within a specific school, and at the district level. I am also convinced that the high school culture influences the infusion of literacy at the secondary level (Sarno-Tadeschi, 1991). Therefore, I would argue that not only content, but also contextual and cultural factors, need to be considered in literacy study. Thus, I believe that understanding the sociocultural framework and the effective use of a reading specialist will give teachers and administrators additional insight into teaching and learning that will help improve student achievement. My orientation toward literacy instruction in high schools is based on participatory approaches and the use of multiple texts and interpretation. To address the possibility that this orientation might distort data collection and analysis, my transcripts and analysis were reviewed with my informant ensuring that my interpretation faithfully represents her position. In the next section, I discuss the purpose of my study, and why it is needed.

Statement of Problem

Purpose

Careful, in-depth study on the role of the secondary reading specialist is needed to understand the current use of professionals in this role. The necessity of study at the secondary level is imperative due to the dearth of research on the role. The research that does exist demonstrates the lack of consistency in role definition, and the recognition that many programs are based on elementary models that are inconsistent with the needs of

secondary students. The IRA (2000), for example, suggests that the role of the reading specialist is different in the upper grades:

These specialists also serve an important role in middle schools and secondary schools. At these levels, specialists must work with content teachers to assist them in building a better understanding of the relevance of reading to their disciplines, how to use their textbooks effectively, and how to implement effective literacy strategies. These specialists need to be aware of how to help students become motivated, strategic, and independent learners. (§ 8)

Thus, the lack of research on high school reading specialists, along with the increasingly unmet literacy needs of students is seen as problematic. It is important to understand how reading is done in secondary schools. This necessitates an in-depth, qualitative study on the role of the secondary reading specialist.

The purpose of this current study was two-fold. First, I collected and analyzed both demographic and descriptive data to explore the compliance with the statute, focusing specifically on the secondary level. Second, I undertook a qualitative study at a selected site, based on an exemplary model, to provide a deep and rich understanding of the role of the secondary reading specialist in a high school in Wisconsin.

In the next chapter, I will first develop a literature review consisting of a history of literacy within the larger context of educational history, followed by effective adolescent literacy practices. I will conclude with a review of research of reading specialists at the high school level. Finally, in Chapter Three, I will detail the methodology I employed in this study.

Chapter Two Review of Literature

Despite limited research on the role of the high school reading specialist, much has been written about adolescent literacy at the middle and high school levels. Because our educational history has had an impact on the way reading is currently addressed in the schools, the historical background of literacy within the larger educational history is presented. Second, a review of the literature on effective adolescent literacy practices is provided in order to develop a connection between adolescent reading and the role of reading specialists at this level. Research suggests, for example, that the role of the administrator is a key variable in how successfully reading is integrated into the curriculum at the upper levels. Therefore, a brief review of research on administrators' perceptions and understanding of reading at the high school level is presented. Finally, the limited research that is available on the role of high school reading specialist is reviewed.

Historical Context of Literacy Development

Historical Background

If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be. (Jefferson, 1818)

Literacy has been at the foundation of American schooling from the first appearance of dame schools to our current K–12 system. Although the educational system in the United States has undergone significant changes and there is a plethora of documentation to illustrate problems in equity and excellence, the importance of literacy to a citizen's ability to function both in society and as an individual has been a

cornerstone of the educational system. In this study, I examined the current role of the secondary reading specialist. Since the structure and purpose of schooling has had a significant effect on the subsequent development of public education, including literacy, it was necessary to briefly review the history of literacy within the larger context of educational history. Venezky (1986) points out that, “the history of American reading instruction is an important but generally neglected area of curriculum history” (p. 129). Therefore, it should be noted that there are a limited number of sources used in the history section.

1600s–early 1900s.

Prior to the common schools that developed in the mid 19th century, schooling was controlled by families and churches, and was not under public control. Nonetheless, those with the ability to go to school found reading at the core of their studies. Reading the Word of God was imperative, and this provided the impetus for reading instruction. Therefore, the purpose for the earliest reading instruction was to prepare students to read the Bible so that they could interpret it without the influence of others (Smith, 1965).

As to reading methodology, evidence suggests that instruction focused on memorization of individual letters, vowels, consonants, double letters, italics, and capitals. After the basics, students moved into the study of syllables and eventually to whole words (Smith, 1965). Reading instruction was also focused on memorization and recitation of verses and rhymes (Vogt & Shearer, 2007). The earliest book, the Horn Book, was used in the Jamestown settlement in 1607, and books that followed the Horn Book included *The New England Primer* and spellers (Smith, 1965; Venezky, 1986; Vogt & Shearer, 2007).

The strong religious focus in reading instruction during the 1600s and 1700s was replaced by nationalism and moralism by the end of the eighteenth century. Reading instruction was soon aimed at pronunciation and enunciation; readings focused on the development of an appreciation for American talent and the influence of American and European history. Additional emphasis was given to oral reading and elocution, defined as expressive oral reading (Smith, 1965; Venezky, 1986; Vogt & Shearer, 2007).

As far as reading materials were concerned, *McGuffey's Readers* became popular around 1836. These books were the first well-defined graded series designed one for each grade in elementary school (Smith, 1965, p. 105). The readers were the first to emphasize the repetition of key words. No particular type of literature was represented and most content contained isolated sentences with little narrative interest. Readers were presented as a series and leveled according to difficulty. The first books focused on the alphabet, phonics, syllables and sight words. They were moralistic and painted a picture of a "white Protestant America" (Vogt and Shearer, 2007). These books included some comprehension questions. According to Venezky (1986), there is anecdotal evidence that comprehension and reading for meaning became an emphasis in instruction at this time.

In the 1880s, all students received the same instruction; the purpose was to provide a uniform experience in molding children in the American way, since preparing children for citizenship was a strong focus of education at this time. Cuban (1984) notes that, in elementary schools, textbooks had already become the teacher's primary tool and the student's main source of knowledge by the 1880s. Textbooks were used to transmit information that would be tested on examinations (Tyack, 1974). It is important to note

that the use of one textbook (along with the teacher) as the authoritative source for content dates back to this time period. One teacher taught all subjects, including reading.

Early 1900s–1920s.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, nearly all children attended elementary school and all students received the same reading instruction, which consisted of primarily recitation and memorization. Unlike elementary schools, high schools in the late 1880s were elitist institutions designed for children of the upper class (Tyack, 1974). Indications that schooling was focused on molding children for their place in the workforce were already appearing at the elementary level and high schools followed the same path. Literacy skills provided job opportunities for the literate that were unavailable to the illiterate. Likewise, the structure of the school, designed to help youth adjust to the working world, emphasized habits of punctuality, obedience, and precision.

A major change in reading instruction occurred at the turn of the century. By 1920, most reading instruction, even beginning reading, emphasized silent reading, though differences of opinion exist over the reasons for this change (National Society for the Study of Education, Committee on Reading, 1948; Smith, 1965; Venezky, 1986).

The beginnings of reading research also emerged at this time. Interest in the scientific method and intelligence testing became popular. In reading, E.B. Huey published *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, which Vogt and Shearer (2007) describe as “an influential and progressive text that examined the reading process using the scientific method” (p. 8). The scientific method, in particular, gained in popularity because the government needed a way to identify leaders and rank the members of the

armed forces. Tyack (1974) compares the scientific method used in the armed forces with its use for school purposes:

In World War I came an important breakthrough in this process of differentiation. Like urban schools, the army then faced a mass of humanity which it was expected to train and then place in different slots in a complex organization. (p. 204)

By the 1920s, schools were based on a business model in which students were “assigned” to either vocational or academic tracks in preparation for the workforce. Intelligence tests were used to track large numbers of students to determine placement. In this way, the existing “order” was perpetuated in a mechanical and efficient way (Tyack, 1974).

Specific to reading, tests that were used to determine reading comprehension and ability included Thorndike’s 1917 measure of reading comprehension, Binet’s IQ test and the *Standardized Oral Reading Paragraphs* written by Gray in 1915 (Vogt & Shearer, 2007, p. 8). These tests were among the first “scientific” tests attempting “to measure complex cognitive abilities and processes” related to reading (Vogt & Shearer, 2007).

Phonics instruction was key to reading instruction at this time; however, the issue over when and how it was to be taught is less clear. Those involved in the teaching of phonics debated between teaching synthetic phonics, where students learned the parts and then blended them into words, versus analytic phonics instruction where students learned the words and then analyzed the parts (Vogt & Shearer, 2007).

In addition to phonics, Smith (1965) notes that the term *remedial reading* came into “general usage during 1923 and 1924” (p. 191). Additionally, The National Society for the Study of Education, Committee on Reading (1948) notes that during the 1930s, reading demands grew rapidly both in- and out-of-school, and it was during this time that

the value of remedial and corrective work in reading became apparent. At this early stage, methods to address remediation lagged behind diagnosis and classroom teachers continued to teach in a whole group setting. Although the term “remedial” was used to describe efforts to help struggling readers, it consisted mainly of reteaching, and reading instruction continued to fall under the direction of the classroom teacher.

Barry (1997) studied the staffing of high school remedial reading programs in the United States since the 1920s. In the 1920s, the phrase “every teacher is a teacher of reading” became popular. It was generally accepted that each teacher who made reading assignments was responsible for the direction and supervision of the reading and study activities that were involved with remedial reading (National Society for the Study of Education, 1925). Despite the popularity of this approach, classroom teachers were less than enthusiastic. In addition, Barry states that one teacher was generally assigned the position of “remedial reading teacher,” even though every teacher was considered to be a teacher of reading. As of 1994, Barry concluded that the teaching of remedial reading at the high school level has been a case of “educational problem solving” which has yet to be completed.

1930s–1940s.

Beginning in the late 1930s, leveled readers became popular for reading instruction. These books included scripted teachers’ guides and contained contrived stories using controlled vocabulary and sight words that were based on the work of researchers such as Thorndike and Dolch (Vogt & Shearer, 2007). During the mid 1930s, the *Dick and Jane* series became popular and these readers, and many like them, were

used until the 1980s. The early readers lacked any diversity, though later readers included illustrations of children from diverse ethnicities (Vogt & Shearer, 2007).

The National Society for the Study of Education, Committee on Reading (1948) noted that an interest in reading among high school and college students appeared during the 1930s. *The Forty-Seventh Yearbook of the Society for the Study of Education* (National Society for the Study of Education, 1948) was devoted to reading in high school and college. Based on their review of literature in reading, the National Society for the Study of Education concluded:

- (1) growth in reading ability, considered as a whole, is continuous and more or less equally paced from the primary school through college;
- (2) the rate of progress varied widely among groups and individuals;
- (3) while practically all major reading attitudes and skills function from the beginning, they mature at different times;
- (4) growth in the elementary grades is most prominent in those aspects of recognition, comprehension and speed which underlie all reading activities;
- (5) growth is most prominent at the high school and college level in the more mature types of interpretation, critical reaction, and integration involved in efficient reading. (National Society for the Study of Education, 1948, p. 41)

Then, as now, reading was a necessary part of the curriculum. Today, reading continues to be a backbone of elementary school, but is often relegated to a remedial-only focus at the secondary school level. It is interesting to note that, as far back as the date of the National Society for the Study of Education (1948) publication, it was already recognized that reading instruction was needed beyond elementary school; it was also acknowledged that such instruction should not be limited to remedial instruction, but should have a schoolwide focus:

The effort made during recent years to correct the deficiencies of poor readers is only one important aspect of the problem. A basic need today is to develop a sound reading program in high schools and colleges which recognizes (1) that growth in reading is continuous, (2) that the function of guidance in reading is to start with the student at his present level of reading ability, and (3) that it should

carry him forward to higher levels of competence in harmony with his capacity and the increasing demands made upon him when reading. (p. 42)

Among other qualities of good reading programs, The National Society for the Study of Education (1948) points out many characteristics that are echoed in the current literature, including:

- a valid reading program is an all-school or college program and involves the hearty support and creative effort of all staff members;
- a valid reading program provides a wealth, variety, and range of difficulty of suitable reading materials;
- systematic guidance in reading in all content subjects;
- appropriate provision for retarded and disabled readers. (National Society for the Study of Education, 1948, pp. 58–68)

Information gathered in the late 1940s, based on surveys from the previous decade, indicated that objective tests of comprehension were used to determine the reading needs of students and separate remedial or corrective reading classes were designed for students who needed such instruction (National Society for the Study of Education, 1948; Traxler, 1945). After World War II, remedial reading teachers appeared with increasing frequency in many schools at all levels. Their presence was an effort to address the reading problems that became apparent during the war (National Society for the Study of Education, 1948). Although it is known that remedial reading teachers worked with individuals or small groups of students who experienced reading difficulties, it is unclear what type of training, if any, these individuals had.

According to Bean (2004), reading specialists first appeared during the 1930s:

The use of specialists dates back to the 1930s when they functioned essentially as supervisors who worked with teachers to improve the reading program. (p. 2)

Although reading specialists appeared during this time, the National Society for the Study of Education (1948) pointed out that there was a lack of training for many of the

individuals involved in the teaching of reading. Training, described as absent but needed, included basic competencies for all teachers, as well as additional training needed by reading teachers, reading coordinators, specialists in tests and measurements and school librarians.

According to Barry (1997), there were no courses available in reading and remedial methods. “The new, inexperienced English teacher was the one who staffed the special reading program” (Barry, 1997, p. 527). The major problem with this arrangement, of course, was the lack of training English teachers received to teach remedial reading. Moreover, the remedial reading teachers at the time were not treated with respect, which has been attributed to the lack of credentialing and education required to be placed in such a position. Evidently, while the need for people trained in reading was recognized during the 1940s, the continued lack of training led to a lack of leadership in reading.

1940s–1960s.

The National Society for the Study of Education, Committee on Reading (1948) describes the specific aims of reading at this time as “efficient silent reading in order to meet the aims of life,” and Smith (1965) describes the purpose as to “promote better understanding of current social, economic and political issues, and to insure more effective preparation for adult activities” (p. 163). Additionally, concerns over soldiers’ ability to read well enough to understand training manuals and other necessary materials resulted in increased attention to reading of informational texts in particular (Vogt & Shearer, 2007). The increased emphasis on informational text and the concept of content

area reading first appeared during World War II, and will be discussed in detail in the section entitled “Content Area Reading.”

Following World War II, with an increased interest in nationalism, immigrants were encouraged to assimilate and there was an increased focus on academics, sparked by the Cold War and the launch of the Russian satellite *Sputnik*. Additionally, there was a call for higher academic standards, including a focus on the “hard sciences.” New school construction and the passage of the National Education Defense Act provided federal funding for graduate study in mathematics, sciences, and foreign languages (Passow, 1989; Tyack, 1974). This increased emphasis on academics was reflected in the appearance of both content area reading and remedial programming.

Amid the unrest surrounding the Civil Rights Movement and the social, moral and political revolutions occurring during this decade, the debate over reading instruction continued. “In general, the public schools seemed oblivious to these social and moral phenomena, continuing to ask the same pedagogical questions, independently of the context of the times” (Vogt & Shearer, 2007, p. 13).

Phonics instruction continued to dominate reading methodology, although there was much debate over which method of phonics to use—analytic or synthetic. Publications in the mid 1950s fueled the debate over how to teach reading. The books *Why Johnny Can't Read* (Flesch, 1955) and *The Great Debate* (Chall, 1967) “divided reading professionals into two camps: those advocating synthetic phonics and those advocating more holistic and analytic methods of phonics instruction” (Vogt & Shearer, 2007, (p. 10). This debate continued and laid the foundation for many researchers to investigate the reading process in the 1960s and 1970s.

The debate over phonics instruction continued into the 1960s and 1970s, resulting in increased research into the “linguistic foundations of the reading process” (Vogt & Shearer, 2007, p. 11). These research studies resulted in several new methods of reading instruction, including programmed reading with its emphasis on sequential instruction. Some of the new approaches included reading machines, like the tachistoscope (a machine used to promote reading speed and rhythmic reading), color-coding of text, scripted teacher manuals, and other specific, programmatic approaches. According to Vogt and Shearer (2007):

The intent of these methods and programs was to provide beginning readers with consistency, explicit instruction, a great deal of practice in decoding, and the gradual introduction of texts that contained the specific linguistic elements that were being taught. (p. 12)

While teachers continued to focus on phonics, they became aware of a problem: children were not understanding what they were reading. As a result, specific skills required for comprehension were identified, including the ability to identify main ideas and supporting details, make generalizations, identify the sequence of events, and compare and contrast elements in a given reading. It was during this time that basal readers made their appearance:

The primary instructional materials during the 1970s and 1980s were basal reading programs and they included leveled readers, phonics activities, and a great deal of comprehension skill practice, usually found on the pages of the accompanying workbooks. The programs also included highly structured, detailed teacher’s guides with different lesson plans for each of the three instructional groups (high, average, low). The fallout from the political and cultural revolution of the earlier decade fostered an attitude of conservatism that was manifested in instructional materials designed for schools. (Vogt & Shearer, 2007, p. 13)

Problems resulting from the widespread use of basal readers included static ability grouping, illustrated by Stanovich’s (1986) “Matthew Effect,” which identified the

pitfalls of being in the “low group,” (i.e., the rich get richer, the poor get poorer phenomenon). There was an overabundance of narrative text, resulting in a lack of exposure to and instruction in expository text. The activities in these books (e.g., end-of-story questions) were designed to assess comprehension, but actual comprehension instruction was lacking.

Content area reading.

Content area reading received attention because it is directly related to comprehension of informational reading and achievement in the subject areas. During and after World War II, Artley’s (1968) review of research revealed that vocabulary and reading comprehension were the most closely related to reading achievement in high school. Meanwhile, Krantz (as cited in Artley, 1968) studied the relationship of reading skills and abilities in elementary school to predicted success in content area reading in high school. Although this research was based on the elementary level, this study illustrates the importance of vocabulary and reading comprehension, which only increases in importance in high school. Artley (1968) summarizes Krantz’ findings as follows:

Each area of subject matter did require the use of certain skills more or less specialized to that area and, as a result, indicated that the development of reading ability specific to a given content area was highly important to pupil achievement. (p. 10)

Despite the emphasis on comprehension, teachers resisted the concept of “content area reading” instruction within their classes. In researching this topic, Catterson (as cited in Artley, 1968) found that content teachers felt that they were already burdened

with their content, and that adding the teaching of reading to their load was too burdensome. According to Catterson:

The current need was not for more subject matter teaching, but a kind of teaching that helps the learner develop a more effective approach to learning. This was not *something* to teach, but a *way* to teach ‘...a way of teaching which advances not only the student’s knowledge of subject matter but his ability to learn other subject matter independently and at will. The aim, then, is to unify knowledge learning and the skills of acquiring knowledge’. (as cited in Artley, 1968, p. 104)

Catterson’s work suggested the need for reading professionals. With proper training, they would be able to provide guidance to content teachers. Other studies also reported concerns over the lack of training and guidance to teach reading or incorporating it into the content areas.

McGinnis (1961) conducted a study on the training of high school teachers in Michigan to deal with reading. Interestingly, her results reflected many concerns raised by teachers today: while the majority of teachers indicated they were taught in college courses that reading skills could be improved, most indicated that they were not taught how to improve them. Most learned that there would be a wide range of reading abilities in their classes, but they were not shown how to adjust their materials and procedures to accommodate them. According to McGinnis (1961), less than one-third of the pre-service teachers were shown how to teach their students to read a chapter effectively. Most telling is that the teachers felt their pre-service training was less than adequate to deal with the reading issues they would be faced with in their classrooms.

It is during the 1950s and 1960s that we see the first research on the supervision and administration of secondary reading programs. Simmons, for example, reports on a five-state survey he conducted that reveals that those in leadership roles had no formal training in the teaching of reading (as cited in Artley, 1968, p. 104). Of those who did

have formal training, only 10% had courses specific to secondary reading. He found that only 5% reported that the person responsible for the reading program held a reading specialist's certificate. He discovered that most of the people responsible for directing the reading programs were the English teachers and the principals. He also addressed the issue so often raised regarding conflating of the teaching of reading and the teaching of English:

Actually, the English teacher is, generally speaking, quite limited in his approach to the teaching of reading. In spite of the often repeated 'Every teacher a teacher of reading' cliché, this study gives potent support to the need for trained and qualified reading supervisors who can give adequate help to the classroom teacher so that he may in truth become a teacher of reading. (as cited in Artley, 1968, pp. 104–105)

An interest in having qualified reading personnel is a recurring theme in the literature. Artley (1968) references a study by Stanchfield (1964) in which she discusses the functions and responsibilities of the reading specialist. She found:

Reading specialists are responsible for making evaluation surveys and, on their basis, developing new and better programs. They work with the classroom teacher to improve the quality of instruction, they organize in-service workshops and conferences; they counsel individual students and confer with parents. (p. 100)

Stanchfield (as cited in Artley, 1968) also found that the organization of reading programs fell into three basic patterns: basic reading classes for students of "average intelligence," reading improvement classes for students of at least average intelligence who fell one or more years behind, and power reading for those above average in capacity and reading ability.

1960s–1980s.

As the social and political turbulence of the 1960s emerged, the initiatives of the 1950s to increase attention on academics and provide funding for studies in the hard sciences faded into the background (Passow, 1989; Tyack, 1974).

“The War on Poverty” resulted in a variety of compensatory programs designed to “close the gap” between white children and minorities; the first major federal legislation directed for compensatory education was the “Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965” (Passow, 1989).

While much of the research on Title I programs specifically, and reading in general, has been directed to the elementary level, there is some research that focuses on the secondary level. According to Artley (1968), “only a few status studies of secondary school reading have been reported during the last decade other than those on the local level, and even on that level, there was a paucity” (p. 3). Nevertheless, he reviewed the limited research that can be used to obtain an understanding of trends and practices during this time period.

Artley (1968) considered both developmental (i.e., schoolwide) and remedial programs. Data were gathered from a number of regional and state surveys. Artley (1968) concluded that “one needs to be cognizant of the type and quality, for a reading program might be little more than one in name only” (p. 37).

Research on literature on instructional methods in reading revealed a drop in reading growth as students moved up in grade level. A study conducted by Morrison and Perry (1959) indicated a drop in seventh and eighth grade. They cited ineffective teaching of reading at the higher-grade levels as a major contributing factor for the drop:

In particular, emphasis on purposeless oral reading and mechanical phonics to the neglect of meaning were noted. There seemed to be a tendency for the teachers to ‘assign work rather than teach.’ The classes were taught as a whole group rather than as individuals with particular needs, and there was an absence of the functional use of reading. (as cited in Artley, 1968, p. 29)

1980s–1990s.

Beginning in the 1980s, a renewed interest in academic rigor appeared, and with it, a resurgence of the business model of education. Despite some legal and political successes in the 1960s and 1970s, the stage for schooling in the 1980s returned to the “corporate model” in the wake of the 1983 publication *A Nation at Risk* (Eisner, 2002; Labaree, 1997). This document warned the nation that the schools were not adequately preparing graduates to compete in the global marketplace. Specifically, it argued that schools were failing to achieve high levels of academic performance in their graduates.

In the field of reading, there was a movement away from teaching reading as a set of skills. Vogt & Shearer (2007) describe the changes at this time as follows:

During the next two decades (1980s, 1990s) theorists and researchers from across the fields of psychology, linguistics, and education explored how readers think about text, how they make connections while they read, and how they ultimately construct meaning. (p. 13)

The convergence of various fields of study into reading research resulted in a new emphasis on making meaning from text, and led to a holistic approach to the teaching of reading. The document, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, was very influential at the time and it also contributed to the interest in a holistic approach to developing readers (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). These provided direction and support for what was to become the whole language movement. Vogt and Shearer (2007) describe this movement as follows:

For about a ten-year period in the United States (mid-1980s to the mid-1990s), there was a decreased emphasis on teaching discrete skills, whether phonics/decoding or comprehension. (p. 14)

During this time, the use of tradebooks for instruction flourished. The whole language movement fell out of favor in the mid 1990s when performance on standardized test scores dropped and research indicated the importance of explicit phonics instruction in learning to read, particularly for struggling readers.

Specific to secondary reading in the 1980s, reading was based on a cognitivist framework and the emphasis was on reading to learn. Strategy instruction and infusing literacy into the curriculum became major efforts in the schools. Alvermann and Moore (1991) studied secondary reading practices in the 1980s and found that the focus was on a combination of lecture, textbook assignments (including the answering of questions), and the integration of other communication forms. Reading was characterized as being in a supportive, not dominant, role. Alvermann and Moore reviewed research from this time period that documents reading as an auxiliary source of subject matter. In other words, the text could be substituted by lecture or lecture–discussion in the classroom. It was noted that variations exist, so that sometimes textbooks were the primary source of information, and sometimes teachers were the primary source. Regular reading practices in school were characterized by Alvermann and Moore (1991) as follows:

1. Textbooks predominate.
2. Teachers emphasize factual textual information.
3. Teachers govern students' encounters with print. (p. 968)

The cognitivist trend in research during the 1980s reflects what was occurring in classroom instruction, as noted above.

Bean (2000) distinguishes between the research reviewed for the 1991 volume of the *Handbook of Reading Research, Volume II*, and the most recent publication, *Volume III* as follows:

Research reviewed for the 1991 volume reflected a quest for teaching and learning strategy validation, typically through experimental and quasi-experimental studies. That line of research has now given way to qualitative studies in content area classrooms aimed at understanding sociocultural underpinnings in teaching and learning. (Bean, 2000, p. 629)

While the above quote suggests a move in a positive direction, Bean (2000) points out that there remain significant gaps in our knowledge base.

Late 1990s–present.

The beginning of this period is characterized by several research syntheses, many of which were federally funded and focused on early literacy. Nevertheless, they have had an impact on adolescent literacy, and the findings and principles from these syntheses are woven into the next section, “Effective Adolescent Literacy Practices.” Vogt and Shearer (2007) point out that while these reports were “embraced by legislators and the press...there were also thoughtful, scholarly, and highly critical responses to them” (p. 17). This is an important point because these reports formed the basis for major reform efforts centered on improvement of early reading instruction, such as No Child Left Behind, and the related initiative, Reading First.

The early reading focus was extended to include adolescent literacy in 2005 with the authorization of Striving Readers. The U.S. Department of Education (2009) describes the goals of the Striving Readers grant as (1) raising middle and high school students' literacy levels in Title I-eligible schools with significant numbers of students reading below grade-levels, and (2) building a strong, scientific research base for

strategies that improve adolescent literacy instruction. There are many specific requirements that must be met in order to receive funding under this program, and this has led to much apprehension over the term scientifically based research:

In recent years, quantitative research has dominated policy, particularly at the federal level. There is an increasing insistence that teachers responsible for reading employ teaching methods grounded in *scientifically based reading research*. This policy is controversial and has been attacked by those who claim that it reduces the complexity of learning to read. (Walpole & McKenna, 2004, p. 46)

Research design and selection of the appropriate methodology for the research questions are frequently topics of discussion among researchers and scholars. Walpole and McKenna (2004) describe the importance of choice in methodology:

An important distinction in methodology is whether the researcher has chosen a qualitative or a quantitative approach. Qualitative methods are useful for describing processes and interactions that are difficult to reduce to a set of numbers. (p. 46)

The debate over what constitutes scientifically based research continues, but the use and acceptance of qualitative research methodologies continues to increase as of this writing.

Summary

Although the most recent literature on adolescent literacy holds promise that changes are slowly being made to move away from passive pedagogical approaches, several have noted that many schools in the 21st century continue to be based on the factory model despite claims to the opposite. This is evidenced by the continuation of transmission approaches to instruction, the continuation of the textbooks and teachers as the primary sources of information, and a lack of critical pedagogy in instruction (Alvermann, 2002; Bean, 2000; Santa, 2006).

It would appear that if reading specialists were used effectively they could provide leadership in literacy pedagogy and instruction to help teachers move toward more participatory approaches that better address the skills required in the 21st century. I will review literature on the present role of the reading specialist later in this chapter. Taking into consideration the substantial literature on the need for adolescent literacy, the effective practices literature, and literature on the role of administrators in literacy efforts, there is an obvious need for more research into the role of reading specialists who can provide guidance in implementing the recommendations found in this literature base.

It is evident that many of the issues addressed throughout our educational history continue to be debated today, including a developmental focus, appropriate materials for the students' reading levels, and instruction in higher-level reading skills. Many of the themes from the historical overview reappear in the next section, which describes the current knowledge base on adolescent literacy.

Effective Adolescent Literacy Practices

The Need for Adolescent Literacy

Sturtevant, Boyd, Brozo, Hinchman, Moore, and Alvermann (2006) argue that, "Literacy learning and teaching must be viewed as a seamless, continual process occurring throughout one's life" (p. x). This reflects current thinking on adolescent literacy, which is that reading is a process that begins when young children learn to decode, read fluently, and comprehend age-appropriate texts. However, it also extends into the upper grades and beyond, as the literacy tasks students and adults must complete become more difficult. While reading professionals, educational leaders and politicians

are now professing the need for adolescent literacy, there is a lack of research on the topic. Pressley (2004) maintains that there has been a “history of understudy of literacy development in secondary schools” (p. 429). Sturtevant et al. (2006) describe adolescent literacy as a “hot topic,” but they add the following comment regarding research:

Yet there is much that is not known about how to develop programs that will effectively support 6th through 12th graders in developing the advanced levels of literacy that will serve them throughout their lives. (p. xiii)

There is fragmented information available about adolescent literacy from the early part of the 20th century; however, Sturtevant et al. point out that the literature is difficult to interpret because it is often embedded in content documents, or is limited in focus to specific groups such as special education or English Language Learners. There is even less mention of the role of the reading specialist in adolescent literacy. Nonetheless, there are commonalities in the literature regarding key elements in adolescent literacy, which will be reviewed in the next section.

It is clear that additional research on adolescent literacy is needed, considering the lack of research on adolescent literacy, and the statistics on student achievement in reading and dropout rates. The National Center for Education Statistics concluded, “Overall, 10.9 percent of the 34.6 million 16-through 24-year olds in the United States were dropouts” (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, p. 1). Sarno-Tadeschi (1991) notes that after World War II, the school dropout rate was linked with low reading achievement. The organization of the high school into separate content areas, in which curriculum is presented in a fragmented way, contributes to problems with literacy initiatives on a schoolwide basis (O’Brien et al., 1995). High school culture often

undercuts efforts to ensure continued literacy development at this level. Writing about adolescent literacy and the high school culture for the IRA, Moore et al. (1999) state:

This focus on subject matter is supported by the typical organization of high schools with the faculty assigned to separate departments and the day divided among separate subjects. Many teachers come to believe that teaching students how to effectively read and write is not their responsibility. (p. 4)

Thus, students may infer that reading and writing are not important. Since reading is an integral part of the acquisition of content knowledge and writing is one way to demonstrate understanding of content knowledge, it is logical and reasonable to conclude that reading and writing are a necessary part of content instruction. There has been a renewed interest in adolescent literacy in recent years, and review of adolescent literacy practices developed the basis for the framework of my study on the role of reading specialists at the secondary level.

