Preparing Future Teachers: Documenting Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge and Application of Effective Instruction

Kathryn M. (Kathryn McGaughey) Scarborough
THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

PREPARING FUTURE TEACHERS: DOCUMENTING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS’ KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

By

KATHRYN M. SCARBOROUGH

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The members of the supervisory committee were:

Stephanie Al Otaiba  
Professor Directing Dissertation

Leigh Edwards  
University Representative

Ithel Jones  
Committee Member

Vickie Lake  
Committee Member

Shelbie Witte  
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the dissertation has been approved in accordance with university requirements.
This dissertation is dedicated to my family who has continuously supported me in this endeavor.
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ABSTRACT

Teachers play a crucial role in the academic success of their students. As such, there is great interest in how teachers are prepared for their important position. The purpose of this study was to document pre-service teachers’ knowledge and application of effective instruction as it related to early literacy. The theoretical framework, *How People Learn*, was used to define effective instruction, design the university course, and analyze the data. Literature pertaining to teacher education, reading instruction, and early childhood education was reviewed in order to inform this study. Thirty-one, early childhood education majors, enrolled in an early literacy course participated in this study. Using a qualitative, case study research design multiple forms of data were collected and analyzed. The researcher was also the instructor of the course offering a unique perspective. The findings reveal pre-service teachers know and apply essential components of effective instruction and attribute their increase in knowledge to the group presentations, field experience, and student tutoring. The findings suggest that the pre-service teachers in this study know more than has been previously documented, well planned cooperative learning can be viewed as beneficial by pre-service teachers, and the pre-service teachers in this study understand and can use explicit instruction. This case study does not attempt to generalize the findings to other samples, rather offers a reader a rich description of a course that may be transferred to other settings.
CHAPTER ONE

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on the standardization of reading instruction focusing on five essential components of literacy (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) and scientifically based instructional methods (Larson & Phillips, 2005). As such, teacher education programs have been required to adopt such related objectives in courses required for teacher certification. In addition, the knowledge needed for effective literacy instruction has centered on pre-service teachers’ understanding of these five literacy components and methods proven to increase student achievement (Moats, 2009). The result of this recent emphasis on reading instruction was that many studies have examined pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators’ explicit knowledge of the components of literacy (Joshi, Binks, Hougen, Dahlgren, Ocker-Dean, & Smith, 2009; Fielding-Barnsley & Purdie, 2005; Podhaski, Mather, Nathan, & Simmons, 2009). Findings from studies painted a bleak picture of teacher education programs with many participants being unable to accurately define the components of literacy (Joshi et al., 2009; Podhaski et al., 2009). However, Allington (2007) believed that caution should be used in interpreting such findings as these studies focus on only one piece of the knowledge necessary to be an effective teacher of early literacy.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The continued interest in teacher preparation has emphasized the importance of schools of teacher education revisiting the methods for instructing pre-service teachers to determine if changes to the environment need to be made (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Some suggest that there is a lack of detailed documentation and study of course methods that contributed to building crucial understanding among pre-service teachers (Ball & Forzani, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Efforts to transform teacher education should focus on designing methods that enhance teacher expertise by allowing for practice and feedback (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000). In addition, there is a need for evidence regarding instructional methods that produce teachers who are able to provide high quality reading instruction (Al Otaiba, Lake, Greulich, Sidler, & Guidry, 2010). Without this documentation, some worry that others from outside the field of education, such as state and federal policy makers, will mandate instructional methods (Allington, 2007).

What is known is that “learning to teach in practice, with expert guidance, is essential to becoming a great teacher” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 40, italics added). Often there is a
disconnect between what pre-service teachers experienced in the university setting and what they observed during their internship experiences (Allington, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Providing practice within the context of the field would require a major overhaul of the connections between universities and schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Until this type of reform occurs, there is a need to understand how university course work can enhance understanding of effective learning environments by providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to experience and practice the skills necessary for effective instruction.

The purpose of this study was to document pre-service teachers’ knowledge and application of effective instruction as it related to early literacy. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What knowledge about effective instruction do pre-service teachers have?
2. To what extent do pre-service teachers possess knowledge about scientifically based reading research when instructed using elements of effective instruction?
3. How do pre-service teachers apply knowledge of effective instruction?
4. To what extent do pre-service teachers attribute their knowledge gains of scientifically based reading research to the instructional elements of the course?

Findings from this study provided examination and documentation regarding teacher education and contributed to a much-needed body of knowledge related to the education of pre-service teachers.

**Researcher’s Role**

As the researcher was essentially the measurement tool in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), it is necessary to explicitly describe the role of the researcher within the study. In this study the researcher was also the instructor of the course. This study offered a unique perspective as the course instructor previously taught both the participants and the course. The semester before the course under study, the participants were enrolled in a course, Early Childhood Foundations, taught by the course instructor. The previous time with the participants allowed the instructor to know the learners more deeply and design instruction that was a match for the learner. Additionally, the instructor had taught the course under study four times. The previous experience with the course permitted the instructor to make choices in instruction that focused on essential pieces of knowledge.

**Context of Course**
The setting of this case study was an Early Literacy course in a teacher education program that educates future early childhood education teachers. The program met requirements from the state Department of Education (DOE) for teacher certification and the literacy course was one of five approved courses for the state reading endorsement thus, course objectives and purposes were aligned with the expectations from the DOE.

The course objectives centered on building content knowledge for early reading instruction and emphasized the five components of literacy instruction highlighted by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Future courses built on this knowledge base and discussed the methods for teaching these components of literacy. Because the DOE approved the objectives, course content was stable. However, what was able to be manipulated was the methodology used for teaching the content. This case study employed a variety of proven effective teaching strategies for teacher preparation.

While enrolled in this course, the pre-service teachers also completed approximately 150 field experience hours. They were trained in an explicit, systematic tutoring program and conducted highly structured reading tutoring sessions with a struggling reader. Both the course content and field experience contributed to the developing knowledge associated with early literacy. However, it should be noted that a mandated reading curriculum was used in the county in which pre-service teachers complete their field experience. The curriculum was implemented as written with flexibility varying by school, and the lessons were whole group and teacher-directed. As such, the pre-service teachers typically do not get the opportunity to see, in practice, learner-centered instructional strategies. The instructional methods used in the course offered the opportunity to experience active learning aligned with effective literacy instruction.

**Participants**

The participants in this case study were early childhood education pre-service teachers enrolled in an early literacy course. The participant demographics are as follows: SAT score Mean = 1075.71, SD = 125.09, grade point average Mean = 3.46, SD = .36, age Mean = 21, SD = 2.07, gender 100% female, race 90% white, 6.5% black, 3.2% other. The pre-service teachers were admitted by application and assigned to a cohort that moved through four semesters (blocks) of course work together. The pre-service teachers progressed through a carefully designed sequence of courses that build upon previous semesters and included fieldwork. Upon completion of the program, pre-service teachers will be eligible for state certification to teach
children age three through eight. The course of interest in this case occurred during block two and was the first in a series of reading courses taken by the pre-service teachers. All pre-service teachers enrolled in the course participated in the study. A faculty member, without the presence of the course instructor, presented possible benefits and risks associated with the study and consent was collected in the form of a signed letter. The final grades are presented in the table below.

Table 1.1: Participants Final Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theoretical Framework**

Guiding this case study was the report from Donovan, Bransford, and Pellegrino (1999), *How People Learn*. The framework from *How People Learn* (1999) outlined “the design and evaluation of environments that can optimize learning” (p. 19) and included four overlapping areas: learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered. In learner-centered classrooms teachers are aware of the individual understandings, needs, and beliefs of each student in their class. Tasks assigned are appropriate to the level of knowledge possessed by each child and provide just the right amount of challenge to be engaging. It is inadequate to just know the student; rather the teacher must have thorough knowledge of the concepts taught. The teacher is concerned with the student’s understanding and organization of new knowledge for later retrieval, not merely with student engagement, which would indicate a knowledge-centered environment. An assessment-centered environment uses a wide variety of formative assessments to monitor participant learning. Frequently employed are strategies that teach and encourage the use of metacognition; making students understandings known to both the student and the instructor. Finally, the community greatly influences the learning that occurs
in a community-centered environment. In community-centered classrooms, great attention is paid to establishing norms of behavior that encourage inquiry, risk-taking, and collaboration.

This theoretical framework was intertwined with all aspects of this study. While this study specifically looks at an instructional method for pre-service teachers it was also interested in teaching pre-service teachers how to create a learning environment to ensure student literacy learning. Therefore, How People Learn (1999) is used to design the environment for pre-service teachers’ learning and evaluate pre-service teachers’ understanding of effective literacy instruction. Both the course instructional design and analysis of pre-service teachers’ understanding centered on the four areas: learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 1.1: Theoretical Framework

**Nature of Study**

Because the aim of this study was to document pre-service teachers knowledge and application of effective instruction as it relates to early literacy, a case study research design was used. Pre-service teachers were enrolled in a foundational early literacy course. Multiple forms of data were collected through interviews, documents, and surveys from the pre-service teachers in order to answer the research questions that guide this study.
Table 1.2: Relation of Research Questions (RQ) to Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ejournal</th>
<th>Lesson Plans</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Formal Assessment</th>
<th>Preparedness Survey</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course Instructional Methods**

Teaching methods used in the university setting to prepare future teachers have been studied and this body of knowledge continues to grow (Grossman, 2005). Yet, there is no one approach that has been determined to be the sole producer of effective teachers. What has been shown was that pre-service teachers experience difficulty transferring theory taught in university courses to classroom teaching (Clift & Brady, 2005).

This course employed instructional strategies that have previously been shown effective in preparing teachers. These methods were: cooperative learning groups, reflection journals (ejournals), lesson plans, and discussions (debriefing sessions). Each method contributed to creating an effective learning environment as described by the theoretical framework *How People Learn* (Donovan et al., 1999).
**Cooperative learning.** Cooperative learning in the form of group presentations was used. The pre-service teachers were randomly assigned to groups and asked to teach peers about an assigned component (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) of literacy instruction. Each group was provided with specific objectives for their component that must be included in their presentations. Specific objectives emphasized the knowledge necessary for this course and provided a knowledge-centered focus. In addition, the specific objectives provided a learner-centered focus, as the nature of this course was foundational, students had little to no previous knowledge about these components. Specific objectives helped ensure that instruction targeted the level of understanding possessed by the learner.

Instructional practices for young children ages should be developmentally appropriate (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Students in the course were seeking certification to teach young children (age three through third grade), therefore knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices was essential. Requiring presentation groups to employ developmentally appropriate strategies created a knowledge-centered focus while simultaneously promoting learner-centered strategies. Using learning-centered instructional strategies provided the opportunity to practice the instructional techniques and to experience the benefits of hands-on learning.

Providing active learning experiences solely for the purpose of creating motivation would
be inappropriate (Donovan et al. 1999). Learning experiences must be targeted to the needs of
the student and facilitate understanding of the material. In order to address the needs of learners,
both formal and informal assessments must be used (Al Otaiba, 2005). Therefore, presentation
groups were required to assess participant knowledge using methods found in early childhood
classrooms. These assessments were reviewed during a debriefing meeting following the
presentation under the guidance of the course instructor. The assessments determined what areas
were mastered by the pre-service teachers during the presentation, as well as what areas need
further instruction. Effective teachers of early literacy continually monitor student progress and
use the data to inform instructional decisions (Lyon & Weiser, 2009). By using such an approach
in a highly scaffolded environment, the course instruction was able to match the specific needs of
the pre-service teachers creating a learner-centered environment.

Reflection journals. In effective learning environments, teachers know the understandings
and interpretations of information their students have about the subject matter creating a learner-
centered environment (Donovan et al., 1999). In order to understand students’ thinking and
knowledge about course content, ejournals were used. The format of ejournals were used
previously and were believed to be less formal than paper journals.

Lesson plans. Effective learning environments ask not only that learners have the
knowledge, but also have it organized in a manner that allows for easy retrieval and application
in future situations (Donovan et al., 1999). Lesson plans provide a tool to examine students’
application of knowledge about both the reading content of the course and the elements of
effective instruction (Grossman, 2005). Students were asked to write a reading lesson plan to
implement in their clinical experiences.

Discussions. An assessment-centered learning environment employs metacognitive
strategies to make student understandings of course objectives known to both the student and
course instructor (Donovan et al., 1999). This allows the instructor to modify instruction and
select content that matches the students’ needs. Discussion has also been shown as an effective
method for reinforcing and reconstructing pre-service teachers beliefs about teaching and
learning (Grossman, 2005).

Data Collection

To ensure accuracy of findings, multiple forms of data were used such as interviews,
documents, and observations (Yin, 2009).
Debriefing sessions occurred following each presentation and served as the setting for semi-structured focus group interviews. Probing questions related to presentation content, instructional methodology, and the type and use of assessments were asked. Active listening and clarifying questions were used to fully understand the meaning of statements. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, read, and listened to multiple times during data analysis.

Documents included ejournals, lesson plans, and formal assessments. Pre-service teachers completed the ejournals reflecting on their understanding of early literacy instruction with prompts used to guide the responses. Pre-service teachers were also required to write a reading lesson plan to be implemented with a small group of students in their placement classrooms. The lesson plan required pre-service teachers to provide a rationale for the lesson objectives, procedures, assessments, and reflection following implementation. In addition, following the first three presentations, the pre-service teachers were asked to write the definition of the components presented. Following the last three presentations, the pre-service teachers were asked to complete the same assignment.

Observations of the presentations served as further documentation of pre-service teachers’ understandings of early literacy. The researcher collected observational data as a participant-observer, and recorded events and reactions of participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis drew from the theoretical framework, How People Learn (Donovan, et al., 1999), which grounded this study. Data collected from each source was analyzed for evidence of understanding about knowledge-centered, learner-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered learning environments. Transcripts from the interviews, lesson plans, and ejournals were read and reread and evidence of each of the four areas was coded (Creswell, 2007). The statements were categorized, read, and common themes were noted.

Definition of Terms

Developmentally Appropriate Practice – instruction that meets children where they are and enables children to reach goals that are challenging and attainable; instructional goals and practices are a match to the individual child’s age and development; based on knowledge about how children learn and develop (Coople & Bredekamp, 2009)

Early Childhood Education – programs serving children ages birth through eight (Coople
Effective Instruction – attends to elements of learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered in the design and implementation of instruction (Donovan et al., 1999)

Emergent Literacy – consists of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are developmental precursors to reading and writing (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)

Explicit Instruction – emphasizes clarity and systematic presentation of skills and strategies by employing scaffolding in authentic situations (Pearson, 1996 as cited in Braunger & Lewis, 2006); the children are not expected to infer key skills and knowledge only from exposure or incidental learning opportunities (Spear-Swerling, 2005)

Reading Content Knowledge – knowledge about reading development, the English language, complexity of skilled reading, and the five components of literacy instruction (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Block, 2002; Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005); reading content knowledge associated with the course of interest – phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency (course syllabus)

Reading Instructional Method - a set of teaching and learning materials and/or activities often given a label, such as phonics method, literature based method, or language experience method (International Reading Association [IRA], 2003)

Systematic Instruction – planned, logical, orderly sequence of instruction that draws from knowledge about reading and child development and takes into account the individual differences in each child (Spear-Swerling, 2005; Strickland, 1998)

Summary

Due to the influence of a teacher on the success of a child, continued examination and documentation of how teachers are prepared must be conducted (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Creating a learning environment that promotes student success is a difficult task learned through experience both as a learner and as a teacher. Effective teachers of early literacy have thorough knowledge of learning environments, instructional strategies, assessment methods, and subject matter (Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009; Lyon, 2009). This case study documented pre-service teacher knowledge and application of effective instruction as it related to early literacy and contributed to the body of knowledge on teacher preparation. Chapter two presents a review of the related literature followed by chapter three which describes the
methodology. Chapter four details data analysis and chapter five provides summary and discussion.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

For this study, a critical review of the literature must be conducted in order to contextualize this study regarding pre-service teachers’ course instruction. First, a review of literature associated with pre-service teachers including instructional methods shown effective with pre-service teachers and characteristics of effective teachers of early literacy was conducted. Next, the definitions of literacy and reading as well as the instructional methods used in the past were discussed. Third, an overview of the history of early childhood education (ECE) and today’s stance on developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) in the education of young children was provided.

The literature used to inform this study was identified using a search of databases: Education Index Retrospective and Education Full Text, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and Journal Storage Archive (JSOR). Additionally, reference lists from relevant articles were searched and this proposal’s supervisory committee provided guidance. Literature was included or excluded based on the relevance to the purpose of this study: to document pre-service teachers’ knowledge and application of effective instructional practices as it related to early literacy.

Pre-service Teachers

The role of the teacher has undergone many changes as the needs of education has shifted (Darling-Hammond, 2010). As research demonstrated children entering classrooms had different needs and abilities, the knowledge a teacher had to possess became more complex (Spodek & Saracho, 2003). The debate over how best to train future teachers and what knowledge is required for effective instruction has been controversial (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Teacher education encompasses a wide variety of instructional approaches with no single approach being the only one necessary (Donovan et al., 1999; Grossman, 2005).