Research on Effective Literacy Practices

To address concerns over the difficulties in piecing together fragmented literature on adolescent literacy research, Sturtevant et al. (2006) wrote the book *Principled Practices for Adolescent Literacy: A Framework for Instruction and Policy*. They describe the purpose of their book as follows:

This book takes a step toward filling this gap by providing educators, scholars, parents, and the general public with a bridge to the knowledge base on adolescent literacy. (p. xiii)

The book is practical and informative. It provides guidelines to those who are involved with adolescent literacy through a set of eight guiding principles that are based on the collective work of literacy scholars, the literature published by various professional organizations, and research on various aspects of adolescent literacy. In addition, several

literacy scholars located middle and high school classrooms to use as models for excellent instruction, and these were used in “vignettes” as each of the recommended principles was applied in classrooms. These are valuable because they demonstrate how the principles are used in the school context.

A strength of the book is that it is comprehensive—it includes opinions and research syntheses from well-known scholars in literacy, professional organizations, and classroom teachers. It provides a bridge between the guidance in scholarly publications and classroom experience. However, a limitation of the book in organizing a schoolwide literacy program is the exclusive use of classrooms where excellent programs are already in place, which minimizes some of the factors that often make efforts to incorporate adolescent literacy into schools difficult. Some of these factors include lack of leadership, outdated pedagogical approaches, teacher resistance, and a lack of administrative support. Nevertheless, it provides a comprehensive picture of adolescent literacy that is lacking in other research.

Biancarosa and Snow (2004) co-authored the report *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*. The report was written to help address the problem of adolescent literacy, and it was specifically geared to those who scored in the bottom quartile in reading as measured by standardized achievement tests. Although the recommendations are geared to students who are in low-performing categories, the recommendations made were not designed to be implemented in remedial or pullout programs, and many of the suggestions are found in literature that address all adolescent readers, not just those labeled as struggling readers (Alvermann, 2002; Bean, 2004; Santa, 2006; Sturtevant et al., 2006). In their discussion on the need to become

literate citizens, Biancarosa and Snow (2004) point out that, “53 percent of all college students take remedial courses because they did not gain the skills they should have gained in secondary schools” (p. 8). It has been estimated that 32 percent of high school students who plan on attending college have little likelihood of succeeding in college English courses (p. 7). While their report is focused on low-achieving students, it is apparent from their discussion and statistics that Biancarosa and Snow are addressing the needs of more than struggling readers.

It should be noted that Biancarosa and Snow (2004) clearly state that the specific elements they describe should “not be seen as sufficient in themselves to address the wide range of problems experienced by older struggling readers” (p. 5). They suggest that the findings be used as a “foundation for instructional innovations” (p. 5). Because the study by Biancarosa and Snow contains broad recommendation areas and their report is often cited, I have used it as a framework for comparison to other research.

This report, which has been widely disseminated, includes the recommendations made by Biancarosa and Snow (2004) that are divided into instructional and infrastructural (also known as structural) improvements. One of the strengths of this report is that it clearly states that infrastructural changes require major reform and curricular changes that are much more difficult to achieve than instructional changes, which focus on individual learners. They note that, “The instructional improvements are unlikely to be maintained or extended beyond the original intervention classrooms if these infrastructural improvements are not in place” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004, p. 13).

The recommendations are thorough as far as the instructional and infrastructural components, and the report contains recommendations that are well-documented and

supported in other work on adolescent literacy (Alvermann, 2002; Moore et al., 1999; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Santa, 2006; Sturtevant et al., 2006). Nevertheless, there are some noticeable absences from their recommendations, and some inferences can be drawn from their discussion that raise questions about the implementation of their suggestions. These issues, which are discussed below, have an impact on literacy leadership, specifically the role of the reading specialist.

Microlevel Changes (Classroom Instruction)

Several of the elements included in Biancarosa and Snow's (2004) report are cited in other literature as key components in efforts to improve literacy at the middle and high school levels. For instance, although Alvermann's (2002) paper was prepared for a general audience, she noted that she based her report on the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) recommendations, which were also cited in Biancarosa and Snow's (2004) work. The following are the nine key instructional improvement areas recommended by Biancarosa and Snow (2004):

1. Direct, explicit comprehension instruction.
2. Effective instructional principles embedded in content.
3. Motivation and self-directed learning.
4. Text-based collaborative learning.
5. Strategic tutoring.
6. Diverse texts.
7. Intensive writing.
8. A technology component.
9. Ongoing formative assessment of students. (p. 12)

Biancarosa and Snow (2004) discuss each of these nine components in some detail, explaining specific approaches that might be included within each category. The information they present, however, does not include anything new to those in the field of

literacy. There were many general statements such as: “Too often reading and writing instruction focuses solely on literature and does not promote the transfer of the skills into the context of content-area materials,” and “Language arts teachers need to expand their instruction to include approaches and texts that will facilitate not only comprehension but also learning from texts” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004, p. 15). There are two infrastructural elements embedded in these generalizations that have been debated for many decades, which will be discussed in the next section (Macrolevel Changes) of this literature review.

Another prominent scholar, Santa (2006), describes her experiences as a reading specialist working with adolescent literacy, and extends some of the points described in the *Reading Next* report in greater detail, which highlight possible potential problem areas in the recommendations. Some of the weaknesses found in Biancarosa and Snow’s (2004) report are addressed in Santa’s (2006) research. One such component falls under Santa’s category “Direct Strategy Instruction and Teacher Modeling.” She points to the large body of research that supports strategy use and states, “Strategies such as K-W-L, concept mapping, story plans, and reciprocal teaching must become common language in our middle school and high school classrooms” (p. 468). The point raised by Santa (2006) has also been addressed by Bean (2000), in his discussion of the changing definition of content area reading. A definite strength of Santa’s (2006) discussion on strategy instruction is her qualifier about how the strategies are used in classrooms:

Yet over the years I have learned that implementing strategic teaching is not enough. Strategic instruction can be misinterpreted by both teachers and students as an organized bundle of procedures rather than as a philosophical shift in what it means to teach and learn. (p. 489)

Bean (2000) describes the historical understanding of content area reading as:

Recognition of the fact that readers require various strategies when they study particular subject areas and read many kinds of materials for different purposes. Content area reading instruction is designed to deliver those strategies. To date, the primary mission of this instruction is to develop students' reading-to-learn strategies. (p. 629)

However, in his subsequent discussion, Bean (2000) describes the way literacy research has moved from a cognitivist perspective to a more situated, sociocultural perspective. He describes how the term content area reading has changed over the last decade. Now called "content area literacy," Bean defines it as follows: "The level of reading and writing skill necessary to read, comprehend, and react to appropriate instructional materials in a given subject area" (p. 630).

While supporting Biancarosa and Snow (2004) for calling on content teachers to use explicit instruction and modeling, Santa (2006) extends her position when she confirms the use of the "literacy expert" in this effort:

As literacy experts, it is our job to promote a philosophical shift in what it means to teach high school students. Reading and writing are used as tools for learning. Process cannot be separated from content; they are one and the same. (p. 489)

An integral part of the process is teaching students how to monitor what they are reading and learn how to transfer their understanding to other subject areas.

Santa (2006) and others clearly describe the importance of metacognition in adolescent literacy learning (Alvermann, 2002; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Bransford et al., 2000; Sturtevant et al., 2006). Metacognition is one way to help students understand why they are learning these strategies and to help them see that they are more than simply worksheets or homework assignments. It helps them learn to monitor their reading and recognize when comprehension breaks down. The strategies they learn can help them know what to do when comprehension breaks down. Santa (2006) explains it clearly:

Effective strategic teaching isn't really about assigning students to take notes or about developing a concept map. Instead, it is about teaching students how to tap into a deeper understanding of themselves as proficient learners. To help them with this, teachers and students must see how principles of learning operate on their thinking. (p. 489)

Since there is so much written about the use of strategies in the content areas and the marketing of graphic organizers, it is a strength of Santa's (2006) work to extend the discussion beyond using the strategies as a passive activity that is easy to interpret as a worksheet. Santa (2006) and Bean (2004) clearly distinguish between the older "reading to learn" paradigm and the newer content area literacy with its focus on active learning and attention to contextual factors. Along with this newer focus, Sturtevant et al. (2006) expand the discussion to include technological literacy and the uses of literacy in the information age. Specifically, they include the use of literacy both within and outside of the school setting, using multiple texts, self-directed literacy, and development of critical perspectives.

Like Biancarosa and Snow (2004), Alvermann (2002) also addresses the importance of self-efficacy and student engagement with a variety of texts and she supports collaborative and participatory approaches that actively engage students. Additionally, she suggests:

Young people's literacy skills are not keeping pace with societal demands of living in an information age that changes rapidly and shows no sign of slowing. (Alvermann, 2002, p. 189)

Alvermann (2002) cites the National Reading Panel's (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) strategies as being "effective ways of teaching comprehension in the middle grades, and possibly beyond" (p. 193). While Alvermann addresses student engagement and self-efficacy in greater detail and places less

importance on independent reading, the strategies are very similar to those found in Biancarosa and Snow's (2004) report, suggesting some consistency among scholars for ways to improve student reading achievement. The focus on increased societal demands and living in the information age suggest that literacy needs are increasing among all secondary level students.

The scope of Alvermann's (2002) writing is comprehensive. She addresses all adolescents, not just struggling readers, as has often been the case. In addition to her discussion of strategies, most of which are common in the literature on adolescent literacy, Alvermann includes what she calls a "situated view" of adolescent literacy (p. 191). These include self-efficacy and engagement, demands of academic literacy, struggling readers, critical literacy and participatory approaches to instruction. While not necessary to outline in their entirety, Alvermann weaves many elements into these five themes that are described as necessary by the International Reading Association (Moore et al., 1999). Not only does she describe each component, but she differentiates between the rhetoric and academic speak so often glossed over in practice, and explains the manner in which these terms fit into practice. I found this to be one of the strongest parts of Alvermann's work. For example, she describes her definition of *critical literacy* as teaching adolescents that all texts, including textbooks, favor some viewpoints over others, and she suggests practices such as multiple readings of the same text from different perspectives as one way to help students to identify privilege in texts. Too much of the literature on reading strategies contains rhetoric about "higher-level" thinking skills, but fails to make any concrete suggestions as to what this means. Alvermann accomplishes this in her discussion. She does not, however, discuss the

persistence of single textbook use in practice, nor does she address the gap between practice and her beliefs.

Bean (2000), in his review of social constructivist dimensions of reading in the content areas, also addresses this issue in some detail. While he notes that research has moved away from cognitivist tradition to more social constructivist approaches, he notes the “continuing dominant use of single textbooks” (in practice), which serve to further center instruction on the teacher. He notes that in-service teachers tend to veer toward teacher-centered approaches, which he concludes is due to pressure to cover content quickly. Unlike others who have written about adolescent literacy, Bean (2000) addresses the gap between theory and practice, highlighting the complexities in adolescent literacy study, an element often missing in such study. The persistence of teacher-directed, cognitivist approaches was addressed in the previous section entitled “Historical Context of Literacy Development.”

One specific theme identified by Alvermann (2002) relates to pedagogy and the need for adolescents to develop higher-level thinking skills. She specifically addresses the use of participatory approaches to reading and writing as necessary to the development of such skills:

Adolescents’ evolving expertise in navigating routine school literacy tasks suggest the need to involve them in higher-level thinking about what they read and write than is currently possible within a transmission model of teaching. (p. 201)

Although more is being written about sociocultural approaches to literacy since the late 1990s, most of the literature is limited to instructional strategies, many of which are slight variations on the same theme. In addition to strategy discussion, some literature explores

the importance of participatory approaches and student engagement and relevance, but again we see the persistence of transmission-based approaches (Bean, 2000).

Another key area of discussion in Alvermann's work (2002), related to transmission approaches is the role of the text. Two important distinctions made by Alvermann (2002) are the different ways in which the teacher and the text are viewed. In transmission models, the teacher and the textbook are considered the "authority" and are viewed as "dispensers of knowledge" (p. 202). In participatory approaches, students construct meaning as they use the texts as tools to gain knowledge. Wade and Moje (2000) have also written about this difference and they describe it as follows:

In transmission classrooms, subject matter textbooks are often the de facto curriculum; in participatory classrooms, a mix of textbooks, magazines, student-generated texts, hypermedia productions, visuals, and so on are used to support and extend the curriculum. (as cited in Alvermann, 2002, p. 202)

A strength in Alvermann's (2002) work is the comprehensive nature of her work. She discusses both in- and out-of-school literacies, student engagement and involvement, and culturally responsive teaching, all factors, she argues, that need to be considered in comprehensive literacy programs. For example, she discusses ways that teachers may enable struggling readers because they "allow struggling readers to rely on them, rather than on the assigned texts, as a source of information" (Alvermann, 2002, pp. 196–197). Research has shown that content area teachers sometimes avoid assigning reading because it is too difficult for their students, thus losing out on critical instruction and practice that would help them comprehend text (Ratekin, Simpson, Alvermann, & Disher, 1985). This piece of Alvermann's work (2002) highlights the need for comprehensive, situated research because the limited studies available often focus only on struggling readers or content literacy. By contrast, what is needed is research into the ways

adolescent literacy is being addressed for all students in the upper grades. Thus, looking into the literature on macrolevel improvements is necessary since they are essential in making long-lasting, schoolwide changes (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004).

Macrolevel Changes (Structure/School Reform)

Moore et al. (1999) note, “The many dimensions of adolescent literacy are best addressed in school reform and restructuring that place the growth of students at the center of every activity” (p. 9). In support of school reform initiatives and adolescent literacy, the Commission on Adolescent Literacy (CAL) asserts: “Surface changes to schools involving scheduling and required courses are not enough to fully support adolescents’ advanced reading and writing” (Moore et al., 1999, p. 9). They expand on this belief as follows:

The CAL believes that the literacy achievement of adolescents cannot grow to new levels without changes in governmental policy. Emphasizing the achievement of early readers has not produced adolescents who read and write at high levels of proficiency. Adolescents deserve increased levels of governmental support. This includes appropriate funding for intervention services *in the upper grades, the point in most comparisons at which children in the United States perform less well* [emphasis added]. Furthermore, government can support literacy research concentrating on the upper grades where literacy proficiencies are less well understood than those at the lower grades. (p. 9)

Macrolevel improvements address changes that need to be made on a schoolwide basis if they are to make a difference, and many times changes are limited only to instructional, or microlevel, changes. One area within literacy that appears repeatedly in the literature is leadership and guidance in reading, both for struggling readers and in content area literacy. This leadership and guidance is needed not only by individual teachers, but also on a schoolwide basis.

The need for leadership in reading instruction is not new; it has been a concern since the 1940s and 1950s. Artley's (1968) review of a study by Thornton (as cited in Artley) illustrates this problem:

Several other findings grew out of Thornton's study. One was that a single teacher usually carried the entire responsibility for the program, that there was only one chance in three that she had any special training for her work, and that the chances were negligible that she did any professional reading on the subject. (p. 5)

A few years later, Applebee (1966) studied the way time was used in English classes and reported the following percentages: 52.2% of time was devoted to literature instruction, 13.5% to language, 15.7% to composition, 4.9% to speech, and 4.5% to reading (p. 275). If students were to gain knowledge on how to read not only literature, but also content area reading, it is evident that not enough time was provided for students to acquire these skills, even if the English teacher had been trained in content area reading.

The instructional improvements recommended by Biancarosa and Snow (2004) require administrative leadership and literacy leadership if they are to be instituted throughout a school. Clearly, there must be more discussion about the leadership necessary to bring these components into classrooms. Two important issues embedded in Biancarosa and Snow's work are related to their suggestion that reading and writing instruction should transfer into content areas and that the language arts teachers should expand their instruction to include text learning. This assertion appears several times in Biancarosa and Snow's writing. Their discussion of these issues, however, is incomplete. Numerous studies cite the use of English teachers as reading teachers as problematic. The argument is that English teachers do not necessarily have expertise in reading, nor do

they receive additional training in their teacher preparation in the teaching of content area literacy (Barry, 1997; Blackford, 2002; National Society for the Study of Education, Committee on Reading, 1948; Rumberger, 1987). A limitation in these studies is the recognition that English teachers are used as reading professionals, but no further study or resulting problems are discussed in any detail. The fundamental issue is the lack of leadership combined with the lack of trained reading personnel to fill the need in content literacy instruction.

Biancarosa and Snow (2004) qualify their assertions regarding adolescent literacy instruction with the caveat:

However, we do not yet possess an overall strategy for directing and coordinating remedial tools for the maximum benefit to students at risk of academic failure, nor do we know enough about how current programs and approaches can be most effectively combined. (p. 3)

Although they are targeting struggling readers, their statement illustrates the need for literacy leadership in efforts to improve adolescent literacy.

One of the ways to develop this understanding is to have leaders with the expertise share with others. More import needs to be placed on the role of the reading specialist, or other professionals with training in reading, sometimes called literacy coaches or reading coaches. Interestingly, the only reference made to a reading professional in Biancarosa and Snow's (2004) report is in their discussion of the coordination of "direct, explicit comprehension instruction," when they state: "This instruction should be coordinated with the language arts teachers, literacy coaches, and other subject-area teachers" (p. 15). Their assertion that teachers and specialists need to coordinate their instruction is important; however, their argument is incomplete because

it lacks substantial discussion on the key component of the leadership required to institute any significant changes at the school level (i.e., macrolevel changes).

It has been argued that strong instructional leaders are necessary in order to have effective literacy programs in schools (Carter & Klotz, 1991; Zipperer, Worley, Sisson, & Said, 2002). The perception and support of literacy by administrators in secondary schools has a significant effect on how it is viewed by teachers, students, and the community. Zipperer et al. (2002) state that,

Although many secondary school principals have little or no training in the teaching of reading, they are held accountable for the development, implementation, and evaluation of reading programs in their schools. (p. 3)

The idea that leadership is essential in developing or continuing to improve upon reading initiatives is nothing new. In 1948, the National Society for the Study of Education pointed out the necessity for leadership in reading efforts when it made the assertion that in addition to cooperation of all staff members, "...there must be central planning and direction" (p. 66). The topic of leadership clearly needs further attention.

The Role of the Administrator in Secondary Literacy

It is evident that the administrator plays a key role in efforts to incorporate literacy at the secondary level and that without administrative support literacy efforts will be difficult, if not impossible, to implement (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Carter & Klotz, 1991; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2005; Zipperer et al., 2002). In Santa's (2006) discussion of key factors and questions to consider for successful implementation to take place, she asserts, "The principal must be involved in every step of the process and participate in the in-services" (p. 475). This does not sound like it would be difficult; however, the literature on administrator perceptions of what

adolescent literacy involves provides evidence that gaining administrative support is not always a simplistic effort. There are many inconsistencies in terminology, not to mention the many variations in the training administrators have received in reading.

Zipperer et al. (2002) conducted survey research in the Savannah-Chatham County School District in Georgia. While the survey was distributed to principals throughout the district at all grade levels, the researchers concentrated their study on the secondary level. When principals were asked where they received their training in reading education, answers included (1) workshops, (2) a personal desire to read and learn, or (3) graduate/undergraduate classes in reading. A strong case can be made that this training is not comprehensive enough, as demonstrated by the studies cited in the instructional practices section of this review under “Effective Adolescent Literacy Practices.”

Carter and Klotz (1991) suggest that principals can be effective instructional leaders if they use their expertise to monitor instruction and provide in-service opportunities. According to Carter and Klotz, typically principals should be looking for the following items in good content instruction: (1) activation of schema, (2) preteaching of key vocabulary, (3) structured guides that isolate key ideas from subordinate points, and (4) the use of pattern guides to help students identify organizational patterns (p. 101). While these suggestions made by Carter and Klotz include some sound practices, including activation of schema and recognition of organizational patterns, some of their recommendations suggest isolated skill instruction and worksheet activities. This illustrates the need for leadership and coordination between the administrators and reading specialists. While administrative support is necessary to effect lasting,

schoolwide reform, ensuring that sound literacy practices are followed requires reading specialists to be a necessary part of the literacy team. Used as part of an integrated approach to instruction, the above instructional guidelines can be sound practices (Bransford, 2000; Carter & Klotz, 1991). Carter and Klotz' work is dated, but important, because it represents the beliefs of administrators in the field. While most in literacy have moved beyond the content instructions set forth above, there is evidence that these beliefs of administrators persist (Bean, 2000). This illustrates the need for a leadership team that includes both the principal and the reading specialist, along with lead teachers.

It is self-evident that, in their role as instructional leaders, administrators are in a position to address instructional approaches in their schools. Zipperer et al. (2002) and more recently, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 2005) both suggest that reading in the content areas could be part of teacher evaluation; it is possible that this might be one important way administrators could support literacy efforts. It is problematic that neither discusses the varied backgrounds and the variety of literacy preparation of administrators. Nonetheless, NASSP (2005) does point out that a team is necessary when undertaking a schoolwide literacy initiative:

The first step a principal must take is to organize a Literacy Leadership Team (LLT) composed of administrators, content teachers, resource teachers, the literacy coach, and the media specialist. (p. 8)

This publication contains a very thorough description of "creating a culture of literacy," and what is most important is that this study illustrates the movement of literacy efforts at the middle and secondary level to a developmental (i.e., schoolwide) focus.

One of the difficulties in moving to a developmental focus has been noted by Zipperer (2002). He points out that only half the principals surveyed believed that the

teachers in their buildings were prepared to address reading problems or that they planned instruction to foster reading development. These beliefs can cause difficulty when schoolwide literacy programs are being instituted. This demonstrates the necessity for collaboration between administrators and literacy experts such as suggested by NASSP (2005).

As described earlier in the section entitled “Historical Context of Literacy Instruction,” cognitivist approaches to instruction continue to prevail despite new studies that support active, sociocultural approaches (Bean, 2000; Sturtevant et al., 2006). It can be argued, for example, that without effective leadership and proper training in literacy to make changes, the status quo will be maintained and efforts to move forward will be difficult or even impossible to achieve. The next section describes the development of the role of the reading specialist in the United States.

The Role of the Reading Specialist

While reading specialists were called *reading supervisors* prior to the 1950s, the title *reading specialist* emerged during the 1950s. According to Bean (2004), it was after World War II when schools were criticized for children’s reading problems that “remedial reading teachers” appeared in many schools. This coincided with the passage of numerous legal mandates resulting in greater funding for reading programs.

During the 1960s, reading professionals were often employed in Title I reading programs (also referred to as Chapter I). These programs were a part of the larger ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) compensatory program. This initiative jump-started the push for remedial reading programs, and was based on a “pullout approach.”

The pullout model was used because the funding was only provided for eligible children.

However, as Passow (1989) noted:

Although Chapter I students experience larger increases in standardized achievement test scores than comparable students who do not receive such services, the gap between their achievement levels and those of more advantaged students has not closed substantially. (p. 14)

According to current NAEP reports, this gap has not changed significantly over time (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). While disagreement continues to exist over Chapter I and its strengths and weaknesses, it can be argued that it has had a lasting and significant impact on the role of the reading professional and the evolution of reading programs. It set the standard for pullout and remedial reading models at the elementary level that have subsequently become models for secondary reading programs despite the seemingly differing needs at the upper levels. Several have noted that the pullout model has established a tradition that may no longer be an appropriate model because it limits the number of students receiving reading help at a time when classroom programs are being promoted (Quatroche, Bean & Hamilton, 2001).

In their review of the role of the reading specialist, Quatroche et al. (2001) note that “major changes occurred in the role of the specialist in the late 1980s, primarily due to guidelines specified in the reauthorization of Title I in the United States” (Quatroche et al., 2001, p. 283). They also found that the role has become more complex in recent years, encompassing instruction, assessment, resource, and leadership components. Although high schools were not the specific focus of their review, they note: “Federal guidelines promote models that necessitate much more attention to students’ classroom performance to enhance their ability to perform high-level skills” (p. 283).

When discussing the role of the reading specialist, Quatroche et al. (2001) note that “reading specialists have functioned in schools for many decades, and over time, their role and functions have changed.” Elsewhere, Bean, Swan, and Knaub (2002) describe the various functions that reading specialists have assumed, including their role as remedial reading teachers, diagnosticians, and resources for classroom teachers. Again, it must be emphasized that much of the research that has been done on reading specialists has concentrated on the elementary level. There remains only limited research that extends to the middle and high school levels, and this is primarily survey research.

One such survey was conducted by Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton and Wallis (2002). In 1996, the International Reading Association appointed a Commission on the Role of the Reading Specialist. One of its responsibilities was to “conduct a survey of school reading specialists across the U.S.” (Bean et al., 2002). Bean et al. stated the goal of their research as follows: “To investigate what reading specialists do so that we could better understand how they provide services to students and teachers” (p. 737). To this end, a survey was developed by members of the Commission. It was subsequently reviewed for context by other members, reading specialists, and a university faculty member. The final survey consisted of 34 multiple choice items, one question requiring a written response, and an optional section for any additional comments.

The survey was sent to a random sample of 4,452 members of the IRA who self-identified themselves as reading teachers. According to Bean et al. (2002), “the descriptor *reading teacher* was used because *reading specialist* is not an available descriptor” on the demographic form used on the annual membership form that was used

to obtain the random sample. The surveys were sent across the United States with a return rate of 1,517 completed surveys (38%) (Bean et al., 2002, p. 737).

Obviously, there are three major limitations in this methodology. First, the surveys were only sent to members of the IRA; thus, excluding any reading specialists who were not members of the IRA or who did not identify themselves as a “reading teacher” on the membership form. We must ask, then, how much bias is built into the sampling procedures.

The second concern is that the reading teachers who were members of the IRA were most likely to be the most informed in current best practices; accordingly, we must ask the degree to which respondents are representative of the general population of reading teachers.

Finally, the low response rate should be noted: the concern here, of course, is to what extent the views of the limited respondents can be considered representative of the IRA membership. Additionally, since there was no reading specialist descriptor on the survey, it is unknown whether or not some reading specialists may have selected a category other than “reading teacher” on their membership form, and were thus excluded from the sample population. Collectively, these limitations make the interpretation of their study questionable. However, since it is one of only two involving high schools, it is important to examine their data.

The survey covered elementary through high school. Bean et al. (2002) described their overall demographics as follows: the typical respondent to the survey was white (97%), female (98%), and worked full time as a reading specialist (91%). Seventy percent majored in elementary education and 90% were certified as reading specialists.

Most had classroom experience and had worked for over 5 years in education (76%). Interestingly, returns revealed that only 8% of the respondents worked at the high school level. With heightened awareness of the need for adolescent literacy instruction and practice in the upper grades, the low proportion of reading teachers working in the high school level is surprising.

As I noted in Chapter One, public school districts in Wisconsin are required by State Statute to have district reading specialists in charge of the K–12 reading curriculum. Each school, however, is responsible for implementing the reading curriculum at their grade levels. Given the problems with the Bean et al. (2002) study, it is difficult to get a comprehensive picture of what reading specialists do in any type of school in order to better understand the services they provide to other teachers and students. In addition to the specific limitations noted above, the survey approach does not allow for an in-depth, contextual study of the reading specialist.

The issue of content literacy and the credibility of reading specialists was raised with respect to the optional question on the Bean et al. (2002) survey. On the optional question, Bean et al. note the following:

Reading specialists commented on the importance of experience as a means of establishing credibility with teachers, and to have a better sense of the difficulties that classroom teachers face. (p. 737)

Again, while the majority of the respondents in this survey were elementary reading teachers, this comment about establishing credibility with teachers appears to be equally relevant to the secondary level. Research has shown, for example, that the resistance of content teachers to reading in the content areas remains problematic (Ratekin et al., 1985).

With respect to the specific responsibilities of reading specialists, Bean et al. (2002) found that the role was divided into four main functions: instruction, assessment, administration, and resource. It should be noted that, for purposes of this survey, Bean et al. used the term “instruction” to refer to student instruction, and “resource” to refer to teacher/school special program involvement. There are several issues embedded in these areas that contribute to inconsistencies in terminology and role definition.

Instruction, for example, can mean reading specialists teaching their own support classes, it can mean modeling with classroom teachers in other schools, and it can also mean planning and collaborating with teachers and the school community. In many cases it holds the same ambiguity; it often means doing all three things. The issue here, of course, is the lack of consistency in the use of the term in the survey. Assessment can involve planning and coordinating testing for the school, informal testing and interpretation for groups of students or individuals, or both. Administration, in turn, generally includes program development and coordination, while resource can be used to mean individualized instruction for special students, or in the broadest sense it can mean professional development. Thus, it is imperative that we engage in a study of reading specialists at the high school level in order to understand how they are currently being utilized in the schools and how these four descriptors from the Bean et al. (2002) study look in the context of the day-to-day life of a school.

The importance of the Bean et al. (2002) survey, of course, was that it provided the first overview of the way the reading specialists working in the schools identify their roles. Regarding the instructional role, Bean et al. report that over 90% of the respondents instruct on a daily basis and, within this group, 66% indicated that they spent

over three-fourths of their time in instruction. Instruction included working with students on a pullout basis, in small groups, or in classes.

With respect to the first role, assessment, the survey indicated that “almost all reading specialists have some responsibility for assessment” (Bean et al., 2002, p. 738). The assessment role generally consists of informal reading measures, but it may also involve the administration of standardized instruments, and is used for both decision-making and accountability. The third role, resource, involves such things as supporting classroom teachers and special educators with modeling, providing materials and support, and serving parents. The final role, administration, includes performing administrative tasks such as writing reports, documenting and monitoring student performance, and other paperwork.

While there is a range of comparisons made in the Bean et al. (2002) study, nothing is analyzed by grade level. Thus, we cannot determine the differential needs of both students and teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools.

Interestingly, the survey also indicates that most reading teachers believe they have responsibility for improving the literacy achievement of all students in the school, not just struggling readers. When asked about major changes in the role of the reading specialist, over half of the reading specialists indicated that they have experienced increases in the amount of paperwork they are expected to do; they are also serving as a resource to teachers and providing in-class instruction. To illustrate this, Bean et al. (2002) quote one reading specialist’s response on the optional survey question:

Our system has provided minimal instruction for classroom teachers [on] change in reading instruction; therefore, I am working more and more in the classroom demonstrating and modeling improved techniques through using literature, writing, shared and guided reading, literature circles, and phonics instruction.

Teachers have changed their thinking and want more reading help—across [the] curriculum—not just [during] reading period. (p. 741)

Clearly, this statement comes from an elementary reading specialist. Since high school content teachers receive very little instruction in reading, even though there is a need for reading in the content areas, it becomes clear that we need to gather similar data at the secondary level.

In a second survey, Barry (1997) used an instrument to find out how high school remedial reading programs had changed from the 1940s to the 1980s. She used an updated and modified version of the same survey used in the 1940s to determine if the nature of the role had changed over the years and, if so, how. Barry's focus was on below-grade level readers. While limited to below-grade level reading programs, the results comparing practices in the 1940s with those of the 1990s highlight some important changes. Current adolescent literacy practices are framed in terms of schoolwide frameworks, but assistance to struggling readers should be a part of the overall framework (IRA, 2000).

Barry (1997) found that, of the schools she surveyed, 67% had a reading program as part of the regular education program; 17% had such a program as part of special education; and 11% had no program to assist struggling readers, but classroom teachers worked to accommodate their needs. She identified four broad categories of the role from her survey results: instruction, structure, evaluation, and organization and staffing. Like Bean et al. (2002), Barry used survey questions developed by reviewing previous surveys and then compared the past to current practices. She concluded that there has been progress, albeit slow, in the field of secondary reading. Changes she identified were (1) an improved image, which she attributed to credentialing and education; (2) more

mainstreaming; and (3) more collaboration among the reading specialist and content teachers.

While Barry's (1997) focus was on high school remedial reading, several points she raises are important to the direction in which secondary reading is going. Barry notes that her results indicate that there is movement away from the remedial class, and that this is "in line with what has been occurring throughout the U.S. over the past several years" (p. 524). She also found that the grade levels served have become more inclusive, moving from 9th grade only to multiple grade levels. A third finding that supports current views on adolescent literacy is the use of the reading specialist in a leadership role, that is, collaborating with content teachers. Barry notes how this "is a change from the isolationist practices in earlier decades" (p. 527). Current discussion of secondary reading illustrates Barry's point since the recent focus on remediation has been replaced with a schoolwide focus. While reading was once considered primarily an elementary issue, it is now widely recognized that literacy instruction should be extended into the upper grades.

Roe, Stoodt and Burns (2001), among others, assert that learning to read is a continuous process that extends well beyond sixth grade. This recent change toward viewing reading as a developmental process, which takes place from kindergarten throughout grade twelve, rather than a remedial only program past elementary school, illustrates a positive change because research has shown that reading growth does not end in elementary school. It has been suggested, for example, that instruction in reading should continue throughout the twelve grades with a transition from word recognition, decoding, and basic skills to a focus on content reading and the development of higher-

level literacy skills such as inferencing, synthesizing, and analyzing multiple texts (Alvermann, 2002; Bean, 2004; Santa, 2006; Sturtevant et al., 2006).

In their recent book on practices for adolescent literacy, Sturtevant et al. (2006) have included vignettes from classrooms to support the instructional principles they suggest. There are, however, only two specific references to the use of reading specialists in their classroom examples. One example describes a middle school where the reading specialist has focused her efforts on creating a respectful and positive school environment. She has created a reading center for students and teachers that is open before school, she visits classes to model strategies for students and teachers, and she serves as a reading coach, supporting teachers' efforts to include literacy in their curricular areas. This vignette also includes the principal and the district reading supervisor's role as they relate to the school's reading specialist. While the inclusion of these vignettes provides insight into actual classroom practice, they also illustrate ways that the administration can have a positive influence on schoolwide literacy efforts. Examples cited by Sturtevant et al. (2006) also include the principal's key role in budgeting to secure funds for book acquisition.

The second example found in Sturtevant et al. (2006) is the role of a reading specialist in a sixth-grade class. They describe her work as follows:

Theresa works extensively with other teachers to improve literacy instruction for all students. She also teaches two reading/writing groups a day, one of fifth graders and one of sixth graders. (p. 97)

This example, while below the high school level, demonstrates two of the areas supported by the professional literature—working with teachers to include literacy on a schoolwide basis and working with struggling students as part of a comprehensive program. While

these examples provide some insight into the way literacy instruction is included in these model classrooms, two examples are simply too limited to make a generalization.

Regardless, these two limited examples provided in the work of Sturtevant et al. (2006) clearly illustrate that we need to know much more about the day-to-day work of reading specialists in schools. Specifically, more research is needed in the classrooms at the high school level. This should also clarify some of the inconsistencies in the role of the reading specialist described in Chapter One.

Summary

While it is clear that there is limited research on the role of the high school reading specialist, we have considerable guidance from professional organizations as to what should be included in secondary literacy. The literature published by the International Reading Association (2000) related to adolescent literature supports three specific areas of responsibility for the reading specialist at the middle and high school levels: instruction, assessment, and leadership. Writing about some of the difficulties inherent in high school literacy, the IRA states:

This focus on subject matter is supported by the typical organization of high schools with the faculty assigned to separate subjects. Many teachers come to believe that teaching students how to effectively read and write is not their responsibility. Without intending to do so, they might send subtle messages that adolescents' continued growth in reading and writing is incidental. (Moore et al., 1997, p. 4)

For this reason, it has been suggested that exemplary reading programs at the high school level can only be attained through major school reform efforts. It has also been suggested, for example, that collaboration with content area teachers is an essential part of a developmental reading program at the high school level because it allows the reading

specialist to use his or her expertise to reach a greater number of students than would be possible in a more historical, remedial program. The Commission on Adolescent Literacy (CAL) recommends that: “Content area teachers and reading specialists work together to effectively support adolescents’ development of advanced reading strategies” (Moore et al., 1997, p. 6).

It would seem that, at present, some schools use the reading specialist to design professional development courses to meet these needs; others work with teachers or a combination of teachers and students. Still others use the reading specialist exclusively in a student–instructor role.

The IRA, the Commission on Adolescent Literacy, the National Reading Conference, and the Wisconsin Affiliate of the IRA, The Wisconsin State Reading Association, are all professional organizations whose missions are to promote literacy and provide guidelines in literacy instruction. However, as I have illustrated in this chapter, we still lack qualitative work on the current state of literacy in the high schools. My study will add to our understanding of how these principles are applied in the high school context. The following chapter will detail the methodology for this much needed study.

Chapter Three Methodology

Cresswell (2003) asks the researcher to answer three questions before designing a research project: (1) What knowledge claims are being made by the researcher (including a theoretical perspective?) (2) What strategies of inquiry will inform the procedure? and (3) What methods of data collection and analysis will be used? I will address each of these three questions in order.

Framework/Claims of Knowledge

Cresswell (2003) notes that, “Stating a knowledge claim means that researchers start a project with certain assumptions about how they will learn and what they will learn during their inquiry” (p. 6). This research was conducted using an interpretive approach, which means that knowledge is assumed to be socially constructed: individual experiences are assumed to lead to multiple meanings and complexities. To illuminate this, the researcher must ask wide-ranging and open-ended questions.

Using an interpretive, case study approach allowed me to make inferences about the culture of the high school reading specialist. Although I conducted a case study, the principles of ethnographic research were used to guide my approach. One of the most powerful characteristics of ethnographic research is that “it uses inductive, interactive, and recursive processes to build theories to explain the behavior and beliefs under study” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 15). Addressing ethnography, Spradley (1979) notes that, “Rather than *studying people*, ethnography means *learning from people*” (p. 3). A single informant was used in this study to provide a rich and deep emic perspective of the role of the secondary reading specialist in his or her natural environment. Spradley notes

that, “In doing field work, ethnographers make cultural inferences from three sources: (1) from what people say; (2) from the way people act; and (3) from the artifacts people use” (p. 8). I used these three sources to generate data, which were then analyzed to arrive at grounded theory. Any disconfirming data were reviewed and additional questions formulated until discrepant items requiring clarification were addressed. The terms used to describe this process are referred to as grounded theory by Glaser & Strauss (1967), and domain and structural analysis by Spradley (1979). Although different terms are used to describe the process of theory building in this type of research, initial interviews and observations provide the basis for further investigation and elaboration. The data are revisited through a continual cycle of analysis and data collection until new information confirms a stable pattern and a model appears to be complete.

Strategies of Inquiry

A qualitative research design was used because it takes place in the natural setting, allows for detailed study, and is based on the actual experiences of the informant. Cresswell (2003) suggests that “the choice of methods by a researcher turns on whether the intent is to specify the type of information to be collected in advance of the study or to allow it to emerge from participants in the project” (p. 17). In his discussion on the choice of methodology, Cresswell discusses the appropriateness of qualitative approaches in studies where data emerge as the study progresses: “These aspects of an unfolding research model make it difficult to prefigure qualitative research tightly at the proposal or early research stage” (Cresswell, 2003, p. 182). As data emerge throughout fieldwork, working assumptions are made and revised. They are based on interviews, observations and artifacts. Additional questions are developed and changed as more in-depth

knowledge is gained. In grounded theory, as Cresswell (2003) points out, “the researcher attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study” (p. 14). Thus, such an inductive strategy of inquiry is best suited to this research study.

Procedures

Phase I: Survey

First, compliance with State Statute 118.015 (Appendix A), which requires a district reading specialist, was mapped via a survey with a specific focus on high schools. Demographic information was collected regarding the number of districts meeting the requirements of Statute 118.015.

The District Reading Survey (Appendix B) was sent to all public school districts with high schools in the State of Wisconsin. This information was obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s website (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008b). The surveys were addressed to the District Reading Specialist. Names and addresses of the school districts were found on the Department’s website. If there was no District Reading Specialist, the survey was sent to the Director of Curriculum and Instruction with an attention line directing the survey to the person in charge of reading. In the absence of a District Reading Specialist, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction was asked to complete the survey. The requested turnaround time for survey completion was two weeks. A second request was sent via U.S. mail to those districts failing to respond to the first request with the two-week turnaround time. For districts that indicated that they have reading specialists located in their high schools,

the Reading Specialist Survey (Appendix C) was sent. It posed additional questions regarding their programs.

Survey/informant selection.

Based on the responses to the survey, purposeful selection was used to identify a potential informant. Initial contact was made via telephone to determine interest in participating in the study. School and district administrators were also contacted to approve this project. After site selection, Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, including formal communication, documentation, and confidentiality agreements were provided to the informant, informant's school, and school district. Subsequently, IRB approval was granted.

Informant selection was based on three areas of involvement at a school site. These three areas were (1) instruction, (2) leadership, and (3) assessment, as defined by the IRA's Position Statement *Teaching All Children to Read: The Roles of the Reading Specialist* (2000). A follow-up telephone call was made to obtain detail on those sites and potential informants that met the initial criteria for involvement based on survey responses. The purpose of the telephone calls was to narrow the search for an informant to those with the most experience at the high school level in the reading specialist position and to search for an informant who identified him or herself as most closely meeting the criteria set forth by the IRA for the secondary reading specialist's role. The purpose for using the IRA's criteria was to search for an exemplary model. The selected informant, Donna, had not recently moved from an elementary setting to the high school setting, and had experience in the three areas identified by the IRA—instruction, leadership, and assessment.

Phase II: Case Study

A case study approach was the most appropriate method for this study because of “its emphasis on the generation of shared meanings and its recognition on the importance of local context and culture in human behavior and beliefs” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 58). The goals of the first part of the study, outlined in Part I, were to gather demographic data on Wisconsin State Statute 118.015, which requires school districts to have a K–12 reading specialist, and to locate an informant for the second part of the study. The second part of the study of the informant’s role in the school context focused on obtaining data on (1) How is the role of the reading specialist carried out in the secondary setting, and to what extent does it reflect the statutory licensure? and (2) In what ways does the school context reflect the role description found in the professional literature?

The IRA (2000) categorizes activities within the areas of instruction, assessment and leadership as follows. Instruction includes planning and collaborating with teachers, as well as supporting classroom instruction and specialized support. The leadership category includes being a resource to teachers, administrators, and parents, involvement with staff development, and development and coordination of the literacy program. Assessment involves administration and interpretation of diagnostic tests and assessments and may include development and coordination of standardized assessments (IRA).

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of ethnographic interviews, observations of the reading specialist in his or her natural setting (i.e., school), and collection of artifacts used by the

reading specialist. Artifacts were used to provide support for, or disconfirm, information obtained in the interviews and observations.

Observations.

Observations of the informant in her school setting were made, including participation in the instructional, leadership, and assessment roles. Observations were made on the following:

Instruction.

- Classroom and/or pullout instruction (including room organization, method of instruction, and types of materials used);
- Materials used during instruction, including handouts, readings, technology, websites and worksheets;
- Interaction between students and teacher;
- Interaction among students and peers.

Leadership.

- Interaction with adults including administrators, faculty and staff, and students;
- Staff development, in-services, and workshops;
- Materials distributed to faculty and administration, including bulletins and staff development materials.

Assessment.

- Types of assessment used in student instruction, including formal and informal measures;

- Role in diagnostic testing;
- Role in standardized testing.

Observations were made a minimum of two times per week during a six-week period of time. These observations included daily activities—classroom instruction, interaction with teachers and staff, school and district meetings, staff development activities before or after school, in-service days, administrative work and assessment tasks. Prior to the observations, I made a checklist of behaviors and actions to observe based on information obtained in interviews and previous observations. Anecdotal notes were made during my observations and follow-up questions were written for further clarification from the informant.

Interviews

Developing a rapport with the informant helped me interpret data from the informant's culture. I approached the research as a series of what Spradley (1979) calls "friendly conversations" (p. 58). In this manner, ethnographic elements were introduced slowly. According to Spradley (1979):

It is best to think of ethnographic interviews as a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants. Exclusive use of these new ethnographic elements, or introducing them too quickly, will make interviews become like a formal interrogation. (p. 58)

Therefore, the initial interviews consisted of descriptive questions presented in a friendly format with the purpose of developing a rapport with the informant. As the interviews progressed, more detailed questions were asked. Spradley (1979) reinforces the importance of descriptive questions: "Descriptive questions form the backbone of all ethnographic interviews" (Spradley, 1979, p. 91). Most of the questions asked in the first

interview were descriptive questions and their use continued throughout all subsequent interviews.

Thus, a total of five interviews were conducted with the informant. The interviews lasted a minimum of two hours and they took place in Spring 2009. Each session was tape recorded to ensure accurate transcription. Transcripts were shared with the informant to check for accuracy and obtain clarification when necessary. Succeeding interview questions were developed based on the preceding responses; the data obtained in each interview were used to frame the next session's questions.

I began with "grand tour" questions followed with "mini tour" questions, where appropriate (Spradley, 1979). Examples of grand tour questions included: "Could you describe a typical day in your role?" "Could you tell me about the students with whom you work?" "Could you tell me about your work with staff development?" These are the most general grand tour questions; other forms of grand tour questions that focus on more specific information, including specific, guided, grand tour questions were also used.

According to Spradley (1979), mini tour questions "are identical to grand tour questions except they deal with a much smaller unit of experience" (p. 88). These types of questions became important when delving into the specifics of the role, as well as other types of descriptive questions such as direct-language questions and typical-sentence questions. Examples of mini tour questions include: "Could you describe your involvement with staff development in content area reading?" "Could you tell me how you approach comprehension instruction with struggling readers?" The mini tour questions focused on specific aspects of the role within the selected site.

Artifacts

Artifacts that were collected included instructional materials used by the reading specialist in her role, any materials developed or used by the reading specialist for staff development or training purposes, and any other pieces of information that were disseminated to staff, students, or parents that relate to the reading program or reading initiative within the school.

Like classroom observations, artifacts were used to provide support for, or disconfirm, information obtained in the interviews. Where discrepancies existed, interview questions revisiting the discrepant areas were used to clarify the discrepancy. The artifacts were classified into domains and analyzed in conjunction with the domains identified in the interviews and observations. In this manner, disconfirming data were identified and additional questions were used to gather insight for any discrepancies.

Data Analysis

Analytic induction was used to form basic categories to develop working assumptions about the role of the high school reading specialist. The working assumptions were refined and modified throughout the course of the study. Constant comparison was used as additional data were collected through interviews and new dynamics were discovered (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, pp. 181–182). Structural questions were designed to test the working assumptions that emerged in the domain analysis and further questions were designed to verify information obtained in previous interviews, and to provide detail on cover terms. Contrast questions were posed where appropriate based on review of field notes and observational notes.

Domain Analysis

A preliminary domain search was conducted using the informant's voice to identify nouns that represented the major categories (i.e., instruction, assessment, and leadership). Other nouns that emerged as possible categories were also identified as additional domains. The identification of a domain, as defined by Spradley (1979), is "any symbolic category that includes other categories."

A domain analysis was conducted using semantic relationships as a starting point. A worksheet was devised to illustrate the semantic relationships found in the preliminary domain analysis. I used "strict inclusion" and "attribution relationships" described by Spradley (1979) as "X is a kind of Y," and "X is an attribute (characteristic) of Y," respectively (p. 111). This process was repeated with data transcripts as domain analysis continued. Once the domain analysis was complete, thematic maps were developed illustrating each domain that emerged during analysis.

After the themes and sub-themes were fully developed, a taxonomic analysis of the relationships was built with a coding scheme using different colors for the themes. A combination of numbers and letters was used to identify sub-themes and sub-sub themes.

Theme Analysis

Using the taxonomy, I considered what the data were telling me and identified major themes. Data were analyzed and organized into themes related to the role of the reading specialist at the high school level. Data is presented to the reader in a written discussion. A detailed narrative of the role of the high school reading specialist in the natural setting illustrates the way the role is implemented in the informant's school

setting, and how it compares to the role description found in the professional literature. Pseudonyms have been used for all real names and locations in order to provide anonymity.

Major themes that emerged, and the relationships among them, will be described in Chapter Five, “The Reading Specialist and the Instructional Role;” Chapter Six, “The Reading Specialist and the Leadership Role;” and Chapter Seven, “The Reading Specialist and the Assessment Role.” The major findings that emerged from the study are described in Chapter Eight, “Implications and Suggestions for Future Research.”

Chapter Four District Reading Survey and Reading Specialist Survey

The purpose of Phase I of the study was to determine the percentage of public school districts in compliance with Wisconsin State Statute 118.015 (Appendix A), which requires, among other things, that all public school districts have a certified reading specialist in charge of the K–12 reading curriculum. Because the focus of this study is on secondary literacy, only those districts with high schools were requested to complete the survey.

A total of 380 (N=380) surveys (Appendix B) were mailed to all K–12 or 9–12 school districts listed on the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s website (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008b). Absent a response from the initial mailing, a second request was sent two weeks later. A response rate of 63% was attained; however, two districts subsequently declined to participate, resulting in a final response rate of 62% (N=236).

Phase I: Compliance with State Statute 118.015

Level One Analysis

The data were analyzed at three levels. The first level was to divide the responses into either compliant or noncompliant based on responses to the questions, “Does your district have a person who is responsible for the K–12 (or 9–12) reading curriculum?” and “What license (number) does this person hold?” The applicable portion of State Statute 118.015 (Appendix A) reads as follows:

Each school district shall employ a reading specialist certified by the department to develop and coordinate a comprehensive reading curriculum in grades

kindergarten to 12. At the discretion of the state superintendent, a school district may contract with other school districts or cooperative educational service agencies to employ a certified reading specialist on a cooperative basis (Wisconsin State Legislature: Legislative Reference Bureau, 2007–08).

The license numbers for certification as a reading specialist in the State of Wisconsin are 317 or 17, and these were the license numbers used to determine compliance with the statutory requirement for a district reading specialist. Prior to August 31, 2004, the reading specialist license was covered under PI 3.24 “Reading Specialist–317.” The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction notes, “Chapter PI 3 as it existed on June 30, 2004 was repealed effective July 1, 2004.” This license was replaced with the 17 license under Chapter 34 and is described as follows: “The Reading Specialist license is a license in the administrator license category in Chapter PI 34 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2009a). For purposes of this study, the 317 or 17 license is acceptable; the difference depends on the date of license application.

The percentage of school districts that indicated they have certified reading specialists in charge of the district reading curriculum was 43% (N=101) at this first level of analysis. At a deeper level, however, the compliance percentage dropped because districts did not meet the licensing requirement for a certified reading specialist. Thus, some districts were subsequently deemed “noncompliant” at the second level of analysis, which is discussed in the following section.

Level Two Analysis

The second part of the survey asked, “Please check the grade level groups for whom the *district reading specialist* is responsible.” The categories were broken down

into primary (K–3), intermediate (4–5/6), middle (5/6–8) and high school (9–12). The reason for this second step was to confirm that the district-level reading specialist was actually in charge of the entire K–12 spectrum. This is clearly stated in the statute, and it is listed under the “Duties of the Reading Specialist.” It reads as follows: “(a) Develop and implement a reading curriculum in grades kindergarten to 12” (Wisconsin State Legislature: Legislative Reference Bureau, 2007–08). This second level of analysis was to look at the “compliant” districts in light of the grade level groups that were checked as being the responsibility of the district reading specialist.

As addressed in Chapter One, careful planning of reading curricula is done at the lower grade levels, but much less focus is placed on this planning as the grade levels increase (Bintz, 1997; Ogle, 2007). The intent of this statute appears to address this problem; however, many of the responses written as “additional notes” on the surveys indicated that the intent of the statute might not be understood. Some districts checked “all levels,” but wrote comments indicating that the district reading specialist did not have much, if any, involvement with the high school. These cases were included in the “noncompliant” category at this level of analysis because the notes, comments, and checked “levels” on the survey indicated involvement at the elementary or elementary and middle school levels only. Therefore, districts are not meeting the statutory requirement that they have a certified reading specialist to “develop and implement a reading curriculum in grades *kindergarten to 12* [emphasis added]” (Wisconsin State Legislature: Legislative Reference Bureau, 2007–2008).

After analyzing the data from this part of the survey, 85% (N=86) of the districts that met the first requirement, that is, employment of a certified reading specialist at the

district level, responded that the person was involved in all levels, K–12. The other fifteen districts (15%) were recategorized into the noncompliant group because, based on the responses and comments written on several of the surveys, they did not work with the full K–12 spectrum. Many surveys contained notes that illuminate the point that curricular planning and involvement in reading decreases as students move up through the grades, regardless of statutory requirements.

1. Question: Please check the grade level groups for whom the *district reading specialist* is responsible:

a. Primary (K–3) _____

b. Intermediate (4–5/6) _____

c. Middle (5/6–8) _____

d. High School (9–12) _____

Response 1: “This is a K–12 position, but I am 50% Title I and 50% reading specialist for [the] district so I spend little to no time at the high school.”

Response 2: “[I am] consult only at the high school and middle school.”

Response 3: “District reading specialist works with elementary K–6,” although all grade level boxes were checked.

Response 4: “In theory, but spends little or no time there [high school], mostly busy at elementary.”

Response 5: “Technically responsible but not yet implementing.”

Above all, the responses suggest that school districts might have a reading specialist designated as “in charge” of the K–12 curriculum; however, based on the comments and notes written on the survey responses, secondary schools are still being

shortchanged within the reading realm. Once the responses to the grade-leveling question were taken into account, the compliance rate dropped from 43% (N=101) to 36% (N=86).

Noncompliance with State Statute 118.015

Level Three Analysis

After calculating the revised compliance percentages, I examined the survey responses indicating that, while there is a district reading specialist, the licensure was different from the reading specialist license. In some cases, it was specifically stated that there was a 317 but they did not work with high school in any capacity, including curriculum. Therefore, my next level of analysis was to investigate the type of licenses held by people working in this position. Out of a total of 57% (N=135) responses that were deemed “noncompliant,” 39% (N=53) provided no further information for the question “Does your district have a person who is responsible for the K–12 (or 9–12) reading curriculum?” The two most frequently cited licenses for those respondents that were placed in the noncompliant category because the person holding the certification was not a certified reading specialist were “Reading Teacher” (license number 316) and “Director of Instruction,” (license number 10), which is the curriculum and instruction license.

As was noted above, surveys returned with additional information provided some insight into who is being placed into this position when not staffed by a certified reading specialist. Ninety-seven responses were sufficiently described to enable categorization. The most frequently cited license for those staffed into this position is the “Director of

Instruction” license (#10) (19%, N=28). The second most frequently cited license is the “Reading Teacher” license (#316) (17%, N=26). The remaining license descriptions, in order of frequency were principal (7%) and English teacher (6%, N= 9). It was determined that 17% of the responses on all returned surveys indicated that the person staffed into the reading position, regardless of license number, worked with primary, intermediate and/or middle school, but not high school.

The last two questions on the District Reading Survey were “Please provide the name of the high school and the name of the person in charge of reading at each district high school,” and “If you answered ‘no’ to number 1, who is in charge of the reading curriculum at the high school level?” The first question was designed specifically to provide a pool of reading specialists in which to locate an informant. This is discussed in the next section.

As discussed in Chapters One and Two of this study, these results are problematic for many reasons. They indicate a lack of specialization and training in reading in both teacher and administrator preparation and certification programs. English teachers are trained to be English teachers, not reading teachers and specialists. Administrator preparation programs are focused on administrative and leadership training, not a specialization in reading. Therefore, it is unclear how the qualifications of these principals, directors of instruction, and English teachers meet the statutory requirements of the certified reading specialist.

Summary of District Reading Surveys

The results of this survey indicate that many districts throughout the state are not in compliance with State Statute 118.015 (N=150, 64%). Whether this is due to a lack of

understanding of the statute, or a lack of awareness of the statute, is unknown. For example, one response included the following next to the question “What license (number) does this person hold?” on the District Reading Survey.

You are making the assumption that a reading specialist is responsible for reading instruction. Frequently an administrator is responsible for reading instruction as well as other areas of curriculum, instruction and professional development. These administrators work with and/or supervise the reading specialists. The administrators are required to have a director of instruction license.

Embedded in this quote are a number of issues that are not the focus of this research; however, this response is important because it provides evidence of the lack of understanding of the difference between responsibility for the curriculum and responsibility for implementation of the curriculum, that is, reading instruction. The 316 reading teacher license (Appendix D) and the 317, (or 17) reading specialist license (Appendix E) are two distinct licenses. Nonetheless, the results of this survey illustrate that many districts use the reading teacher license to staff the district reading specialist position specified in the statute. The lack of differentiation of these two licenses, along with problems resulting from this distinction, is discussed in detail in other sections of this research study.

Reading Specialist Survey

The purpose of the second survey, the Reading Specialist Survey, was to identify high schools that have reading specialists on the staff. A total of 83 (N=83) surveys (Appendix C) were mailed to the high school reading specialist at all schools responding that they have a reading specialist in this position. Two weeks after the first surveys were mailed, a second request was sent to those reading specialists who had not responded to

the initial request. In the second request, the reading specialist was asked to return the survey with a note if the survey was not applicable, and the reason it did not apply. The final return rate for the School Reading Specialist survey was 78% (N=65).

The first level of data analysis was to determine if the person in the position was a certified reading specialist who worked in that position full-time. Out of a total of 65 survey responses, 88% (N=57) did not hold positions that were described as “full-time reading specialists” at the high school level. At this first level of analysis, the responses were analyzed to identify themes, or categories, for the types of replies fitting the category “did not work at the high school level as a reading specialist.”

There were two most frequently identified categories of people reported as high school reading specialists, but who actually were not in that position. One group included those serving in a district-wide capacity in reading, but having little or no involvement at the high school level (N=18). Another group worked at either the elementary or middle school level, or a combination of both (N=18). Six reported that they were “classroom teachers,” and five reported that they taught English, Language, or Speech (N=5). Finally, six respondents were placed in the category “other,” as their responsibilities were not defined, or listed as Title I teacher or Accelerated Reader teacher/monitor. The remaining four respondents indicated that they did not hold a reading specialist license. Thus, 57 of the 65 reading specialist surveys were excluded from the potential case study candidate pool because they did not meet the specified requirements (i.e., work full-time as a licensed reading specialist in a high school with involvement in the roles identified by the IRA—instruction, leadership, assessment).

High School Reading Specialists

In summary, out of 83 potential informants for the case study (Phase II) only eight respondents met the initial screening requirements of full-time employment at the high school level and certification as a reading specialist. The respondents identified themselves using terms such as “reading specialist,” “literacy coordinator,” and “reading coordinator.” Initially, my plan was to review the School Reading Specialist Surveys (Appendix C) in order to ascertain which respondents identified work in all three categories described by the IRA as roles of the reading specialist—instruction, leadership, and assessment. However, the number of suitable responses was so low that I requested follow-up telephone interviews with each of the eight who met the initial screening requirements. E-mail messages were sent to the eight potential informants requesting a telephone interview and asking for a convenient time for an appointment. Follow-up telephone requests were made one week after making requests via e-mail. Responses from five were received within the week; another two replied after sending out a third request.

Two potential informants did not respond to my requests for telephone interviews. I sent three e-mails and made two follow up telephone calls, but did not get any reply from one of them after another attempt via e-mail and a follow-up telephone request. The second potential informant returned my telephone call subsequent to informant selection and the beginning of fieldwork.

Telephone interviews were conducted with the remaining six potential informants. The following questions were asked during the interview:

1. Describe your involvement with instruction, staff development/leadership and assessment.
2. Describe any administrative tasks that you did not include in the areas of instruction, staff development/leadership, and assessment.
3. On a scale of 1–5, how would you rate your effectiveness in the area of instruction? Leadership/staff development? Assessment?
4. Within your instructional role, how is the instructional component organized (e.g. in the classroom, pullout, or combination)?
5. Within the leadership category, describe your involvement with teachers, staff, administrators, and the community.
6. Within the assessment category, describe your responsibilities.
7. How long have you been in the role of the high school reading specialist?
8. Are you working in this position on a full-time basis? If not, how is your time used?
9. Where is your school located, and how would you characterize it?
10. Describe your philosophy on instructional methods.
11. How do you address the issue of diversity in your role?
12. What types of resources do you use in your instructional and leadership roles?
13. Describe any administrative tasks that you did not include in the areas of instruction, staff development/leadership, and assessment.

After these questions were discussed, I reviewed any responses on the returned survey that needed clarification.

Using the written survey responses and the telephone interviews, the potential informants were ranked on the basis of their involvement in the areas of instruction, leadership/staff development, and assessment, along with their experience in the high school setting. I used the written survey responses along with the additional details obtained in the telephone interviews to determine the extent of involvement in each category as described by the reading specialist.

Three were eliminated because their roles consisted primarily of instruction (i.e., they were in teaching roles) or they were used solely in a coaching role. For the two respondents who indicated that they were used primarily in an instructional role, both indicated very minimal involvement with assessment, other than some proctoring and diagnostic testing. The leadership categories were also similar, reporting some “limited staff development” and committee involvement.

The remaining three potential informants were ranked according to the guidelines outlined above. The two that were not selected had some type of involvement in all three areas identified by the IRA, but they were limited in scope. One of these two indicated that the teaching role took approximately 70% of professional time. Leadership activities accounted for 10% of the role and involved membership on various committees, including the curriculum committee and the textbook adoption committee. The assessment role, accounting for 10% of the time, consisted of screening and placement for incoming freshmen. Another 10% of the time was devoted to administrative tasks such as budgeting.

The first runner up indicated involvement in instruction, teaching freshman study skills, and a homeroom assignment, estimated at 25–30% of the time; a 25–30% time

commitment for leadership activities such as sitting on several building and district committees including student services, site plan, district staff development and curriculum revision teams was also indicated. Assessment was listed as 0% (very rare) time commitment, but some proctoring was listed for WKCE testing. Administration of an after-school homework program, test preparation and student book club, along with working as a teacher resource, were listed as 25% administrative responsibilities.

The reading specialist selected for the case study indicated involvement in all three areas. Instruction accounted for 40% of the time; the leadership role accounted for 40% of the time; assessment varied between 10 and 20% of her time; and administrative responsibilities another 10% of the time. Based on the informant's written responses on the School Reading Specialist Survey and her telephone responses to extended questions on her role, I determined that this informant best met the definition of the three components involved in the reading specialist's role according to the IRA (2000). Following identification as a potential informant, I contacted her via e-mail to request a telephone interview. I received a response indicating several blocks of time in which to contact her for a telephone interview. The telephone interview lasted approximately one hour.

She described her role in instruction as involving classroom instruction to students reading two or more grade levels below placement. These students received English credit for this class. She also monitored and coordinated their reading program, *Read 180*, which involved preparing reports, keeping data, and meeting with the teachers and administrators monthly to review progress. She was also involved with special education teachers and participated in some team teaching with them for *Read 180*.