Educating Pre-service Teachers

Many perspectives influence teacher education, but one idea is prevalent among all and is perhaps the most important: effective teachers are intentional (Allington, 2007; Coople & Bredekamp, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Intentional teachers respond to the individual needs of the children in their care and are purposeful and thoughtful in how they create the appropriate learning environment (Coople & Bredekamp, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006). This
ability is one that requires ample experience and knowledge (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Expert teachers have declarative knowledge, knowledge that is reflective, organized, and analyzed while beginning teachers do not. This lack of declarative knowledge makes the ability to select instructional practices and use assessment to guide instruction much more difficult for beginning teachers and results in them relying more on prescribed curriculum (Snow et al., 2005).

Ways to develop the knowledge necessary for effective teaching and provide experiences to pre-service teachers have been studied. Because of questions regarding the quality of teacher preparation, teacher educators should continue to provide examination and documentation of effective reading teacher education (Allington, 2007). Methods that have shown promise in teacher education are examined in the following paragraphs.

**Tutoring.** Because opportunities that require procedural knowledge, the ability to apply knowledge at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner, rather than factual knowledge, the ability to list or regurgitate information, are more complex and indicate greater understanding (Krathwohl, 2002), tutoring young readers by pre-service teachers has been studied (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007; Spear-Swerling, 2009). Results from such studies indicated that pre-service teacher knowledge and perceptions of preparedness to teach reading increased after participating in a tutoring program (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007). In addition, pre-service teachers’ reflections and final reports of the tutoring experience indicated that they were beginning to use assessment data to make instructional decisions, a skill needed to be an effective teacher. Pre-service teachers who provided explicit instruction through a highly structured and scripted tutoring curriculum showed the most growth in knowledge and preparedness to teach (Al Otaiba et al., 2010).

**Field experiences.** It has been argued that the most important component of reading instruction for pre-service teachers is a supervised field experience that provides ongoing guidance and feedback (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The field experience component provides pre-service teachers with a much-needed window into models of good teaching and how good teachers make decisions (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The most effective experiences are those that are carefully supervised and structured with pre-service teachers receiving high quality and immediate feedback on their performance (Ball & Forzani, 2010). Pre-service teachers have cited the field experiences as the most beneficial component of their preparation to become a teacher (Williams & Alawiye, 2001).
Despite the numerous benefits of field experiences, it has also been found that sometimes evidence-based practices are not being consistently used in field experience classrooms, making university course instruction of vital importance (Vaughn, Moody, & Schumm, 1998). Additionally, some pre-service teachers acknowledged that their mentor teacher models integrated all subject areas and allowed for exploration, however, the pre-service teachers were unable to identify the specific learning objectives that were being taught and why the objectives were selected (Mogharreban, McIntyre, & Raisor, 2010). Many of the pre-service teachers suggested that the mentor teachers selected instructional methods based solely on what the children will think of as fun. Additionally, often time pre-service teachers, within the context of their field experiences, focus the majority of their energy on issues of classroom management rather than putting into practice methods discussed in coursework (Clift & Brady, 2005)

**Coursework.** Pre-service teachers need multiple forms of instruction and experiences in order to become effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006). They must understand explicitly how expert teachers instruct in a manner that promotes student achievement. The most effective courses help teachers apply knowledge learned in the university setting to the classroom context (Barone & Morrell, 2007). Teacher educators who are the most effective model behaviors found in exemplary classrooms in their own university classroom and engage in a cycle of reflective practices (Barone & Morrell, 2007). As a result of the importance of university course work in the development of effective teachers, several methods of instruction have been studied.

**Portfolios.** Emerging in the wake of portfolios in public schools, teacher preparation programs began using portfolios of student work to more carefully document pre-service teachers’ learning and the application of that knowledge (Grossman, 2005). Pre-service teachers reported viewing the portfolio as helpful in encouraging them to reflect on their practice and to link theory to practice. Additionally, compiling a portfolio helped the pre-service teachers think more deeply about their instruction.

Typically included in the portfolio are lesson plans for their field placement age level written by the pre-service teachers (Grossman, 2005). Lesson plans can serve as an indication of how the pre-service teacher applies the knowledge taught in courses to her field placement classroom. Yet, to be most effective, pre-service teachers should be given the opportunity to create lesson plans that they will actually implement in their field experience (Trummons, 2009). Also, university instructors should explain in detail the lesson plan requirements and evaluation
in order to gain accurate information about the pre-service teachers’ knowledge (Trummons, 2009) and to ensure the assignment is meaningful to the pre-service teacher (Grossman, 2005).

**Lesson plan study.** Taken from a model found in Japan, lesson plan study occurs in the university classroom setting and encourages pre-service teachers to engage in the cycle of plan, implement, reflect, and plan (Cavey & Berenson, 2005). As part of this practice, students engage in discussions about practice and receive guidance from peers and the course instructor. As a result of this methodology, pre-service teachers have shown the ability to look to student behavior and assessment results to evaluate lesson effectiveness and plan for future instruction (Williams & Alawiye, 2001). Furthermore, pre-service teachers also were able to move beyond their sense of feedback as criticism to seek input and observations from others to inform their practice and meet student needs.

**Modeling.** Since pre-service teachers tend to teach how they have been taught (Mueller, Wisneski, & File, 2010), instruction that allows them to experience appropriate and effective practices have shown to be beneficial (Jones, Lake, & Dagli, 2005; Lee & Krapfl, 2002). Methods that literally teach using instruction appropriate for the grade level that pre-service teachers’ desire to teach, increase the likelihood that they will implement those techniques in their classrooms (Lee & Krapfl, 2002). Moreover, pre-service teachers express increased confidence in teaching in a developmentally appropriate manner and structuring a learning environment that allowed for children to explore.

**Cooperative learning.** In schools today teachers must have the ability to apply knowledge to solve complex problems faced by early readers within their classrooms and work in teams to find appropriate solutions (Darling-Hammond, 1995). To provide instruction that also develops cooperative skills, teacher educators frequently turn to cooperative learning. Cooperative learning requires students to work together to design a presentation or solve a problem (Johnson & Johnson, 1998). Results of studies revealed that students report greater interest in course content and motivation to participate when interacting with peers in cooperative groups (Keller, 2009). Furthermore, cooperative learning groups implicitly encouraged students in higher order thinking (Fournier, 2002) as students “explain strategies to one another in their own words, thus helping them further process the complex cognitive activity” (Stevens & Slavin, 1995, p. 242).
Unfortunately, some research has also illustrated poor perceptions of the usefulness of collaborative groups in learning key academic skills among university students (Williams & Alawiye, 2001) and specifically pre-service teachers (Whitbeck, 2000). Additionally, there is a question about the effects of cooperative learning groups when the tasks are complex with multiple methods of solving the problem (Fuchs, Fuchs, Kazdan, Karns, Calhoon, Hamlett, & Hewlett, 2000). These findings, both positive and negative, should be interpreted with caution. Due to the large amount of time and understanding needed by instructors to properly implement cooperative learning (Stevens & Slavin, 1995), often instructional techniques are called cooperative learning, yet do not keep with the elements necessary for cooperative learning to be effective (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

Elements of cooperative learning. To be a true model of cooperative learning specific elements must be included (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2007). Elements essential for cooperative learning to be effective include: positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, social skills, and group processing. Experts on cooperative learning vary the names of each component, but agree that each piece is necessary to ensure that all students benefit from the cooperative learning experience (Stahl, 1994). When implementing cooperative learning groups in teacher education it is important not only to include the essential elements to ensure its effectiveness with pre-service teachers, but also to ensure its effectiveness when the pre-service teachers implement such a strategy in their future classrooms.

Discussions and reflections. Regardless of the activity in which the pre-service teacher has engaged in, opportunities for discussion and reflection are essential in teacher preparation programs (Grossman, 2005). This opportunity to process an experience can take multiple forms from an electronic journal, to peer group, to instructor and student conversation, and is frequently cited by pre-service teachers and documented in studies of teacher preparation as beneficial in pre-service teacher learning.

Effective Teachers of Early Reading

A great deal of literature in the field of reading instruction points to large achievement gaps among students of different races and economic status (Snow et al., 1998). Citing low proficiency scores among students in grades one, three, four, eight, and twelve, a growing number of researchers feel schools and teachers are failing children of varying backgrounds in regard to adequate reading instruction (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2008). The belief that
schools and teachers are failing children raises questions of teacher education programs and how well they prepare future teachers (National Council on Teacher Quality [NCTQ], 2006). Allington (2007) and Barone and Morrell (2007) argue that schools, teachers, and teacher education programs are not failing, but that standards have risen in recent years to new heights. Despite different views about the success or failures of schools and teachers, both schools of thought agree that an effective teacher is necessary in every classroom.

There seems to be some consensus of what constitutes effective teaching of early reading among researchers within the field (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Allington, 2002; Allington 2007; Braunger & Lewis, 2006; IRA, 2003; National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance [NCEE], 2010; Pressely, 2006; Snow et al., 2005). Early childhood teachers should balance their instruction to teach children strategies for word and letter identification, fluency, and comprehension (Block, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2002). In order for teachers to effectively accomplish well-rounded instruction, they must possess skills and knowledge that center around four overarching areas: content knowledge, instruction, assessment, and the classroom environment.

**Content knowledge.** For teachers to effectively teach children to read they must have a wealth of knowledge about reading development, the complexity of skilled reading, and the English language (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Block et al., 2002; Snow et al., 2005). While the rate and timing of development varies by child, each child will move through similar stages as he/she acquires language and literacy skills (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). A thorough knowledge of the skills associated with reading and the pattern in which they typically emerge necessitates teachers tailor instruction to match individual needs (Simmons, Kame’euni, Harn, Coyne, Santoro, Smith, Beck, & Kaufman, 2007).

Teachers must also know and understand that many skills support the learning of reading (Snow et al., 2005). Knowledge of phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, is needed to ensure a skilled reader (Pressley, 2006). Knowledge of equal importance is the connections between reading and writing, the background knowledge children bring to their learning, and children’s literature (Scarborough, 2001).

Finally, effective teachers have a good deal of specific knowledge about the structure of the English language and know how to teach it to young children (Joshi et al., 2009; Podhaski, Mather, Nathan & Simmons, 2009; Snow et al., 2005). In order to teach the nuances of the
language in a manner that a child can understand, a teacher must know the rules about English language explicitly (Moats, 2009). Many children, particularly those who are struggling readers, require that knowledge be explicitly taught before they are able to experiment with the rules of language in their own reading and writing (Pressley, 2006).

**Instruction.** It is widely accepted that teaching reading requires teachers to differentiate instruction to meet individual needs in their classroom and, therefore, teachers require a wide variety of instructional techniques at their disposal (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Cunningham et al., 2009). The one-size-fits-all approach to teaching reading is not appropriate as the needs of each child and each school are unique making it important that pre-service teachers know and are able to use a variety of instructional techniques (McKenna & Walpole, 2010).

Children learn to read by a variety of materials and methods… No one approach is so distinctly better in all situations and all respects than the others that it should be considered the one best method and the one to be used exclusively. (Bond & Dystra, 1967/1997 as cited in Braunger & Lewis, 2006, p. 11)

Effective teachers employ instructional techniques in response to individual needs (Cunningham et al., 2009). Examples of instructional strategies include, but are not limited to, modeling, prompting, flexible grouping, and direct explanation (Tompkins, 2010). While the need for explicit instruction has been documented as necessary for some children, particularly those children who are considered at-risk, (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Delpit, 1988). Allington and McGill-Frazen (2000) suggest that while “explicitness is necessary for instruction to be effective… a key issue is what to be explicit about and when and how” (p. 145). What is taught must be linked to the specific needs of each child and therefore pre-service teachers must understand how to administer, interpret, and modify practice based on assessments (Lyon & Weiser, 2009).

**Assessment.** As with the selection of instructional strategies, choosing the appropriate assessment tools is critical to successful teaching. Effective teachers use data to make instructional decisions (Lyon & Weiser, 2009). They view their job as teaching individual children, not a specific curriculum, and understand that to reach each child, they must know his or her individual strengths and weaknesses (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000). Early childhood education professionals must be able to determine student needs by collecting and analyzing student work and assessments and using that information to individualize instruction (Al Otaiba,
2005). Thus, a response to intervention (RTI) model is logical to inform teachers if instruction is working, to provide insight into instructional changes that might be necessary, and to engage students in monitoring of their own progress (Brown-Chidsey, Bronaugh, & McGrant, 2009; Moats, 2009). RTI has its roots in the field of special education but is also effective in general education classroom settings as each child is unique (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). Defined by the National Center on Response to Intervention (2010),

Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. With RTI, schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities. (p. 2)

While RTI is a relatively new term, it describes a practice effective teachers have previously done: that is to reflect on what they have taught, gather information to determine student learning, and make necessary changes in their instruction to ensure all children make learning gains (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Assessment takes many forms including screening measures conducted at intervals during the school year to provide indicators of how students are progressing, and diagnostic assessments when children are not responding to classroom or intervention instruction as expected (Al Otaiba, 2005). But a third type of assessment, known as progress monitoring, is of the utmost importance as it informs the day-to-day practice in the classroom. In early childhood classrooms, progress monitoring can be anecdotal notes, running records, and student work samples, which are all used to provide data on individual students (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). Effective teachers know how and when to assess and use that information to inform their instruction.

**Classroom environment.** In addition to skills explicitly taught and assessed, effective teachers know that children benefit from actively constructing knowledge, talking about what they have learned, and engaging with a multitude of print in their environments (Block et al., 2002). Therefore, effective teachers create an environment that promotes these behaviors. A positive classroom environment is created when activities are designed that allow children to have a wide variety of meaningful interactions with literacy activities throughout the entire day and in all areas of the curriculum (Pressley, 2006). Included in successful classrooms are high
quality children’s literature, ample writing supplies, reading and writing opportunities in all play areas, charts and posters that are familiar to children, comfortable areas for reading, leveled books for individual children, and non-fiction texts related to classroom themes (Tompkins, 2010).

In addition to creating an environment that stimulates literacy activities, effective teachers know of and use high quality literature in classroom (McMahon, Richmond, & Reeves-Kazelskis, 2001). Reading aloud to children is an effective way to provide children with access to text beyond their independent reading levels (Tompkins, 2010). Using high quality literature daily in reading aloud stimulates student interest, enriches vocabularies, and teaches comprehension strategies.

Teachers have been shown to have great influence on a child’s academic success (Darling-Hammond, 2010). As a result, the quality of teachers has come under scrutiny and has lead to questions regarding the preparation of pre-service teachers. Reviewed was a growing body of research on the methodologies used in teacher preparation that have been shown to have success. Additionally, areas of literature in regard to effective teachers of reading was also discussed.

**Reading and Literacy**

When researching the topic of reading it is necessary to discuss the multitude of definitions of reading and literacy. Definitions associated with reading have evolved as have the methods used for reading instruction (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). The definition of reading greatly influences the manner of instruction and assessment and it tends to center around three distinct philosophies: the bottom-up approach, the top-down approach, and the balanced approach (Pressley, 2006). The bottom-up approach emphasizes that reading begins with the ability to decode and leads to comprehension. The top-down approach believes that comprehending and interacting with text leads to the ability to determine the meaning of unknown words. The balanced approach to literacy instruction asserts that skills from both bottom-up and top-down approaches are necessary for reading.

**Bottom-Up Approach**

The primary goal of reading instruction for the bottom-up approach is to ensure the student’s ability to recognize and say the written word, with a secondary focus on gathering meaning from text (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2007). This instructional methodology is closely
aligned with the “decoding/analytic literacy” definition (Braunger & Lewis, 2006, p. 3), where literacy is determined by one’s ability to read previously unseen text. In the bottom-up approach, skills such as letter identification and letter-sound correspondence are foundational (Pressley, 2006). Instruction centers primarily on experiences that explicitly teach these basic skills (Graves et al, 2007). In the bottom-up approach, teachers typically follow a Direct Instruction model by using a carefully planned lesson design, and providing specific direction to students (Engelmann, 1999). Advocates of the Direct Instruction approach believe that if the teacher conducts lessons as designed and the children pay attention, children will learn to read.

**Alphabetic-spelling.** Perhaps the beginning of the bottom-up approach occurred during Colonial times when the definition of literacy was “signature literacy,” (Braunger & Lewis, 2006, p. 3), which meant the ability to read and write one’s name, and “recitation literacy,” (Braunger & Lewis, 2006, p. 3), which meant the ability to memorize and recite book passages. At this time, the instructional method was referred to as “alphabetic- spelling” (Graves et al., 2007 p. 43). The purpose of instruction was for religious or patriotic learning and the elements of instruction occurred in a specific sequence where students: learned the alphabet, learned to spell syllables then words, memorized portions of text, and finally read orally (Graves et al., 2007). During this time the need for reading and writing were minimal as business transactions were conducted in person with familiar people and communities were small and close knit.