She described the leadership component as presenting formal in-services to all high school staff, presenting at bimonthly staff meetings, and working in a coaching role with individual teachers and departments. Another aspect of the role was integrated with the assessment role, and involved presentation of results of assessments to administration and staff. She also led the Literacy Team, which was a team with members from different departments in the school. This group worked to raise awareness and understanding of the ways literacy can be integrated into the content areas.

Depending on the time of the year, she was also involved with assessment, both schoolwide and on an individual basis. According to the reading specialist, she described her role in assessment as giving the “8th and 9th grade students the SRI (2x for 9th grade), compiling results, and triangulating results with other at-risk factors.” She also prepared reports of findings, presented them to administration and staff, and maintained a spreadsheet of student performance. The factors she included on her spreadsheet included performance on WKCE, lexiles, course failures, interventions, poverty, and other similar factors. As to individual assessments, she indicated she tested students who are referred by teachers, guidance counselors, and parents.

She described her administrative/other activities as including book orders, paperwork for Response to Intervention (RtI) monitoring, and participation on numerous committees, including the K-12 Literacy Team, the RtI team, and the Student Advisory Committee.

Subsequent to the telephone interview, I again contacted the potential informant via e-mail and a telephone call to explain my case study in greater detail and ask if she would be interested in participating in the case study. She affirmed her interest in the

study, and provided me with the appropriate contact information needed for approval to conduct research in the school and district. I provided her with the necessary consent forms. Subsequently, I received an e-mail approval letter granting approval at the school and district level, filed an IRB Amendment for the specific location, and obtained the necessary IRB consent forms from the informant and her school administrator.

Summary of reading specialist survey returns.

The high response rate of the reading specialist surveys resulted in a surprisingly low number of potential informants. Based on the written responses and telephone interviews, many (N=36) of the positions described as “reading specialist” are considered district reading specialists who, in reality, spend little to no time at the high school level, or work in elementary and/or middle schools. Others (N=11) serve as classroom teachers.

Analyzing the responses of those who are actually working in the role, it is clear that the description of their roles vary considerably. With the exception of districts that use their reading specialists in a coaching role, all respondents have some responsibility for classroom instruction. All respondents indicated that they are involved at the school level through participation on various school committees, and most reported having some minimal involvement in staff development such as presentations at staff meetings or going into classrooms to collaborate on reading upon teacher request. Many of the reading specialists I spoke with on the phone indicated that their school districts or school administrators were leaning toward more leadership in the area of coaching and/or staff development. Phase II is a case study of one high school reading specialist as she performs her role in the natural setting in a large midwestern high school.

Purpose of the Case Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the way in which a high school reading specialist performs his or her duties within the school setting. The case study approach was selected in order to uncover the reading specialist's perceptions of the role, and to develop a deep and rich understanding of the day-to-day duties of a reading specialist in the school setting. Although there is much literature on adolescent literacy, as well as professional literature and guidance on the role, my interest was to gain detailed insight into the way the reading specialist carries out the role.

Additionally, I was interested in understanding the informant's perceptions of the clarity of the role (i.e., the existence of a formal job description and how the day-to-day experiences fit into such description). Literacy coaching emerged as a theme during fieldwork, and it is discussed in detail within the Leadership Chapter. It should be noted that the role of the reading specialist was selected for study rather than the role of the literacy coach. As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, the literacy coach is not a licensed category in the State of Wisconsin at the current time; thus, this study was focused on the reading specialist's role. However, as will be demonstrated and discussed in Chapter Six, the term "coach" is being widely used, and it further complicates the role of the reading specialist because there is a lack of cohesive understanding of the coaching role and how it is, or is not, related to the role of the reading specialist.

Methodological Approach

"A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case" (Stake, 1995). Despite the plethora of articles, books, professional journals, and research on adolescent

literacy, the availability of research in the schools is scant. Therefore, I selected this approach because I wanted to develop a deeper understanding of the role.

This case study was conducted as an instrumental case study because this model was best suited to my research questions. Stake (1995) differentiates intrinsic case studies from instrumental case studies. In his discussion, he notes that intrinsic case studies are focused on learning about one particular case “because we need to learn about that particular case” (p. 3). The intrinsic case study did not fit my research questions; while I was interested in studying one reading specialist, my purpose was to study the clarity of the role, and the way the role unfolds in the high school. Therefore, my study is an instrumental case study, which Stake (1995) describes as follows, using a teaching scenario to make his point:

We may choose a teacher to study, looking broadly at how she teaches but paying particular attention to how she marks student work and whether or not it affects her teaching. This use of case study is to understand something else. Case study here is instrumental to accomplishing something other than understanding this particular teacher, and we may call our inquiry *instrumental case study*. (p. 3)

Because my case study is designed to gain insight into the role in order to develop a better understanding of the role of the high school reading specialist, while studying this particular reading specialist, it best fits into the instrumental case study framework. The reading specialist selected for this case study was chosen because she self-identified her involvement in the areas of responsibility described in the professional literature, specifically, instruction, leadership, and assessment (IRA, 2000).

Organization of Results

My case study results are organized into three chapters focused on instruction, leadership, and assessment, respectively. I placed the instructional role first because the

reading specialist placed this role component as a priority. However, it is imperative to understand that the reading specialist's roles are not clearly delineated into these three role components; they are integrally related and the lines between them are blurred. Issues that affect one role intersect with other roles, and this often causes contentiousness between the reading specialist and other teachers and administrators. These divergences will be woven into the text, but addressed in greater detail in the last chapter. Nevertheless, these three broad categories provided a framework for initial concept mapping and theme identification.

Data Analysis

As was detailed in Chapter Three, the data were analyzed through a recursive process in which I identified themes within the three categories designated by the IRA (2000) (i.e., instruction, leadership, and assessment). I used a mapping technique to categorize themes within each major role description, and I identified “unofficial” roles as they emerged throughout data analysis. Any newly identified, unofficial themes are described within the applicable section. Overlap of themes and categories was common. Nevertheless, the data chapter is organized into the three categories identified by the IRA. The themes and the interrelationships among them are discussed in detail in the final chapter. Within each major category, I combined interview data, observational data, and artifacts to explain what I learned in the field about the roles of the high school reading specialist within the context of the school setting.

Chapter Five presents the instructional role, and it is organized slightly differently from the other chapters because my informant is involved in classroom instruction for two periods out of her five-period day. Observing her in the instructional role, along with

the interview data, illustrates how her instructional role has an impact on her other roles. Therefore, the initial section of Chapter Five includes a detailed description of her role as a classroom teacher for struggling readers. It is not a critique of her teaching, nor is it designed to provide detailed information about instructional practice; the purpose is to illustrate how her teaching affects her leadership role and her relationships with her colleagues. In addition, the description also highlights some issues that may be identified with struggling readers in the upper grades (i.e., motivation, at risk), which may have implications for the instruction of struggling readers unique to the high school level.

I approached the writing of each chapter from my perspective as a non-participant observer. Major themes are identified within each chapter, but the detailed discussion of the themes is contained in the final chapter.

Chapter Five The Instructional Role of the Reading Specialist

It is my first day at the site of my case study on the role of the high school reading specialist. I stand in the hallways before school and in between classes, where the students act like they do in many high schools near the end of the school year. Some are talking about classes, graduation, summer plans and school projects that are coming up. Others are milling around, walking slowly, and looking sleepy. Still others are sitting on the floor or windowsills biding their time until the first bell rings. I am located in the middle of the school, in my temporary residence in the office of the reading specialist. She is housed inside the attendance office next to the administrative offices. Her office consists of two rooms—a back room with a table and chairs, bookshelves, a coffee pot, and a comfortable place to perhaps rest after a day with plenty of overtime. After the first day, I can see that the “back room” gets a lot of use: Donna, the reading specialist, has a good rapport with her students as evidenced by their frequent presence in her office before, during, and after school. These are students that other regular education teachers might have written off.

Laurelton High School is located in a mid-sized midwestern town that serves in excess of 1,200 students. Socioeconomically, less than 25% of the student body qualifies for free and reduced lunch, and the student body is primarily white. Approximately 10% of the students are Hispanic, African American, or Asian. There is gender balance in the school, and students are distributed evenly between the grades. Students identified as “students with learning disabilities” account for approximately 15% of the student population.

Donna's Background

Donna was employed in a business position before she became interested in education. After her children were in school, Donna made the decision to work as a substitute teacher, and she was often placed in special education classrooms. She decided to make a career change and pursued a degree in special education. She was offered a position as a special education teacher shortly after working as a long-term substitute in the district where she is now employed. Since she worked as a teacher prior to her role as the reading specialist, she had previously developed relationships with teachers in the school, which she maintains has helped her in some ways and hurt her in others. This issue will be discussed in more detail throughout the chapter. In one of our interviews, Donna described how her interest in reading developed, and what led her to pursue her reading teacher (316), and then reading specialist (317) license:

Working as a special education teacher, one of my biggest frustrations was the fact that students with special needs did not have the skills they needed in order to even be functionally literate; you couldn't justify sending them out in the world when they couldn't read. They didn't have the strategies that they needed and they often had decoding, so I'm not talking about CD [cognitively disabled], severe kids or moderate kids, but I'm talking about the LD [learning disabled], the EBD [emotionally behaviorally disabled kids], kids who could really read. They had the decoding piece down for the most part, but they really could not comprehend what they read and the frustration as a special education teacher was 'How the heck do I get them where they need to be?' So, I realized that I didn't have enough knowledge myself in order to be able to teach them what they needed in reading. So I went back and took a class in content reading—adolescent literacy content reading—thinking, ok, this is the only class I'm going to need. It's going to tell me what I need to know about how to help these high school kids and I'll be done. It ended up, though, just sort of whetting my appetite for reading in general. I found out so much more than just 'They need just this one strategy or these couple skills.' I found out it was extremely involved, very complicated and that one class was not going to be enough, so then I went back for the 317 [reading specialist license]. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

Donna's response about the lack of knowledge among special education teachers confirmed some of the literature on the teaching, or incorporation of reading in general, at the secondary level (Barry, 1997; Blackford, 2002; Carter & Klotz, 1991; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2005; Rumberger, 1987; Zipperer, 2002). It should be noted that, although this particular interview was about special education teachers, limited knowledge among content teachers was a recurring theme throughout my fieldwork with content teachers and administrators. Because our discussion was based on her particular experience, I pursued this line of questioning to get her opinion on the pervasiveness of this issue: "Do you think that's still a problem—special education teachers [and knowledge of reading instruction]—is it pretty pervasive?" (Interview, May 6, 2009).

Oh my God, yes—it's a huge problem. It is one I have tried to address here, but in this particular district, at the elementary level and middle school, students with special needs were not allowed to work with the reading teacher because the person in charge of pupil services at that time felt like it was double-dipping and so his thing was, if they have a special education teacher, then let that person handle the reading deficits and let the reading teacher deal with the kids who do not have any other support. What happened was you had special education kids with teachers who had no clue how to teach reading because in special education reading, you have to take one reading class, one general reading class—that's it—and that's more philosophy about reading, and certainly not how to teach reading. So yeah, it is a huge problem. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

Returning to the literature on adolescent reading, the problem raised concerning special educators in this quote can be extended to all content area teachers. Many students in the general school population also need to learn how to tackle content reading. As noted in the Literature Review, this duty often falls to English teachers; however, they tend to focus their time on literature, not on text learning (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). The instructional role of the reading specialist includes responsibility for instruction to

students who are struggling readers, which is one facet of Donna's position, but it also includes instructional leadership to the school as a whole.

Donna's Role at Laurelton High School

Donna was hired as the Reading Specialist at Laurelton in 2007. Prior to being placed in her current position, she worked there as a special education teacher. She identified herself as being involved in all three roles cited by the International Reading Association in their Position Statement, *Teaching All Children to Read: The Roles of the Reading Specialist* (2000). In our first interview, I asked her, "If I had worked here for a year or two, what are all the things I would be doing?" (Interview, May 6, 2009). She responded:

I generally like to prioritize, so I try to think about what is the most important to me, not what is the most important to administration, but what is most important to me, and that would be instruction. The students would be my priority because there is no other, I don't know—what's the word—there's no other hope. There's no other resource, I guess, for kids who are struggling—whether it's because of reading, whether it's because of motivation, alienated, whatever. So they are my priority because there is no one else for them. So instruction is big. The second piece would be assessment. We do not have a lot of data in this district, all we have are WKCE scores and that is clearly not enough. So the data would be the second piece that I think is a priority. We have to have data on these kids so that we can provide some sort of intervention...Let's see—instruction, data...the Literacy Team—to me that's really kind of a priority because those are the people that [sic] are going to be listened to more by the faculty so training the Literacy Team in best practice in literacy. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

As the interview progressed, the additional responsibilities and details of the position were discussed in depth. Even though they are highly interrelated, these responsibilities (Instruction, Leadership, Assessment) will be discussed in separate chapters.

I asked Donna about her daily schedule. Although Donna has no written job description, her schedule, at least on paper, is as follows:

First Period: Preparation Period

Second Period: Class (Read to Learn)

Third Period: Literacy/Coaching Time

Fourth Period: Class (Read to Learn)

Fifth Period: Literacy/Coaching Time

(Artifact, May 13, 2009).

The rationale for including the details of Donna's classroom instruction was to illustrate some of the issues faced by adolescents who are struggling readers, including general characteristics such as low motivation, embarrassment, and literacy specific issues such as low vocabulary and difficulties with word attack and comprehension.

Donna's Instructional Role

One of the high school reading specialist's roles is instructional. The IRA (2000) describes the instructional role of the reading specialist as changing, and states, "Today, new roles are necessary" (p. 1). While the position statement suggests that teachers should work less often with students and more often collaborating with teachers, it does state:

There are programs in which the specialist provides instruction outside the classroom, for example Reading Recovery instruction. A well-coordinated, congruent, and quality program can occur whether the reading specialist functions in the classroom or in a pullout setting.

It is clear from the Reading Recovery example that this role description is geared toward the elementary level; the structure of the instructional role in the high school

setting is not specifically addressed, but it is clear from the heuristic included in the IRA's (2000) position statement that part of the instructional role is "specialized support." In Donna's case, this specialized support is provided to struggling readers in a regularly scheduled class that Donna teaches.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, both the observation of Donna in her instructional role, and our interview data, illustrate ways her instructional role has had an impact on her other duties. Therefore, the initial section of this chapter includes a description of her responsibilities as a classroom teacher of struggling students. The major themes that emerged in conjunction with her instructional duties are curriculum, resources, and testing and placement for her class.

Class Structure and Placement

Donna taught two periods each day. The classes at the school were set up in block format; each class period was 70 minutes in length. Donna explained how the credit system worked when students were placed into her class:

Right now our 9th graders who are in the reading program are getting English credit for that—it is not accepted by colleges. So, it's OK for graduation; for college entrance, they're going to have to pick up English further on. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

This policy would be changing in the following year. She explained:

Every student has to take English 9. Every student...and that can be either standard or advanced level. If they're basic readers, they have to take a reading intervention and English 9, so there will be double dosing. So they are going to get reading, which will be an elective credit, and they're going to get their English credit through regular English. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

At the beginning of the year, Donna placed students in her class, Read to Learn, based on recommendations from middle school and test scores on the Scholastic Reading

Inventory. Donna described her instructional role at the beginning of the year as “*getting to know the students that I have because it’s got to be interest-driven,*” and “*getting lesson plans together, trying to figure out how many kids I have and I need to get all those kids assessed right away*” (Interview, May, 6, 2009). Donna explained that the students were dismissed from her class “*once they have had two consecutive lexile scores that are at the beginning of their grade level range*” (Interview, May 6, 2009). Lexiles were defined as follows:

The Lexile Framework for Reading is a scientific approach to measuring text difficulty and reading ability, putting both texts and readers on the same scale to accurately match readers with reading materials. A Lexile measure for either a text or a reader is a simple number followed by an “L” (e.g., 850L). The Lexile Scale ranges from below 200L for beginning readers and beginning-reading text to above 1700L for advanced readers and text. Both the Lexile measure and Lexile scale are integral parts of the Lexile Framework. (MetaMetrics, 2004)

As described in detail in the Assessment chapter, one aspect of Donna’s leadership role was to help teachers understand lexiles and how these scores can be used to meet the needs of their students.

I asked Donna about her role in parent-teacher conferences. She stated that, although she participated in conferences, not many parents attended. I asked her if she ever had referrals from counselors or even self-referrals from students, and she indicated that it happened, but very rarely.

Donna’s Daily Class Routine

Generally, when Donna’s students arrived to her class, they followed a similar routine each day. First, the agenda was posted on the board and then a sequence of procedures was followed. Research has confirmed that having a regular routine helps struggling students. When students understand why they are learning specific things it

enhances their learning (Tovani, 2000). I arrived in Donna's classroom on my first day in the school, and, as the students arrived, they sat at rectangular tables, two students to a table. Donna had written an agenda on the board that read as follows: *Twisted* (read aloud), News, Main Idea Review, Topic and Main Idea. This would be the order of the day. Every day began with a read aloud, followed by the news, and then reading strategy/comprehension instruction.

There were six tables and a large rocking chair in the room. Five students were in class when the bell rang and five others came in shortly after (Observation, May 4, 2009). One student was occupying the rocking chair and the rest of the students sat at the tables. This seating arrangement and pattern of some students arriving on time and some coming in late continued during my subsequent visits (Observations, May, 2009).

Donna began class with a read aloud. She told me in an interview later that day that she always began with a read aloud. Donna sat in front of the class at one of the tables. She read aloud for approximately 10 minutes. She selected a book that she believed her students would find engaging and of high interest. On that day, she was reading an engaging adolescent novel. On most days, students listened intently to the story (Observations, May, 2009). As I continued to observe class, interest in the story was apparent, though attention varied for some students. Donna did not interrupt the reading often, but she did "think aloud" where appropriate to model some of the strategies she had been discussing in class. For example, she modeled the use of context clues to find the meaning of a word that was easily defined using context (Observations, May 6, 2009). On another occasion, she took the opportunity to point out how structural analysis could be used to help identify the meaning of the word incoherent (Observations,

May 13, 2009). I made a note to myself that she did this at opportune times, and she did it such a way that it did not interrupt the meaning, or flow, of the book.

On another observation, Donna was reading a section of the book that was particularly good for the strategy of visualization. She recognized that some students were off task and adjusted her activity to engage them in a more active role than just listening. Donna asked them to draw a picture of what she had read. She reread it while the students attempted to draw a picture of this section of the book. The students appeared to enjoy this activity and Donna was successful in regaining their attention (Observation, May 20, 2009).

At the end of the read aloud each day, students made predictions for the next day's reading, a well-known reading strategy to help students monitor their understanding of the reading. Then the students transitioned into the next activity, the news segment. Donna told me that her students do not think reading is important, so she included activities that modeled reasons for reading. For example, the read aloud was an engaging, high interest book that was read for entertainment, whereas the news segment provided a real world example of literacy skills such as the ability to identify and summarize important information related to current events.

The library media specialist taped the daily news for the students each morning. Donna told me in an interview that she included the news segment because it is a real-life activity and the ability to summarize and explain the main idea in the news is an important skill. During the exercise, Donna handed out a sheet that the students were to use to record their thoughts on the day's news. The sheet included questions such as: "Which news story was the most interesting and why?" "Which news story do you think

is the most important and why?” “Which news story do you think is the least important and why?” “Which news story do you have the most knowledge of and where did you learn about the topic?” and “Which news topic would you like to learn more about?” Participation in this activity varied depending on the content of the news on any particular day. Students knew they would get a grade for this activity, and it appeared that, since they had to watch it in class anyway, they figured they might as well go ahead and respond to her questions. On one day, I observed that Donna integrated math into the news discussion. One of the stories dealt with the increasing diversity in the United States. Donna asked her students, “How could we graph this?” The question grabbed the attention of several students. One of the students volunteered “pie chart,” and another suggested “bar graph” (Observations, May 14, 2009). Donna seized the teachable moment, integrating math and language arts into an activity that was authentic and interesting to her students.

It is important to note that the instructional role with struggling readers at the high school level is particularly difficult because they have often been struggling for many years before getting to high school; accordingly, their attitudes about school in general, and reading in particular, are poor. I have included the specifics on Donna’s instructional day in order to show how she tries to balance necessary skills with real-life activities such as the news segment. After a brief discussion on the news, the students transitioned into the reading activity, which was a review of main idea. Donna asked a student to pass out the textbooks. While he was doing so, an interesting exchange occurred related to the news segment of the class.

Student: How about we just watch it this time? Adults don’t sit and take notes when they watch the news.

Student: Why can't we just watch it?
Donna: I wish we could.
(Observations, May, 2009)

The students recognized that their homework sheet was not a “real world activity.” One of the issues this example highlights is the necessity for meaningfulness and authenticity of the activities that students are asked to complete. The more meaningful and authentic, the more relevant the students see the activities; hence, engagement increases. However, scaffolding is necessary with these students because they also need a framework to help them understand the tasks and avoid frustration (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). While some activities themselves are not authentic (e.g., main idea worksheets and news article guides), they can be used to provide the framework necessary to help these students develop an understanding of necessary skills. I would argue that using more authentic, interactive activities would not only help students apply these skills in a more realistic way, but also help with some of the behavioral issues I observed during my visits. However, these students need to acquire the basic skills before applying them in more authentic ways. Thus, we see the quandary of balancing instruction in the remedial skills needed to finish school and transition to the work environment, with making instruction active, participatory, and relevant.

After the students asked why they couldn't “just watch” the news, Donna explained the reason why identification of the main idea was important. She realized that this was not something that her students would choose to do, but she believed that it is a necessary skill, and, based on her previous instruction and assessments, she saw a continuing need for instruction on this topic. *“Yesterday we did main idea. This is a hard concept, but you need to have this down, so we will be working on this the rest of*

the year” (Observation, May 6, 2009). I could see that main idea was difficult for her students, and it took her several class periods using a variety of approaches to experience success. Success was defined as the ability to successfully identify main ideas and supporting details in pieces of text. Some students were clearly displeased with this news; this could be observed through their body language, which included by eye rolling, groaning, and other off task behaviors (Observations, May 3–13, 2009). Donna asked the students to turn to page 179 in their books. She reminded them of the previous work they did on how to locate the main idea and where it could be found. Next, she explained topic identification as the first thing they should think about, and she described it as “which word you see the most often.” Several students continued to remain off task (Observation, May 6, 2009).

At this point, Donna used an overhead transparency and reminded students that signal words, or key words, could be used to help them distinguish examples from main ideas. Participation increased and several students began to find examples. I noticed that many students gave incorrect answers to these examples, despite their simplicity; these were very basic, short paragraphs with perhaps four sentences. Each sentence was numbered and the topics and main ideas were obvious in most cases (Artifacts; Observation, May 6, 2009). On numerous occasions, I observed that the students were off task and I could see them text messaging and engaging in behaviors such as tapping pencils on the table, ripping labels off plastic bottles and rocking back and forth in their chairs. Donna grew upset about the negative behaviors and eventually told them to be quiet. Some continued in their behavior and Donna asked one student to leave the classroom. The rest settled down for the next activity.

I notice that there were some intercom interruptions during class calling students to the office. This happened twice in one class period on one of my observations, and Donna asked, “*Does he/she have to come right now?*” The response was, “*Yes, right now.*” According to Donna this happened “a lot” (Observations, May 13, 2009). This type of interruption is distracting to both teacher and students and, with a group of students who are often easily distracted, these types of interruptions cause a major disturbance to the flow of instruction.

On a different day, Donna told the students they would be doing a review of main idea identification. She had them work with a partner, gave them different paragraphs from the text she had been using, and asked them read and discuss them before they shared with the group (Observation, May 13, 2009). While this activity was an attempt to have all students actively engaged in the activity, when Donna asked each group to have one person read the paragraph and the other to explain their answer, all but two refused to read the paragraph. In the end, she ended up reading it for them. Establishing a balance between high-interest, authentic learning experiences and covering necessary skills and strategies needed by students is challenging. An advantage of staying involved in the teaching role is that it may help Donna instruct others in differentiation and providing support for struggling readers; however, it can also work as a detriment, because it takes time away from her leadership role; in turn, other teachers might perceive that she is not working with the mainstream population, but only with her specific subpopulation. This is further discussed in the section entitled “Student Subpopulation.”

After class, I asked Donna about a seating chart or other classroom arrangement. She told me that she does not use a seating chart because she has not found it helpful in

reducing off-task behavior. However, she indicated that she moved students around when she felt it was necessary to help keep them on task. Donna and I spoke about other options for classroom management and she told me that she has tried all sorts of different seating arrangements and interactive work, but she has had the most success with what she is doing currently. I made a note that she remained positive and composed, even when her students were off task. On only one occasion did I see her become frustrated and make an on-the-spot decision to give the students a quiz on the read aloud book. This appeared to be a rash response stemming from her annoyance with their behavior on that particular day (Observation, May 13, 2009). We discussed ways that Donna has tried to address the problems with behavior and she explained that she has tried different seating patterns; she has used high-interest materials and choice when possible; and she has even collaborated with a co-worker so that there were two teachers in the room. None of these practices made a difference in addressing the negative behavior.

One example of a time she tried to find something meaningful that the students could relate to, but still learn a necessary skill, was in her use of signal words to identify a time sequence in writing. Donna wrote a paragraph with isolated sentences on the overhead. The subject of the paragraph was parent-teenager relationships, and the lack of understanding between teenagers and their parents. This appealed to her students and they settled down from their previous inattention. Participation was noticeably higher than in other activities I observed (Observation, May 13, 2009).

I observe a noticeable negative change in behavior in both of Donna's classes today. I am wondering if it is the advent of nicer weather, or the proximity to yearend that is making them behave so poorly. The topics that Donna is covering in instruction are necessary to a basic understanding of reading; she has noted that she believes it is absolutely necessary to keep working on main idea/topic/details and signal words because these are lifelong skills necessary for comprehension.

These are tough kids to teach because they are in and out of school (skipping, suspensions, lack of interest) so often that they don't have much consistency. Many of them are flunking all their other classes and a couple of them are only in school a few hours a day by decision of the school. (Observations, May 13, 2009)

Donna's students also completed journal writing once per week. They could write whatever they wanted to in their journals. Donna responded in detail to each and every journal entry on a weekly basis. This is another activity that allows the students some choice in their writing. Since Donna responds to each and every journal entry, her students know that she is personally interested in each individual student, and if the opportunity arises, it allows her to provide them with some guidance, which is one of her "unofficial roles." Such roles will be discussed in the section titled "Student Subpopulation" at the end of this chapter.

Donna's students worked in the computer lab during some of the time I was observing. They were working on projects of their choice. She commented that students exhibit more buy-in and were more vested in their work if they had choice in their learning experiences. This was a long-term project and, before they began, Donna modeled the entire research process for them using the topic of child slavery. She provided them with handouts to help guide them through the entire process from selecting and narrowing down a topic through the end product, a PowerPoint presentation. Donna moved around the room while they were working, asking students questions and providing them with positive feedback (Observations, May 4, 2009). Motivation is a key issue with high school below-level readers, and Donna's efforts show that she tries to keep a balance between high interest motivational work and strategies and skills that may or may not be motivating, but are necessary to move her students forward (Observations, May 4, 2009).

While the students were engaged in their long-term projects, they spent some days in the computer lab and other days in their regular classroom. On regular classroom days, Donna taught them skills they needed to cope with their content classes and to prepare them for the functional literacy skills they would need after high school. On several of my visits, they were continuing to work on main idea identification. Donna adjusted her instruction based on the needs of her students (Observations, May 3–13, 2009).

At the end of one of her classes, Donna reminded the students to sign up for a date to make their presentations. Once the presentations began, it was obvious that many of the students had selected topics that were of interest to them, and they were able to gather and summarize information, put it into a PowerPoint presentation, and speak in front of their peers about the topics (Observations May 4, May 6, May 13, 2009; Artifacts). In this way, Donna was supporting the use of choice and active participation in the classroom, which has been established to improve achievement in secondary schools (Alvermann, 2002; Alvermann et al., 2007). This is an element of instruction that Donna can use in her leadership role, that is, helping teachers design meaningful projects that involve literacy as well as their content material. (Observations May 4, May 6, May 13, 2009; Artifacts).

One overriding theme that became evident during my observations of Donna's classes centered on the similarities among the population of students with whom she works. The concern was whether or not isolating these students together into one class was the best way to address their needs, or if they would they be better off receiving Donna's assistance either directly or via teacher coaching within their content classes?

Beers, Probst, and Rief (2007) suggest that, “schools need to re-vision reading and writing instruction as a continuum rather than an either-or-situation” (p. xv). They maintain that these students need daily instruction from a teacher with expertise in reading. “They need a small class that meets daily for at least forty-five minutes in addition to their regular English/language arts class” (p. xvi). The students with whom Donna works would fall at the far end of their suggested continuum, characterized by students who read many grades below grade level and lack basic skills such as those described above.

Resources

Locating resources for struggling readers at the high school level can be a difficult task. There are programs available, but these one-size-fits-all packages that promise success for all struggling readers are not what these students need; rather, they benefit from exposure to a broad variety of materials, including technology, and both narrative and expository text at a wide range of reading levels.

When I inquired about resources, Donna told me that resources were hard to find at the high school level. We discussed the differences between the available materials for reading in elementary, middle, and high school levels, and she noted that it was quite time consuming to try to build sets of materials to use with her students because they were reading so many years below grade level. However, she knew that her students were required to read a variety of both narrative and expository text; therefore, they needed to learn strategies to help them with multiple kinds of texts. Thus, Donna spent a great deal of time on the Internet looking for resources and ideas from other schools and districts (Observations, May 4, 2009).

While we were discussing the lack of resources for high school below-level readers, she commented that sometimes she wished she “could just reach up on the shelf over there and grab the English book where the lessons are right there,” although she knew this would not be good practice because the materials used for instruction needed to be at each student’s instructional level, thus requiring the use of multiple texts (Observations, May 14, 2009).

Donna frequently used technology to find multilevel articles for her students and made use of high interest books for read alouds. She acknowledged that her students need to be active learners, and not passive recipients of information she transmits to them, so she tried to spend some of each day in this type of activity. However, she also reminded me that her students were coming to her with very low-level vocabularies and other reading deficits that she needed to address. She showed me two books that she used with her students; one was *Groundwork for College Reading* (Langan, 2008), which she used because it contains skills that Donna believed her students would need in order to succeed in high school, and/or achieve success on the GED. The other book she used is *Building Vocabulary Skills, 3rd Edition* (Nist & Mohr, 2002). She believed it was absolutely essential that these students build their vocabularies, and she believed that the lack of background knowledge, along with very low vocabulary levels, was a large part of her students’ reading problems (Observations, May 4, 2009). This combination of resources helped Donna reach some of the guidelines that adolescent learners need and deserve, including explicitly modeling the thinking process and using explicit instruction. Although some of the resources Donna used were not highly engaging text, she integrated these more direct approaches with the use of high interest, engaging materials and used

student choice to provide a balance between teaching necessary literacy skills required in other content courses and providing a choice of high interest materials with more collaborative approaches.

The time that Donna spent searching for resources for her own classes is important to note because it is time-consuming and reduces the amount of time available for Donna's leadership and assessment roles. It should also be noted, however, that knowledge of resources, compilation of text sets, and alternative sources for both above and below level readers is a part of Donna's leadership role. This subject is discussed in more detail in the Leadership Chapter.

Testing and Assessment

Standardized Testing.

Donna's students take the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) three times per year. Scholastic, Inc. (1996–2009) describes the SRI as follows:

SRI (SRI) is a research-based, computer-adaptive reading assessment for Grades K–12 that measures students' level of reading comprehension and reports it using the Lexile Framework® for Reading. Data aggregation and disaggregation by demographic subgroup helps administrators monitor progress toward Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) while classroom and student-level reports help teachers to place students, differentiate instruction, monitor progress, and forecast state test results. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/sri/overview/faq.htm#1>

Student results are provided using lexiles, described earlier in this chapter in the section entitled "Class Structure and Placement."

Donna's class went to the computer lab to take this test for the final assessment of the year. She told me that the test questions were taken from a bank of questions that are designed for the reading levels of the students, making it possible to do a retake without

having the same questions repeated. A student may have been asked to retake a test if it appeared that no effort was put forth during testing. During the course of one of our discussions on the SRI, Donna illustrated what she saw as one of the difficulties with the SRI:

These students that you saw, so you know who these kids are, the first time they took the SRI at the beginning of the year, I'm looking 200s, 300s, 400s just these hideous scores and I'm thinking you cannot possibly be that dirn dumb. And these kids, you've seem 'em, they're not that bad, so after developing a relationship with them, however, I'm saying to them, 'Do this for me, please, please, take this seriously...I know you blew the first one off, don't blow this one off for me; I really need for you to show some growth because I know you're capable to do this—do this—and you know they did, and everybody went up. Everybody went up, everybody increased by 2, 3, 4, 500, and it was all a matter of them wanting to do it. They were just doing me a favor and that was like wow, it kind of made me rethink the whole SRI as a universal screening, but because there again, it's a different population. I mean most kids are going to want to do their best, but the population I have, they could care less and you really gotta beg and plead in order to get them to show you what they are actually capable of. It's frustrating. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

Because Donna's students had a problem with motivation, she believed that getting a representative reading level on any standardized test could be problematic, so she tested her students more frequently. In a discussion related to the variation that is seen with these test scores, she told me that this factor was one of the reasons that she tested her intervention students more frequently than the rest of the freshman class:

Well, there is (a large variation) and that's one of the reasons I wanted us to be able to do it three times a year, but with us, there's no way, so I'm lucky to get two, but with the SRI, don't you find that the first one is nothing—meaningless—the second one gives you a little bit better indication, but it's that third score—that's the one that is really kind of telling you that this is where the kid probably is and I can show that because I'll have data where a kid starts low, they go up, the next one they are going to be stagnant, they stay at the same point, and that tells me that is really where that kid is. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

Looking at some of the reports generated, the variance to which Donna was referring could be seen on one of the graph reports. However, she analyzed these results

and, for her intervention students, she was able to determine when, in her opinion, the students needed to repeat it. Donna felt confident that she was getting a good lexile number for her students.

A few students completed the test in less than five minutes; Donna immediately looked through their test results, which was possible because she had access to their test results online. She asked a couple of selected students to repeat the test because it was obvious they did not put any effort into the test (Observations, week of May 15, 2009). Donna and I discussed the testing and what happened with the results. She commented that there was no reading intervention in Grade 10, an issue of contention between Donna and the administration (Observation, May 24, 2009). The disharmony between Donna's view of the literacy hierarchy of needs, compared with the views of administration, is one of the themes that was identified throughout my fieldwork. Donna's role in schoolwide testing, including the way the SRI is used with the larger school population, is described in Chapter Six.

Regarding the WKCE test (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2009b), Donna's role involved some test monitoring for the schoolwide testing, but she did address the importance of this statewide test with her students. She performed test preparation with her students to help them learn and practice test-taking strategies prior the testing window.

Grading.

Donna described her grading policies and the types of work she graded for her Read to Learn class. When I asked her to explain grading policy, she responded:

I don't want to have to grade everything because, to me, that makes it more like every other class; and I don't want it to be like every other class. I want it to be more thinking-oriented, and more student-centered, where you have the opportunity for us to just talk things through. That's just kind of pie in the sky; it's not going to happen because really, they do need to be held accountable in some way, so really that's a huge weakness of mine. I do set up the grade book where reading activities are given a certain percentage, their journal is a certain percentage, like this project is another percentage of the total grade, their research project, that's a 500-point project that's really big, so in that regard I grade like other teachers, but I'm not as strict about it; for example you know, there's many things I do, like the news, they get their 20 points, or 8 points or however many points it is worth. (Interview, May 13, 2009)

She was conflicted with grading because the students she worked with struggled with reading, so she found herself in an awkward position. We discussed the grading conundrum with below-level reading classes in the upper grades. If reading intervention classes are self-contained at the high school level, the way in which grading is handled depends on the district. In Donna's case, grades were given for her class as they were for any other content area course, so she did her best to provide a variety of assessment opportunities for her students. Because her students were coming with a long history of reading difficulties, grading and assessment was difficult.

Student Subpopulation

Another theme that emerged throughout my interviews and observations of Donna's instructional role was related to her students. Because this population of students is unique from the rest of the school, her instructional role has an impact on her

role as a schoolwide instructional leader, which is covered in Chapter Six. Before discussing Donna's leadership role, it is important to understand the characteristics of the students with whom Donna works.

Bradley and the Revolving Door

It was immediately apparent from my first days in the school setting that Donna's office was a "comfort zone" for her students. One of my earliest observations was that the office was a "revolving door" for students who paraded in and out to tell her about their problems, their successes, their failures. On my initial visit, one student in particular came into the office and made himself at home in one of the chairs in her office. He remained there during the first period, went to her class for the second period, and returned to her office for the remainder of the morning after class (Observations, May 4, 2009). This continued every day I was in the school setting. I was fascinated by this occurrence and I wondered why this student was not in other classes, and why his other teachers would not be trying to locate him. I asked Donna about this student: "What happens if you contact Bradley's teacher regarding the amount of time he is in your office? Have you tried?" (Interview May 6, 2009). Donna's response was, "*Oh God, yeah. I did [talk to his teacher].*" (Interview, May 6, 2009). Based on observations on several days subsequent to this conversation, I noted that Bradley continued to hang out in Donna's office. She commented several times that the teacher continued to write him a pass to come to her office. The impact of this practice on both Donna's instructional and leadership roles is discussed in the following section. While Donna believed her good rapport helped to make these students feel comfortable in school and

may even have helped them to stay in school, it also caused her problems in her leadership role.

My observations during the school day showed that many students come to Donna looking for help and support when they were struggling in their content classes (Observations, May, 2009). She explained that she was willing to work with them, but her involvement sometimes was not welcomed by the students' primary teachers. Interestingly, Bradley's teacher seemed to be an exception. The following excerpts were taken from a series of interviews in which Donna described some of the tension she experienced between herself and some of the other classroom teachers within her instructional role.

The exception is Bradley, and I can't get rid of him. I mean, I told that particular teacher he's not working when he's in here; don't keep letting him come in here—he's not working. And then she sent him. Problem is Bradley—because he's been on the run for so long, he only has my class. That's the only class he has, and he's in her room (LD) all day. So that's why he wants to come in here—because it's something different. Yeah, so that's the problem with that one; that's an unusual case. But normally, they're kind of...it's just kind of weird... if I develop a relationship with them, it's very strange and I don't know if that's just unique to me; it's very strange. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

The last sentence in this quote described a point that Donna mentioned a few times during my visits, and this was the issue of the rapport she had with her students. It was obvious from my observations in her classes and the time spent with her in her office during her non-instructional time that she had developed a good rapport with her students. She commented several times that she was concerned that this was not representative of others in this role. Nevertheless, I have found in my own experiences as a classroom teacher of struggling high school readers that the development of a positive rapport seems to be a natural occurrence because the students are in a safe, friendly

environment learning concepts that are appropriate for their reading levels; accordingly, it provides a positive outlet for these students who are so often placed in content classes where they are unsuccessful.

Donna provided several examples of ways in which the rapport she had with her students, and their tendency to come to her for help with their classes, caused some tension with her teaching colleagues.

Actually, some teachers have been very—jealous is not the right word, and I don't mean to use that word because it sounds like I have something that they want, and that's not, well, in some cases it is, it's relationship. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

Donna described another teacher's response, "It's not your job, Donna. It's not your job to work with her" (Interview, May 6, 2009). The tension between this teacher and Donna over Donna's instructional role can be viewed as a hindrance to her leadership role.

Donna responded by saying, "But, I don't mind working with her, I have a relationship with her, she'll work for me—just let her work with me" (Interview, May 6, 2009). She told me that this particular student was failing when she worked in the resource room because there was too much distraction there, but the primary teacher would not let her work with Donna. She pointed out that while this happened frequently with special education teachers, it also happened with regular education teachers. This issue was not unique to this one case, either:

So, that's happened in more than those two cases. It's happened kind of frequently where special education teachers, and I used to be one, but they're very protective of their students; and part of it is they've got to write the dirn IEP and they're held to it. So I understand that, but if you have a relationship with a kid, don't frickin' mess it up. I'm not trying to steal them. I mean my God, they can have 'em. So most teachers do not, and there are a lot of them, who do not want their kids to come in here for academic assistance with me. They'll say, 'you know what, they need to stay with me.' And you know, like Karita in the first period? She's not supposed to be in here...she just went LD, this semester is her first, and she'll say, 'I'm not going to that room. I hate her.' So, she'll either

skip, if I don't let her come in here, and they don't let her come in here, she'll skip school. What am I supposed to do? You know, I have a relationship with the kid, just let her stay in here, but they won't. They are very...you know, they just want them with them. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

This issue has an impact on the role of the high school reading specialist because it requires an additional time commitment. In addition, it created difficulties for Donna in her instructional leadership role because she was seen as a peer in a teaching role and may not have been recognized for her reading expertise. It also created tension with the teachers for whom she was expected to provide leadership and staff development.

A great number of the students Donna served came to school with issues that put them at risk for school failure. They were a subgroup of the larger student body, and it is important to understand that this group of students was not representative of the larger school. Because this population of primarily freshmen was so different from the rest of the student body, Donna's involvement with them isolated her from the rest of the faculty in her "classroom instruction" role. Donna described her students as unmotivated, at risk, troubled with alcohol and drug issues, legal issues, and social problems. I argue that her isolation, combined with the characteristics of the students with whom she works, made her ability to function in the leadership role more difficult. Further, this illustrates a significant difference between the elementary and secondary level (i.e., structure). This structural difference is described in detail in the Leadership Chapter.

I was immediately struck by the extraordinary amount of time that Donna spent with her students, both past and present. They were frequently in and out of her office. After observing many students coming in and out of her office, asking her advice, telling her about their problems and issues, it became clear to me that these students were not characteristic of the general student body, and that these students took up a lot Donna's

time during the day. As a result, Donna began to take on additional, informal roles including that of guidance counselor and confidante. Additionally, the paraprofessional who was in charge of discipline and finding students who have truancy or legal problems, spent quite some time working with Donna because she had many of these students in her classes.

One of the terms I heard quite often during my observations was the term “on the run.” I first encountered it during our discussion of Bradley. In an extended conversation with Donna about some of the students she teaches, I asked her about the term “on the run.” Her response was “*on the run—they run away*” (Interview, May 6, 2009). I asked her where they were running to, and her response was “*Drug houses usually, they’re all local*” (Interview, May 6, 2009). This led to a new line of questioning regarding her relationship with the students, their parents, the administration, and her teaching colleagues.

When I explored the issue of the students “on the run,” Donna explained:

If they’re on the run usually it means they’ve been in jail and they get out of jail and they go to shelter care. And, they don’t like shelter care, so then they leave. So they’re ‘on the run’ meaning they’re out, but the kids will say, ‘You know what? He’s ok.’ They won’t tell me where—whose house, but they will say, ‘He’s Ok, you know I just saw him last night.’ (Interview, May 6, 2009)

In further discussion, I asked Donna about her responsibility to locate these students who were “on the run.” She told me that she did respond to parent questions to let them know that their child is “in the area and he’s safe,” but she always indicated that she did not know the exact location. Donna stated,

I don’t want to know and I really don’t want them to tell me where because then I’ll lose my relationship with them because then they’re (school officials, police) going to go get them. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

This interview raised several questions regarding her role. If the role was well defined, where did the counseling/confidante piece fit? This aspect of Donna's role took up a significant amount of her time. So that meant it also took time away from her leadership and assessment roles.

Donna commented about the importance of relationship building with her students on many occasions, both in formal interviews and in casual discussions. It did not take a long time to see that her students placed their trust in her and considered her a confidante. However, this placed her in a somewhat difficult position at times, and may have detracted from her other role responsibilities. Her responsibilities as confidante took additional time from her schedule: it also created tension among some faculty members. These issues are explored in the Chapter Six, "The Leadership Role of the Reading Specialist."

Overall Summary of the Instructional Role

While the IRA does not prioritize the roles of the reading specialist, Donna has prioritized her responsibilities, and she placed the instructional role with students as her top priority. Since she had no formal job description, she took the opportunity to rank her job responsibilities using her professional judgment. The lack of a formal job description was identified as a major theme, and is explored in detail in Chapter Six. Some of the challenges she faced in her instructional role included the lack of a curriculum and available resources with which to instruct, as well as isolation from other teachers. Her instructional role also had an impact on her overall role as the high school reading specialist because it not only required a significant amount of time, but it created

difficulties for Donna in her instructional leadership role. She was seen as a peer in a teaching role and may not have been recognized for her reading expertise.

Although Donna prioritized instruction as her first responsibility, administration did not; they saw her role as primarily that of coach. Again, the lack of a written job description resulted in a problem that could have been avoided. Donna's characteristics and views regarding how the schoolwide literacy role should be arranged will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six. Regardless of how the leadership role is designed, one thing is clear: differing priorities create obstacles to a unified view of the role.

Chapter Six The Leadership Role of the Reading Specialist

One of Donna's responsibilities was schoolwide leadership, and I observed her in this role on several occasions. She was considered to be the "literacy coach" in her leadership role, although her title as "reading specialist" was never differentiated from her role as "literacy coach." Thus, she was involved in the traditional role of the reading specialist in her instructional and assessment roles. This chapter, divided into four major sections, is organized around themes that emerged related to her leadership role. The four major sections, with subcategories in each major section are as follows: Section One, "Literacy Leadership at Laurelton," includes subcategories on roles and responsibilities, qualifications, resistance to literacy coaching, Donna's approach to literacy leadership, and her perceptions of administration's approach to literacy leadership. Section Two, "Barriers Donna Faces in Her Leadership Role," includes subcategories on lack of recognition, power and authority issues, barriers due to structural factors, and involvement in staff meetings and staff in-services. Section Three, "District Involvement," provides a description of Donna's involvement at the district level. Finally, the chapter ends with Section Four, "Concluding Remarks on Leadership." Within each section, I describe my observations and the current trends and issues in the literature pertinent to the findings.

Donna was working as both the reading specialist and the reading coach. The following quote illustrates the quandary Donna faced in her multifaceted role:

They keep saying you coach, you coach, you coach. I keep saying I teach, I teach, I teach. (Interview, May 19, 2009)

This dichotomy between Donna's role in leadership (coaching) and her instructional role was observed frequently during my school visits. Establishing a balance between the needs of struggling readers and moving literacy learning forward throughout the school was one of the biggest challenges faced by Donna and the administration. The IRA (2000) breaks the leadership role into three areas: (1) literacy program development and coordination, (2) staff development, and (3) locating and coordinating resources. While these facets were all included in Donna's role, they were not easily divided into these categories. As with instruction, the role, as it was played out in the context of the high school setting, was not as clearly defined. Therefore, this chapter will address the major themes that emerged as the data were analyzed for the leadership role.

Literacy Leadership at Laurelton

Donna's vision of the leadership role of the high school reading specialist was to provide literacy leadership to a Literacy Team as a means of providing staff development to content teachers on best practices in literacy. Her approach was somewhat different from administration's view of the role, which they saw as an individually based coaching role. They wanted Donna to contact individual teachers and coach them to integrate literacy into their curricula. Donna's preferred method, a team approach, is discussed in the section entitled, "Donna's Approach to Literacy Leadership."

It is important to note, however, that Donna's disfavor with the term "coaching" could have arisen because she was viewing it through too narrow of a lens. She was not considering the broader concept which many who support coaching adopt, which is a

team approach through collaboration between teachers, administration, and the literacy coach, with the goal of increased student achievement (Moran, 2007; Sturtevant, 2004).

The difference between Donna's view and that of administration was apparent in her response to one of the questions related to the leadership role. I asked her, "How do you describe your 'leadership role' in the schoolwide instructional domain as far as the whole school is concerned?" She responded:

Struggling. If I had to sum it up in one word, struggling, or drowning. (Laughs). Or I could say nonexistent. Well, it's supposed to exist, staff has been told that it exists. I've been introduced as the Literacy Coach even though I didn't want to be introduced that way—but nobody has ever explained just exactly what that means to staff. So, that's why I would say it's struggling—because administration has one view of what that entails—that leadership role, which is going into each and every teacher's classroom and teaching them strategies...and that's not, that's not reality, that's not the role and that's not the way I envision the role. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

During my time in the school, Donna commented several times that administration's approach to the leadership role was based on coaching, whereas she preferred to approach the role from the standpoint of a Literacy Team, which she described as follows:

The Literacy Team—to me that's really kind of a priority because those are the people that [sic] are going to be listened to more by the faculty, so training the Literacy Team in best practice in literacy, getting them up and running—meeting them every two weeks and working on a literacy plan for the high school—to me that is very important, and that, that does take quite a bit of time. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

This quote suggests that administration and Donna never developed a unified understanding and description of the coaching facet of her role; thus, the other teaching staff were not in a position to understand her role. Consequently, there was also no initial understanding prior to implementation. I would argue that this lack of planning and understanding caused Donna undue difficulty in her leadership role, and some of the

challenges she faced could have been lessened or avoided through careful planning and communication. Issues that arose from this lack of a common understanding and purpose are embedded throughout this chapter in the appropriate sections.

Roles and Responsibilities

From the start of the conversation on leadership, it was clear that there were differences of opinion regarding how the leadership role should be structured. The issue was complicated by the lack of both a formal job description and the lack of a district-level reading specialist (discussed later in the chapter). Because there is often so much uncertainty surrounding the role of the reading specialist at the high school level, it is very important for both schools and districts to define the role clearly beginning with the title of the position.

As Moran (2007) points out:

The use of literacy coaches is not without controversy, however, and there are a number of reasons for this, including uncertainty about the purpose of literacy coaching, multiple interpretations of the title and role of a literacy coach, and the varying qualifications of the individuals hired to provide the coaching support. (p. 3)

Each of these points is relevant in Donna's case. After Donna described her leadership role at the current time, I asked her to "Describe how you meet the instructional 'literacy' needs of the teachers in this school." Donna laughed and offered the following response:

I don't. Well, that's the thing—they've got to ask. You can't force it on them; you can't force any of that on them because they first have to realize that they need something new. Nobody came to me even though they were forced to have a literacy goal as part of their annual assessment. So, that was the first thing that was done last year...every single teacher must have a literacy goal and they must meet with the reading specialist. Nobody knocked down my door [laughs]. I had a couple of teachers in the beginning of last year, so after I was introduced, said,

'We're so fortunate to have a reading coach...literacy coach, blah, blah, blah, and everybody's like, 'What can she coach? 'What is that about?' Never defined, nothing. And then they said this is a mandatory staff meeting, and you must have a literacy goal and you will be assessed on it and everybody is looking at me like 'Grrr. We hate you.' (Interview, May 21, 2009)

Although there are several issues embedded in this quote, one of the most obvious is the lack of communication between Donna and the administration about her role. According to Donna, she was not told that there would be a literacy goal before it was presented to the staff. Further, it appeared that the faculty did not have an understanding of the literacy coach's role as advocated by the administration. One of the problems with the current focus on coaching is that the very term "coaching" is also not clearly defined. Walpole and McKenna (2004) have called literacy coaching "a practice in search of research" (p. 1), and there is much in the professional literature to suggest that the widespread interest in coaching has preceded any available research to help "guide practitioners on the key issues of literacy coaching" (Moran, 2007, p. 22).

In a discussion of the lack of clarity surrounding the coaching role, Moran (2007) describes the confusion surrounding the coaching terminology when she asserts, "Further testament to the general confusion about the role of the literacy coach is the variety of names the position goes by" (Moran, 2007, p. 4). While it may seem insignificant, the terms "literacy coach," "reading coach," "instructional coach," and the myriad offshoots of these terms clearly work to confound the role. I would argue that, in the absence of a licensed, regulated category for coaching (including standard terminology) that the title of "reading specialist" should continue to be used. A second, important issue concerns the qualifications for the reading, or literacy coach.

Qualifications for the Coaching Role

The IRA (2004) has taken up the issue of the role and qualifications of the reading coach in the United States. While the IRA provides some guidelines, they acknowledge that the term reading coach and the related certification issues contain uncertainties. That said, they provide this guidance:

With the changing roles have come a variety of new titles, such as *reading coach* and *literacy coach*, and there is considerable variability in the job descriptions for these coaches...At present, there is little consistency in the training, backgrounds, and skills required for such positions, and there is little consistency in the general competence of coaches, in part because there are no agreed upon definitions or standards for the roles. (IRA, 2004, p. 2)

While this position statement has many qualifying statements illustrating that not all coaches are reading specialists, the position statement does state clearly:

Reading coaches frequently act as reading specialists when they provide leadership for school-, district-, and state-level reading programs. In the leadership role, they design, monitor, assess reading achievement progress; they provide professional development and coaching for teachers and building personnel; they are responsible for improving reading achievement; and they may also supervise and evaluate staff. These responsibilities *are the responsibilities of reading specialists*, [emphasis added] and if reading professionals are serving in these roles (regardless of their titles), they must meet the standards for reading specialist/literacy coach as indicated in the *Standards for Reading Professionals, Revised 2003*. (IRA, 2004, p. 1)

Sturtevant (2003) has written about the coaching role, which she describes as follows:

The position of *literacy coach* is, in many ways, similar to that of the 1970s and early 1980s secondary school reading specialist who worked in federally funded projects in low-income schools across the United States. Like these earlier counterparts, the twenty-first century literacy coach must be highly knowledgeable in reading and literacy. Most states already have certification processes in place for reading specialists; these processes are appropriate models for helping to define the skills and knowledge that secondary school literacy coaches need. (p. 12)

Notwithstanding the fact that the role and qualifications of literacy coaches lack clarity, it is nevertheless important to outline and describe the qualifications of the person in the coaching role within a specific school and/or district. Thus, it would appear to be important to develop a clear understanding of the role among the faculty and the school community. This is something that Donna reported had yet to happen in her district. Again, it is difficult because the term “coaching” was not clearly defined before it gained widespread popularity in schools. In Wisconsin, the certification most closely resembling the skill set necessary to the role remains the reading specialist license. Nonetheless it seems clear that, regardless of the title used, expertise in reading and writing is essential.

High Schools and Teacher Resistance to Literacy Coaching

Literacy coaching at the high school level is challenging for two overarching reasons; one difficulty is the high school structure and the second is content teacher resistance. Sturtevant (2004) cites several factors as reasons for the “lack of implementation of research-based instructional practices in secondary schools.” Factors relating to the high school structure that contribute to difficulty in coaching include lack of time, large class size, high numbers of students and classes per teacher, the traditional school curriculum, and high-stakes assessments (p. 8). As described in detail in Chapter Two, these structural factors are well ingrained and they have been resistant to change over time (Cuban, 1984; O’Brien et al., 1995). The last factor, teachers’ and administrators’ long-held instructional knowledge and beliefs related to content teacher resistance (Sturtevant, 2003, p. 8), is a problem Donna encountered on many occasions.

Donna shared the following story with me, which took place after the initial staff

meeting during which the faculty were informed that they would need to have a literacy goal. It illustrates the need for literacy leadership:

I had a teacher come in and say, 'Now, I have this text, this short piece of text here, and I gave this to all my students and nobody passed the quiz.' I said 'OK,' because this is my 'first assignment,' if you will, as a literacy coach. And so I'm looking at this and it's science, I think it was physical science; I don't even know what science it was, so I'm looking at it and it was hard. I can't even read it and I'm relatively smart, not smart, but I can read. And I looked at it, I looked at the quiz she gave me and I am like, 'This is awful,' So then I'm thinking, 'OK, how do I tell this woman, 'This is not appropriate for 9th graders.' So that took me awhile...I finally went back to her, and I said, 'You know, look at this passage.' I mean—and I pointed out vocabulary and I said, 'The assigned texts are too difficult and they haven't a clue what you are trying to teach them. Background knowledge! Did you preteach vocabulary? This is hard'—and I had highlighted a couple of sentences and I said, 'Look at this, if they don't have background knowledge this is really tough.' She took offense and she said, 'Well, those kids are just you know, the worst crop of 9th graders I have ever seen.' (May 21, 2009)

This quote highlights one of the issues Donna faced on more than one occasion: the teacher put the blame on the students and became quite defensive. In this particular case, the teacher ended up agreeing to give the student another assessment after breaking the text into smaller, shorter pieces. However, Donna pointed out that the teacher never did accept her insight into the problem:

She never acknowledged that it's too hard; it's too hard, so that was the first experience and it was not a good one because she immediately, immediately became defensive. So [sighs], so I don't know, I mean it's gotten better, it's gotten better since then, but part of it was my role was never clearly defined by administration and the people were told this is the expert in literacy, you must have a literacy goal, and now go forth and go to her, so it was hard, so it still, it's a little bit better now the second year, but it's still not clearly defined to staff, it's just kind of a buzz word that is thrown out there. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

While Donna acknowledged that this was her first experience, and the situation had improved since that time, she recognized that teacher resistance is an issue in trying to use the coaching model at the high school level. One of the reasons coaching is so difficult is because the teachers view themselves as content experts and do not view the

teaching of reading as part of their discipline. This is problematic due to the structural barriers at the high school level noted in the beginning of this section. Much of the literature on coaching is based on research at the elementary level, or is presented in a general school framework.

Buly, Coskie, Robinson & Egawa (2006) address the differences in coaching at the elementary and middle and high school levels. They assert,

One challenge often comes when a model that has been effective in elementary school is implemented in middle or high schools without appropriate consideration or adaptation to the world of secondary schools. (p. 26)

They raise some key points that may be ignored when coaching programs are undertaken at the secondary level, including less emphasis on individualization of instruction and the negative repercussions this can have on students: “Simply teaching content isn’t going to work for a large portion of students” (Buly et al., p. 26). Therefore, successful coaching models at the middle and high school levels need to take this difference into account (i.e., content dissemination versus individualized instruction).

Buly et al. (2006) suggest that the coach can help bridge the gap between the teachers’ content knowledge and the teaching learning cycle. However, the coach must receive training and professional development in helping to meet these goals. They describe the middle and high school coach’s role as follows:

We believe that an appropriate model for coaching at middle and high school levels involves a focus on developing a thorough understanding of the teaching and learning cycle; this means helping teachers to learn to assess all students in a classroom in every content area taught; to use that assessment data to evaluate the different needs of students; and then to appropriately plan instruction, and select materials for that instruction, based on the assessed needs of each and every student. (Buly et al., 2006, p. 26)

The lack of training and support that Donna has experienced has been faced by others in similar positions, according to Buly et al. (2006), who point out:

The absence of support for those who are expected to provide professional development. In many districts we find good teachers who are simply removed from the classroom or reading specialist positions and labeled as ‘coach’ and then left without the support they need to be an effective coach. (p. 27)

This aptly describes Donna’s situation. She was hired as a reading specialist, then moved to the position of literacy coach. Toll (2005) addresses this issue as well when she notes, “the overlapping roles sometimes cause confusion among others in the school” (p. 5). Teachers knew Donna as both their teaching colleague and as a teacher to struggling readers, as described in the Instruction chapter. As Mangin (2009) notes, “teachers had come to rely on reading specialists and para-professionals to work with under-performing students” (p. 2). It is imperative that a shift from a more traditional specialist to a coach is understood by the faculty if it is to be successfully implemented.

I would also argue that some of the resistance to coaching that Donna faced falls back to the lack of understanding of her role, which was a “*huge barrier in trying to formulate what it is you are going to do or not do*” (Interview, May 21, 2009). I inquired further about how lack of a well-defined role affects her position:

And I’ll tell you something else—if, you know, I am a fairly strong personality, but if someone was in this role that was not fairly assertive and outgoing, if someone was in that role like that, that is basically quiet and not assertive, you [sic] would die, you would never, ever be able to do it because you really have to, you have to put it out there because if you’re a docile person and you have that kind of personality where you just kind of sit back and wait, then you’re screwed because you cannot do it, because there is no role, you’ve got to make your own role, basically. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

It has been acknowledged that the coaching role is not firmly defined (Buly et al., 2006; Moran, 2007; Walpole & McKenna, 2004).

Despite the lack of clarity surrounding the role, in order for Donna to move forward with the coaching role in whatever format is decided upon (i.e., a team approach, an individual approach or a combination of the two), she would need to work with administration to come up with a plan to share with the faculty so that everyone would understand what her role involved and how it would relate to overall school improvement and student achievement.

Donna's Approach to Literacy Leadership

Donna confronted many challenges in her first experiences as a schoolwide literacy leader. Facing defensive teachers, teachers who often did not believe their students had any kind of reading problem, and teachers who believed they were already integrating literacy into their curricula, caused Donna to re-evaluate her approach to her role as a literacy leader. As referenced in the introduction, Donna supported the use of a Literacy Team as the way to approach schoolwide literacy because she believed that there would be better “buy-in” from members of their own department if they worked on a Literacy Team under her guidance—as opposed to working directly with her—because she was not an expert in their disciplines. Nevertheless, administration favored an individually based coaching model.

I was curious about administration's view of coaching, so I asked Donna why there was such a strong focus on “teacher” coaching. In fact, there were several occasions, during interviews and throughout my observations, on which we discussed some of the problems Donna saw with coaching as it was defined by administration. In one of our conversations, I asked her specifically how she would “infuse literacy into the content areas if not on an individual coaching basis.” She recalled a previous interview

in which she had described a science teacher who she tried to help and how she used that experience as a learning opportunity:

After the disastrous thing with the science teacher where I kind of realized, oh man, these people are really sensitive and they're going to be very defensive with anything at all that I have to say about their teaching. The first step, then was for me to put that service thing out there, where I just did a list of all the things that I could possibly do to help them that I thought was non-threatening—I'm not saying what they're doing is bad, I'm just saying if you need some help, here I am. So, I put that out there first, to me my role is less threatening and not to be seen as something that's forced on them. So that was the first step. I got back a lot of information from those, but I didn't have the time right then. So that [time] was kind of a negative thing. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

The “service thing” to which Donna referred was a letter that she wrote to staff asking them to review a list of services that she could provide; it stated that she could provide them with information and research support in the areas listed, and included classroom assistance as well as “providing staff development in literacy and adolescent learners.” This was a non-threatening way to invite teachers to enlist her help. One of the problems Donna experienced with this approach is that the teachers did not view themselves as needing coaching; thus, without any evaluative power, or validation as an authority on reading with discipline-specific knowledge, Donna’s ability to have an impact on teachers was limited.