**Basal readers.** Typical in bottom-up classrooms are basal readers (Graves et al., 2007). Initially, basal readers emphasized decoding with attention paid to each individual letter before moving on to sounding out entire words (Pressley, 2006). Student books contained highly controlled vocabulary and primarily narratives passages (Graves et al., 2007). Children did not read expository passages until approximately the fourth grade. Teacher’s manuals, worksheets, testing, and ability grouping were common. Reading lessons were teacher directed and included instruction in decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension with each being distinct from the other (Duffy, Roehler, & Putnam, 1987). “There was seldom any evidence of the connection between the skill taught and the story that accompanied it” (Duffy et al., 1987, p. 360). Students engaged in silent reading, answered follow up questions and completed worksheets (Graves et al., 2007). The child’s ability to read new texts by applying previously learned letter-sound correspondences determined his literacy ability (Pressley, 2006).
Publishers of basal readers made attempts to modernize text selections, use excerpts from authentic children’s literature, include characters with diverse backgrounds, and introduce expository text as research on the use of literature in learning to read emerged (Graves et al., 2007). Despite these modifications, the focus of reading instruction was still on sounding out words by attending to each individual sound before moving to reading words (Pressley, 2006). Comprehension instruction required students to recall information and centered on literal-level responses with teachers assessing comprehension rather than teaching comprehension strategies (Block et al., 2002). Still used today, basal reader content and instructional methods have been significantly affected by recent research in the field of reading instruction such as the report of the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

**National Reading Panel.** With the release of the National Reading Panel’s (NRP) report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000), the definition of literacy was affected and some within the field argued that the definition of reading was still unclear. The argument centers on one type of assessment that includes young children reading nonsense words, which some educators believe is not necessary because, “without comprehension involved how is this reading?” (Braunger & Lewis, 2006, p. 10). The NRP emphasized five components considered essential in reading instruction - phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension – and stated that each of these components must be addressed specifically in order for a child to learn to read (Braunger & Lewis, 2006).

Objections have been made to the methodology used by the NRP (Hammill & Swanson, 2006). These objections contribute to the belief that simply focusing on these five components is not enough to ensure a literate population (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Despite the doubts about the research methodology used, the impact of the report has been substantial (Braunger & Lewis, 2006; Hammill & Swanson, 2006). Policy makers from the federal to the local level have called for the use of scientifically-based research in instruction and assessment of reading (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Emphasis has been placed on curriculum ensuring comprehensive and detailed coverage of the five components of reading instruction at the expense, some might say, of a more holistic approach to learning to read (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Subsequent reports (see Fielding-Barnsley & Purdie, 2005; Joshi et al., 2009; NCTQ, 2006) have released alarming statistics about the lack of knowledge among pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, teacher educators, and university textbooks in regards to these components.
Student objectives in modern versions of basal readers include skill instruction in each of the five components suggested by the NRP (Graves et al., 2007). Lessons are highly scripted with attention paid to comprehensive and systematic coverage of each component (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Professional development focuses on helping teachers understand how to implement the curriculum guides as directed and provides little opportunity for teacher’s to adapt curriculum to the needs of students (Podhajski et al., 2009).

**Reading First.** Reading First (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002) has provided a foundation for the importance of early literacy experiences for all children by providing funding and training for early childhood professionals in literacy (Hoffman, 2010). Reading First mandates that schools be held accountable for ensuring all children are reading (able to comprehend grade level text) by the end of third grade and provide funds to schools that use scientifically proven methods for reading instruction (Scott, 2006). With the introduction of Reading First, intentional language and literacy instruction topped the list of effective and necessary elements of early learning programs (Hoffman, 2010). The emphasis of early childhood programs became focused on increasing development of early language, cognitive, and pre-reading skills in young children. All use of Reading First funds had to stay within the guidelines set forth by the NRP and, thus, a narrow skill focused perspective of reading instruction became the norm (McKenna & Walpole, 2010).

Reading First provided choice to centers to select from scientifically based instructional strategies that were proven to increase student knowledge associated with early reading skills (Hoffman, 2010; McKenna & Walpole, 2010). Scientifically based programs are those that met specific research guidelines (NCLB, 2002) that some have argued to provide only a limited view of reading instruction (McKenna & Walpole, 2010). Skills deemed necessary by Reading First legislation were oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge and achievement measures were set in place to monitor student progress (Hoffman, 2010). Since the implementation of Reading First, flaws in how achievement is measured and the large viabilities by state have been documented, however the emphasis on skills is widespread (McKenna & Walpole, 2010).

**Top-Down Approach**

The top-down approach to literacy instruction emphasized the importance of children actively constructing meaning from texts, going beyond words to focus on picture clues, and
prior understandings (Pressley, 2006). In this approach, connections between reading, writing, speaking, and listening are perceived to be essential in developing young children’s literacy abilities (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Predominant beliefs associated with the top-down approach are aligned with the constructivist learning theory in that students are fully active in seeking answers to their questions (Ruey, 2010). In the top-down approach, the teacher assumes the role of facilitator, intervening only to provide ideas within the context of the students work. Teachers rely heavily on observations to monitor and assess children’s reading development and use that information to create an environment in which children can explore and discover skills associated with reading. Perhaps the most notable result of the movement toward emphasis on meaning was whole language.

Whole language. As with reading and literacy, the definition of whole language has been described in multiple ways (Pressley, 2006). It is often depicted as “an approach to literacy education that emphasizes natural development of literacy competence; Immersion in real literature and daily writing is favored over explicit teaching of basic reading skills” (Pressley, 2006, p. 15). Much of the resistance to bottom-up approach came from those who supported a more natural and meaningful introduction to literature. In contrast to basal readers that taught skills in isolation, advocates of a top-down or whole language approach taught skills through child led interactions with text (Graves et al., 2007). Goodman described proficient readers as those who are “effective in constructing a meaning that they can assimilate or accommodate and which bears some level of agreement with the original author” (as cited in Bloom, 1983, p. 602). Whole Language deemphasizes letter and word level decoding and emphasizes more “higher-order meaning construction” (Pressley, 2006, p. 19) in reading with prior knowledge playing a central role in comprehension. Proponents of this approach of instruction insist that children be taught to attend to semantic cues, rather than phonological cues, when attempting to read unknown words and determine their meanings.

Comprehension strategy instruction. Comprehension has played a central role in the top-down approach to literacy instruction. “The most important thing about reading is comprehension,” (Block et al., 2002, p. 3). Many skills and strategies are employed and taught in order to acquire, confirm, and create meaning from written text (Block et al., 2002). The priorities of meaning-enhanced comprehension reflect the importance of motivation in learning to read and emphasize that the teacher should “foster an intrinsic desire to read” (Block et al.,
2002, p. 7), select interesting texts at an appropriate level of difficulty, and teach comprehension strategies. Proponents of comprehension strategy instruction emphasize that the purpose of instruction is to “equip children with tools they need to use independently, purposefully, actively, aggressively even, to understand more deeply and remember more permanently” (Block et al., 2002, p. 104).

**Balanced Literacy**

The balanced approach to reading instruction integrates components from the bottom-up and top-down approaches to reading instruction and includes both specific skill instruction and an environment structured to provide children with the opportunity for meaningful interactions with print (Pressley, 2006). This is perhaps in response to an emerging definition of literacy referred to as critical literacy (Block et al., 2002). Critical literacy requires a reader to be able to read in depth a wide variety of media, analyze, and synthesize what has been read and make meaning beyond the words on the page. There are many definitions of critical literacy that reflect the multitude of skills students must employ and the components a teacher must address, but arguably the most encompassing is from the IRA’s 2009 Position Statement.

Reading is a complex system of deriving meaning from print that requires all of the following: the development and maintenance of a motivation to read, the development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print, sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension, the ability to read fluently, the ability to decode unfamiliar words, and the skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes or speech sounds are connected to print. (IRA, 2009)

Advocates for a balanced approach to literacy instruction believe that both bottom-up and top-down strategies must be employed to comprehend text (Pressley, 2006). In the balanced literacy approach to teaching young children, the curriculum is structured to allow multiple and varied experiences with a wide variety of print (Pressley, 2006; Tompkins, 2010). Opportunities for independent, scaffolded, and modeled reading and writing are incorporated throughout the day and embedded in all classroom activities (Tompkins, 2010). Environments are rich in print and high quality children’s literature is central to the classroom (Pressley, 2006). Teachers observe and assess students using a wide variety of assessment methods and provide explicit skill instruction based on a child’s individual needs. Balanced literacy incorporates objectives with
instructional and assessment methods from both top-down and bottom-up approaches and requires a highly trained teacher to be effectively implemented.

The balanced approach to literacy instruction weaves together multiple literacies and perhaps is best illustrated in the diagram from Scarborough (2001) featured in Figure 2.1. Skills such as phonological awareness and phonics are integrated with critical thinking comprehension skills in the hopes of producing good readers. Explicit understanding of the multiple characteristics of skilled readers is imperative among those charged with educating young children (Cunningham et al., 2009; Lyon, 2009).

Figure 2.1. From “The Many Strands that are woven into skilled reading” by Scarborough, H.S. (2001).

The definitions of reading and beliefs about reading instruction have shifted throughout the years. Beliefs about reading instruction center around three distinct perspectives: bottom-up, top-down, and balanced. These multiple perspectives have evolved over time and influence the methods of instruction.

Early Childhood Education

26
The education of young children, like reading instruction, has evolved over time as societal needs have shifted (Canella, 2002; Spodek & Saracho, 2003). For the greater part of the nineteenth century in the United States, care of children fell to mothers with the primary goal of education being to teach children to perform tasks necessary to care for one’s self and family (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Some children attended school in a one-room schoolhouse, but due to responsibilities in the family, schooling was mostly fragmented. As women began entering the workforce around World War I, the need for childcare centers arose (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Research revealed discrepancies between races in school achievement and pointed to the literacy experiences that took place before formal schooling began as influencing later achievement (Spodek & Saracho, 2003). As a result, Head Start became the first nationally funded program devoted to the education of young children (Spodek & Saracho, 2003). Since the inception of Head Start, early childhood education has evolved with parent expectations changing from care for their child’s basic needs to the education of him or her (Spodek & Saracho, 2003).

Today, a widely agreed upon source regarding the education of young children is the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (Helburn & Bergmann, 2002). Serving as one accreditation body for early childhood educational facilities, many programs seek their information on methodology from NAEYC concerning the most effective manner in which to educate children from birth to age eight (Coople & Bredkamp, 2009). Position statements issued by NAEYC detail components of quality early childhood education programs and developmentally appropriate practice for the education of young children.

There are other groups that criticize NAEYC’s statements about appropriate practice (Helburn & Bergmann, 2002). For example, fundamentalist Christian groups object to anti-bias curriculum that include discussions about diverse family structures. These groups publish position statements that reflect a biblical worldview (Ucker, 2010). Others such as Mallory and New (1994) argue that NAEYC’s statements do not reflect the diversity of race, background, or learning abilities seen in many of the children entering schools. A correct, single method for educating young children has not been identified, but it is suggested that teachers of young children be aware of their own views and temper them based on the views of others around them (Spodek & Saracho, 2003).

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice**
As previously discussed, the most universally used approach to early childhood education centers on developmentally appropriate practice (Spodek & Saracho, 2003). Developmentally appropriate practice states that children should be seen “joyfully, physically, and intellectually engaged in meaningful learning about their world and everyone and everything in it” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. x). In order for learning to be child-centered, early childhood educators should adhere to some specific guidelines in preparing instruction for young children. The guidelines involve multiple aspects of creating an effective learning environment. First, instructional goals and practice should be based on current research in child development and tailored to meet the individual needs of each child’s specific level of development. Second, teacher content knowledge is imperative for successful programs due to the necessity of a teacher making informed decisions to ensure each child is provided with tasks that are challenging, meaningful, and attainable. Third, developmentally appropriate practice considers it essential that children be provided with opportunities to construct their own knowledge in a carefully planned environment where teachers knowingly plan activities that lead to construction of skills necessary for the learner. Fourth, in developmentally appropriate classrooms, teachers provide assistance to a child at the right time and with the appropriate intensity so the child can master tasks just beyond what he can do independently. Finally, teachers in developmentally appropriate classrooms have a thorough understanding of the goals of the curriculum and continually assess children using a variety of methods to inform their instruction (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

**Emergent Literacy**

In addition to NAEYC’s description of developmentally appropriate practice, general behaviors specifically associated with emergent literacy have also been established by a wide range of researchers in the field (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Perhaps, one of the most essential elements of literacy development is that reading and writing skills develop in a predictable pattern although the timing varies with each child. As young children acquire early language skills, they become aware of structure and meaning in oral language that provides a necessary base for future writing and reading. Additionally, children with emergent literacy skills find meaning in environmental print. The children begin to read signs and symbols and make meaning from print.

Young children also begin to gain metalinguistic awareness, the ability to hear different individual sounds and words (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Metalinguistic awareness is also
referred to as phonemic awareness and is developed as children engage in play with rhyme and riddles (Snow et al., 2005). As phonemic awareness develops, children write using symbols, shapes, and letter-like formations to attempt to replicate the print around them (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). This writing evolves to include the use of inventive spelling patterns that represent the child’s emerging understanding of language (Snow et al., 2005). Young children also enjoy and learn from read aloud experiences and glean important lessons of print awareness from them. Children then imitate these concepts of print in their own book explorations and reading and incorporate literacy activities into their play (Braunger & Lewis, 2006).

The education of young children is of great importance as the quality of early experiences has been shown to influence students’ future success (Spodek & Saracho, 2003). Childcare purposes have evolved as societal needs have changed and today, early childhood education is charged with educating young children and providing a strong foundation for future learning.

**Summary**

This review of literature discussed the complexity associated with teaching early literacy. Specifically, the review provided information on the wealth of knowledge required for effective teaching of early literacy and methods of instruction previously used to prepare pre-service teachers. Because of the importance of the teacher in a child’s academic success, continued examination of teacher preparation is necessary. Chapter three presents a methodology for exploration of cooperative learning as a method of instruction in an early literacy course to facilitate pre-service teachers’ understanding of effective early literacy instruction.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Teachers play a crucial role in students’ academic success (Darling-Hammond, 2010). As a result, teacher quality has been studied in detail. Some recent reports have concluded that many classroom teachers do not have the necessary knowledge to be effective and that teachers are failing to adequately educate students (Honig et al., 2008). Opposing views believe that schools and teachers are not failing; rather the educational demands on students have increased significantly (Allington, 2007; Barone & Morrell, 2007). Both sides agree that an effective teacher is essential for student learning leading to questions about how teachers are educated.

How to develop teachers’ breath and depth of knowledge necessary to be an effective teacher can be difficult (Clift & Brady, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2010). What has been acknowledged was that because of the complexity of the skills associated with effective teaching, the skills cannot simply be taught, but must also be learned by experience (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Currently, teachers enter classrooms faced with a variety of learners, curricula, community beliefs, needs, and achievement expectations (Cunningham et al., 2009). Increasing this complexity was the fact that one method of instruction does not reach all children (McKenna & Walpole, 2010) and teachers must be prepared to match instruction to the specific needs of the child (Cunningham et al., 2009). In order to meet these varying needs, teachers must possess a great deal of knowledge about their subject matter, instructional strategies, assessment strategies, and the classroom environment (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

What teachers know and understand about content and students shapes how judiciously they select from texts and other materials and how effectively they present material in class. Their skill in assessing their students’ progress also depends upon how deeply they understand learning, and how well they can interpret students’ discussions and written work. No other intervention can make the difference that a knowledgeable, skillful teacher can make in the learning process. (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 8)

The purpose of this study was to document pre-service teachers knowledge and application of effective instruction as it related to early literacy learning. This case study sought to document the knowledge pre-service teachers had about effective instruction, the extent to which pre-service teachers possessed knowledge about scientifically based reading research when instructed using elements of effective instruction, pre-service teachers application of their
knowledge about effective instruction, and the extent to which pre-service teachers attribute their knowledge of scientifically based reading research to elements of the course.

**Qualitative Case Study Research Design**

Qualitative case study designs contribute to a field of knowledge by providing meaningful, contextual understandings of real-life occurrences (Yin, 2009). By prolonged interaction with the participants of study and multiple sources of information about the phenomenon, the case study method provides a window into the situation and a voice to those involved. The benefit of such a design is that it provides a context to answer how and why type questions in a setting that occurs typically (i.e., cooperative learning) or atypically (e.g., school shooting). Moreover, case study design can and should use multiple sources of evidence to provide a rich description of the case under study. Using qualitative case study design, the aim was to determine pre-service teachers’ emerging understandings of early literacy learning through careful analysis of documents, interviews, and observations.

**Teacher Educator**

As the researcher was essentially the measurement tool in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), it is necessary to explicitly describe the role of the researcher within the study. In this study the researcher was also the instructor of the course offering a unique perspective. The choices made as the instructor were examined in the following paragraphs.

As mentioned previously, the instructor taught these pre-service teachers in the previous semester course, Early Childhood Foundations. This experience provided great insight into the pre-service teachers from what they knew to what experiences they have had. During the Foundations course, the instructor modeled in practice teaching using developmentally appropriate practices. Direct instruction was limited with an emphasis on engaging students with subject matter, allowing for their own construction of knowledge, and encouraging discussion and problem solving among peers. Further, the course emphasized application of knowledge learned from the class by requiring students to write personal philosophies of education and cite specific researchers and/or early childhood models as the basis of their beliefs.

The instructor taught the Early Literacy course four times before allowing for the content knowledge required for the course to be arranged in a manner that allowed for thorough understanding and transferability. The focus of instruction was on pre-service teachers’ understanding reading content knowledge, why instruction in each of the areas of instruction is
necessary, and how to ensure children have reached the desired outcomes ensuring a knowledge-centered learning environment.

**Participants**

The participants for this case study were thirty-one pre-service early childhood education teachers enrolled in a foundational early literacy class. The participant demographics are as follows: SAT score Mean = 1075.71, SD = 125.09, grade point average Mean = 3.46, SD = .36, age Mean = 21, SD = 2.07, gender 100% female, race 90% white, 6.5% black, 3.2% other. Students were admitted to the Early Childhood Program by application and assigned to a cohort that progressed through four semesters (blocks) of course work together. The program was designed so that each semester builds upon the next. These pre-service teachers previously completed block one that included a course in Early Childhood Foundations taught by the researcher.