Toll (2005) has offered ways to approach teachers who do not believe they need help. She suggests that the literacy coach approach these teachers in such a way that the learning is put on the coach rather than the teacher. For example, she suggests saying, “I’d like to learn about your work for my own sake. Because I work with everyone in the school, it’s helpful for me to know where our strengths are as much as where our problems are. Can we talk about your classroom?” (p. 121). This non-evaluative, non-

threatening way of approaching teachers might help others like Donna to forge relationships with teachers and take the focus off their instruction.

During one of my visits, Donna told me about a teacher who requested her assistance in helping him design a social studies unit using primary sources. She commented that he most likely requested help because one of his colleagues had a successful experience working with Donna on a unit using book clubs. She was pleased that a positive experience with one teacher caused another teacher to request her expertise. This was a positive step; however, she pointed out that this was only the second request for coaching assistance in the current year (Observations, May 14, 2009). I asked Donna if she believed that experiences like this would lead to more staff buy-in over time, and she cited this collaboration as a reaffirmation of this approach.

After her initial experiences trying to help teachers based on their questionnaire returns, Donna commented that timely responses to requests for assistance were important. Time was an issue that Donna spoke about frequently—particularly the lack of time she had to do a quality job in all the aspects of her role. In one of our interviews, she spoke about the time it took to research adolescent and high school literacy:

You have to keep reading up on the stuff and you have to keep looking into why do we have a problem in high school to begin with—why? And, all the books that you read, all the research articles that you read, trying to find out why does this problem exist and what can I do about it? That's a huge thing, so after all this research and looking into establishing the Literacy Team and what their role should be, I realized that it's got to come from them and this comes back to the personal learning—is it personal learning communities? Professional learning communities, it kind of feeds off that concept of teachers have to teach teachers, and as a literacy coach even if you've been a teacher, and everything you read says the best literacy coaches are usually teachers, it still doesn't matter. I mean it still doesn't because you're not right in there teaching their content, so teachers who are actually teaching that content are the best people to help them...get the Literacy Team people who have an interest in improving the school and the kids, get those people to say, 'Hey, I've tried this, this works, why don't you try it or

think about it?' How it's going to go over, I don't know because they don't all have the background knowledge yet. The big key is they have to make teachers understand that kids have to think about what they're teaching them, that's the biggest key. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

Again, the isolationist attitude of some classroom teachers persists, along with the departmental, hierarchical structure of high schools, despite the current emphasis on collaboration (Cuban, 1984; O'Brien et al., 1995). Nevertheless, Donna recognized that change that is internally motivated is preferable to change that is required, or made to be part of an evaluative process. For this reason, Donna summoned even more resolve to approach the leadership aspect of her role through a collaborative team approach. Ideally, the coaching program would involve both individual and teamwork. Toll (2005) suggests, "conferring with individual teachers is part of their [the coach's] work, but so is meeting with teams of teachers and study groups" (p. 82).

Donna has significant scholarly support for her team approach. Anders (1998) suggests that the formation of a literacy team, which she calls a literacy council, is a recommended way to start a coaching program. She describes three assumptions on which the literacy council is based:

- (1) The literacy program permeates every aspect of the curriculum and activities of the school.
- (2) Each educator in the school can contribute to the literacy program.
- (3) When people have an investment in a project/activity, they are more likely to take responsibility for the quality of that project. (p. 17)

Anders (1998) then describes the council leadership:

Ideally, the leader of the literacy council is a person who knows the reading and writing processes, who has experience teaching in the middle or high school, and who has at least a master's degree in reading, writing, or teacher education with an emphasis in reading/language arts. (p. 17)

Donna's approach to the Literacy Team at Laurelton was very similar to the ideas proposed by Anders. Donna was moving forward with the Literacy Team and working with them to move literacy initiatives forward. Since Donna did not have a formal job description stating that coaching was the method by which the leadership role must be arranged, she took it upon herself to work with the literacy team approach. However, Donna will need the support of administration in her efforts with the Literacy Team. Considering the three assumptions laid out by Anders, the principal or administrator must be committed to the literacy initiative.

Ippolito (2009) studied the role of principals in relation to literacy coaches. She describes one coach in a middle school and her relationship with the administrators with whom she worked. While this was a middle school, not a high school, there is an important message regarding the collaboration and team approach that is a rather foreign concept in high schools. Describing the administrators, the teacher "emphasized that the principal saw coaching and PLCs as the most efficient way to build teacher capacity" (p. 2).

In addition to the power of collaboration and dialogue, the Literacy Team had the advantage of being time efficient. Coaching individual teachers was difficult, in Donna's case, due to the sheer size of the teaching staff (>120) at her high school. Donna believed that the formation of a Literacy Team was the best way to deliver staff development because if it is well designed, teachers would be teaching teachers in their own content areas under the guidance of a reading specialist, while also learning from colleagues in their own content areas. When I asked Donna about how the Literacy Team was structured, she explained it this way:

When I first submitted that concept, my definition was that we would have at least one representative from every department mandatory—somebody has to be there and that they would serve two-year terms and that it would be their responsibility to go back to their departments and report what went on at the Literacy Team meetings, so they would have to go back and report to their department ‘This is what we’re doing, what do you think about it?’ It didn’t work out that way—administration said it has to be voluntary, and administration also said to keep it wide open to anybody and everybody, come one, come all. Well, you didn’t have to worry about that [laughs]. It didn’t get there. But it did, I was surprised that really, you know that we had as many people come forward as we did. I was surprised, but it took a lot of talking it up, if you will, it took a lot of ‘Hey, how about this?’ and some examples are some people who had just, you know, emailed me or mentioned, ‘You know what? My class, my kids aren’t listening—got any ideas?’ Which is not great, because what am I going to do—start whipping out articles? ‘Here, try this!’ But, I basically said, ‘You know what? You ought to think about joining the Literacy Team,’ that’s why we’ve got to form a Literacy Team and that’s kind of how it evolved. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

One of the values inherent in the concept of the Literacy Team was that the departmental representation provided each department with staff development delivered by their own content area teachers. Success was slow because the Literacy Team was so new; however, the power of PLCs in the coaching model has been discussed (and validated) by Mangin (2009):

Where reading specialists performed coaching functions or schools had successfully implemented professional learning communities characterized by collaboration and dialog, the teachers were more receptive to coaching. (p. 1)

Because Donna was advised that the Literacy Team would have to be voluntary, I wondered how many departments would end up with representation on the Team. Therefore, I asked her if they were all represented:

No, they are not; they’re not. We have, I mean we don’t have art, tech ed., music, phy ed, but we have the cores—we have one person from each core area, which is great, but there again, this is such a big school...that [one subject] for example, is divided into two groups, and they are totally different in their philosophies of teaching, so we have one of the good ones, but the group that we really need to work with, we don’t have a representative from that group. So no, all departments are not represented. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

This was the first year that Donna had worked with the newly formed Literacy Team, so the project was only in its infancy. Regardless, the Literacy Team had good departmental representation and it was a good beginning. The group seemed enthusiastic about their plans for the upcoming school year, and at one of the final meetings of the school year, they were working on determining how they would deliver the staff development to their departments. Donna pointed out, however, that the Literacy Team needed to get more exposure and recognition. Therefore, her idea was that the members of the Literacy Team, under her direction, would provide staff development, likely through the use of technology, and possibly through a podcast:

I plan on writing the scripts, and I plan on introducing it because I'm not in the Peace Corps—I mean I'm going to—I've got to—there's only so much I'm going to do for absolutely no recognition and this is something that it has to be known is coming from me, these people aren't just deciding, 'Oh, this is a skill/strategy that I can use,'—heck no, I plan on writing the scripts with them; I mean I'm going to do a template probably, and then sit down with them and say, 'OK, give me an example of a text that you use, an example of a unit, let's talk about one unit' and then try to figure out as they're telling me, going through their plans for that one unit, then I want to say, 'OK, this would be a good place for you to talk about using an anticipation guide, what do you think about that?' Or, 'How do you preview your vocabulary now when you introduce this lesson?' So, I'm hoping in that conversation with them that I can fill in the blanks in that template... What I envision is like a folder, a literacy folder, so you open this folder and I'll be doing the introduction... I want to say something about the definition of literacy—remember literacy is not just reading, so give an introduction and then click to see U.S. History, 'click here.' Whatever, so like a folder, and then I'd like to have a wrap-up, or after each podcast then I want to be able to have a comment. So, Jim does one on U.S. History using literature circles, maybe this is how I'm teaching U.S. History Revolutionary War, have multiple texts so then after he's done, then I'd like to come back on and repeat, kind of, the main points—'You noticed that Jim used different leveled texts, and student engagement was up,' so kind of give them, 'This is what happens because of this.' So I'm there multiple times, because I have to have ownership. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

The issue of ownership and recognition as the literacy expert came up on several occasions. There were two possible reasons for this, according to Donna. One was that

the reading specialist was employed under a teaching contract, so there was no authority inherent to the position which meant that an administrator needed to be in charge of reading. In Donna's school, the organizational structure at the high school was also a barrier. Both these factors had an impact on Donna's ability to function as a leader, and will be discussed later on in this paper. The issues of power and authority are addressed in detail in a subsequent section entitled "Collaboration and Support versus Power and Authority," and the structural barriers are described in detail in the section entitled "Barriers Within the Organizational Structure."

The structure of a coaching model has been addressed by Moran (2007) and others. The literature on the role of the literacy coach focuses on student achievement rather than teacher "monitoring." However, in Donna's case, it appeared that the teachers, rather than the students' academic achievement, were the driving force behind the coaching initiative. Some of the resistance Donna was facing appeared to be due to the "directive" that teachers would have a literacy goal, which made them feel as if it was being forced upon them. It can be argued that taking a wider view of coaching, focusing on collaboration and student achievement rather than teacher goal-setting, might improve Donna's relationship with the faculty.

Moran (2007) identifies three essential principles of coaching that fall "within the overarching goal of improved student achievement:"

1. Coaching should help establish a school culture that recognizes collaboration as an asset.
2. Coaching should develop individual and group capacity to engage in creative problem solving and self-reflection.
3. Coaching should provide a continuum of professional learning opportunities to support adults in their acquisition and use of specific knowledge, skills, and strategies. (p. 6)

It is evident from these points that Donna's team approach is in line with the literature. Working with individual teachers is also part of the coach's role; however, Moran (2007) cautions that "if staff members come to see the coaching program as an intervention for some rather than an opportunity for all, there can be negative reverberations for the entire school community" (Moran, 2007, p. 12). The way the literacy goal was announced to the staff at the beginning of the year is an example of the negative reverberations to which Moran refers. As we ended this segment of our conversation, Donna decided the word that best described her leadership role in the schoolwide domain was evolving. *"It's struggling...evolving. I mean I could sit here and think of all sorts of terms; maybe evolving, evolving would be a better word"* (Interview, May 21, 2009).

I had the opportunity to attend one of Laurelton's Literacy Team meetings. Donna opened the meeting with a reminder that the K-12 Literacy meeting was coming up, and that she would arrange for substitute teachers if the group would fill out substitute requests. She then explained the purpose of this upcoming district meeting, which was to address and work on inconsistencies between elementary, middle, and high school. Donna explained that there was a lack of consistency between these grade spans; this is addressed in a subsequent section. After this initial announcement, she reminded the group of their purpose: *"The function of the group is to oversee the Literacy Plan for next year"* (Observations, May 20, 2009). The group discussed how to, perhaps, use technology to get literacy into a schoolwide focus, including the possible use of technology in department meetings. One of the teachers suggested that maybe the first few minutes of department meetings could be used for this purpose. This way, the team would know that all staff has seen them, and it would be an administrative requirement.

Following this approach, it would “*take the burden off those doing the presentation.*” An added benefit of doing it this way would be that everyone would have exposure to the presentations; therefore, there would be some accountability (Observations, May 20, 2009).

Also, during the meeting, the team discussed which books to read to help them organize for their summer and fall literacy work. Donna played a key role in this meeting. She steered the committee toward the books that she believed would be the most useful for their purpose. At one point, one of the members suggested that they read a book on reading strategies. Donna explained to the group that she did not think this was the right direction, that promoting strategies in and of themselves is “risky,” so the group decided on the two books that she recommended (Interview, May 21, 2009; Observations, May 20, 2009).

The next item on the agenda was a “Glossary of Terms,” which she handed out to the group. There was no discussion on this item, so I asked her about it in a later interview:

I'm trying to figure out the best way to distribute that to staff. Part of our problem is that staff doesn't understand literacy, they don't know any definitions, so if I toss out a term like anticipation guide, they're like 'What? Huh?' So, they have to be educated before we can implement any changes because you can't tell/make suggestions if they don't have background knowledge, so the purpose of the Literacy Glossary is to provide them with some tool for background knowledge...so that's a part of it, they need background knowledge just like our kids need background knowledge and they don't have it. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

Donna explained that the Literacy Team had spent a lot of time discussing various definitions, and she eventually made the decision to complete the Glossary, take it to the team, and then the committee would decide how to disseminate it to the staff. Based on

my observations, Donna experienced the most success in establishing herself in a clear leadership role with the school Literacy Team. Establishing herself as the literacy leader in the school would be very important to future literacy efforts in the school, as described in the beginning of the chapter. I would argue that her work with the Literacy Team would build their recognition of her expertise, and through her leadership of this group, individual teachers would come to her with their literacy needs. While Donna moved ahead with the team approach, she explained how she perceived administration's approach to the leadership role.

Administration's Approach to the Leadership Role

Donna used the term "coaching" to describe her perception of administration's vision of literacy. However, Donna's literacy team approach is also a form of coaching. For purposes of distinguishing them, I will refer to Donna's approach as team coaching and her perception of administration's approach as simply "coaching" to keep it consistent with Donna's voice. Administration envisioned that Donna would work with individual teachers to teach them how to embed literacy strategies in their content disciplines. I ask Donna why she thought administration was so focused on this particular approach to coaching. She replied:

Because they've heard this buzz word in some conference or whatever and they're going to start tossing it out there and they think, well because this consultant said you must have a literacy coach, that's what you have to have in order to make your school wonderful and make everybody great readers, so they just take that and without really understanding what that involves, or understanding obstacles to that, or even understanding why these kids don't read to begin with...instead of understanding all that and having that knowledge, they just move forth, you know, like a bull in a china shop...we've got this, by golly, right now, and she's going to fix everything. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

There is no doubt that coaching is certainly in vogue at the current time. However, Moran (2007) asks the question, “Is there a research base that supports coaching?” (p. 21). This is interesting given the popularity of coaching. She continues, “Despite the current emphasis on scientifically based research, few substantive studies are available to guide practitioners on the key issues of literacy coaching” (Moran, 2007, p. 22). Even more surprising:

The contradiction is that despite the relatively little empirical evidence that supports coaching (and its link to student achievement), policies and practices for coaching are being put in place on a massive scale. (Moran, 2007, p. 22)

Moran provides many examples of scholars in literacy and leaders in the field writing in support of coaching (IRA, 2004; Moran, 2007, Sturtevant, 2003; Toll, 2006; Vogt & Shearer, 2007). Many documents published by such organizations as the Department of Education, the Learning First Alliance, the International Reading Association, the National Staff Development Council, and the National Council of Teachers of English all provide information and support to schools, districts and states wanting to implement coaching programs (Moran, 2007, p. 23). The gap between theory and practice, however, remains wide. Additionally, as previously noted in the Resistance section, the coaching model at the high school level is bound to be different than the one at the elementary level. Most of the articles written on coaching are based on the benefits and/or concerns with coaching in general, and they are often geared toward the elementary level; thus, they may not be directly applicable to the high school level.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the lack of an in-depth understanding by administrators about literacy can impede the development of a successful literacy program. Santa (2006) and others have described the necessity of administrative support

in the development of reading programs. Because both administration and reading specialists have detailed knowledge in their respective fields, they need to work together closely because the reading specialist has the in-depth knowledge of the reading process and the reading needs of students in the school, while administration has the authority to ensure that literacy initiatives are implemented in the school. The existence of a strong combination of the two can help to ensure a strong literacy program (Ippolito, 2009; NASSP, 2005; Santa, 2006; Vogt & Shearer, 2007).

Donna elaborated on her initial response to my question on coaching when I asked her to clarify a previous response: *“If coaching is by ‘administrative dictate,’ from where does administration get their knowledge?”*

You tell me, I don’t know. I think it’s kind of like when we go to WSRA (Wisconsin State Reading Association) [convention] and maybe you go to a session on something new and you’re all excited because the people are good presenters and stand there and say, ‘Oh, this is great, you know, our school was never making AYP [annual yearly progress], we had a horrible school and nobody could read...and then miraculously the literacy coach came in and everything is perfect.’ I think they attend something, or you know, one principal of one school does this and they have success and then they go back and tell their peers and then they say, ‘By golly, we’re going to do the same thing.’ I don’t think they have, or at least from my experience, they do not have the knowledge...they certainly don’t understand an adolescent reader; they don’t understand the problems with that population at all, not at all. (Interview, May 19, 2009)

Her response again affirms the research that supports having the administration work closely with the reading specialist (Santa, 2006).

If coaching, as it was defined by administration, would end up to be the expectation for Donna’s leadership role, I asked her how the district would provide her with training. She summed it up as follows:

‘They’ will not, and I think I know a lot about it. My 317 had coaching components. But the whole point is, that’s part of, when you get your 317 that is

what you learn, and does it have to be called 'coaching?' No! It has to be called 'this is best practice in literacy instruction'—not just to students, but informing other teachers. So that's another part of it. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

Later in the interview, she alluded to the content specialization once more, when she stated:

High school teachers are going to be very defensive because they are content teachers, that's their field, that is their chosen profession—not teaching but the content, and they are going to be—I don't know, it's a hard one. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

This is one piece of teacher resistance toward literacy coaching. The teachers are working in their content areas. They have specific expertise within their chosen fields that the reading specialist does not have. Therefore, it is likely that a credibility problem will exist. It is essential for teachers to develop an understanding of the reading specialist's role if they are expected to find it useful. Moran (2007) states this clearly:

After all, if the literacy coach or administrator is confused about the roles and responsibilities of the position, why should we be surprised when teachers fail to embrace the model with enthusiasm? (p. 5)

The roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach are not clearly defined (Moran, 2007). In this case study it is clear that the absence of a clear role description, as well as a lack of clarity among her peers and administration regarding her role, presented a major barrier to the effective implementation of Donna's coaching duties. Donna's literacy role was further complicated by the fact there was no literacy coach assigned to oversee the literacy curriculum for the entire school district.

Specific to coaching, Moran (2007) discusses the importance of careful planning and consideration of the role of the literacy coach before implementation. She asserts that the first questions that should be discussed are "Why hire a literacy coach?" and "What is the goal of the position?" Her response describes the position in which Donna

found herself—“Often the coach is already on board, and the questions have yet to be asked, much less answered” (Moran, 2007, p. 4).

Notwithstanding these points, the sheer time limitation of working with over 120 teachers individually, while also working in both the instructional and assessment roles, is impractical. This is not to say that there would be no individual coaching, but having the literacy team, or small PLCs, in combination with individual coaching would lighten the load for the other facets of the position; at the same time, content teachers in the same disciplines would be working in a collegial environment, a key aspect to a true coaching model.

Although administration seemed to be set on using an individual coaching approach for literacy leadership, I asked Donna, “Can you describe for me your vision of how coaching could work in this school?”

That’s tough—you know why it’s tough? Because quite frankly, I don’t believe in that whole coaching thing, so I mean, I like the learning community thing better, or the professional learning communities. Personally, I like that concept better because I think that change has to come within, within the person of course, but I really think that it has to be, they have to be made aware of where they need to improve, how they need to improve, where the problems are and they’re not going to be made aware of that unless somebody close to them can point the stuff out to them. They have to see it, so how do you make them see it? As an outsider, you can’t make them see it. So that’s why I think if you build a relationship around something else, you group these people together, not because of literacy, but for some other reason and then the literacy piece comes in kind of as, once you’ve got that relationship established and they’ve worked together and they’ve been successful in some other avenue, and then they can start having dialogue—that I think can work, but coaching—I don’t like that whole term. It implies you are an expert and someone else isn’t, and yeah, we’re experts in our field, but I’m not an expert in science. Because I don’t know your content and I don’t know how kids respond to your content and your teaching, but I can tell you what kids need in order to be successful readers—I can tell you that, but if it’s a coach, then it’s almost like I’m a coach in science, you know what I mean—the term sucks.
(Interview, May 21, 2009)

Donna's point about the term "coaching" implying an "unequal" relationship is interesting. While the literacy coach should have expertise in reading and writing, "true" coaching is not evaluative. However, because Donna's role was never clearly defined to the staff, and because administrators were the ones who presented the materials and staff development sessions she prepared, she did not receive recognition for her expertise. The issues surrounding this challenge are addressed in detail in the next section.

Barriers Donna Faces in Her Leadership Role

Lack of Recognition

Donna was a licensed and experienced reading professional, but her expertise and knowledge often seemed to go unnoticed or unused. This lack of recognition made it difficult for Donna to take the lead in literacy leadership. One of the barriers Donna faced is that her work was often done "behind the scenes," leaving her unrecognized as the literacy expert in the school. A certain amount of this would be expected, but in order to move literacy forward in a large school, the person with the reading expertise needs to be recognized for it so that the teachers are aware of this expertise and the contributions these specialists can make to literacy efforts. Donna described the process as follows:

I present at the staff meetings, but the administrator presents first like it's his, and then says, 'We have done this. We have done that.' It's not, it's me, so that's been a huge, a huge barrier. Huge. Emails that go out come from him, not me. So that is huge. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

During the course of this conversation, Donna suddenly added the following comment:

But the 317, even though it's an administrative license, it is not treated like one. I just had this thought—that to me is the biggest barrier to being a literacy coach—If you seriously want to be a literacy coach, in that role, then I think you need to be respected and an administrative person. Now you still need a reading specialist to come in there and do the relationship building with that teacher, but

if you seriously want to be a literacy coach, you've got to have the respect of staff as not only an expert in literacy, but by golly, you can implement something, you can have some power. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

This comment complicated our interviews because it contained a contradiction, which Donna immediately pointed out: *“I know I just contradicted myself, but do you know what I'm saying?”* (Interview, May 21, 2009).

Power and Authority versus Collaboration

It is necessary to read the following transcript in its entirety because it illuminates some key obstacles to effective literacy leadership, and the importance of administrators and reading specialists (regardless of the license category) working together to make a positive impact on reading at the high school level.

You have to have some power. If I think I'm teaching perfectly, everything is lovely, I'm not going to change, and me personally, I can walk in and be your best friend and beg you and plead with you, 'Please do this, I know it'll work, it's beautiful.' 'You can't make me, so I'm not going to change.' So no matter what we say about going in and 'Oh, why don't you try this?' Well, bullshit. I don't want to and you can't make me do it; however, if you are seen, if you want to be a leader, then you have to have the power. So I have the power, I am an expert, and I have the power—I am an administrator. I'm at that level. I'm in all those meetings at that level, but now I walk in and I want to talk to you about what you're doing in literacy—you are going to respond to me totally different—totally different. I still can say, 'Hey, you know what? You know what—have you ever thought about trying this? I don't know if this is going to work for you, but just kind of think about it.' You might say, 'I hate you because you're an administrator.' Well, I don't care, you still have to listen to me and I'm going to come back and see if you're doing it. So, what's going to work? You know what I mean? (Interview, May 21, 2009)

Power and authority were recurring themes throughout our interviews, and this quote references one more specific example of Donna's frustration with this issue. While the role of the coach was not intended to be an evaluative role, Donna experienced the resistance of content teachers, which may have been due, in part, to administration's

dictate that all teachers have a literacy goal. This goal would become part of their annual assessment, and therefore, each teacher would meet with Donna regarding the literacy goal. This presentation made literacy coaching look both evaluative and punitive; thus, it set Donna up for failure from the beginning. The situation was compounded by a lack of understanding of the role by teachers, administrators, and even Donna. Moran (2007) states: “The primary goal of coaching is to improve student learning” (p. 6). When presented as a forced literacy goal, even if the purpose is to improve student learning, the perception of the teachers will be evaluation of their teaching, thereby promoting teacher resistance to coaching efforts.

The literature on effective coaching highlights the importance of collaboration with teams of teachers as well as individual teachers working with the literacy coach to improve student learning through the analysis of classroom data (Moran, 2007; Toll, 2005). The power and authority that seem to be necessary in Donna’s situation may be partially attributable to the way that coaching has been presented at Laurelton. In her discussion on program scope, Moran (2007) describes the importance of not using a “targeted approach” to coaching where only specific teachers receive coaching. She refers to this as a deficit model. Although Donna was expected to coach all faculty members, the way it was structured took the focus off student achievement and moved it to the teacher. Considering the literacy goal and the requirement to meet with Donna, it is not surprising that the teachers at Laurelton might view the coaching model as an intervention model.

Our follow-up discussion focused on the principles of adult learning and PLCs (professional learning communities). Donna previously pointed out that the power of

PLCs was that change came from within. That said, when change did not happen and the leader, in this case Donna, had a teaching contract just like the rest of the teaching staff, she could “*suggest away, but they can do exactly what they want.*” Donna suggested that the response was often, “*I am perfectly happy with what I’m doing...I already teach content literacy*” (Interview, May 21, 2009). When teachers do not focus on student achievement as a reason to change, they have no reason to modify the way they have always taught.

The more we discussed it, the more complicated the discussion seemed to get.

Donna’s response to one of our conversations on PLCs was full of contradictions:

And the PLC thing—I honestly believe that’s a better way to work it, and if we are talking about a literacy coach being a leader, then you have to have administrative status in order to be a leader; you cannot be a leader as a teacher just like every other teacher. It’s like some social studies teacher is going to walk in here and be a leader? BS—you’re not a leader—you’re just like I am, and so I just contradicted myself, I know, but it’s because I’m thinking about this as we’re talking about it. (Observations, May 21, 2009)

We decided we would table our conversation until our next interview. This was a difficult issue and the tension between collegiality and the need to be an expert (authority) was apparent.

Because I had conflicting data, we returned to the issue of “power” in a later interview. I reiterated a point from our previous discussion, asking: “If you make the job administrative and you have the power to go in and help people see that there is a problem, doesn’t that conflict with people to buy-in in the first place?” Donna responded:

Yeah, yeah, it does. And I remember that conversation because that’s where—in my talking I did contradict myself and that was really the first time I’d thought about that and realized it was a contradiction. But here’s the thing—if your goal is to actually make progress, then are you going to take the time to be viewed as a

reading specialist/reading teacher by other teachers who don't have a clue what that means and then hope that because your personality is nice that they will let you in—because they're not going to value your expertise because they don't understand your expertise because you're not a content area teacher, so they're not going to value or respect your expertise in a field that they do not understand or even consider a field. It's not considered a discipline; it's not a field. So how are you ever to going to get buy-in unless you're just all nice...they are still going to be somewhat skeptical because after all, you are not teaching a discipline like they are, so you are already a second-class citizen. If, on the other hand, the reading specialist is viewed as an administrator, with that comes a certain amount of respect—maybe not earned, maybe not always deserved, but with it comes a certain status that means that you have knowledge, you have knowledge as an administrator. Administrator is a category they understand. A reading specialist is a category they do not understand. (Interview, June 15, 2009)

Two issues came to the fore as a result of this conversation; one was that content area teachers did not consider reading a discipline. Donna referred to this as being a “second-class citizen.” O'Brien et al. (1995) discuss content area hierarchies, and based on Donna's experience, this may be what she is referencing. The issue of not understanding the “category” under which the reading specialist/literacy coach falls, makes sense in that Donna is considered a “remedial” reading teacher in her instructional role, and she does not get recognition as a schoolwide literacy leader since the administration has that “formal” responsibility (Interview, May 21, 2009).

I wanted to confirm that I understood her point, so I restated what I thought she was saying:

So, what I hear you saying is that maybe the word that we used before, ‘power,’ is the wrong word? Maybe the word needs to be respect, though the way it is defined right now, the reading specialist role needs to be administrative because then you have that respect and they are going to understand it, whereas someday if the role of the reading specialist/coach is well defined and people understand it as a discipline, then it might not matter. I was thinking of ‘power’ as ‘ok, it's going to be a dictate.’

Donna responded:

That was my wrong choice of term because I was thinking—as I’m talking I’m thinking—I was thinking it that day, but what I really mean is they have to have something that they can acknowledge as being a position, and administration is a position of power, that position and we always say, too, well, we can’t be evaluative—why not? I mean, why not...you lose the respect that you need in order to get people to do things they have to respect your authority. That’s what it’s all about—if they don’t respect your authority, then why the heck do it? And, if you come in as a coach, and yet you can’t evaluate them, you can hold their hand and say, ‘Oh, this is a nice job, what if you did this?’ They’ll turn around and say, ‘Heck no, I’m not doing it. You can’t make me.’ ‘Oh, they’ll be nice, and say, ‘Oh, Ok, nice idea’—that’s just bull because you aren’t there in a position of authority. (Interview, June 16, 2009)

While Donna believed in the PLC approach and the use of a Literacy Team in her schoolwide leadership role, it was clear that she considered the lack of the administrative category a barrier to her leadership role. Although the word “power” may be a strong word, Donna believed that the reading specialist’s role needed to have an evaluative component, because without it, there was no motivation for teachers to focus on literacy.

Additionally, or perhaps alternatively, her role needed to be better clarified so that teachers understood it. As noted previously, the reading specialist license is an administrative license; however, school districts may employ their reading specialists under a teaching contract, which was Donna’s situation. One question that arose from this discussion of barriers, was how could the administration support Donna so that she would be effective in her leadership role?

Ippolito (2009) studied the role of the administrator in effectively supporting literacy efforts. In her discussion, she comments that many educators have expressed their beliefs about this issue of balance as follows:

Some suggest that principals can establish close relationships with literacy coaches by offering a number of structural supports (e.g. clear job descriptions, regular professional development, common planning times, and a school literacy

team), as well as a number of relational supports. Others suggest that principals must participate actively in coaching work to better understand literacy professional development and increase teachers' sense of accountability for instructional improvement. (as cited in Ippolito, 2009, p. 1)

As with research on the role of the high school reading specialist, Ippolito notes, "Few research-based accounts of coach-principal relationships exist" (p. 1).

The ideal situation, which Ippolito (2009) calls "the partnering principal" is exemplified in the study of Barbara, a middle school literacy coach in a school with over 600 students. Barbara was a teacher and reading specialist at the same school before becoming the literacy coach, and she pointed out that this prior relationship was helpful in moving to the coaching role because she "felt very connected to both the school and wider community" (p. 2). She felt that the principal and assistant principal worked with her as a cohesive team. In this vignette, the following elements support the coaching model in this particular middle school: administrators are viewed as instructional leaders because of their visibility in classrooms, at meetings, and in their support of schoolwide literacy through attendance at meetings. Ippolito (2009) points out that "the administrators demonstrated both a willingness and aptitude to act as instructional leaders" (p. 2.). It can be argued, however, that being an instructional leader in schoolwide literacy presupposes that the administrator is knowledgeable in best practices and literacy, or that they recognize and rely on the expertise of the reading specialist, or literacy coach, in a collaborative relationship.

Like Barbara, Donna was on the teaching staff prior to working in the reading specialist/coach role, and it was apparent during my time in the school that Donna had a good working relationship with her colleagues. I would argue that it was not the relationship with her colleagues that prevented Donna from successfully implementing

the coaching model, but it was the lack of understanding of the reasons for, and purposes of, the coaching model that caused Donna difficulty in this aspect of her role.

Barriers within the Organization Structure

I asked Donna if she was on the District Staff Development Committee at Laurelton, and she responded, “*There is none.*” I followed up by asking, “In that case, who plans out your staff development?” She responded, “*Administration,*” but added an example that illustrates another way that the high school structure undermined her ability to be an effective leader:

It's the way it's organized...I think it would be easier in a smaller school. I'm not even invited to department chair meetings; they have meetings once a month. I was asked to go once and did a presentation, but never got asked back again, but come to find out that that same group is implementing sustained silent reading, and I knew nothing of it, nothing whatsoever. A percentage of the science department asked me, 'What do you think about this sustained silent reading?' And I said, 'What?' And they said, 'What's your opinion on SSR?' I said, 'I think it's stupid it's got no place in high school; I think it's great for little school, but I mean kids eat you alive in SSR in high school. It would become a behavior problem. It would be a management issue.' The department chair looked at everyone else and he said, 'See there? It didn't come from her.' So, they had all been talking about it, and I said, 'What are you talking about?' and he said that at the Department Meeting the administrator said that next year we're implementing sustained silent reading. I didn't know a thing about that. So, I lost all credibility right there. I might as well have just started doing a dance because nothing else is going to matter, so I was furious. I was mad because I worked so hard to get these people to let me come in and that was like 20 people in that department that I was talking to where I completely lost credibility in front of them. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

Excluding Donna from decisions involving literacy leadership, such as the one described, put Donna in an awkward position. If her role was to be a literacy leader, whether in the form of a coach or the Director of the Literacy Team, she should have been involved in decisions like the one above. During our conversation, Donna

explained her follow up, and how the teachers she was meeting with perceived the situation:

They were very kind and they did, they felt bad for me, and a couple of them even came up to me afterwards in the hall and said, 'You know, I can't believe they are doing this to you, this is horrible.' And they were fine, but how can I stand there and talk to them about literacy when that happened? So, I immediately went into the office and I said, 'You know what? I am livid. What's this sustained silent reading?' And he said, 'You know, you and I have talked about that,' and I said, 'Yeah, and every time you and I have talked about this I've told you that this is not good practice in high school.' (Interview, May 21, 2009)

After additional discussion, Donna was informed by her administrator that this idea came from an article; it was used in another part of the country by an administrator who used it as part of a research project. Donna read the article from which the idea was derived and pointed out that it failed in the first year, and that it was implemented by a literacy team, not decided by an administrative team. In the case of Laurelton, the Department Chairs were told the sustained silent reading program would be implemented the following year at a Department Chair meeting. Donna was not invited to the meeting, nor was she informed of the silent reading goal. In this case, staff was told it would be implemented the following year at department meetings. This experience is an example of a structural barrier to effective leadership. Donna described that experience as *"Terrible. That's because I'm not invited to Department Chair meetings"* (Interview, May 22, 2009). Through the exclusion of the reading specialist at leadership meetings where decisions would be made regarding literacy leadership, Donna's expertise as the literacy expert was undermined.

The barriers that Donna faced are not easy to describe because they involved a combination of factors including lack of clearly defined job responsibilities, teacher resistance, and a lack of recognition for both her position and her expertise that, taken

together, caused serious difficulties in being an effective school leader in literacy. I would argue that Donna would not need administrative power and authority if the coaching model was presented to the faculty using the principles of coaching. This would include the use of data to support the need for increased student achievement, as well as the use of collaborative teams to identify the needs of the students as opposed to being told that they need to change their instruction, which clearly suggests an evaluative component.

Donna's Participation in In-service/Staff Meetings

Donna was involved in formal staff development through in-services that generally took place three times per year for half days—one at the beginning of the year, one in the middle, and one at the end. I asked her about her participation in these meetings, and she explained that she was not in charge of them, but she did present for a part of them: *“Half an hour or so, and I always run over because I’m long winded. So I always take more time than I’m allowed”* (Interview, May 6, 2009).

One of Donna's most successful in-services was on the use of lexiles (defined in Chapter Five). Donna explained to me that all staff had to have their books lexiled, and being the reading specialist, she was the one who did this. In her in-service, she provided several examples of the lexile needed to read specific materials. This was one example of the faculty recognizing Donna for her expertise:

I did an all staff in-service once when I introduced lexiles because that's the only thing I've been acknowledged as a leader in—is, I know all about lexiles. I'm the 'expert lexile person' because I've had to bring everybody up to speed on that so one of my PowerPoint slides has the lexile of a teacher, a plumber, of whatever, and it has all these professions...so I have that for staff and I have that for students, too. (Artifact; Interview, May 21, 2009)

There would be a coaching opportunity for Donna to use her lexile knowledge to support classroom teachers if the focus on her coaching role moved from teacher-based to student-achievement based, as suggested in the coaching literature (Mangin, 2009; Moran, 2007; Sturtevant, 2004; Toll, 2005).

Although there were periodic monthly faculty meetings, Donna's role in them was limited. When I inquired about the faculty meetings, and any possible involvement on Donna's part, she commented,

Faculty meetings are updates regarding board decisions, administrative team mandates, etc. I have been involved when some literacy mandate needed clarification, for example, the lexile framework. Usually no one likes them, and they are mandatory and are administratively developed and presented. (June 15, 2009)

Donna commented that the staff meetings were "sit and get," mostly when staff received periodic information of an administrative nature. According to Donna, the meetings did not involve participatory staff development opportunities.

Donna's District Involvement

During one of our interviews we discussed the District Literacy Team, and I asked Donna if the Literacy Team concept is unique to the high school:

No, they are not at all the levels. Middle school has one, they were one year ahead of us in getting a Literacy Team together...when I came on board, I wanted to see the literacy plan, and that's kind of how the K-12 evolved. But ours here evolved because of the coaching piece, because I can't do it all, you can't do it all, this is a big school and as I said, the best way to get teachers to listen is to have one of their peers talk to them. So, that was the incentive to get this thing working, and plus, it kind of takes me out of the spotlight a little bit, which is hard because as we were saying earlier today, I still have to be acknowledged that I'm doing a job because you don't want to cut yourself out of a job. But it's hard because, and that's another whole piece, it's hard because as a literacy coach you really should be in the background, you're not supposed to be in the forefront, you know what I mean? You have to make teachers think that it's their idea and they do it, and then when it's successful, they're going to get the credit

for it, you're not going to get the credit for it, so it's a hard job because really everything you do has to be like you're whispering in somebody's ear, you're invisible and you know, you're saying this—'Do this,'—they do it and then everybody pats them on the back because 'wow,' so it's hard because you get yourself out of a job if you're too invisible—they don't need you. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

Once again, it appeared that the function of the District Literacy Team, like the high school Literacy Team, had not been well defined.

District Literacy Team and Other District Committee Work

Donna commented that she was on several committees; the three in which Donna took on the most responsibility were the school Literacy Team, the District At-Risk Team and the District K–12 Literacy Team (Observations, May, 2009). As previously noted, there was no district person in charge of reading, so technically Donna's administrator was in charge (Donna cannot be "in charge" since she is not an administrator).

There was an upcoming half-day Literacy Team meeting for which Donna was planning. However, she told me that she was bringing in a consultant because of the inconsistencies between elementary, middle, and high school. These inconsistencies included differences in testing for placement into special classes and different philosophies of administrators and reading specialists. Tensions existed between the levels, but they recognized the need for a districtwide literacy plan. Because Donna was not in a position of authority to steer the committee, she was doing all the planning, but her administrator was the one who would be visible at the actual meeting. The consultant would be the one who presented at the meeting, but Donna would be the one who prepared the agenda. I attended the meeting, the purpose of which was to outline the steps needed to develop a districtwide literacy mission and vision. Because I met with

Donna while she was organizing the day, writing the agenda, and planning the long-term goals for the district team, I realized that she was the one taking the lead on this committee. However, once again, she did not receive any recognition for her leadership and guidance. The lack of a district-level reading specialist may have contributed to the tensions that existed between the elementary, middle, and high school groups, and this will be discussed in the following section, “Connection to Elementary and Middle School.”

Donna was also on the district At-Risk Committee. I had the opportunity to observe one of these meetings. Although she was a member of this committee, she was not the chairperson. The meeting took place at the district offices. A district administrator ran the meeting, and there were representatives from all levels, including guidance counselors, teachers of students with disabilities, and alternative education teachers. The purpose of the meeting was to decide what the district will use for Reach/Response to Intervention support. Prior to the meeting, Donna went online to check for any new publications or guidelines relevant to state requirements and district responsibilities, and she made copies of her assessment and at-risk spreadsheets that she uses at the high school. The committee reviewed what they send for state reporting purposes, and identified additional information that they believed would help them track their at-risk students. While Donna was not the chair of the committee, her interest in data collection and analysis made her a valuable committee member, and she was the one who assembled the data and made the spreadsheets for this meeting (Observations, May 14, 2009; Artifact).

Connection to Elementary and Middle School

While the focus of this case study is not on the elementary or middle school level, this connection is important because the professional literature, as well as State Statute 118.015 (Appendix A) reinforces the importance of consistency and seamlessness in the K–12 literacy spectrum. The issue of discontinuity between elementary, middle, and high school is exacerbated when there is no district reading specialist to oversee the entire K–12 reading curriculum. Although the way literacy is implemented should be different in elementary, middle, and high school because the focus and structure are different at each level, there should nevertheless be consistency (i.e., there is a reading continuum for all grades K–12).

Based on Donna’s response and the comments received on the surveys returned in Phase I of this study, it began to appear that the incorporation of reading at these levels was increasingly inconsistent as students move through the grades. Without going into depth about the structure of the reading programs at the elementary and middle school levels, Donna explained that reading instruction and the role of the reading specialist was different in elementary, middle and high school. These differences are described below.

Because of the administrative interest in coaching as the best approach to staff development and leadership at the high school level, I asked Donna if coaching was also an expectation at the elementary and middle school levels. Her response contained several comments that highlighted some of the differences between the levels. She responded that the reading teacher at the middle schools did do some coaching, but that “*her full-time job is as a reading teacher*” (Interview May 21, 2009). When Donna was asked if coaching was used at the elementary level, her response was:

Absolutely not. We brought it up at the K–12 team and those reading teachers went nuts. Absolutely not, we are reading teachers, not coaches...the classroom teachers are all literacy coaches and they are all wonderful and that they don't need that at the elementary level, so it's a term that's basically used at middle school. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

As for middle school, Donna explained that they had reading teachers, but coaching was an “add-on” that, in Donna’s opinion, had been successful due to strong administrative support. Again, the way the leadership role was structured depended on the level—because the strong content, departmentalized focus increases as the students move up in grade level. The one area where Donna experienced the most difficulty because of the lack of a district reading specialist is that of assessment and intervention placement for her students entering 9th grade. I asked Donna if she went back to the middle school to discuss students who tested below grade level on the SRI test (Scholastic, 1996–2009) and who she believed needed to be in her class. She commented:

Because I'm not involved when they create the watch list, they create their watch list and then they send it to me, now ideally I would like to be involved in how they create that watch list, because what I found last year was they missed a heck of a lot of students. They get here and have a lot of failures and have low lexiles as freshmen, but they were never on my watch list, so ideally I would like to be involved in how they create that watch list, but that's not happening right now. (Interview, May 19, 2009)

Donna explained that this was just one example of the tension that existed between the middle and high schools related to reading. They often disagreed on the tests used to assess progress. Assessments were one area that Donna believed needed to be consistent in both middle and high school policies and practices. This topic is explored in detail in the Assessment Chapter.

Concluding Remarks on Leadership

Based on our discussions surrounding leadership and instruction, I asked Donna about the IRA and how she perceived her position, particularly as she envisioned the leadership piece.

I would envision it not as a coach, but as a literacy—I hate to use the term—as a literacy specialist, as a resource, but not as a coach. So the leadership is leadership on data, leadership in analyzing data, leadership in presenting that data to staff, and making recommendations or suggestions as to what needs to be done based on the data, so that’s how I see leadership more. It’s more as being a visible literacy person in the school who collects data, analyzes data, presents data, and then offers suggestions. (Observations, May 21, 2009)

I asked if she would expand a little bit on her response that she would “offer suggestions.” Her response incorporated some of the issues that were addressed in Chapter Two:

To expand on it, I think offering suggestions is the key; it can’t be mandatory, it can’t be framed as “I’m going to teach you this strategy; it has to be more, ‘I noticed that you have 30% of your freshmen failed your course.’ Well, you can’t even say it that way because that would make them defensive, but you would have to approach it with the data, you know—kids seem to be struggling in English. Do you have any idea why, why do you think they are? Why do you think that is? And I kind of do this with our English teacher. Why do you think these boys are kind of failing your class? And I’ll say I know their attitude is kind of crap with one of them, but what do you think is going on? So that way, they’re actually thinking of it. And then, he said, for example, well, we read everything aloud, they offer to read for extra credit aloud in class and we talk about it. And I’ll say, ‘Yeah, but you know sometimes when you talk about it, they’re slower at processing, that’s what I see, do you think maybe that’s it?’ So, it’s almost like giving them these thoughts, so that’s what I mean by kind of offering suggestions. Now that’s very, and unfortunately, that’s more of my personality. It’s too loosey-goosey, so you can’t really write a job description based on loosey-goosey, but that’s what I mean by kind of offering suggestions is if you have the data, then you can say...you know who to go to basically. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

It was clear that Donna placed a great deal of emphasis on data. As can be observed by the above-referenced quote, and based on the quote below, it was quite

evident that she would use data to prioritize her staff development efforts. Her idea to use data to support her role is supported by the available literature on coaching (Moran, 2007; Sturtevant, 2004). In addition to improving student achievement, which is the reason for the coach's role, it may help to reduce teacher resistance by taking the focus off their teaching and moving it to student performance and achievement.

I would use the data. Who should I try to strike up a conversation with first? And that's kind of what it's all about—you need an ally. Its hard, you know like the English teacher, for example, he had to know I'm an ally...I had to say, 'Hey, I understand where you are coming from; I know one's off task a lot, and I don't blame you at all, but I do know that I see him struggling with xyz, so then he knew I was his ally because I wasn't attacking him, I was respecting his classroom and his knowledge, but I was letting him know that the kid does struggle in this particular area, and we're best buds now. But now is anything going to change? It's going to take a long time, but at least he knows that I'm not threatening to him; I'm right there, I've got his back because the kid's mom called him, and I'm like, 'Hey, I'll support you on this—I've got your back.' (Interview, May 19, 2009)

There is no question that building relationships with teachers is a key to quality leadership regardless of the design of staff development. As Buly et al. (2006) point out, “Effective instructional coaching requires a collegial relationship built around trust and mutual goals” (p. 24). Donna used many examples to show the importance of this relationship building. Despite the obstacles Donna faced in her leadership role, she forged relationships with the faculty, as she did with her students, and this could be seen to help her move the school forward with literacy.

In addition, Donna placed a strong emphasis on her assessment role as an integral part of both the instructional and leadership roles. Assessment is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven The Assessment Role of the Reading Specialist

Donna placed great importance on her assessment role because it provided data to support her instructional role. It also provided reading levels for students so that teachers could supply reading materials at the appropriate reading levels for their students. It was immediately apparent that her assessment role was highly interrelated to both her instructional and leadership roles. However, I have chosen to present the topic as a standalone chapter because it is so clearly defined, both through the data collected in the field, and by the role as it is identified by the IRA (2000). This chapter will begin with a description of Donna's role in universal testing. Second, I will present a description of her involvement with diagnostic and additional testing. Third, I will discuss barriers to the assessment role, followed by a discussion of the crossroads of leadership and instruction. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of her assessment role.

We need to have data on these kids so that we can provide some sort of intervention. And then analyzing that data and doing something with it because you have to get to that piece of 'OK, so what? What do we do now?' (Interview, May 6, 2009)

Donna was involved, to some extent, with both the diagnosis and assessment role categories outlined by the IRA (2000)—“administration and interpretation” and “development and coordination.” In fact, Donna prioritized her assessment role as second in importance among the three roles of instruction, leadership, and assessment.

Donna described her rationale for the priority she placed on assessment:

The second piece would be the assessment. We do not have a lot of data in this district; all we have are WKCE scores and that is clearly not enough. So, the data would be the second piece that I think is a priority. We have to have data on these kids, so that we can provide some sort of intervention. So, instruction and then the data, and then everything that comes with that data, both testing of kids,

and I'm talking like universal testing, not informal inventories, but the universal type of assessments so that you can look at all kids and assess where they are in reading. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

One additional piece of assessment that was an add-on to the testing that was done at her own school was the coordination of data and assessments with the middle school, which added time to some of her additional “administrative-type” duties. Donna’s involvement with the middle school is described in a subsequent section, “Involvement with Middle School Transition.” The clerical tasks also took a significant amount of time because Donna was the one who gathered all the additional pieces of data to use when she compiled her spreadsheets. These spreadsheets were used for intervention planning, watch lists, and other administrative purposes related to her work with instruction, as well as some of her committee work (Interview, May 6, 2009).

Universal Testing

Freshman Testing

In the beginning of the year, Donna spent extensive time in her assessment role because she was responsible for testing all ninth graders on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) (Scholastic, 1996–2009). This responsibility was previously described in Chapter Five.

We spent time discussing when and why the decision had been made to do universal reading testing. Donna commented that they needed more universal testing than the WKCE scores to analyze student achievement in literacy; thus, the decision was made to use SRI testing. Donna was supportive of the SRI as the reading testing

instrument because the teachers could get lexile scores on their students, thereby allowing them to know their students' instructional reading levels.

Since the SRI is a computerized test, Donna needed to coordinate “*how to get 500 kids in two computer labs over a four-day period because they don't all go at once*”

(Interview, May 6, 2009). I followed up on that information by asking her, “When you do that, where do the students come from? I mean, do you have to try to take them out of study hall?” She responded:

Oh no, we take them out of whatever period of the day—it's alphabetical. Last year was the first year we have done that so a lot of time in the beginning of the year was talking about that very question—can we get them out of just study halls—just planning for the first one took, oh, gosh, it took so much time trying to figure out the best way—and then we had to appease teachers—because teachers were like, “What do you mean you are just going to take my freshmen out of class? What the heck do I do with everybody else? So teachers were pretty ticked off—so we had to be able to then say, ‘Hey look, what you're going to get out of this is their reading level.’ Unfortunately, they said, ‘What do I do with it now?’ which was where I came in to say, ‘Here's what you can do.’ (Interview, May 6, 2009)

According to Donna, she designed a successful staff development session on the use of lexiles to help teachers determine the answer to the question, “What do I do with it now?” Donna used this lexile data as a means into the content classrooms because she was able to use her expertise in the use of the Lexile Framework (MetaMetrics, 2004) to show the teachers how to use this information—teaching faculty about lexiles, lexiling their books, and explaining how lexiles can be used for instruction. If teachers had difficulty determining whether or not their books would be accessible to their students, Donna would be available to help them. This aspect of Donna's work is also discussed in Chapter Six.

Donna hired substitute teachers to monitor the schoolwide testing. The substitutes also took care of some administrative tasks, such as printing reports and keeping track of attendance and absences to ensure that everyone took the test. They also worked to reschedule testing for students who did not show up at their assigned times. A student may also have been asked to retake a test if it appeared that no effort was put forth during testing. Donna raised the point that students' motivation to do their best could present a problem with any standardized test, and as she suggested, it was often problematic.

Use of test results.

SRI™ reports.

After students complete the tests, Donna reviewed two SRI reports (Scholastic, 1996–2009): the “Read for Life” report, which showed a graph of student progress, and the “Growth Report” for ninth grade, which showed all students' progress in lexiles. The “Read for Life” report was useful because it provided the lexile scores a student attained and gave a range of activities with corresponding lexiles required for certain activities such as reading Ipod directions and driving manuals. During my observations, we discussed the motivational aspect of seeing the required reading range for activities that would be important to people in this age group. The other report, the Growth report, provided the lexile growth of each student in a bar graph display. These reports were used by Donna in her instructional role as one of the ways to monitor the success of her reading intervention class. She also shared this information with her students so that they could see their progress. By examining the lexile growth of each student, teachers could also use it as an indicator of reading growth or lack thereof. Donna could use this

information to place students into intervention classes, and she could upload it into the teachers' management system so they could have access to all of their students' lexile scores.

Although the entire freshman class was required to take the SRI (Scholastic, 1996–2009) twice, Donna (along with a few other teachers who worked with *Read 180*, special education and English Language Learners) tested students at midyear. As far as her assessment role was concerned, the end of the year was the busiest time of year for Donna. She spent a great deal of her time monitoring and recording test results as well as updating the at-risk spreadsheets that she prepared at the beginning of the year.

Spreadsheets and Watch Lists.

Donna made use of the SRI (Scholastic, 1996–2009) testing in several ways. One was to be able to provide teachers with lexiles so they could plan for the various reading levels in their classes. Additionally, the data was used to identify students for Donna's intervention class and subsequently track their progress. The SRI results were also one piece of data that was included on a spreadsheet used to monitor students who were considered to be at risk for failure. Donna used the terms "spreadsheet" and "watch list" frequently. Therefore, I asked her if they were one and the same. I was unclear about this "spreadsheet," so I asked if it was maintained for every freshman student, or only for students who were reading below grade level? She responded:

I keep those factors on every single freshman, but only the ones with the lower lexiles, and honestly, I don't even use WKCE that much; instead I look at the lexile score and I look at course failures. And this hasn't been, this isn't a decision that's been made by anyone—this is me doing this for the first time. I generated the data sheet, the concept—so this was me 'solo'—creating this, so nobody has sat down and said, 'Why don't you look at course failures, for example.' Me, just from looking at taking the lexiles and then trying to figure out,

‘Ok, how do I know which kids may need some intervention—which ones need reading support?’ I had to add what else—or what other factors in? Maybe [that] would either indicate yes, they need support because reading is truly an issue or maybe they’re blowing it off, or whatever. So, some way to kind of qualify that lexile score as an accurate measure of their reading—I needed those kinds of other pieces of information so I just chose failures because to me that indicated ok, then there’s something wrong—high lexile, lots of course failures, then I say motivation—so then I look—do I have them checked as being at risk? Or, are there a lot of absences, so then I’ll look at all the other pieces. But, I maintain the data on every single freshman. (Interview, May 13, 2009)

I wanted to confirm the relationship between the spreadsheet she was describing and her “watch list.”

The watch list. The next step would be creating the watch list and that’s what I was explaining. First it would be the lexile, that’s the first thing and then secondly the WKCE scores; I give just a passing glance because I don’t put any credibility in that at all as an assessment, so I give it kind of a glance, but then I’m going to go to the failure piece and I’m going to look at those kids and see how many courses have they failed and then that’s how I create the watch list. So it all begins with a low lexile because this is all about reading, so then that’s my focus. So, I first look at the lexile and then at those kids who are below grade level, or just barely on grade level, anybody with 1000 lexile or below are going to be kids that I highlight. (Interview, May 13, 2009)

Gathering the data and compiling this first spreadsheet took a significant amount of Donna’s time (Observations, May, 2009). Because I saw her spending so much time on this data gathering and spreadsheet compilation, I followed up by asking her what happens, instructionally, or with staff development, as a result of this information. My initial question was, “If they are not below lexile level, but they have these other factors, do you still put them on a watch list?” She responded:

If they have more than one though, so course failures—I want to know why you are failing because you have an at-grade lexile in reading, so then I’ll look at absences and the other piece might be behavior. I might pull in referrals so as a reading specialist, though that is not my job; yeah, yeah. So nobody really, we haven’t gotten that far with it—so in other words, my job is just to look at the reading and is that a reason for the failures and the absences, and maybe even the behaviors? What are the steps? And then the big piece is ‘So what?’ What’s the

next piece? We don't have any interventions for tenth grade. (Interview, May 13, 2009)

I was curious about what happened if one of the freshmen who tested at or above grade level dropped at the end-of-year administration, so I asked her, “If you have kids that go down and they are now below grade level, what happens?” She replied:

So what? And then, so what? And that, we don't know yet because this is the first year and so I had asked that question—so what are we going to do about it? You know, we're spending all this time and effort and money to buy the extra licenses to be able to assess all the freshmen—what are we going to do with that data? That's going to be a big thing. (Interview, May 6, 2009)

Donna told me that a certain percentage of the school's freshmen inevitably would score below proficient on the WKCE (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2009b) exam at yearend: on a disaggregated basis, it would not generally end up being any particular subgroup (i.e., special education) rather, it would be composed of students from many groups, including regular education students. She used spreadsheets to provide evidence to support her position that there needed to be a tenth grade intervention class. She made the following observation:

It's going to be interesting to see what's happening with that...because if then I teach sophomores, then we lose the literacy coaching piece so it's going to be, 'Do we let the freshmen, do we let the 10th graders go who were below proficient, no reading support whatsoever, keep our fingers crossed and have literacy coaching, or do we eliminate the literacy coaching as part of my job and I teach freshmen and sophomores?' (Interview, May 6, 2009)

This quote illuminated one of the issues involved with trying to balance the instructional role with both the leadership and assessment roles. In this case, Donna believed that she should add a tenth grade intervention class for the students who were testing below proficient at the end of the freshman year; however, this would take time

away from her leadership role, regardless of whether it was comprised of coaching, the Literacy Team, or some other method of conducting staff development.

It must be noted that this was the first year that Donna compiled this information, so the follow up had not yet been determined. Nevertheless, this would become an issue because, from what I observed, Donna did not have the time to teach additional classes in tenth grade, considering all of her additional responsibilities. Time was an obstacle that became increasingly apparent during my visits at Donna's school. This theme of instruction to students versus working in a "coaching" role appeared throughout my fieldwork, and represents the conflict between Donna's belief (that she needs to teach struggling readers) and administration's belief (that she needs to work with all teachers to improve literacy throughout the school). This conflict is further discussed in Chapter Eight.

Shortly after the SRI (Scholastic, 1996–2009) testing was complete, planning for the WKCE (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2009b) began. Donna's role in WKCE consisted primarily of test preparation on test-taking strategies, which were disseminated online via a Moodle site with schoolwide availability. Moodle is an internet-based website that can be used to provide staff development via the computer.

Diagnostic Testing/Additional Assessments

Conferences and student referrals.

Donna's role in conferences was limited; but, on occasion, a parent, another teacher, a guidance counselor, or even a student could make referrals to Donna. When a student with a potential reading problem was referred to her, Donna began by giving the

student the SRI (Scholastic, 1996–2009) if they had not yet taken it in the current year. If the student scored poorly on the SRI, then Donna would conduct an informal reading inventory on him or her. An informal reading inventory is an individually administered test that measures word identification, fluency and reading comprehension. Donna commented on several occasions that she did not like informal reading inventories, but she would use them “*just to make sure decoding is not a problem*” (Interview, May 6, 2009). She noted that her students generally had difficulty with comprehension, and she believed that informal inventories were better used to look for problems with word recognition and decoding.

Involvement with middle school transition.

Donna also identified that she might conduct additional testing with the incoming eighth graders. She received a report each year from the central office that identified 8th grade WKCE (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2009b) scores, the length of time students had been in the district, and the scores obtained on the assessment that the middle school used for reading, which was different from the SRI (Scholastic, 1996–2009). Donna commented that this was the start of considerable “clerical” work. She created her own spreadsheet for this group, based upon the data she received from the central office. Once she gathered the data and input it into her own spreadsheet, she sent it over to the middle school guidance counselors. She followed up with them and would eventually discuss the identified students with the middle school guidance counselors. She would also travel to the middle school to give these students the SRI test.

During one observation, Donna entered assessment data from the middle school into her spreadsheet. She commented that there was a “*big increase in proficiency—from*

64% to 84%.” She noted that this was “*somewhat difficult to believe,*” and commented that she would call the 8th grade guidance counselors and teachers to discuss these results (Observations, May 13, 2009). One of the issues was that the assessments were different at the middle and high school levels. This could be problematic because Donna’s “watch list” contained the names of eighth grade students who might be candidates for her intervention class. The middle school assessments did not provide a lexile number, which was used extensively at the high school, so Donna needed to test the watch list students prior to freshman testing so that she could get lexiles for them (Interview, May 13, 2009). The lack of consistency between the middle school and the high school was problematic according to Donna (Interview, May 13, 2009).

In a subsequent observation, Donna was again working on her spreadsheet. Later that day, she told me that she had visited the middle school on Tuesday; so, I asked her, “Can you tell me what you did at the middle school on Tuesday?” She responded:

Watch list—I have already tested them; I was going back through the data because I have more pieces of the data I had added like their transfer into the district, and their middle school reading scores from the assessment they use. So, I had two more pieces of data to add to the lexile, so I met with the counselors on that particular morning to go back through the data because what I’m trying to do is to make sure I know who needs a reading intervention in the fall in addition to English 9. I had already been over there and spent a whole day testing, and I have to say I have a good relationship with the guidance counselors, which I am proud of because the high school has not had a working relationship with the middle school at all. And I’m kind of proud of the fact that we are making some inroads now, but it’s kind of taken, I mean that I had to take the initiative to say, ‘Can you help me out with this please?’ So yeah, so now we’re working together a little bit better. Reading teachers—they and I are still not on board, but yeah. (Interview, May 21, 2009)

An extensive amount of Donna’s time was spent accumulating and compiling data for her spreadsheet, which she referred to as her “watch list.” I wanted to confirm that

the WKCE (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2009b) and the SRI (Scholastic, 1996–2009) are the only assessments that were given to the freshmen:

As far as assessment goes, yes, for our current freshmen, that's it. The other data, though, is not assessment-based, but it's risk factors. The IEP, socioeconomic, if they're identified at risk, course failures, absences. So, they're all on the spreadsheet, so even though they aren't assessments, they're still factors that we need to consider. (Interview, May 13, 2009)

According to Donna, the inconsistency between the middle school and the high school was problematic (Interview, May 13, 2009). It appeared to result in a duplication of work regarding compilation and analysis of data; in addition, the use of different testing instruments made it difficult to compare and track data. Again, this lack of consistency between the levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) is a theme that emerged in both the leadership and assessment data analysis, and it is discussed further in Chapter Eight.

Barriers to the Assessment Role

Donna explained her frustration with the situation of being hired in a teaching category with the 317 license. She noted that “*most things need to go through administrator approvals and signatures,*” which had been the case with a letter that she wanted to send out to parents of students needing reading support the following year (Observations, May 14, 2009). They were being offered the option of summer school. Donna commented that she had to wait for an administrator’s signature before the letters could be mailed. The letters were important because the Read to Learn class was mandatory in freshman year if the students had not taken it during summer school. Since a certain number of students were required for the summer school class to run, it was important that the letters be sent out in a timely manner; however, she had to wait to get

the approvals and signatures she needed. This clearly illustrates how the lack of an official administrative role functions as a barrier to effective completion of her role in both assessment and leadership as discussed in Chapter Six.