All students enrolled in the course were asked to participate in this study. Because of the researcher’s dual role as course instructor, a faculty member described the research project, risks, benefits, and requirements of the study to the participants. This faculty member collected consent forms. Consent forms were kept confidential from the researcher until the completion of the course to ensure participant privacy. All of the data collected for this study was part of the assignment requirements for the course.

**Setting**

It has been suggested that pre-service teachers’ knowledge develops over time and through experience from declarative knowledge to reflective, organized, analyzed knowledge (Snow et al., 2005). Because of the nature of this particular class as the first in a series of reading classes, the purpose here was to build declarative knowledge and common language that can provide a basis for discussion in future reading methods courses. The course of interest was within a program that trains future early childhood education teachers. The program met specific requirements from the State DOE and course objectives and purposes were aligned with the expectations from the DOE. Because of this DOE approval, course objectives were unable to be manipulated, but the course instructor was able to modify the methodology. The course objectives centered on building content knowledge for early reading instruction and emphasized the five components of literacy highlighted by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) as the required knowledge. Future courses build
on this knowledge base and discuss the methods for teaching these components of literacy. Additionally, the state emphasized the importance of using developmentally appropriate practice in early learning classrooms, thus understanding developmentally appropriate concepts and practices were important.

Table 3.1: Sequence of Literacy Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block I</th>
<th>Block II</th>
<th>Block III</th>
<th>Block IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Literacy</td>
<td>Teaching Reading in the Elementary School</td>
<td>Student Teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts in the Elementary School</td>
<td>Differentiated Reading Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Field experiences were cited by pre-service teachers to be the most influential and beneficial component of their preparation programs (Williams & Alawyie, 2001). In the county schools where pre-service teachers in this study completed their clinical experiences, a mandated reading curriculum was used and consisted of scripted teacher manuals and student workbooks. Classroom teachers were required to use the curriculum as written with flexibility varying by school. Missing from many classrooms were daily read aloud, meaningful interactions with high quality literature, and developmentally appropriate instructional and assessment methods that are supported by research in the field of early childhood education (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Al Otaiba, 2005; Block, 2002; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Joshi et al., 2009; Lyon & Weiser, 2009; Podhaski et al., 2009; Snow et al., 2005; Tompkins, 2010). Thus, it was imperative that pre-service teacher coursework provide students with a balanced look at early literacy learning and provide opportunities for practice and feedback using developmentally appropriate practices in literacy instruction. In other words, reading knowledge has been defined. Yet there is a disconnect between the reading knowledge and the professional guidelines from the field of early childhood education. The instructional design of the course attempted to connect the reading knowledge with the professional guidelines from the field of early childhood education.

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The course met in the same room throughout the entire semester. This allowed for posters to be hung, rules to be posted, and the room to be modified to suit the needs of the lessons and presentations. As a result of being in the same room, a *home* was built with student work posted similar to what is encouraged in early childhood classrooms.

**Course Instructional Method**

*How People Learn* (Donovan et al., 1999) specified four interconnected areas necessary for effective instruction. The framework was designed both to evaluate and to aid in the development of effective learning environments. In planning the instructional model for this course each of these areas were considered essential. Additionally, while knowledge about the five components of early literacy is an important element of reading instruction, it is only a piece of the knowledge teachers need effectively teach literacy (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Allington, 2002; Allington 2007; Braunger & Lewis, 2006; IRA, 2003; NCEE, 2010; Pressley, 2006; Snow et al., 2005). Many skills are required of fluent readers and teachers must have content knowledge as well as knowledge of instructional methods, assessment methods, and the classroom environment to be able to match instruction to the individual needs of students. Matching instruction to student needs requires more than mere recall of facts; it asks teachers to understand the content, determine why the skills are important, and organize their knowledge for retrieval (Donovan et al., 1999). Learning environments in which students are encouraged to discuss, present, and question each other are effective at increasing knowledge (Stevens & Slavin, 1995). This study examined the use of effective instructional techniques in teaching pre-service teachers about early literacy instruction.

In addition, the instructor used a unique perspective about the learners and the course in planning the learning environment. The instructor had previously taught the course of interest four times allowing for a thorough understanding of the course objectives, the course position within the early childhood program, and the subject matter. Further, the instructor taught a course, Early Childhood Foundations, to these particular pre-service teachers during the previous semester (block 1). The experience with the subject matter and knowledge about the students provided the instructor with valuable information in order to construct a knowledge-centered and learner-centered environment.

**Article Critiques**
For instruction to be effective, it must be targeted to the learners’ knowledge (Donovan et al., 1999). In this, a foundational course, knowledge about reading and early literacy among the pre-service teachers was limited. Therefore, readings from the course text and supplemental sources were required before each class. The required text for the course was CORE: Teaching Reading Sourcebook written by Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn (2000). Supplemental readings included professional journal articles and book chapters (Appendix I). For articles related to each of the components of literacy instruction, pre-service teachers were expected to write an article critique summarizing the main research findings and the implications for their future early childhood classrooms. This provided the pre-service teachers with some beginning knowledge of the concepts that will be presented in class and allowed for the presenters to target their instruction to the participants knowledge.

**Cooperative Learning**

Group presentations, a form of cooperative learning, were used. Because of the setting of this course and requirements set forth by the state, one of the five components of early literacy was used as the topic for each group presentation. Pre-service teachers enrolled in the foundational course were randomly assigned to one of six presentation groups. While there are five components of early literacy instruction, the component of vocabulary was divided into two separate groups, specific-word instruction and word learning strategies, due to the large amount of material. Groups were provided class time to plan with the expectation that they also met outside of class.

**Specific objectives.** An essential element for effective cooperative groups is clearly defined objectives (Stahl, 1994). Students must be presented with comprehensive directions and goals to ensure that maximum learning for each individual occurs. In addition, the knowledge associated with effective literacy instruction is extensive (Braunger & Lewis, 2006; Snow et al., 2005) and students in this initial course had limited prior knowledge associated with teaching early literacy. Previous semesters of this course provided the instructor with the knowledge that without guidance to the important knowledge about each of the components of literacy, students would miss the most critical pieces of information. Therefore, to ensure that the presentations matched instruction to the needs of the learners and focused on the necessary content, specific objectives were given (Donovan et al., 1999). Providing specific objectives also ensured that each task was carefully structured around the necessary information with the purpose being to
ensure learners thoroughly understood the content, why the information was necessary, and organized the knowledge for easy retrieval (Braunger & Lewis, 2006; Donovan et al., 1999). The presentation objectives (Appendix B) were guided by course objectives listed in the syllabus and emphasized thorough understanding of the five components of literacy.

**Instructional strategies.** Meaningful instruction must be learner-centered, carefully aligned with the needs of the students, and allow for active participation in the development of understanding (Donovan et al., 1999). It was not enough to present students with information and expect them to learn; they must be engaged in the subject matter and given reasons that the information is important. Learners, both pre-service teachers and young children, must be provided with opportunities to learn that match their level of understanding.

For young children teaching in a manner that is deemed developmentally appropriate is important. In the previous block during the Foundations course, the pre-service teachers experienced a variety of teaching strategies that actively involved them in creating meaning. In this Early Literacy course, pre-service teachers were asked to teach each of their objectives explicitly in a manner that is developmentally appropriate for young children. By doing so, pre-service teachers were able to practice instructional methods that can be effective with young children and received immediate feedback from the course instructor. The pre-service teachers also got to experience how learner-centered teaching strategies positively affected their own learning.

Additionally, the pre-service teachers had opportunities to discuss how the use of such strategies affected their learning, talk about content with each other during the activities furthering their understanding of key objectives, and discuss the implementation of learner-centered teaching strategies during debriefing sessions with the course instructor following the presentation. Not only does the discussion allow for opportunities for monitoring one’s own learning, but also provided an environment in which students were encouraged to work together to construct meaning (Donovan et al., 1999).

**Assessment.** Instructional strategies must vary based on individual needs making ongoing, formative assessment essential in effective classrooms (Donovan et al., 1999). Based on their schooling experiences and the heightened importance placed on accountability in recent years, many pre-service teachers enter teacher education programs with the belief that assessment is always a formal, paper-pencil test (Bos et al., 2001). While formal assessments
serve an important role in classrooms, daily assessments in natural settings are essential in helping teachers target student learning and match instruction to student needs (Al Otaiba, 2005). During the previous semester, the preconceptions about assessment held by the pre-service teachers were addressed and the pre-service teachers were exposed to a multitude of assessment methods for young children. In the Early Literacy class, students were asked to apply their knowledge of assessment during their presentations. Each presentation group was required to use assessment methods in keeping with developmentally appropriate practices to assess participant learning. Following each presentation, pre-service teachers, with the guidance of the course instructor, reflected on their practice using student assessments to determine the effectiveness of their presentation and what areas needed to be retaught to ensure mastery.

**Feedback Letters**

The community in which learning takes place greatly influences the learning outcomes (Donovan et al., 1999). Teachers should pay particular attention to establishing environments where students are comfortable trying out new techniques and can receive constructive feedback regarding their practice. In order to create a climate of mutual respect and inquiry, the pre-service teachers with their presentation groups, wrote feedback letters to each group following their presentation. Guidelines (Appendix J) for the letters encouraged constructive comments targeted to improve future teaching.

**Reflection Journals**

Reflection and conversation about preconceptions and emerging understandings are an important component of learner-centered and assessment-centered classrooms (Donovan et al., 1999). Additionally, intentional teachers reflect on their practice and modify their instruction based on these reflections (Allington, 2002). In order to encourage pre-service teachers to engage in reflective practice, journals were an essential part of the course. Following each presentation, pre-service teachers responded to questions about their understanding of early literacy instruction via an online assignment portal to the course instructor. The online assignment portal was able to be accessed by the student and instructor and allowed for the benefits of an ejournal to be maintained and the responses confidential. Ejournals were chosen based on previous studies that have used the format effectively (Goldstein & Lake, 2000).

**Lesson Plans**
Lesson plans as part of portfolios have been used extensively in teacher education to assess pre-service teacher learning and to encourage them to reflect on their learning (Grossman, 2005; Tummons, 2009). In order for lesson planning to be seen as a beneficial task, opportunities for implementation should be given (Tummons, 2009). By allowing for implementation, the pre-service teachers are given the opportunity to see in practice how the proposed methods can be of benefit to them thus creating a knowledge-centered environment.

Because this study sought to determine pre-service teachers’ application of effective instruction as it related to early literacy, lesson plans provided important documentation of this knowledge. A requirement of the course was for pre-service teachers to write a lesson plan focusing on a specific reading objective that was needed by a small group of students in their clinical experience classroom (Appendix D). The plan was implemented in the placement classroom and the pre-service teachers wrote reflections about their effectiveness.

**Formal Assessments**

As is typical within university courses, the pre-service teachers were asked to convey their knowledge of the five components of literacy at two times during the semester. Following the first three presentations, the pre-service teachers were asked to define phonological awareness, phonics, and the benefits and need for specific word instruction. After the last three presentations the pre-service teachers were asked to define comprehension, fluency, and describe why it is necessary to teach word learning strategies.

**Discussions**

In learner-centered and assessment-centered classrooms, instructors create opportunities for students to make their understandings known to both themselves and to the instructor (Donovan et al., 1999). Further, previous studies have shown that when pre-service teachers engage in discussions about their learning they demonstrate greater understanding of course concepts and can provide more specific descriptions of their knowledge (Grossman, 2005).

Because of the benefits of discussions, students participated in debriefing sessions following their presentations. These sessions took place with the course instructor who asked probing questions (Appendix G) to elicit the pre-service teachers knowledge about the uses of assessment and learner-centered instructional strategies. The instructor also asked questions based on observations during the presentation to attempt to understand the application of effective instruction. In addition, the pre-service teachers analyzed assessments from their
presentation to determine the effectiveness of their instruction and areas that should be retaught. Providing the opportunity to practice skills taught in course work in real settings, such as described, allowed for greater participant understanding (Donovan et al., 1999; Grossman, 2005).

**Quality Concerns**

It was important to consider elements of quality in qualitative research by considering how to persuade a reader that the findings are worth attention (Golafshani, 2003). At times, objections have been made to the use of case study design due to lack of rigor (Gerring, 2007). Tellis (1997) and Yin (2009) suggest particular attention be paid to issues of construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability when designing a case study.

**Construct Validity**

Frequently, concerns about construct validity occur due to questions about the subjectivity of findings (Tellis, 1997). In order to remedy this, three strategies are suggested (Yin, 2009). First, multiple sources of evidence and investigators should be used to provide for triangulation of data. Triangulation gives merit to findings by helping to develop converging lines of data. Drawing conclusions from several sources rather than just one, researchers can be more certain that the findings are representative across all participants and all times. Additionally, using more than one investigator to analyze data and then comparing with one another will again create validity of findings (Merriam, 2009). In this case study, data was collected from each participant using multiple methods: documents, interviews, and observations. During data analysis a second graduate student trained in qualitative methods coded and categorized data. These results were then be compared with the primary researcher and discrepancies noted and discussed.

Second, a case study database should be established (Yin, 2009). Separate databases and files should be used for the data and the report of the researcher. This practice allows for other researchers to analyze raw data free from the interpretation of the report. For this study, all data was stored in electronic files. The ejournals and interview transcriptions were saved in files and the lesson plans were scanned and uploaded to a computer file.

Finally, a chain of evidence must be maintained (Yin, 2009). All data collected should be kept in an organized manner. The investigator should take care to document how, where, and why conclusions were made and cite specific evidence from the data to support conclusions. Thorough description of the case and documentation of findings were reported in the results section of this study.
Internal Validity

Internal validity tends to be a problem when an investigator infers something that has not been directly observed such as a participant’s understanding (Yin, 2009). As such, using techniques such as pattern matching, explanation building, addressing rival explanations, and using logic models when analyzing data lends credibility to findings. In this case, pattern matching was employed when analyzing data. The theoretical framework focused analysis on specific areas: assessment-centered, knowledge-centered, learner-centered, and community-centered. Patterns within the data that related to pre-service teachers’ understanding about each of these areas were sought. Pattern matching ensured that the research questions were answered by focusing the analysis on the specific areas of interest.

External Validity

External validity from the quantitative perspective deals with the generalizability of findings to a larger population (Yin, 2009). A case study, however, was selected as a research design to provide an in depth look at a particular situation chosen for the purpose of understanding the phenomena in great detail. As such, the ability to replicate a case study is unlikely, however, the findings can be transferred to similar cases. To effectively transfer findings, care must be taken by a researcher to provide sufficient description of the case under study. Additionally, while case studies explore unique situations, some suggest that providing explanation and understanding of common activities should be done (Golafshani, 2003). Therefore, in a case study, the researcher seeks to connect findings to a broader theory that can then be applied in other similar situations (Yin, 2009). For this case study, careful documentation and thorough description of the case was provided to allow others to transfer the elements of this case to their own setting. Additionally, findings about pre-service teachers’ understanding about early literacy will be tied to the areas of assessment-centered, learner-centered, knowledge-centered, and community-centered outlined by the theoretical framework used to guide this study.

Reliability

As discussed when addressing external validity, reliability in qualitative research is a question not of the ability to replicate, but whether or not the results are consistent with the data that was collected (Merriam, 2009). To ensure reliability, procedures and data should be compiled in a manner that allows other researchers to read, understand, and draw similar conclusions (Yin, 2009). Because this case study attempted to document pre-service teachers’
understanding of effective instruction as it related to early literacy during a university course, descriptions of participants, setting, procedures, and data were described in great detail. Additionally, all documents were scanned and saved in electronic files. To ensure quality of interpretations during data analysis is adequate, a graduate student from the School of Teacher Education at the university was used during highlighting and coding of data. Separately both the primary researcher and the graduate student read, highlighted, and coded data. Results were compared and discrepancies discussed.

**Data Collection**

When designing a qualitative study, the researcher must decide whether to plan data collection instruments in detail prior to conducting the research or allow the instruments to develop as the case under study unfolds (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The decision largely depends on the extent to which the research knows what he wants to find out. When there is clear knowledge of what the researcher seeks to document, data collection procedures and tools should be planned out. In doing so, extraneous, unrelated data is avoided and the researcher can ensure the multiple forms of data are included resulting in less bias in data collection. In this study, the purpose, to document pre-service teacher knowledge and application of effective instruction as it related to early literacy was clear. The data collected served to illuminate pre-service teachers’ knowledge and application of effective instruction as defined by the theoretical framework. Data was also collected from the course instructor and served as documentation of the effective practices used in designing and implementing course instruction.

**Reflections**

Previous studies have used reflections effectively to illuminate pre-service teachers’ understandings and perceptions about early literacy (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007). The format of ejournals versus paper journals was selected based on previous studies that explored pre-service teachers’ understandings about various elements of teaching such as constructivism and caring (Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Jones et al., 2005). “We believed that the email format would provide students with less formal, more spontaneous medium…eliminating some of the pressure and drudgery often associated with reflective journal writing” (Goldstein & Lake, 2000, p. 864). The ejournals served as a method for documenting pre-service teacher knowledge about effective instruction and course objectives. Prompts (Appendix C) were given to elicit information in regard to various aspects of effective instruction as it relates to early literacy.
In addition to the ejournals collected from the pre-service teachers, the instructor kept a field notebook. The field notebook is an essential piece of qualitative research and also served as a reflective tool for the instructor of the course. Not only was reflection necessary to design effective instruction, the use of such a practice models for the pre-service teacher its use in practice.