Donna asserted that a problem in the district was a “*lack of consistency between levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) in the testing area*” (Interview, May 21, 2009). The lack of coordination was exacerbated by the lack of a district reading coordinator. It seemed that Donna had gradually taken on some of the duties that fell under the domain of a district reading coordinator, perhaps because of her interest in all the data that she collected and analyzed. This informal role would be difficult because, as she pointed out, there was tension between the different levels, and she did not technically have any supervisory or administrative-level authority. This had an impact on the K–12 Literacy Team District Plan as was discussed in Chapter Six.

The observed inconsistencies in the assessments used at the various levels of the district again pointed to the problem inherent in the lack of a district reading specialist. Additionally, the tension that existed between Donna and the middle school guidance counselors, as well as between Donna and the middle school reading teachers, did not allow open and honest communication regarding the best way to address the districtwide needs of the students in the entire K–12 literacy spectrum. This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter Eight.

At the Crossroad: Instruction or Leadership?

Throughout our discussion of her role in assessment, I wondered how the school would use the information Donna tracked on her spreadsheets. Thus, I asked her, “If they don’t qualify for some kind of special program, other than reading, then there is nothing?”

Other than Read to Learn in ninth grade, they just go off to 10th grade English?” Her response was: “*That’s right. Yep*” (Interview, May 13, 2009). Because the spreadsheet contained much valuable information, not all of it directly related to literacy, we engaged in extended discussion about the data she collected. She described the students who were on the watch list, and, after excluding the special education students who received assistance through that department, she commented:

I’m still left with a certain percentage of our freshman class that is below grade level in reading...what are we going to do about it? So then I’m going to start looking at failure data because there are some kids who are below grade level in reading, but yet they never fail a class. So do they need a reading invention? Is reading not a problem or do they have the skills to cope? It’s going to open up a can of worms, because, you know, just examining, exploring all that data is going to take a lot. You know, to figure out what’s going on, but then I still don’t have anything so even if I get down to 10% or below, kids that don’t have grade-level reading capability, what the heck am I doing with them? So, administration’s going to say, ‘Well, you coach teachers so that they can differentiate, and they can accommodate.’ The reality is even if I am successful in doing that in some cases, it’s not going to help that 10% right now because it’s not going to happen that fast. So my proposal is that I teach sophomores also, that’s the proposal I’ve made to administration—that not only do I teach non-special ed. 9th graders, but I also teach a reading course for sophomores. (Interview, May 13, 2009)

There are several important issues highlighted in this transcript. The issue of coaching versus instruction is a major one. Donna and I discussed her role as the reading specialist, as well as her schoolwide responsibilities. If she taught intervention to sophomores, in addition to her freshman classes, she would have very little time, in an already packed schedule, to attend to her leadership and assessment roles. This was a complex issue that was addressed in the previous chapter, and will again be addressed in Chapter Eight, “Implications and Results.”

Since there was some tension surrounding the coaching issue, I asked her how her suggestion to teach sophomores in an instructional role was being received by

administration, and she responded, “*It’s not. They don’t want to give up the coaching piece because if I do that I can’t coach because there’s not enough time*” (Interview, May 13, 2009). I asked her if she thought they would listen to her rationale if she went to administration with data to support having instruction in tenth grade, and she responded:

I think they would if I had data, but where am I going to get it? I mean how many high schools offer reading intervention in 10th grade? They may run some Read 180 classes...but I know I’m not going to find a lot of data on that, I don’t think. I mean I’ve run across some things, but it’s more talking about the effectiveness of a certain program. (Interview, May 13, 2009)

Her comment reflected the lack of research to support one approach over the other. It would seem that Donna had a definite preference for the instructional role with students as a way to address the needs in the school. I found this curious because, although there was a demonstrated need for the inclusion of literacy in the content areas in high schools, Donna seemed to undervalue this aspect of her role (Alverman, Phelps, & Ridgeway, 2007; Daniels & Zemelman, 2004). We found ourselves discussing the licensure of reading teachers versus reading specialists. It could be argued that, in an ideal world, the reading specialist would oversee the literacy program on a schoolwide basis. The role would include the staff development piece, whether structured through a coaching model, a team or PLC model, or some other method. On the other hand, the reading teacher would be the one responsible for the classroom instructional piece on which Donna placed so much importance.

In light of this perceived preference she had for the classroom instruction piece, I asked her to describe what she would consider to be the ideal reading “professional” in a high school:

I think that taking on the role of—being able to instruct, and being able to do data...because honestly data is ‘where it’s at.’ You have to get that data together.

So, being able to instruct, and do the data, and professional development. Those are the three big pieces. (Interview, June 16, 2009)

I am still somewhat perplexed with Donna's response because it appeared that she considered professional development an afterthought, behind instruction and data. However, keeping all the data on the entire freshman class would suggest the need for monitoring all the students. I asked for further clarification about her instructional role within the bigger role:

If you've got somebody who just wanted to be a reading teacher, that would never fly because they wouldn't want to do the data and they wouldn't want to do the professional development, so you really have to have someone who wants to do all three; typically, reading teachers, I think, stick just with the kids, and coaches want to do just the professional development. (Interview, June 16, 2009)

I continued to think about the role of the reading specialist "on paper" compared to the way the position was revealed in the school setting. After reviewing Donna's perspective on the role numerous times throughout our interviews, as well as in informal discussions, I do believe that she viewed the role as involving all three facets; however, her view of the instructional piece appeared to vary from the way the role is identified in professional literature, a point that will be discussed in the final chapter, "Implications and Results."

In the leadership chapter, Donna described her clear preference for the use of a Literacy Team in staff development over and above a coaching role. At one point, I asked her, "If you were an IRA member, would you not buy into their model, which is the three facets—instruction, assessment, leadership? What would happen to the leadership piece—would you eliminate it?" She responded, "*No, because leadership doesn't necessarily mean coaching*" (Interview, May 21, 2009). I wanted some additional clarification on that response, so I rephrased the question. In her response, which was previously quoted in the Leadership Section, she said she envisioned her data

collection and analysis to be the basis of her leadership role. What she seemed to be suggesting is that, in the capacity of such a leadership role, she could offer recommendations to staff, based on facts gleaned from her data analysis.

Clearly, all the time and effort Donna puts into data collection and analysis resulted in much useful information; this information could provide support for her work with content area teachers, regardless of what her assistance and knowledge was labeled. The issue that must be considered, however, relates to her proposal to teach tenth grade intervention, because there is not enough time to work with teachers and teach in her own classroom. Donna's data are not only used for reading intervention, but also for at-risk classification at the high school as well as the district.

Donna used this information and data from her spreadsheets in her work at the district level on the At-Risk Committee. At the school level, however, it is still somewhat surprising that she would prioritize working with a limited number of students in an instructional role over committing the time to oversee literacy efforts within the school, based on the extensive data she collected. I remain perplexed over this issue because it seems that, in the process of discussing the aspects of instruction, leadership, and assessment, the leadership piece gets shortchanged. As the person with the most literacy expertise in the school, Donna needs to be the one to provide the necessary guidance to conduct quality staff development for the departments.

The individual leadership piece also would need to be addressed among the teachers, particularly since Donna believed that using data is one way to get into the classrooms. Using data to make suggestions on ways to help improve student achievement may be better received than being called a "coach" with the focus on the

teachers' instruction, as opposed to student achievement. Regardless of what this part of the role is called, coaching or data analysis for improved instruction (or some other title), work with teachers is an integral part of the leadership role, and essentially related to the assessment role.

Summary of the Assessment Role

Donna's role in assessment took up a significant amount of her time, which is logical once we understand how Donna perceived her role. She placed a great deal of emphasis on data because she used it to monitor, not only her own students' progress, but the progress of the entire school body. Through her focus on data, she was able to provide interventions to the students who needed it the most. She had a record of improvement, or lack thereof, which she could use to assess her effectiveness in intervention. In addition, she would be able to use it to support the route that she chose to take to move the school forward in literacy, both with individual teachers and on a department level.

In the final chapter, the major themes that emerged throughout my fieldwork are described and discussed. Implications for additional research and theoretical implications will be expounded. Finally, practical implications related to the major themes will be presented.

Chapter Eight Implications and Results

Four major themes emerged throughout this research, although each theme incorporates several sub-themes as described in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. The first is the lack of compliance with Wisconsin State Statute 118.015 (Appendix A), and the ramifications this has on the high school reading specialist at both the school and district levels. The three remaining themes pertain to the individual school level: (1) the lack of definitive licensure for the evolving role of the reading specialist into that of a literacy coach; (2) the lack of clear definitions and role responsibilities of the reading specialist (or literacy coach), leading to misunderstanding of the role not only by the reading specialist/literacy coach, but also by the administration and faculty; and (3) distinguishing features that differentiate high schools from elementary and middle schools.

Chapters Four through Seven provided a detailed description of the themes and sub-themes that emerged throughout the course of fieldwork. This chapter elaborates on the four major themes that surfaced during the research and concludes with implications and recommendations for further research.

Compliance with State Statute 118.015

Based on a return rate of 62%, the results of the survey in Phase I of the study (Appendix B) indicated that a number of school districts in Wisconsin are not in compliance with the statute requiring a district reading specialist. Only 36% of the districts that returned surveys were in compliance with the statute, specifically the requirement that all districts “employ a reading specialist certified by the department to develop and coordinate a comprehensive reading curriculum in grades kindergarten

through 12” (Appendix A). Further investigation into the reason for noncompliance was not within the scope of this study; however, some of the comments written on the surveys suggest that reasons for noncompliance might include a lack of understanding, or even awareness, of the statute. Therefore, study related to communication between the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Wisconsin State Legislature regarding compliance monitoring is warranted.

The statute states that the reading specialist will: “Work with administrators to support and implement the reading curriculum” and “Conduct an annual evaluation of the reading curriculum” (Appendix A). While the statute seems to be very clear regarding a K–12 curricular continuum, data from Phase II of this study, the case study, indicates a lack of consistency between the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Taking into consideration a more global view, many districts responded that there is no reading curriculum per se at the secondary level, thus making compliance difficult. These factors, both specific to the particular school in this case study, along with comments from the District Reading Survey (Appendix B), illustrate the confusion over the intent of the statute. These are, nonetheless, concerns that fall under the reading specialist’s duties, which are outlined in the statute. Although issues, such as the absence of a prescribed reading curriculum at the high school level, are unique to that level, it makes the statute more difficult to interpret. However the reading curriculum is defined, the statute is clear in the requirement that the district reading specialist “develops and coordinates a comprehensive reading curriculum in grades K through 12” (Appendix A). Accordingly, many of these issues could be addressed through a district-level reading specialist, which is the intent of the statute. This suggests that the Department of Public

Instruction and state legislators should communicate about the intent of the statute and its implementation in schools, particularly at the high school level.

High School Reading Specialists

While State Statute 118.015 (Appendix A) does not require high schools to employ reading specialists within each high school, the second part of Phase I of this study was designed primarily to locate an informant for the case study (Phase II) who worked in a high school setting; therefore, surveys (Appendix C) were sent to all districts indicating they had reading specialists, or reading personnel at the high school level. A return rate of 78% was achieved for the reading specialist survey. Only ten percent of respondents actually worked in the specialist role full-time at the high school level. During telephone interviews with six potential informants, all of them indicated that they worked in classroom instruction at least a portion of everyday, and they all pointed out that the role was shifting from an instructional focus, with a limited number of students, to a schoolwide focus, suggesting a move toward a coaching role. As described in depth in Chapter Four, my informant was selected based on the criteria set forth by the International Reading Association for reading specialists (2000). My results confirmed what is found in the current literature, that is, there is a shift from a student-focused model toward a teacher-focused model based on coaching teachers to improve student achievement.

Practice is preceding research in the area of literacy coaching (Moran, 2007; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). While there are many books extolling the virtues of coaching, and it is clear that improving instructional practice through collaboration

among colleagues with a focus on student data seems a reasonable approach, more research is needed to solidify and clarify the role of the literacy coach.

The traditional role of the reading specialist is changing at a rapid pace, which has resulted in some difficulties reconciling the more traditional role with the newer coaching model. In Donna's case, she was expected to be a literacy coach, but she also fulfilled the more traditional roles of instruction and assessment, described under "Roles and Responsibilities."

A key finding in this study is the overall lack of research into coaching, but specifically at the high school level; a majority of the literature on literacy coaching is directed toward the elementary school, with some focused on the middle school, but very little, if any, based at the high school level. Some of the coaching literature reiterates points stated in the literature review, including the focus of instruction on content, the use of the lecture mode of instruction, and the continuation of the factory model of teaching (Jay & Strong, 2008). Due to the content hierarchy and the structure of the high school, issues surrounding the transition to a coaching model are significantly different at the high school level than they are at the elementary level. These concerns (i.e., barriers) were described in Chapters Five through Seven. The issues Donna faced in her high school reading position, particularly as her role evolved into more of a coaching role, highlight many areas for future research. These are discussed in the last section, "Implications and Recommendations for Future Research."

Key Themes Identified in Phase II/Case Study

The first major theme emerging from this research is a lack of definitive licensure for the evolving role of the reading specialist into that of the literacy coach. This lack of

definition has led to much misunderstanding of the role, not only by the literacy coach, but also by administration and faculty. A second theme is the lack of a clearly defined role, which makes it difficult to effectively carry out the role and may even cause increased teacher resistance at the high school level, in particular; one cause for this is that content teachers continue to view themselves as purveyors of content rather than as reading teachers. A third theme is the necessity for a collaborative and open relationship between the administration and the literacy specialist/coach, which is a necessary prerequisite to developing an understanding of the role by the faculty and staff. Finally, differences that distinguish the high school level from the elementary and middle school levels emerged as a major theme because the structure of the high school differentiates it from the other grade spans. An underlying issue that affects the role, whichever way it is defined (i.e., specialist or coach), is time. Expanding the role into a schoolwide focus, while continuing to meet the traditional roles of instruction and assessment, becomes a major barrier to effectively carrying out the role; this is particularly important at the high school level, where instruction provided to struggling readers may be best provided by a qualified reading professional in a class setting (Beers et al., 2007).

Licensing issues.

While the International Reading Association has provided guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the reading specialist, there is much less clarity on their guidance on the role of the literacy coach (IRA, 2000; IRA, 2003; IRA, 2004). One of the reasons they cite for this is their recognition of the lack of licensing for reading specialists in some states, thus suggesting the need to look to the state level for more specific guidance. In Wisconsin, the 317 license is an administrative license; the Department of Public

Instruction has stated specifically in the license description that the reading specialist works with teachers, not students. In practice, however, this is not happening; often the reading specialist works both with students, in some type of an instructional role, and with teachers.

If there are two distinct roles, there should be two distinct licenses. If the literacy coach role is replacing the previously licensed reading specialist category, then the license description, including the title, should reflect the change in role. Simply changing the title of “reading specialist” to “literacy coach” does not ensure that there is any understanding of the differences in the two roles, and it causes confusion among faculty and staff. One problem Donna faced that exemplifies this lack of clarity is illustrated by her role as a classroom teacher two periods a day and her role as a coach the remainder of the day, thus making it difficult to establish herself as a leader.

The dual positions cause confusion about the role of the reading specialist and, as observed in Donna’s case, may actually undermine the coaching role. Adding more uncertainty, there is no license for the role of the reading (or literacy) coach in the State of Wisconsin. The increasing use of literacy, or reading coaches, in the State of Wisconsin suggests that more guidance be provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Exploration of either expanding the role of the reading/literacy specialist to include coaching under its license, thereby retaining the title of reading specialist, or introducing a new license for reading/literacy coaches, should be explored.

While the title may seem insignificant, it represents a theoretical shift away from the traditional view that reading specialists work with students, or with a limited number of teachers, to help address the needs of specific students in their classes toward a

schoolwide approach with the goal of increased student achievement (Jay & Strong, 2008). Struggling readers at the high school level are often much farther behind their peers than they were in the lower grades; additionally, they often have experienced several years of failure that is exacerbated by year after year of instruction in content classes that may be beyond their reach. This, in turn causes low motivation, making them unwilling—and perhaps unable—to keep up with their peers. There is a unique instructional component that is often necessary to accommodate these students at the high school level. The concern here becomes: what happens to these students if the person with the most reading expertise no longer works with them?

When reading specialists suddenly find their titles changed to *reading coaches* or *literacy coaches* without an accompanying clarification of the role—both personally and among administration, school district personnel, and the faculty with whom they work—success in the transition to the coaching role may be less likely.

Since this research has been conducted, the Wisconsin State Reading Association (2009) has created a Position Statement draft on The Role of the Literacy Coach. It does acknowledge that literacy coaches should “hold a master’s degree and Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 17 licensure” but, beyond that, it lists only a set of skills that school literacy coaches should hold related to the knowledge of reading and writing, expertise in teaching, experience or preparation that promotes reflective practices, and other sound presentation and literacy skills. There is another list of points that literacy coaches should acquire in the course of their work. These are principles associated with collegiality and attributes already expected of licensed reading specialists such as, “connecting teachers with resources and materials as needed,” “evidence an

understanding of the value of diversity in education,” and “model best practices in literacy” (WSRA, 2009). While it is a positive step to see the organization suggesting licensure for the coaching role, the Position Statement appears to limit the role more than the 17 license (Appendix E). One reason for this is that the instruction and assessment responsibilities that have traditionally been included in the reading specialist’s role, other than using assessment information to inform instruction at the classroom level, are not addressed. Based on this statement, it appears that the role of the literacy coach is being considered more of an “instructional coach” with a focus on literacy, with less emphasis being placed on reading and literacy theory and its application in the schools.

Roles and responsibilities.

The roles and responsibilities of the literacy coach are not clearly defined (Moran, 2007). One of the obstacles faced by Donna in this case study was a lack of clear responsibilities for her coaching role, and a subsequent deficit in the understanding between Donna and her administrators. The absence of a clear role description, as well as a lack of clarity of her role among her peers, presented a major barrier to Donna’s effective implementation of the coaching duties. As Moran (2007) suggests, this lack of understanding can have a negative effect if coaching is viewed as a punitive measure.

While the existing literature shows promise for coaching models, this research demonstrates some of the negative effects of introducing a literacy coach before developing a clear understanding of what the role will involve and developing an understanding of how it will differ from a previously established reading specialist’s role. Related to the necessity of the faculty and administrative understanding of the coach’s role, is the understanding of the person who is staffed into the position. In Wisconsin,

one practical implication for districts and individuals considering employment as a literacy coach is to be certain that the expectations and responsibilities are specified prior to staffing the position. Since there is no license for the reading/literacy coach, the reading specialist is a logical candidate for this position. It would be in the best interest of the reading specialist, as well as the potential employer, to have a clear understanding of the district's vision for the position to ensure philosophical compatibility.

Relationship between literacy coach and administration.

Donna experienced many obstacles, in part due to her own lack of understanding with regard to her role, but also due to an absence of clarity in the administration's definition of her role. While Donna would not characterize her relationship with her administrators as contentious, difficulties existed because she was not categorized as an administrator. Therefore, she could not directly implement any literacy initiatives or directives, since these needed to come from an administrator. Existing literature on the role of the literacy coach suggests that the role is best undertaken in a non-evaluative, collaborative manner (Moran, 2007; Sturtevant, 2003; Vogt & Shearer, 2007; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). In order to implement an efficacious literacy coaching program, Donna needed the support and recognition of administration for her expertise, while also being recognized by the faculty as someone whom they respected for her literacy knowledge.

Differences in coaching at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

The last overarching theme in this study is the difference between coaching at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Based upon size alone, the high school level

is challenging in a coaching model; issues that are unique to the high school include the intense focus on subject matter coverage, content teacher resistance, and the sheer number of classrooms and teachers within the school. The extant literature does provide some guidance in this area. Vogt and Shearer (2007) describe the use of a literacy team in meeting literacy needs. In the present case study, the use of a literacy team approach was undertaken by Donna in her efforts to meet the coaching requirements set forth by her administrators. While Donna was able to provide leadership to the team, the departmental approach provided the faculty with staff development in literacy from someone within their content areas, thus securing a greater sense of authenticity.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Implications for practice.

This study was conducted as a single case study; accordingly, the results are limited to the findings of the present study. While State Statute 118.015 (Appendix A) does not provide guidance, other than to say there should be a “reading curriculum” at the high school level, it leaves individual school districts with limited flexibility in how they define it. The statute does not provide a directive that reading instruction, as a specific subject is dictated; this implies that reading will, in some way, be incorporated into the high school curriculum. While it is often assumed that reading is covered in the English curricula, expository reading and the fostering of literate thinking is not regularly covered in high school English classes. Districts and schools need to identify how they define and incorporate statutory requirements for a continuum of the reading curriculum through the high school level, as required by state statute.

In addition, there exists a paradigmatic shift away from working with students and focusing on struggling readers to a schoolwide approach fostering critical literacy skills that fall on a continuum covering the K–12 years and beyond. Based on the results of this study, schools and districts need to clearly identify how they frame and define the role until the International Reading Association, and its state affiliates, provide clear guidance and directives in licensing and role qualifications for literacy coaches.

The results of this study illustrate the necessity for a clear understanding between the reading specialist/coach and the administration prior to any change in the existing role of the reading specialist or the employment of a new literacy coach. In the present study, the absence of understanding with regard to Donna's role, along with a lack of recognition for her literacy expertise, resulted in less effectiveness overall. Until there is more clarity each district will need to be clear about the way it envisions the reading specialist/coaching role.

At the present time, there is no control over who is employed as a literacy coach. Therefore, this study suggests that consideration should be given to a coaching license to ensure that the most highly qualified individuals are filling this role. In the meantime, there needs to be a definitive understanding of the nature of the role at the school and district levels until such time as it is a licensed position.

Suggestions for future research.

Research into how the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the State Legislature interact to monitor the intent of and compliance with State Statute 118.015 is necessary. The present study illustrates the need for a district reading specialist to help

provide direction for a district's literacy plan, as well as to ensure consistency between grade level spans (i.e., elementary, middle and high school).

The literature that is available, in the form of articles and practitioner handbooks, indicates a need for additional school-based research to support the practice of coaching that is currently gaining widespread acceptance. While the limited research that is available, primarily at the elementary level, looks promising, it is imperative that research, both qualitative and quantitative, is conducted at all levels, particularly high school. Such research is needed to provide guidance on successful coaching efforts; it may also help to bring clarity to both role definition and responsibilities.

Quantitative studies, in particular, are warranted to examine the effect of coaching on student achievement. Much of the literature suggests that instructional improvements have a positive impact on student achievement; but, more research is needed on the connection between coaching and student achievement. Further, it is suggested that part of the research agenda include investigation of the structure of the role to determine the best balance to effect schoolwide instructional improvement while meeting both the instructional and assessment needs of the school. Based on this case study, further investigation into the use of the reading specialist's time is warranted. The instructional role should be studied to determine if this component of the role is necessary and results in the best outcome for the school. Likewise, the assessment role was important to this case study because the reading specialist was the person who gathered and evaluated reading levels, monitored at-risk factors, and provided analysis of the relationship between reading scores and failures to the faculty. Because these responsibilities require an extensive time commitment, these components of the traditional role should be

explored further before moving forward with a completely restructured role; this will help to determine the best use of the reading specialist's time.

In conjunction with the responsibility to define the role, the existing literature suggests that a collaborative, non-evaluative approach works best in a coaching model. In Wisconsin, the reading specialist license is administrative; this further necessitates an understanding of the nature of the role (i.e., administrative, evaluative, collaborative, non-evaluative). This leads to the issue of licensure, which the Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction controls. As was demonstrated in this study, the classification of the role, whether categorized teaching or administrative, needs to be specified. Although the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction classifies the 17 reading specialist license in an administrative category, school-based reading specialists are frequently employed under teaching contracts. The existing literature supports a non-evaluative, collaborative model, suggesting the teaching contract classification as a reasonable approach; however, as illustrated in Chapter Six, issues such as content teacher resistance and the strong subject area focus at the high school level suggest that the administrative license might be a viable approach. Research into licensing options, including the status of licensing in other states, is suggested as an area for further study.

The results of the case study demonstrated that content teacher resistance to attempts to integrate literacy into their subject areas continues to be an obstacle at the high school level. As the results indicate, this may be due, in part, to the belief that the literacy coach does not have expertise in specific content areas. It may also be aggravated by the conviction that reading is not considered a content subject area. The use of the Literacy Team approach that Donna promoted in her school proved successful

in making literacy relevant in specific content areas, and the team approach helped to build support from content teachers when the coaching was provided by members of their own department areas. Research into ways that other schools and districts are using a team approach at the high school level could help to illuminate how this method of coaching can be used to help reach literacy needs on a schoolwide basis.

The possibilities for further research into literacy coaching are far-reaching, as demonstrated by the results of this study. From statutory compliance, to licensing, to the formulation of job descriptions, to the impact on student achievement and issues unique to the high school level, the field is in need of research, including the use of multiple methods, both quantitative and qualitative. University and school partnerships are suggested as a way of bridging theory and practice. Further research is needed to provide an identity and solid foundation for literacy needs in the interest of future generations.

Conclusions

The present study illustrates the theoretical shift taking place in the role of the reading specialist in reading and literacy in the 21st century—from a student-focused, remedial, primarily elementary-oriented approach to a more broadly defined, schoolwide, teacher-focused, professional development coaching model. Literacy is no longer viewed as limited to the elementary level and, with the recognition that literacy learning moves along a continuum throughout life, adolescent and adult literacy is moving to center stage. Professional organizations such as the International Reading Association and its state affiliates, along with other professional organizations that concern themselves with literacy, need to take the lead in providing guidance to states regarding licensing and the formulation of new descriptions for the roles and responsibilities of the reading specialist.

In turn, states will be able to provide specific literacy guidance to their districts and schools. This case study clearly illustrates the differences of opinion and understanding of the role of the high school reading specialist among administrators, faculty members, reading specialists/coaches and various professional organizations. This push and pull is producing “the perfect storm” in which the resultant turmoil creates a balkanization in the field of adolescent literacy as it relates to the role of the reading professional. Clear responsibilities should be laid out for reading/literacy specialists, and reading/literacy coaches.

The purpose of Wisconsin State Statute 118.015 is “to provide for a developmental reading program for pupils at all grade levels” (Appendix A). This statute provides requirements regarding the employment and duties of reading specialists. Although this establishes a framework for operation at the district level, each district must determine how they will address the requirements in their individual schools. This may be more challenging at the high school level, where a specific reading curriculum is unlikely to be found. Nevertheless, there needs to be a mechanism to measure compliance with the statute, including the way reading is incorporated within the district high schools.

In conclusion, while the existing literature shows promise for coaching models, this research demonstrates some of the negative effects of introducing a literacy coach before developing a clear and deep understanding of what the role involves and how it may differ from that of the previously established reading specialist.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Wisconsin State Statute 118.015

118.015 Reading instruction. (1) PURPOSE AND INTENT. It is the purpose and intent of this section to provide for a developmental reading program for pupils at all grade levels.

(2) EMPLOYMENT OF READING SPECIALISTS. Each school district shall employ a reading specialist certified by the department to develop and coordinate a comprehensive reading curriculum in grades kindergarten to 12. At the discretion of the state superintendent, a school district may contract with other school districts or cooperative educational service agencies to employ a certified reading specialist on a cooperative basis.

(3) DUTIES OF READING SPECIALIST. The reading specialist shall:

- (a) Develop and implement a reading curriculum in grades kindergarten to 12.
- (b) Act as a resource person to classroom teachers to implement the reading curriculum.
- (c) Work with administrators to support and implement the reading curriculum.
- (d) Conduct an annual evaluation of the reading curriculum.
- (e) Coordinate the reading curriculum with other reading programs and other support services within the school district.

(4) SCHOOL BOARD DUTIES. The school board shall:

- (a) Develop a program of reading goals for the district for grades kindergarten to 12.
- (b) Make an assessment of existing reading needs in grades kindergarten to 12 in the district based on the reading goals established under par. (a).

(c) Make an annual evaluation of the reading curriculum of the school district.

History: 1977 c. 29; 1995 a. 27 s. 9145 (1); 1997 a. 27.

Appendix C
School Reading Specialist Survey

Please answer the following questions as completely as you can. Thank you.

1. My position title and license are: _____

2. Please check the areas in which you are involved, and explain additional responsibilities in the space provided.

Instructional Responsibilities:

_____ Intervention (pull-out)

_____ Small group (intervention) in classroom

_____ Whole group (non-intervention) in classroom

_____ Team teaching

_____ Title I teacher

Other instructional responsibilities: _____

Leadership Responsibilities:

_____ Formal staff development/in-services

_____ Informal staff development/classroom modeling

_____ Coaching in classrooms/collaborative consultant

_____ Scope and sequence

Other leadership responsibilities: _____

School Reading Specialist Survey (continued)

Assessment Responsibilities:

- _____ Diagnostic testing
- _____ Standardized Testing/Assessment Coordinator
- _____ RTI
- _____ Title I Coordinator

Other assessment responsibilities: _____

Administrative Responsibilities:

- _____ Book/text orders
- _____ Paperwork for RTI monitoring

Other administrative responsibilities: _____

Other Responsibilities not identified above:

Appendix D
Reading Teacher License

PI 3.23 Reading teacher - 316. (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008c)

Any person who has a specific assignment to teach reading shall hold a reading teacher license. Effective July 1, 1985, a regular reading teacher license to teach kindergarten through grade 12 shall be issued to an applicant who has completed an approved program and who has received the institutional endorsement for the reading teacher license and who meets all of the following requirements:

(1) Eligibility to hold a Wisconsin license to teach or completion of an approved teacher education program.

(2) Two years of successful regular classroom teaching experience.

(3) At least 18 semester credits with at least 12 of those credits taken beyond the bachelor's degree. The 18 semester credits shall include a practicum in teaching reading at the elementary level and at the middle/secondary level and shall include course work in all of the following:

(a) Developmental reading for grades kindergarten through 12.

(b) Assessment and instructional techniques for readers with special needs.

(c) Language development.

(d) Learning disabilities.

(e) Content area reading.

(f) Literature for children or adolescents.

History: Cr. Register, April, 1988, No. 388, eff. 5-1-88; am. (intro.), Register, March, 1992, No. 435, eff. 4-1-92.

<http://dpi.wi.gov/tepd/PI3sub6.html#pi324>

Appendix E
Reading Specialist License

PI 3.24 Reading specialist - 317. (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008c)

Any person who directs kindergarten through grade 12 reading programs or works with reading teachers, classroom teachers, administrators, and others as a resource teacher in reading shall hold a reading specialist license. Effective July 1, 1985, a regular reading specialist license may be issued to an applicant who has completed an approved program and who has received the institutional endorsement for the reading specialist license, and who meets all of the following requirements:

- (1) Eligibility to hold a Wisconsin reading teacher license.
- (2) A master's degree with a major emphasis in reading or at least a 30 graduate semester credit program equivalent to the master's degree with a minimum of 15 graduate semester credits which include all of the following:
 - (a) Guiding and directing the kindergarten through grade 12 reading program.
 - (b) Field experience in kindergarten through grade 12 reading programs.
 - (c) Research related to reading.
 - (d) Supervision of instruction.
 - (e) Content area reading for the reading specialist.

History: Cr. Register, April, 1988, No. 388, eff. 5-1-88.