**Lesson Plans**

Documents, such as lesson plans, can be important sources of information (Yin, 2009). Lesson plans and units are commonly used in the field of education to determine how pre-service teachers implement the course content (Tummons, 2009). However, care must be taken in how the lesson plan assignments are given and how they are evaluated to elicit accurate demonstration of pre-service teachers’ knowledge. It is important that pre-service teachers view lesson planning as a meaningful activity versus mindless paper work. This can be accomplished by allowing for implementation of the lessons. Additionally, evaluators of lesson plans should take into account the environment in which the lesson plan will be delivered and appreciate that the pre-service teacher must incorporate curriculum mandates and classroom routines in their plans. When designed to ensure reliability and validity of findings, lesson plans have been used effectively to document pre-service teachers’ understandings and application of course content (Doyle, 1997; Wolfe, 2010).

The lesson plans were used to assess the pre-service teachers application of effective instruction as well as their knowledge of course objectives. To elicit the desired information, a rubric (Appendix D) designed and implemented previously by Wolfe (2010) was used. This rubric was provided to pre-service teachers before writing the lesson plans and served as a guide for writing their lessons. By providing pre-service teachers with the rubric, lesson plans included information about the areas of interest in this study particularly, their rationale for selecting the objectives, specific learning objectives, instructional methods employed, assessment strategies, and reflection on the lesson effectiveness.

Lesson plans were also gathered from the course instructor for both the course under study and the course taught the previous semester. The lesson plans were used to demonstrate the effective practices used by the instructor in both courses.

**Interviews**

Interviews are useful in order to let the voices of participants be heard and to understand
their thoughts and perceptions (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, focus group interviews can be beneficial when interviewees are comfortable with one another, cooperative, and have a shared experience. Such interviews can contribute to the discussion by promoting ideas and encouraging conversation of thoughts. The disadvantage of such an approach is that some participants may not contribute to the discussion requiring the interviewer to pay special attention to eliciting contributions from all participants. In order for the interviewer to elicit the desired information, questions should be developed before the interview in order to guide the conversation (Yin, 2009). Also, the interviewer should practice active listening skills such as responding and probing in response to participants’ answers. Because of the nature of focus group interviews, many voices are included in the discussion, making it difficult to remember and note all comments; as such, audio recording is beneficial.

Focus group interviews have been used with pre-service teachers in previous studies and, in combination with other data sources, provide useful information to further explain pre-service teachers’ understandings (Lake, Al Otaiba, & Guidry, 2010). In this case, semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with each group following their presentation. The interviews were audio recorded. The questions (Appendix G) asked attempted to explore how pre-service teachers planned instruction for their presentation, assessed participant learning, and used those assessments to plan for future instruction.

**Observations**

Data gathered from observations is helpful in providing additional information about what is being studied (Yin, 2009). Participant observation is a special type of observation in that the observer plays an active role in the setting and has the potential of providing access to inside information. There are, however, disadvantages that should be addressed prior to conducting participant observation. First, the observer might have to assume a stance on or manipulate the phenomenon of interest affecting his ability to maintain a neutral position. Second, the role of a participant may require too much time for the observer to take careful and detailed notes. When conducting observations, field notes should be adequately documented (Creswell, 2007). Note templates that allow for description and observer reflections should be used to separate from what is actually seen and what is inferred by the observer. The reflective notes can be used as discussion points if follow up interviews or observations are used.

For this case study, the researcher’s dual role as the course instructor made the use of
participant observation an appropriate choice. It should be stated that in this case, the instructor manipulated the use of cooperative groups as described in the instructional method section and intended for the study to develop pre-service teachers’ understanding of early literacy. However, the purpose of this study was to provide examination and documentation of an instructional method in order to build knowledge for the field of teacher preparation. Thus, the researcher carefully documented descriptions and drew findings from multiple sources to ensure that the participants’ understandings were determined. Additionally, observational notes were taken using the note template (Appendix E) during group presentations. The observational notes were also used in order to evaluate the presentations and compensated for the one possible disadvantage associated with participant observation.

**Preparedness Survey**

A survey can provide additional data about specific areas of interest within the case study (Yin, 2007). In this case, in order to answer Research Question Four (to what extent do pre-service teachers attribute knowledge gains of scientifically based reading research to the instructional elements of the course?), the survey was used to determine the participants’ opinions on how they learned knowledge from the course. The Preparedness Survey (Appendix H) used was modeled after a survey used previously by Al Otaiba and Lake (2007) in their teacher education research. The survey asked pre-service teachers to complete a Likert type questionnaire indicating the degree to which they feel prepared to teach specific areas of literacy. It also asked pre-service teachers to indicate how they felt prepared to teach that knowledge (course work, field placement, tutoring, etc.).

**Data Analysis**

When analyzing a case study two main strategies are: theoretical proposition or case study description (Yin, 2009). In this case study, data analysis relied on theoretical propositions that helped organize and focus attention on data that related directly to the research questions. The theoretical framework, *How People Learn* (1999), that grounded this study outlines four elements that must be considered in designing learning environments and was used as the lens to view the data: learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and the community. Thus, data was analyzed using those four categories. Previous studies, for example Petrosino (2004), have used these four areas to guide data collection when studying knowledge and
application of effective teaching practice resulting in the findings maintaining consistency with the research questions.

Guided by Creswell (2007), analysis of data involved coding, sorting into categories of interest, and establishing patterns among categories. Initially, the ejournals, interview transcriptions, lesson plans, and observations were read and coded based on statements that provide information about understanding of the four areas of interest. By concentrating on the four areas of effective instruction, the study will maintain focus on the question. A graduate student trained in qualitative research methods from the School of Teacher Education independently read and coded the ejournals, interview transcriptions, and lesson plans to ensure reliability of findings.

Statements related to each of the areas were categorized. The data was read and reread looking for common patterns among pre-service teachers’ statements. These patterns will provide documentation of pre-service teachers’ understandings of early literacy learning. Again, a graduate student from the School of Teacher Education read and independently documented patterns in findings to ensure reliability.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology that was employed in this case study with the purpose of documenting pre-service teacher knowledge and application of effective instruction as it related to early literacy. Specifically, this study documented pre-service the knowledge about effective instruction, how pre-service teachers apply knowledge of effective instruction, and the extent to which the pre-service teachers attributed their learning gains to elements of the course. By collecting data from multiple sources and organizing data analysis around the components outlined in the theoretical framework, this methodology revealed the desired information. Chapter four presents the data analysis.
CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to document pre-service teachers’ knowledge and application of effective instruction as it related to early literacy. In this chapter, the findings of this study are presented with insight into the researcher’s role and personal experiences in order to highlight the study’s uniqueness. An explanation of the methodology, including data collection and analysis are provided. The organization of the remainder of the chapter centers on the four areas of interconnectedness defined by the theoretical framework, How People Learn (Donovan et al., 1999): learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered. Within each of these four areas the pre-service teachers’ knowledge and application of effective instruction is explored. Finally, the extent to which pre-service teachers attribute their knowledge gains to the course instruction is displayed.

Teacher Educator

The instructional decisions I made in the design of the course and the classroom setting were integral to this study. My experiences as a pre-service teacher, early childhood teacher, and university instructor informed my decisions. This case study seeks to document information about this particular group of pre-service teachers who experienced this unique instructional model. This study does not attempt to generalize the findings to other samples, rather to provide the reader with a rich description that may be transferred to other settings.

My Education

My undergraduate degree was completed at Florida State University where I was enrolled in the elementary education teacher preparation program. I completed three semesters of courses with a cohort combined with three semesters of field experiences in elementary classrooms. Many lesson plans required for the university classroom, while they served a purpose for my learning, did not link to the core county curriculum in my placement class causing my classmates and me to question the relevance of the lesson plans we were asked to write. As documented by Grossman (2005) and Williams and Alawiye (2001), this question was similar to many pre-service teachers.

My final semester of the preparation program was spent in the field experience classroom. I taught reading and math in whole group from curriculum manuals that provided me with a script and student worksheets that had been modeled to me by my mentor. Like many pre-
service teachers most of my learning centered on issues of classroom management (Clift & Brady, 2005). While, I learned to cope with various learning disabilities, behavior problems, and parents, I also sent out weekly newsletters, wrote plans, handled Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), and fire drill schedule disruptions. I felt well prepared to teach and credited my field experience with that preparation. Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, and Chard (2001) maintain that among pre-service teachers self-reported perceptions of preparedness did not correlate to knowledge of reading or pedagogical content. I taught, as many pre-service teachers do, how I had been taught (Mueller et al., 2010) and did not see nor experience evidence based teaching practices in my placement classrooms again similar to many pre-service teachers (Vaughn et al., 1998). The experiences I had in my teacher preparation program provided me with valuable insight into the pre-service teachers I taught.

I completed my Master’s degree in Education Leadership at the University of Virginia while teaching. The subject matter was not elementary education, but having students to relate concepts to made a difference in my understanding. The professors took concepts and connected them to my current interpretations. I felt, as many pre-service teachers felt, that I learned the most from instructors that helped me apply the knowledge I learned to my early childhood classroom (Barone & Morrell, 2007).

Early Childhood Classroom Experience

Actually teaching kindergarten, first grade, and second grade was quite different from what I had known in my field experience. One school was incredibly diverse with students speaking 43 different languages. The students were from mostly average socioeconomic families (33% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch) and I had three parent volunteers. There were no curriculum manuals, but the county provided substantial materials, trainings, and resources to the teachers. Students in my other school were predominantly white from upper-socioeconomic families (18% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch). The parents provided substantial monetary and volunteer support. I had 15 regular parent volunteers in a class of 19 students. Again, little was provided by way of curriculum manuals, but the school provided ample support.

Allington (2007), Copple and Bredekamp (2009), and Darling-Hammond (2006) state that effective teachers are purposeful and thoughtful in creating a learning environment and responsive to the needs of each individual child. Throughout my classroom experiences, I exhibited these qualities. I learned to reflect on my practice using children’s assessments to
evaluate my effectiveness and their progress. I learned to allow children to construct knowledge and provided explicit skill instruction matched to the needs of each small group I taught.

McKenna and Walpole (2010) maintain that teachers enter classrooms with a variety of learners, curricula, community beliefs, and achievement expectations. My experiences support their findings. Therefore, it was important to me to include key principles of effective instruction to help the pre-service teachers can adapt to the expectations of the schools.

**University Teaching**

The first university course I taught was a summer session of *Children’s Literature* to 40 early childhood and elementary education majors. My inexperience both with this age of students and the course content caused me to cling to my power point slides the entire semester. Soon after, I taught elementary and early childhood education courses *Early Literacy Learning, Teaching Reading in the Elementary School*, and *Differentiated Reading Instruction*. As I gained experience with the subject matter, course requirements, order of courses, and students, my instruction began to change. I remembered what I had appreciated from my preparation program and tried to incorporate more activities that encouraged students to be involved in their learning.

**Early childhood foundations course.** Four years after the Children’s Literature class I first met the early childhood pre-service teachers of interest in this study. By this time I had taught *Teaching Reading in the Elementary School* six times, *Early literacy Learning* four times, and *Differentiated Reading Instruction* once. I understood how the courses built on one another, the early childhood program, and how developmentally appropriate practice could potentially be seen in contrast to some of the research in the field of reading.

While I had not taught the *Early Childhood Foundations* class before, I relied on my previous teaching experiences, early childhood knowledge, and research on effective pre-service teacher education to inform my instructional methods. I wanted to model effective instruction because pre-service teachers tend to teach how they have been taught (Mueller et al., 2010). Also, my instruction was designed for pre-service teachers to experience appropriate and effective practices by being involved in their learning, which has been shown to be beneficial to pre-service teachers (Jones et al., 2005).

As the first class within their early childhood education program, I knew establishing community norms (Donovan et al., 1999) was very important in setting a community-centered environment. Therefore, I began the first class by reading a children’s book, *First Day Jitters*
(Danneberg, 2000), about a teacher who was scared to go to a new school. We played an icebreaker, Sorts and Mingles, which got the students up, moving, and laughing. The students made lists about what characteristics exceptional early childhood teachers possessed and watched youtube videos of some bad teachers. The syllabus was discussed and expectations were set. My goal was to encourage interaction, questioning, participation, and risk taking among the pre-service teachers because the classroom environment greatly influences the learning that occurs (Donovan et al., 1999).

My lesson plans revealed a semester filled with a variety of instructional methods. Power points were used sparingly and those that were used had video clips and pop songs woven in to grasp student attention. Students were assigned buddies and were given time to talk about what we had learned. Activities such as Historical Figure Go Fish, Human Timelines, Beach Ball Question Toss, Name that Model, and an Early Childhood Curricular Beliefs Inventory were used to provide hands-on, active learning that modeled key principals of developmentally appropriate practices where students should be seen, “joyfully, physically, and intellectually engaged in meaningful learning about their world and everyone and everything in it” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. x).

Comments from the course evaluation forms provided insight into how the pre-service teachers viewed this course. They felt the course was interactive and instruction was varied which can be seen in the following quotes. “I enjoyed being able to practice retaining the information in fun and interesting ways.” “I liked the activities we did; it helped me learn a lot.” “She made the material easy to learn. She thinks outside the box with very helpful activities.” The pre-service teachers appreciated the practical information and examples woven into the course. “I really enjoyed the shared experiences from real live classrooms. It went along with the curriculum and helped me better understand.” “I liked the stories you brought from your time in the classroom. It made the material more real and you relatable.” They also felt like I cared whether or not they learned the material and appreciated the energy and enthusiasm I brought to each class. “Mrs. Scarborough really cares if you understand.” “She was always excited and happy to be in the classroom.” “Great attitude; an instructor who seemed to want to teach us and had concern for her students.”

The pre-service teachers’ comments indicate an emerging appreciation for active learning. This understanding is important for early childhood educators who strive to create
developmentally appropriate learning environments. They also began to address the importance for connections being made between the course and their future early childhood classrooms. The pre-service teachers appreciated how the new information they learned in the university course was related to their current field experiences and understandings. The awareness of how new information is organized to fit into existing understandings is a key principle of creating knowledge-centered environments (Donovan et al., 1999). Finally, the pre-service teachers felt the classroom community that was established was beneficial to them as learners. Again this understanding is one of the key principles from the theoretical framework that guided this study (Donovan et al., 1999). The foundation laid in this first course was crucial to the early literacy course as it provided a model of effective instruction.

**Early literacy learning course.** The following semester I used my knowledge of these pre-service teachers, previous experience with the course content, research studies about teacher education, and guidelines from *How People Learn* (1999) to design my course instruction. Because it is believed that the community in which learning takes place greatly influences the amount of knowledge gained (Donovan et al., 1999), establishing and, in this case, maintaining a climate of inquiry, risk taking, and collaboration were of vital importance. Pre-service teachers entered their first early literacy class greeted by a quote. “The first month [class] sets the tone for the whole year” (Lickona, 1991, p. 121). The lesson plan specified that the class topic was community building and students were engaged in a lesson modeled from Likona (1991) in which they took part in creating classroom rules. Individually, students were asked to list things others can do to encourage or discourage them to participate in class. Responses were then recorded on the front board. In small groups students were asked to use this list to write four rules on chart paper. The charts were posted around the room and each student was asked to put a star next to her top three rules. The three rules with the most stars became the following class rules. 1) Be the student you want your students to be. 2) Be encouraging and uplifting. 3) Have fun with lively conversations and positive attitudes. (Laughter is important!) Students were asked to partner with me in enforcing their rules. Subsequent classes began with *news share* that allowed students to talk, share excitements and frustrations, and clarify any misunderstandings they had about assignments from their classes.

Their final eJournals reveal that they appreciated and valued the culture of the class. “There was so much information for each of those different aspects that having a large group to
discuss it with and learn from each other really enhanced the learning environment,” wrote Grace. Amelia agreed, “The fact that I was comfortable with my peers and the activities were fun yet educational made the climate of learning a good one. Being in small groups made it easy to learn and to ask questions.”

Throughout the semester I attempted to model reflection in my teaching practices, as it has been shown that the most effective teacher educators engage in a cycle of reflective practices (Barone & Morrell, 2007). For example, after the second class meeting, it was clear the pre-service teachers had not observed their mentors as they had been assigned to do and therefore, would be limited in the time they would have to complete the assignment. As a result, I posted the following message on the class website, “From the looks of it in class yesterday, many of you have not yet observed a reading lesson and next Monday is a holiday leaving you only Wednesday to observe, chat with your mentor, and write up your report. I think that is unreasonable to expect, SO the Reading Lesson Observation is due Thursday, January 27th. Please bring any questions you have next week!”

Positive classroom community was continued throughout the semester via routines such as beginning each class with news share and with me reading aloud a high-quality children’s book. Additionally, classes included specific knowledge and information that had to be applied in their field placements (e.g. training in Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), a literacy assessment the students would use in their placement to complete a course assignment; Tutor-Assisted Intensive Learning Strategies (TAILS), a tutoring program the students would use with one student in their placement classes; and instruction in the structure of the English Language, Print Awareness, and Letter Knowledge). Like the previous semester, students were provided with hands-on activities in which they could practice administering DIBELS assessments and delivering TAILS instruction. However, different from the previous semester was a longer portion of explicit instruction on how to administer DIBELS and conduct TAILS lessons. This was a purposeful decision because, like young children beginning to read, it was unlikely that pre-service teachers would learn assessment administration or instructional steps without being provided with explicit instruction (Spear-Swerling, 2005).

Reading research defined explicit instruction as emphasizing clarity and systematic presentation of skills and strategies by employing scaffolding in authentic situations (Pearson, 1996 as cited in Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Just as children are not expected to infer key skills
and knowledge only from exposure or incidental learning opportunities (Spear-Swerling, 2005), pre-service teachers could not be expected to understand how explicit instruction differed from direct instruction without ample hands-on practice. My model again served to demonstrate explicit instruction in practice.

In the second part of the semester the pre-service teachers were placed in randomly assigned presentation groups. Presentation groups, a form of cooperative learning, were selected as an instructional strategy based on research that states that “learning to teach in practice, with expert guidance, is essential to becoming a great teacher” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 40). My intention was to provide the pre-service teachers the opportunity to teach combined with feedback, in order to develop their teaching abilities. Students were given specific objectives to teach, asked to teach using developmentally appropriate practices, and to assess participant learning using assessment methods found in an early childhood setting. (See chapter three for specific of the group presentations.) Figure 4.1 illustrates the connections between the group presentations and the theoretical framework.

Figure 4.1: Connection Between Instructional Methods and Framework
In addition, the pre-service teachers were asked to complete article critiques on articles pertaining to each component of literacy. The assignments were due on the day of the presentation and served to provide background knowledge of the subject matter. Following their presentations, the presenters met with me in debriefing sessions. These sessions allowed their understandings of teaching and learning to be heard by both themselves and by me. Throughout the semester, the pre-service teachers completed ejournals. I choose both the discussions and ejournals based on research that indicated these opportunities for reflection were essential to teacher preparation programs (Grossman, 2005). Finally, students were asked to write literacy lesson plans to be implemented in their placement classrooms. Again, this instructional decision was made based on literature that indicated lesson plans were an effective way to gain information about pre-service teachers’ knowledge (Trummons, 2009).

**Methodology**

The research questions that guided this study and the relationship between the research questions and the methods are presented below.

1. What knowledge about effective instruction do pre-service teachers have?
2. To what extent do pre-service teachers possess knowledge about scientifically based reading research when instructed using elements of effective instruction?
3. How do pre-service teachers apply knowledge of effective instruction?
4. To what extent do pre-service teachers attribute their knowledge gains of scientifically based reading research to the instructional elements of the course?

**Table 4.1 Relation of Research Questions (RQ) to Methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ejournal</th>
<th>Lesson Plans</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>“Formal” Assessment</th>
<th>Preparedness Survey</th>
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<td>RQ1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Data Collection**

To ensure accuracy of findings multiple forms of data such as observations, interviews, documents, and surveys were used (Yin, 2009). The role of participant observer was used for the observations due to the dual role of the instructor as researcher. During the presentations, the researcher recorded notes using the template (Appendix E) that had sections for descriptive and reflective notes. The observations provided additional information about the phenomenon under study, served as the evaluation for the group presentations, and were used as discussion points during the semi-structured interviews that followed.

The focus group interviews were conducted after the presentations and followed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix G). Active listening and clarifying questions were used during the interviews in order to fully understand the pre-service teachers’ statements. Each interview was audiotaped and lasted approximately twenty minutes taking place either in a small conference room or out of doors.

The documents collected were reflection journals (ejournals) and lesson plans. The ejournals served to document pre-service teachers’ knowledge of effective instruction. Each week pre-service teachers were provided with questions (Appendix C) designed to elicit responses in regard to various aspects of effective instruction. The lesson plans were used to document pre-service teachers’ application of effective instruction and their knowledge of scientifically based reading research concepts presented in the course. Students were provided with a detailed lesson plan rubric to ensure the lesson plans included information of interest in this particular study (Appendix D).

The preparedness survey (Appendix H) was used to specifically answer Research Question Four: to what extent do pre-service teachers attribute their knowledge gains of scientifically based reading research to the instructional elements of the course. Pre-service teachers were asked to complete the Likert type survey and indicate where they learned each skill during the last class session of the semester.

**Data Analysis**

While serving as the participant observer (Yin, 2009), the following specific items of interest were looked for and documented. 1) Were the objectives covered accurately? 2) Were assessments (formal or informal) used? Was there evidence of rewording/reteaching? 3) Did the activities meet early childhood developmentally appropriate practice guidelines and provide for
learning of skills? The observations served as vital evidence of how pre-service teachers applied knowledge of effective instruction.

The six focus group interviews were transcribed and analyzed again concentrating on responses that revealed knowledge or application of effective instruction. Interview transcriptions were read and reread with memos written (Creswell, 2007). Themes across each interview were highlighted.

The data from the ejournals were read and reread several times with notes made about statements that appeared across participants’ journals (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, tables were used with key phrases or concepts listed in columns and checks made for subsequent ejournals in which those same phrases were used or the same concepts were discussed. These tables were then analyzed to determine knowledge of various aspects of effective instruction among the pre-service teachers.

Lesson plans were analyzed using tables looking for two distinct areas of interest: 1) knowledge of reading content and 2) application of effective instruction. Lesson plans were read and reread and coded based on evidence of effective instructional practices as guided by the theoretical framework. Reading content knowledge was gathered from the lesson plans by reading and rereading to determine accuracy of instructional concepts, matches between best reading instructional practices and content, knowledge of reading development, and assessment methods.

Lastly, the preparedness survey was analyzed using means and standard deviations. A table was created to display responses to each question. It should be noted that due to the nature of data collection across the course of an entire class, some pieces of data are missing from the pre-service teachers due to absences or incomplete assignments. Also, for the ejournal following the pre-service teachers’ presentations they were asked to provide me with feedback about their presentation and group dynamics and did not always answer the ejournal prompt too. Therefore, in some reporting tables the total (n) will not be 31 and percentages have been used in reporting responses. Table 4.2 reports the total number of responses for each piece of data.

Table 4.2: Responses for Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Total Number of Responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

55
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Total Number of Responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Plan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness Survey</td>
<td>31 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment following first three presentations</td>
<td>26 (84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment following last three presentations</td>
<td>29 (94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 1: TAILS Tutoring</td>
<td>31 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 2: Literacy Assessment</td>
<td>31 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 3: Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>31 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 4: Planning for Group Meeting Time</td>
<td>30 (97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 5: Literacy Instruction</td>
<td>31 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 6: Specific Objectives and DAP</td>
<td>24 (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 7: Literacy Environment</td>
<td>23 (74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 8: Literacy Instructional Practices</td>
<td>26 (84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 9: Literacy Assessment</td>
<td>23 (74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 10: Connections between Group Presentations and Early Literacy Learning</td>
<td>21 (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal 11: Classroom Culture</td>
<td>30 (97)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pre-service Teachers’ Knowledge and Application of Effective Instruction**

In previous studies that have documented pre-service teachers’ knowledge, assessment measures used were formal, multiple choice type assessments (Joshi et al., 2009; Podhaski et al., 2009; Snow et al., 2005). These assessments indicated that teachers, pre-service, in-service, and teacher educators, knew very little about reading content defined as the five components of early literacy and the structure of the English language. Findings in this study were consistent with previous findings. The formal assessments which asked the pre-service teachers to define the components of literacy, revealed a minimal knowledge of these concepts.

However, using the theoretical framework *How People Learn* (1999) to define effective instruction and literature from the field of reading research to analyze this data, the informal assessments of the pre-service teachers in this study revealed a wealth of knowledge about effective instruction in regards to early literacy. In order to document pre-service teachers’
knowledge of effective instruction, three sources of data were analyzed: ejournals, lesson plans, and interviews. Opportunities that require procedural knowledge rather than factual knowledge are more complex and indicate greater understanding (Krathwohl, 2002). As such, in order to document pre-service teachers’ application of effective instructional practices lesson plans, observations, and interviews were analyzed.

Learner-centered

In learner-centered classrooms, the teacher is responsive to the individual understandings, needs, and beliefs of her students (Donovan et al., 1999). Instruction is targeted to the level of knowledge possessed by each child and provides the right level of challenge (Cunningham et al., 2009; Donovan et al., 1999). The data revealed three themes about the knowledge pre-service teachers possess regarding learner-centered instruction and two themes about how the pre-service teachers applied their knowledge.

Match student needs. An understanding that instruction should target the needs of the students in their classrooms was expressed by 43% of the pre-service teachers. Ingrid explained why it was necessary to know the level of each student’s literacy skills, “The teacher knows what adjustments need to be made for each student so they get the most out of the lessons and classroom time and can move forward in their reading and comprehension skills.” Kathleen expanded, “Students’ writing and reading skills will improve through these activities that are both educational and age appropriate.” “Having a classroom of many different learners, we must consider everyone’s needs and plan accordingly,” wrote Krista. “In my future classroom, I plan on applying these concepts by: finding out students’ specific needs and interests and use them as a basis of the lessons,” said Jennifer.

This same theme appeared in the pre-service teachers’ lesson plans as 68% selected the lesson based on the needs of their students. “This group of students struggle with recognizing vowel patterns and consonant blends,” wrote Krista in her rationale for her lesson. Georgia wrote, “This group of students is still having difficulty with letter sounds and sounding out words.” Reading research stressed the importance of targeting instruction to the needs of the children using the children’s interest, prior knowledge, and level of reading development (Cunningham et al., 2009; McKenna & Walpole, 2010; Scarborough, 2001).

Varied instructional activities. Of the responses, 62% of the pre-service teachers indicated in their ejournals that instruction should be varied both by individual student based on
his or her needs and by methods balanced between explicit and constructing knowledge. “I know that literacy instructional practices need to be varied,” said Dorothy. “The techniques include accessing the students’ prior knowledge and building upon that foundation, instructing directly and explicitly, and engaging students in activities that help them apply their knowledge and use higher level thinking skills,” mentioned Georgia. “Literacy strategies that could be used in the classroom are reading centers, small literacy workshops, and directed reading instruction,” remarked Ava. “In addition to teaching these [literacy] skills explicitly, they should be taught in centers. It is important to teach these with a variety of different methods because they are difficult concepts to be taught and even harder to understand,” commented Lilly. In the interviews, the pre-service teachers also said that the varied activities increased participation. “I think they learned better when they're hands on and active rather than – like if we had a PowerPoint and we were just talking I think a lot of them would zone out.”

**Student engagement.** Thirty-nine percent of the pre-service teachers indicated that student engagement must be considered when planning for literacy instruction. The words student engagement were used to categorize responses from pre-service teachers in this study that refer to challenging students, grabbing student interest, and connecting to prior knowledge. For example, Bridget wrote, “In your lesson it’s important to challenge them a bit, but not so much that they get frustrated and give up.” Her statement demonstrates her knowledge of the developmentally appropriate practice belief that instruction should provide the appropriate amount of challenge (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). “When planning for literacy instruction,” said Georgia, “other key aspects of teaching need to be thought through such as the need for making the material relatable to the students and the plans to engage the students either through interaction, hands-on activities, or group work.”

**Opening activities.** Connecting new information to previous knowledge of the learner is important (Donovan et al., 1999) and most of the pre-service teachers applied their knowledge of this concept and used an opening activity or warm up to begin their lessons both in their placement classrooms and in their presentations. Some students used the activity to activate students’ prior knowledge about concepts and to determine what students already knew.

The teacher will begin by asking students if they have ever seen, been an actor in, or read a play before. After a short amount of discussion, which can be directed by and centered
around the students’ previous experience with plays, the teacher will pass out a play that has been chosen based on the reading levels of that group. (Kerry)

Other pre-service teachers used the opening activity to review concepts that students already knew and would be used in the current lesson. Ava taught her students about the bossy e. She reminded students in the opening about the different sounds vowels could make by singing the Apples and Bananas song with different vowel sounds at the beginning.

During the presentations within the university course, some groups implemented a theme to tie their presentation together. The word learning strategy group showed a clip from Finding Nemo “because they were talking about how Dory was talking whale and she needed to understand speaking whale and terminology. [The clip] ties it all together and just grabs their focus and their interest because it's a cartoon.” The comprehension group wrote the Untold Story of the Three Little Pigs and read half of the story to start the presentation and the other half at the end. The story provided a resource for explaining concepts.

For a few of mine, it is asking what kind of questions you are using. I related it back to The Three Little Pigs. They were, like, “What’s a literal question?” I was, like, well, for example, what are the three little pigs’ names? Can you find that directly in the text or do you have to infer what it is? Do you know who the kidnapper is or do you have to infer who it is? Is it directly in the book? Well, it might be, but we don’t know yet, so you have to ask questions and use predictions, which are your strategies.

Differentiating instruction. Of the lesson plans turned in, 74% were designed for a small group of students with similar instructional needs. The pre-service teachers designed lessons that focused on skills needed among a specific group of children. They recognized that not all of the children would benefit from the same instruction and used small groups to target instruction to learner needs as can be seen in the pre-service teachers’ rationale for the lesson plan. This finding was surprising as the County where the pre-service teachers completed their internships has a mandated reading curriculum that includes whole group lessons and student worksheets.

The pre-service teachers’ ejournals stated that materials used in lessons should be modified based on student needs, however, only two used materials to differentiated instruction in their lesson plans. This could be a result of the majority of lessons being designed for only a
specific small group of students. Faith took differentiating a step further by listing as a lesson material “a book of interest for each student to read” (italics added).

**Summary.** Attention to the learner’s needs and prior understandings is essential to creating a learner-centered environment (Donovan et al., 1999). Three themes of knowledge emerged from the data. The pre-service teachers knew that their instruction should target the needs of the individual student. Frequently, the understanding of needs referred to learning styles (auditory, visual, or kinesthetic). While not incorrect, it is only one piece of matching instruction to the learner. Effective teachers employ instructional techniques in response to individual needs (Cunningham et al., 2009).

Second, the pre-service teachers knew that they should vary instructional activities and create a balance between explicit instruction and student construction of knowledge. Effective literacy methodology provides both specific skill instruction and opportunities for meaningful interactions with print (Pressley, 2006). Finally, the pre-service teachers knew that instruction must provide students with the appropriate level of challenge, capture their attention, and connect to the student’s previous knowledge. When working with young children many look to guidelines from developmentally appropriate practices (Spodek & Saracho, 2003) which states instruction should be challenging and attainable for the child (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Pre-service teachers application of knowledge about learner-centered practices centered around two themes. The pre-service teachers employed opening activities with the purpose of activating prior knowledge related to the new lesson’s objective. Making connections between what a child already knows and the new material is essential to children’s understanding (Scarborough, 2001) and helping the child organize the new information for later retrieval (Donovan et al., 1999). In addition, the pre-service teachers differentiated their instruction in response to the needs of the learners. The ability to differentiate instruction is considered a necessary skill for effective reading instruction (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Cunningham et al., 2009) as one method of instruction does not meet all learners’ needs (McKenna & Walpole, 2010).

**Knowledge-centered**

To create an effective learning environment, the teacher must have a thorough knowledge of the concepts taught and be concerned with the student’s understanding and organization of new knowledge for later retrieval, not merely with student engagement (Donovan et al., 1999). In
this course, the knowledge pre-service teachers must learn concerned early literacy. While there are differences in opinion about the successes and failures of schools and teachers, outlined in Chapter 2 is a consensus of what constitutes effective teaching of early reading: content knowledge, instruction, assessment, and classroom environment (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Allington, 2002; Allington 2007; Braunger & Lewis, 2006; IRA, 2003; NCEE, 2010; Pressely, 2006; Snow et al., 2005). Discussed in the following paragraphs are six themes that emerged from the data in regard to pre-service teachers’ understanding and application of knowledge-centered instruction.

**Explicit instruction.** The data revealed an understanding of the complex nature of explicit instruction within the context of early literacy among the pre-service teachers. Knowledge that instruction can be explicit without being direct is important in an early childhood classroom where teachers strive to create developmentally appropriate lessons that support early literacy development (Braunger & Lewis, 2006; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). “Students should be taught concepts explicitly and clearly, be given multiple opportunities for practice, be able to apply what they have learned, and be assessed in a timely and appropriate fashion,” wrote Krista. Kerry said,

Many of the elements of early literacy must be taught explicitly to students. Students may learn through experience about print awareness, but it is unlikely that they will develop letter knowledge or phonemic awareness without being specifically taught about those skills. However, this does not mean that lessons have to be direct instruction. I think it is important to use a variety of teaching techniques when teaching literacy.

Sixty-eight percent of the pre-service teachers applied their knowledge about instruction by providing explicit instruction of the concept in their lesson plans. Brook, for example, began her lesson by telling students they would be learning about the main idea of a story saying, “The main idea is the main focus of the story as well as the main point the author is trying to make.” Amy held up a picture of the letter “O” and told the children, “the vowel “O” could make two different sounds. A long sound where it says its name /o/ like in open and a short sound /O/ like in octopus.”

Observations of the presentations showed many of the pre-service teachers began their center by defining key terms explicitly. Jackie began by saying, “since this is your first center, I know you don’t know these terms yet so I’m going to go over them first.” Kathleen used a chart
to describe how to use context clues and kept it available while the students played “Nemo’s Contextual Analysis.” Kerry integrated teaching the necessary vocabulary into a read aloud of a hand made book by introducing words prior to reading and stopping to point them out when the words appeared in the story.

The “fab five.” The data showed an inconsistent knowledge of the five components of literacy among the pre-service teachers. Table 4.3 lists a component of literacy in the first column. Across the row are the scores of the entire class on formal assessments. As the pre-service teachers entered class following the first three presentations, they were asked to define phonological awareness and phonics and discuss the benefits and the need for specific word instruction in writing. The results were mediocre with 52, 38, and 69 percent of pre-service teachers able to accurately and completely define phonological awareness, phonics, and the benefits for specific word instruction respectively (see table 4.3). Following the last three presentations the pre-service teachers were asked to discuss the importance of word learning strategies and define comprehension and reading fluency in their weekly ejournal. The results were somewhat better, 71, 93, and 59 percent of pre-service teachers able to accurately and completely discuss the importance of word learning strategies and define comprehension and reading fluency (see table 4.3), but still did not present the ability to correctly define the components of literacy. This finding is consistent with previous studies that shows pre-service teachers’ inability to accurately define the components of literature (Bos et al, 2001; NCTQ, 2006). However, it should be noted that this course is the first course in a series of reading courses that these pre-service teachers take and over half of them were able to either completely or partially define each of the components of literacy. Considering the placement of this course in the series it is actually promising that they have this emerging understanding as mastery of concepts among the pre-service teachers is not expected at this time.

As expected, the scores of the pre-service teachers who presented on the component were higher when compared to the scores of the class as a whole. In column one written in italics is a component group. Across the rows in italics are the scores of the pre-service teachers who presented on that component of literacy. With the exception of the phonics group, a higher percentage of presenters were able to give a complete and accurate definition of their component of literacy. The poor phonics group results could be a result of the small number of responses from the group. Teachers of each component did better than the class as a whole, supports
research that says the ability to apply knowledge as is necessary when teaching a concept results in greater understanding (Krathwohl, 2002).

Table 4.3: Pre-service Teachers’ Knowledge of Literacy Components

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<tr>
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<th>complete/accurate definition</th>
<th>partial definition</th>
<th>inaccurate definition</th>
<th>no response</th>
<th>total responses</th>
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<td>phonological awareness</td>
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<td>8 (35)</td>
<td>3 (13)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.A. group</strong></td>
<td>3 (75)</td>
<td>1 (25)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phonics</td>
<td>9 (38)</td>
<td>11 (46)</td>
<td>4 (17)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phonics group</td>
<td>1 (33)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (67)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific word</td>
<td>18 (69)</td>
<td>6 (23)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S.W. group</strong></td>
<td>5 (100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word learning</td>
<td>20 (71)</td>
<td>4 (14)</td>
<td>4 (14)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W.L. group</strong></td>
<td>4 (80)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (20)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehension</td>
<td>27 (93)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>comp group</strong></td>
<td>5 (100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fluency</td>
<td>17 (59)</td>
<td>10 (36)</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>fluency group</strong></td>
<td>3 (75)</td>
<td>1 (25)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percentages are in parentheses.
The pre-service teachers’ lesson plans revealed a greater understanding of the components of literacy. Seventy-one percent of the students selected objectives, state standards, and instructional methods that were appropriate to the component of literacy that they were teaching. In 6% of the lesson plans not enough information was provided to determine if the pre-service teachers possess knowledge about the components of literacy they were teaching. An incorrect understanding of the component of literacy was seen in 23% of the lesson plans. Of those who do not demonstrate knowledge of the component, 71% confused phonics and phonological awareness. This confusion is not surprising given the finding from Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, and Chard (2001) who found over half of pre-service and in-service teachers had this same difficulty.

**Children’s literature.** Pressley (2006) and Tompkins (2010) stress the importance of high-quality children’s literature being used within early childhood classrooms. They believe that books should be available and integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. Tompkins and McMahon, Richmond, and Reeves-Kazelskis (2001) also encourage the use of read aloud as an instructional method to enrich student vocabularies and teach comprehension strategies.

Believed by 61% of the pre-service teachers was that including children’s literature in the classroom was essential to literacy instruction. Given that the pre-service teachers have not taken a class on children’s literature at this point in their course work and do not see children’s literature used consistently within their placement classrooms, this is not surprising. Some pre-service teachers saw books as a resource in the classroom like Dorothy who wrote, “There also needs to be books readily available for the children to read.” Kim, like other pre-service teachers integrated literature into her instruction, “Literature and reading aloud should be a core element of every early childhood classroom. Books can be used to introduce themes of further knowledge in any subject whether it be math, science, or social studies.” Another pre-service teacher, Grace, specified that the teachers should:

Pre-read the book, this way they know what it is they want to discuss with the children. Then introduce the book to the students, point out the author, illustrator, title page, and allow the students to make predictions based on the title and cover pictures. This practice allows children to become more connected to the book and the predicting questions are a
great way to get them to focus on the story and think critically about what they know about the title and the pictures.

**Literacy includes reading, writing, and speaking.** While only 21% of the pre-service teachers said specifically that literacy includes reading, writing, and speaking. Knowledge that literacy is more than just reading and writing demonstrates a broad understanding of early literacy. The following statements illustrate the pre-service teachers’ understanding that literacy is more than just reading and writing, and also affects a child’s socialization. “The teacher should be facilitating language use with her students and socialization which can lead to improvement in literacy subjects,” wrote Amelia. Meg provided examples, “During the day the teachers are providing literacy by having the students listen and follow instructions and conversations.”

“Building their vocabulary is extremely important because it helps their language and social skills develop,” said Bridget. She continued, “Vocabulary is needed for social skills as well as reading and writing skills.” Braungar and Lewis (2006) emphasize that young children first develop awareness of structure and meaning of language through oral language. This understanding among children provides a necessary base for future reading and writing.

**Reading develops in a predictable pattern.** Sixty-one percent of the pre-service teachers indicated that reading develops in a predictable and sequential pattern. This is an essential understanding about early literacy (Braungar & Lewis, 2006). Knowledge of the pattern in which reading develops is necessary for teachers of early literacy in order to effectively target instruction that meets the needs of the children. Jamie wrote, “Reading is a skill that is acquired in a very specific way. In order for instruction to effectively take place a proper sequence should be followed.”

**Developmentally appropriate/active learning.** Of the pre-service teachers’ lesson plans, 42% included instruction that had hands-on activities for their students. Some used materials such as magnetic letters that allowed children to physically manipulate words or slinkies as they stretched out individual sounds in words. Amy gave each student a short straw and a long straw and students were instructed “to hold up their long straw when they hear a long vowel sound and a short straw when they hear a short vowel sound.”

**Summary.** One of the four areas of interconnectedness included in *How People Learn* (1999) is knowledge-centered. The data revealed six themes of knowledge and application of knowledge about knowledge-centered practices among these pre-service teachers. First, the pre-
service teachers understood that literacy instruction needed to be explicit, but that explicit did not equal direct instruction. Further, they applied this knowledge in the classroom as they clearly presented skills to their students and provided scaffolding as children used the skills in authentic situations. This concept is vital for early literacy teachers, as they mesh the need for explicitness and developmentally appropriate practice (Braunger & Lewis, 2006; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Pressley, 2006).

The second understanding focused on the five components of literacy among the pre-service teachers in this study. Strong emphasis has been placed on this area of knowledge among teachers (Larson & Phillips, 2005). The formal assessments, where students were asked to define components, showed a poor ability to define components of literacy among the class as a whole. However, the lesson plans, a more informal assessment, revealed that the pre-service teachers selected research based instructional and assessment strategies aligned with their component of literacy stated in the objective.

Additionally, some of these pre-service teachers knew that children’s literature played an important role in literacy instruction. Effective teachers use high-quality children’s literature in their classrooms to provide children with access to text beyond their independent reading level, stimulate student interest, enrich vocabularies, and teach comprehension strategies (McMahon et al., 2001; Tompkins, 2010). Fifth, the pre-service teachers knew that reading acquisition develops in a predictable pattern. Understanding the pattern that reading develops is essential to effective teachers (Braunger & Lewis, 2006).

Finally, the pre-service teachers demonstrated a broad understanding of developmentally appropriate practices in their teaching. They had knowledge the pre-service teachers demonstrated is broad. They have knowledge beyond how to implement one curriculum. Teacher educators should emphasize the content knowledge about reading instruction, components of literacy, the literacy environment, and young children, as these are the necessary pieces of knowledge (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Allington, 2002; Allington 2007; Braunger & Lewis, 2006; IRA, 2003; NCEE, 2010; Pressely, 2006; Snow et al., 2005).

**Assessment-centered**

The data revealed four common themes of knowledge and application among pre-service teachers in regard to the assessment-centered piece of effective instruction. Per the theoretical framework, an assessment-centered environment employs a variety of formative assessments to
monitor participant learning (Donovan et al., 1999). Effective teachers use data from many types of student samples to make instructional decisions (Al Otaiba, 2005; Lyon & Weiser, 2009). Not only do effective teachers use assessment data to plan for instruction, but also to evaluate the effectiveness of their own instruction (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Further, teachers of young children test through authentic situations in informal settings in order to gain insight into the child’s emerging understandings (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

**Determining student abilities and needs.** A common theme in this study was the knowledge that assessment could be used to determine student abilities. That assessment could or should be used to determine students’ current ability levels and/or learning needs was specifically stated by 74% of the responders. For example, Lilly wrote, “It [assessment] tells you exactly where each child is, and it can also tell you certain children need help in specific areas.” Similarly, the pre-service teachers believed the information about student abilities should be used to plan for instruction. Knowledge that assessment can be used to match instruction to the specific needs of each child is imperative for literacy instruction (Alington & McGill-Frazen, 2000; Cunningham et al., 2009).

**Planning for instruction.** A response common to 57% of the pre-service teachers was that assessment data should be used to plan for instruction. The pre-service teachers knew that lesson plans should be written to meet the needs of the individual children within their classes and reported that assessment should be an important tool in their planning. Susan wrote, “Teaching methods are constantly being adjusted to cater to the results of these assessments.” This finding is consistent with other studies (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007) that concluded pre-service teachers were beginning to use assessment data to make instructional decisions.

Sadly, while 57% of pre-service teachers in this study knew that assessments could and should be used to plan for instruction, only 16% of them actually mentioned assessment in planning for their literacy lessons. Mary used the state mandated assessment, Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR), to connect her lesson with the target students. “Because FAIR testing just finished, I know these students have difficulty with taking a word and stretching it to hear every sound in the word.” Twenty-six percent said they “realized” the children needed this skill or observed that the children did not know how to complete the skill. For example Meg wrote, “From my experience I have come to the conclusion that these students struggle with rhyming words.” The other pre-service teachers gave rationales that were vague.
“This lesson is appropriate for this group because sequencing is one tool used to strengthen comprehension,” commented Julie. While technically accurate, her statement did not provide a description of how her lesson directly related to the learners.

**Formal and informal assessments.** Eighty-two percent of the pre-service teachers in this study included both informal and formal or informal only assessments in their ejournal responses (52% included both formal and informal assessments, 30% of pre-service teachers discussed only informal assessment). Only 17% discussed only formal assessment. This finding was interesting because the county in which they completed their field experiences stressed the importance of state mandated, formal assessments. However, it could be the result of the pre-service teachers’ Foundations and Early Literacy courses that emphasized the importance of informal assessments in authentic settings. If the responses about informal assessments are in fact a result of the pre-service teachers’ coursework, it provides promise that university courses can influence teaching practices.

The discrepancy between their responses and what they see within the university classroom supports previous studies of teacher education which point to differences between what is taught in the university class and what pre-service teachers see in their field experience (Allington, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Heather reported that formal assessments were “the ones our mentors complete on all the students in the class.” While, Ava, who illustrated knowledge of multiple types of informal assessment, said, “formal tests do not work for literacy assessment because all of the students may have different answers depending on the level they are working at.”

The pre-service teachers also exhibited misunderstandings and questions about assessment. For example, Sally revealed an inaccurate understanding of the differences between informal and formal assessment in her statement “an informal way to assess literacy is by listening to a student read and checking for the different components. A formal assessment would be having a specific objective to look for.” While Faith struggled with understanding anecdotal notes,

I wasn’t exactly sure when you write notes down, what exactly I was supposed to write down. That was confusion on my part. I wrote either that they got – ’cause I added that extra little assessment on the back of their trains, so I wrote down that they got it all
correct if they missed one, which everybody got ‘em all correct. It was just I wasn’t sure what else to put down.

In university courses, assessments are formal and meet requirements from accreditation and state standards. While informal assessments were discussed and developmentally appropriate practice encouraged their use, the pre-service teachers have not experienced these methods. Since pre-service teachers tend teach how they have been taught (Mueller et al., 2010), it is unusual that these pre-service teachers used informal assessment. Within their field placement there is a stressed importance of formal assessments. Pre-service teachers see their mentor teachers administer formal assessments, but are either unaware of the practice of informal assessment or informal assessments are not occurring in the field experience. It is not unusual if the use of informal assessments (evidence-based practices) were not being used consistently within the field as previous studies have found evidence-based practices to be missing from the field (Vaughn et al., 1998).

As a result of previous findings, it was surprising that 74% of the pre-service teachers in this study employed informal assessment methods in their lesson plans. Many used checklists as the method of evaluation (check plus, check, check minus) used by their mentor teacher. Kerry, for example, wrote,

Throughout the play reading, the teacher will assess student use of varied intonation and appropriate rhythm. The student will receive an E if they don’t have to repeat any lines, an S+ if they have to repeat 1-3 lines and an S if they have to repeat 4 or more lines. Others had students individually complete the objective as the closure of the lesson. Mary offered,

As an assessment and closure, have each child pick their favorite card from the ones that they did with their partner and let them perform their “word stretch” in from of the small group. Once they do their favorite word, have them pick a new card and stretch it. Record whether it was successful or not.

Within the context of the field placement, the pre-service teachers appeared to have effectively used informal assessments. However, in the university classroom during observations of their presentations, it was difficult for me to discern what types of assessments, if any, which were being used.
The most common forms of assessments used during the presentations were checklists and asking if any participants had questions. The pre-service teacher presenters had checklists in which they checked off if the participants completed the activity. “We all had a checklist of everybody's names and mine was when they completed the worksheet they would get checked off.” It was difficult for me to ascertain from their comments and the observations if the informal methods of assessment were used to actually determine mastery of the skill or simply if the student participated in the lesson. “There were only a couple girls that really didn’t participate at all in my center. I just made a little note of it, kind of.”

In the interviews the pre-service teachers commonly stated that they asked if the participants had any questions as the informal method of assessment and they assumed that no questions meant the students understood and met the objective. For example, “I think they really understood it too, because in our small groups we asked if they had any questions, and they didn’t. And then in the larger group, they didn’t have any questions either.” The belief that no questions means students met objectives is incorrect and needs to be addressed in future courses.

The discrepancy between the application of informal assessments is of note and can perhaps be explained by the lack of model I provided by way of informal assessments within the university courses. Looking to my lesson plans I found, while I used observations during the presentations, I did not specify to the students how it influenced their grades and the types of questions asked during the follow up interviews. Also, while I asked questions during class and thoroughly read their ejournals looking for misunderstandings that needed to be clarified, I did not specifically tell the pre-service teachers how I used this information to modify my instruction. From my lesson plans, it appears that there was a lack of modeling of assessment-centered practices on my part.

**Evaluating lesson effectiveness.** Consistency was seen within the pre-service teacher data about assessment-centered practices but, there was one outlier response that is worthy of attention. Only 13% of the pre-service teachers mentioned that assessments could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a lesson. Reading research is specific in the need for teachers to use assessment data to determine the effectiveness of their teaching (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006), however, only a small percent of the pre-service teachers recognized this as a use of assessment. Again, looking to my lesson plans, the model of this use of assessment was missing. I did not transparently engage in this practice with the pre-service teachers. “We aren’t just testing just to
see what the child knows, but also to see whether the instructions were clear and how can the teacher improve to help the students understand,” wrote Julie. Amelia said, “assessments make the teacher aware of what he or she needs to change or needs to continue doing.”

While only three students stated that assessments could be used to evaluate lesson effectiveness, 55% used lesson assessments to make judgments about the effectiveness of their lesson plans. Amelia wrote, “I feel this lesson went really well. Each student was able to come up with at least three different rhyming words using the various sounds.” Faith used her observations to modify the lesson for future use. “Something I think would work better for the sentence writing is giving them words to include in their sentences because two out of the three chose rule breaking words to use in their sentences.”

The students also used informal observations to reflect on their presentations.

Yeah, it was the same two or three questions for each time a group rotated. It was the same two or three questions, so I think maybe they were bad questions or they could have been stated differently, but I made sure I explained them after.

I felt like it went well because with mine it was like the objective, they met it. They understood why it was important to learn the words before, so then that was like, oh, that was good. It was a good activity for them.

The use of assessments to evaluate and modify lessons for the future is a skill effective teachers of reading possess and use in their instruction (Lyon & Weiser, 2009) and was applied effectively by some of the pre-service teachers in this study.

**Summary.** Assessment-centered instruction is one of four interconnected areas that must be considered when creating an effective learning environment. The data revealed four understandings and applications among the pre-service teachers. First, they knew that assessments should be used to determine student abilities and needs, a understanding necessary for instruction to be effective (Donovan et al., 1999). In addition, the pre-service teachers said that assessment data should be used to plan for instruction. Effective teachers use a variety of assessments to inform their instructional decisions (Al Otaiba, 2005; Lyon & Weiser, 2009).

Research from the field of reading and early childhood education indicates that a mix of formal and informal assessments should be used to determine student progress (Al Otaiba, 2005; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Lyon & Weiser, 2009) and these pre-service teachers knew a mix of formal and informal assessments should be used. Further, they used informal assessments to determine
student mastery of learning objectives in their lesson plans (Brown-Chidsey et al., 2009). The final understanding and application pre-service teachers had about assessment-centered practice was through the use of assessment to evaluate their lessons’ effectiveness. Effective reading teachers use data gathered from students to make necessary changes to their instruction to ensure that all children make learning gains (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

These findings are important for teacher educators as it shows that these pre-service teachers possess knowledge about key principles of an assessment-centered environment. Their knowledge was not limited to one type of assessment or one use for assessment. Considering the current emphasis on high stakes standardized testing, these pre-service teachers understood that assessment is more than just a final test.

**Community-centered**

In community-centered classrooms, attention is paid to establishing norms of behavior that encourage inquiry, risk-taking, and collaboration (Donovan et al., 1999). Early literacy environments provide opportunities for children to actively construct knowledge, talk about what they have learned, and engage with a plethora of print in their environment (Block et al., 2002). Both the description of community norms from the theoretical framework and reading research detailed environments in which learners were active in their learning and the pre-service teachers indicate knowledge of the importance of this type of learning. Additionally, the pre-service teachers indicated that a print rich environment was necessary for an effective literacy environment.

**Active learning.** “The idea of incorporating content into the lesson in the form of games is great and developmentally appropriate; these activities allow group participation, movement, and teacher assistance,” said Amelia of her experience as a participant in a presentation. Others found the hands-on teaching methods required of the presentations to also benefit them as learners. Dorothy wrote,

Learning the content in a constructivist manner, which has been so much better than hearing lectures about these topics, makes it obvious how much more fun constructing knowledge is for children. Also, because of this I think I have learned the content at a much deeper level.

Mary, a skeptic of the presentations as can be seen in the following quote, “I was in NO way excited about theses group projects.” found the experience helped her understand the
importance of student involvement. “One connection I see between participating in these group projects and early literacy learning is the students so desperately need to be involved in the learning process.” Kim described her understanding of active learning as developmentally appropriate practice, “it [developmentally appropriate practice] involves many hands-on activities that require concrete materials and manipulatives. By allowing the students opportunities to engage with content themselves and discover independently, they are more likely to greater comprehend and retain the information.”

The presentations were filled with hands-on activities that got students up, moving around, and interacting with one another about the concepts that they were learning. Laughter was heard during each presentation as the pre-service teachers competed to identify long vowel sounds and move their scuba diver closer to the sunken treasure or as they added healthy fluency ingredients to their Fluency Strategy Soup. The pre-service teachers incorporated strategies in their presentations that promoted active learning.

We could have just told them what Readers Theatre was, “Oh, you have the kids read script to each other,” and that’s just what they do, but they really got to see it, and see that it was fun for them so, of course, it’s going to be fun for the little kids.

Print rich. When asked about the literacy environment in their ejournals, 74% of the pre-service teachers discussed the importance of the classroom environment being “print rich.” “One way of encouraging literacy is through a print-rich environment,” wrote Kim. Many of the pre-service teachers considered things such as classroom labels, word walls, students’ names, poems, and student writing as necessary for providing a print rich environment. They indicated that providing children with a print rich environment “allows for students to be able to recognize words and become familiar with them on a daily basis,” as shown in Kathleen’s statement.

It was interesting and promising that many of the pre-service teachers made a distinction between a print rich environment, classroom libraries, and children’s books. For example, Kathleen wrote, “I believe there are four main areas that are needed in order to promote a literacy environment. These elements include a print rich environment, classroom libraries…. Or Mary’s statements, “Creating a print rich environment means including words everywhere. My classroom will also be filled with books.” Literature has emphasized the importance of classrooms being filled with books, but also posters, word walls, writing supplies, and labels
(Tompkins, 2010). It appears from the data that these pre-service teachers see that creating a print rich environment was much more than simply having books available.

**Safe learning environment.** Only one student, Krista, specifically addressed the literacy environment in terms of the students’ level of comfort. Yet, when pre-service teachers were discussing their experiences within the early literacy university class, 43% indicate that they learned and appreciated the importance of the safe environment during the group presentations.

The lesson plans showed the pre-service teachers engaged students in developmentally appropriate practices that allowed for inquiry, risk-taking, and collaboration. However, the lesson plans provided little insight into the classroom community and the pre-service teachers’ roles in shaping it. This was not surprising considering the lesson plans targeted only a small specific group of students not the entire placement class. During the presentations the pre-service teachers upheld the classroom rules created at the beginning of their semester and designed learning activities that encouraged collaboration among their peers, questioning, and application of knowledge. The community norms in the classroom were maintained throughout each of the presentations.

**Summary.** When designing effective learning environments the community should be considered (Donovan et al., 1999). The pre-service teachers displayed knowledge that centered around two themes. The first is that the pre-service teachers knew that learning should be active with children engaged with the materials, content, and each other. The pre-service teachers employed strategies to encourage discussion among the students and construction of knowledge as advocated for in developmentally appropriate practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). During the presentations the pre-service teachers maintained classroom norms of behavior and designed learning activities that encouraged collaboration among their peers, questioning, and application of knowledge.

The second is that the literacy environment should be print rich. Effective teachers create an environment that allows children to construct knowledge, talk about what they have learned, and engage with print in meaningful ways (Block et al., 2002; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Both of these understandings held by the pre-service teachers have been shown as knowledge among effective teachers.

**Pre-service Teachers Attribute Gains in Early Literacy Knowledge**

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In order to answer the research question “To what extent do pre-service teachers attribute their knowledge gains of scientifically based reading research to the instructional elements of the course?”, they completed a self-reported preparedness survey (Appendix H). The survey, modeled after the survey used by Al Otaiba and Lake (2007), asked pre-service teachers to complete a Likert type questionnaire indicating the degree to which they feel prepared to teach specific areas of literacy and to indicate where they learned each skill.

The pre-service teachers’ responses to the survey are presented in Figure 4.2. The mean degree of preparedness and the standard deviation for each preparedness statement appear in columns two and three respectively. The lowest mean was 3.76 (1.64) for “how to use morphology” and the highest was 5.17 (1.10) “developing students’ reading fluency.” The overall mean and standard deviation for the preparedness survey was 4.88 and 0.40.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I feel well prepared to...</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Coursework</th>
<th>Group presentations</th>
<th>Readings &amp; article critiques</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>TAILS tutoring</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Field experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess students to identify strengths and weaknesses in literacy development.</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>DIBELS (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze students’ error patterns in reading.</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>DIBELS (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt instruction for struggling readers to meet individual needs.</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>DIBELS (2)</td>
<td>Other Classes (1)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate student progress in developing literacy.</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>DIBELS (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select appropriate materials for reading instruction.</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Personal experience (1) Teacher (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence and organize literacy lessons.</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Class instruction (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate all of the area of language arts instruction.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Class instruction (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help children develop phonological awareness.</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Class (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach the relationship between letters and sounds (phonics).</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Class (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach children to decode words (phonics).</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Class (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop students’ reading fluency.</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Other classes (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach comprehension strategies.</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Other classes (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop students’ awareness of text structures.</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Other classes (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use morphology to explain spelling.</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Other classes (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach struggling students to read.</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Other classes (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants were able to check all that apply to indicate attribution of knowledge gains.

Figure 4.2: Preparedness Survey Data
Columns four through nine present the number of times a pre-service teacher indicated the source where she learned the skill. Overall, both group presentations and field experience had the most checks, 286 and 285 respectively. The high number of checks for field experience is not unusual, as previous studies have reported pre-service teachers indicate field experience to be the most beneficial component of their preparation to become a teacher (Williams & Alawiye, 2001).

The indication that the group presentations was a main source of the pre-service teachers’ knowledge supported the use of methods that teach using instruction appropriate for the grade level that the pre-service teachers desire to teach (Lee & Krapfl, 2002) and also supported the use of properly designed cooperative learning activities. That the pre-service teachers perceived the group presentations caused their learning is different from previous studies which found poor perceptions of the usefulness of cooperative learning (Whitbeck, 2000; Williams & Alawiye, 2001).

Though the table shows that the pre-service teachers indicated the course assignments in the course had the least impact on their learning (194 checks), several students did write in that they learned the information from the DIBELS assignment specifically. That assignment required pre-service teachers to administer a pre-test and post-test to a child in their field experience. Following each assessment, the pre-service teachers wrote a summary of the assessment results and a plan for instruction based on the assessment results. This assignment connected assessment theories presented in class to the field experience context and revealed positive feelings among the pre-service teachers. The appreciation of the connection between the course and field experience among the pre-service teachers is similar to previous studies (Barone & Morrell, 2007).

Additionally, the table illustrates an increase in checks associated with the group presentations around the skills explicitly taught during the presentations. The statements from “help children develop phonological awareness” to “develop students’ awareness of text structures” had the highest amount of checks that indicate group presentations were the source of the knowledge. Given my role in this study, these findings could be the result of the pre-service teachers responding with what they felt was the socially accepted response or the response I
wanted to hear (Merriam, 1998). However, I believe this to be unlikely because of the candid nature of their responses seen within the data.

The tutoring experience had an impact on the pre-service teachers’ knowledge gains (255 checks) as has been shown in previous studies (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007). Questionnaire items that dealt with readers who struggle and assessment such as “analyze students’ error patterns in reading” and “teach struggling students to read” received the most indications of tutoring being where the skill was learned. This is consistent with previous studies that have shown pre-service teachers begin to use assessment data in making instructional decisions after participating in a tutoring program (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007; Spear-Swerling, 2009).

**Summary.** The final research question this study sought to answer was where these pre-service teachers felt they learned the skills about literacy instruction. A survey was used (Appendix H) to gather this information. The pre-service teachers indicated using check marks from where they learned the skill. The findings show from most frequent to least frequent: group presentations (286), field experiences (285), tutoring (255), course readings and critiques (210), and course assignments (194).

Interest in teacher preparation programs has emerged as questions about the teacher quality have arisen. Methods of instruction used in pre-service teacher course work have been studied to determine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. The study was designed based on these previous studies and followed guidelines from the theoretical framework, *How People Learn* (1999).

**Summary**

This chapter presented the findings of this study about pre-service teachers’ knowledge and application of effective instruction as it relates to early literacy. In addition, the extent to which the pre-service teachers attributed their knowledge gains to course instruction was displayed. Unique qualities about the researcher were presented in order to provide a rich description of the case. Conclusions and suggestions for further research are presented in Chapter five.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to document pre-service teachers’ knowledge and application of effective instruction as it related to early literacy learning. Findings from this study provided examination and documentation regarding teacher education and contribute to a much-needed body of knowledge related to the education of pre-service teachers. This chapter presents a review of the current research and theoretical framework, conclusions, implications for further research, and considerations for this study.

Current Research

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on the standardization of reading instruction focusing on five essential components of literacy and scientifically based instructional methods (Larson & Phillips, 2005). As such, teacher education programs have been required to adopt related objectives in courses required for teacher certification. The knowledge needed for effective literacy instruction has centered on pre-service teachers’ understanding of these five components and methods proven to increase student achievement (Moats, 2009). The result of this recent emphasis on reading instruction was that many studies have examined pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators’ explicit knowledge of these components of literacy (Joshi et al., 2009; Fielding-Barnsley & Purdie, 2005; Podhaski et al., 2009). Findings from these studies paint a bleak picture of teacher education programs with many participants being unable to accurately define the five components of literacy (Joshi et al., 2009; Podhaski et al., 2009). However, Allington (2007) believes that caution should be used in interpreting such findings as these studies focused on only one piece of the knowledge necessary to be an effective teacher of early literacy.

Effective instruction requires that teachers possess a great deal of knowledge about their subject matter, instructional strategies, assessment strategies, and the classroom environment (Darling-Hammond, 2010) in order to be prepared to match instruction to the specific needs of each child (Cunningham et al., 2009). Currently, teachers enter classrooms comprised of a variety of learners, curricula, community beliefs, and achievement expectations, and one method of instruction does not reach all children (McKenna & Walpole, 2010). The understanding teachers have about the content and students affects how competent they are at selecting instructional materials and delivering instruction (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Therefore, teacher
preparation programs must ensure that pre-service teachers enter classrooms with the ability to adapt to the varying expectations of their schools.

Many teacher preparation programs are revisiting the methods for instructing pre-service teachers to determine if changes to the environment are necessary to ensure pre-service teachers have adequate knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Currently, Ball and Forzani (2010) and Darling-Hammond (2010) suggest that there is a lack of detailed documentation and study of university course methods that contribute to building crucial understanding of teaching and learning among pre-service teachers. Without this documentation, Allington (2007) worries that others from outside the field of education, such as state and federal policy makers, will mandate instruction.

“Learning to teach in practice, with expert guidance, is essential to becoming a great teacher” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 40). While many pre-service teachers report that their field experience is the most beneficial component of their preparation (Williams & Alawiy, 2001), the practices they observe in their field experience are in contrast to what is taught in their university courses or not in keeping with best practices (Vaughn et al., 1998). As a result, providing practice within the context of the field requires a major overhaul of the connections between universities and schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010) to ensure that field experiences are carefully supervised and structured and that pre-service teachers receive high quality and immediate feedback (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Therefore, attention must be placed on designing course instructional methods that enhance expertise by allowing for practice and feedback (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000). Findings from this study provided examination and documentation regarding teacher education and contributed to a much-needed body of knowledge related to the education of pre-service teachers.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that guided this study was the report from Donovan, Bransford, and Pellegrino (1999), *How People Learn*. As discussed in Chapter 1, the framework from *How People Learn* (1999) outlines “the design and evaluation of environments that can optimize learning” (p. 19) and includes four overlapping areas: learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered.

In learner-centered classrooms teachers are aware of the individual understandings, needs, and beliefs of each student in their class. Tasks assigned are appropriate to the level of
knowledge possessed by each child and provide just the right amount of challenge to be engaging. It is inadequate to just know the student; rather the teacher must have thorough knowledge of the concepts taught. In a knowledge-centered classroom, the teacher is concerned with the student’s understanding and organization of new knowledge for later retrieval, not merely with student engagement. An assessment-centered environment uses a wide variety of formative assessments to monitor participant learning. Frequently employed are strategies that teach and encourage the use of metacognition, where students’ understandings are known to both the student and instructor. Finally, in community-centered classrooms, great attention is paid to establishing norms of behavior that encourage inquiry, risk-taking, and collaboration.

Conclusions and Implications

New and creative ways are needed to ensure that teachers enter classrooms armed with the tools necessary to be effective (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This study revealed three new implications for teacher education: pre-service teachers may know more than previously documented, effective cooperative learning can lead to an increase in pre-service teachers’ knowledge, and pre-service teachers may have a more thorough understanding of explicit instruction. These findings pertain to the participants in my study only and it is my intention that the conclusions provide detailed description of the instructional methods and results so that readers can determine if they are applicable and/or appropriate for their particular setting. Similar studies with different groups of pre-service teachers should be conducted to see if transferring instructional ideas from this study yield similar findings about pre-service teachers’ knowledge, benefits of cooperative learning, and pre-service teachers’ understanding of explicit instruction.

Pre-service Teachers’ Knowledge

Previous studies have concluded that many teachers do not possess adequate knowledge about reading to be effective in the classroom (Joshi et al. 2009; Podhaski et al., 2009). With this finding in mind, I sought to determine what knowledge was possessed by the participants in this study by using different methods from previous studies. My assessment methods were guided by the theoretical framework and included pre-service teacher journals (ejournals), discussions (focus group interviews), and lesson plans. This data lead to the conclusion that pre-service teachers in this study actually possess a great deal of knowledge about effective instruction and were beginning to apply this knowledge. Considering these pre-service teachers were in block
two out of four blocks and had not completed methods courses, it is especially promising that
these findings reveal such understandings about effective instruction.

This finding offers a different point of view on the knowledge possessed by pre-service
teachers and potentially calls into question reports that indicate pre-service teacher programs are
inadequately preparing teachers. Looking to Bloom’s Taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002), it can be
argued that the methods used to document pre-service teachers’ knowledge and application of
knowledge in this study, indicate greater understanding than methods that rely on only multiple
choice and/or standaraized assessments. I would suggest teacher educators look to methods that
require application, like those used in this study, to determine the knowledge their pre-service
teachers possess.

In a time when standardization is being encouraged and counties are mandating curricula,
our pre-service teachers must be able to adapt to the varying expectations and should have a
thorough understanding of teaching and learning. To ensure that the pre-service teachers grasped
the knowledge of effective instruction defined by How People Learn (1999), I made many
specific instructional decisions.

Learner-centered. In an effort to make the classroom learner-centered, I gave each
group specific objectives to cover in their presentations and required all presentation participants
to write an article critique on each component of literacy. As the first course on literacy and
reading that these pre-service teachers had encountered, their knowledge about the components
was limited. Providing specific objectives allowed the pre-service teachers to focus their
attention on the most important pieces of information and not be weighted down on nonessential
information. This choice allowed for the presentations to cover pertinent information and
provided a solid foundation on the components of literacy. In addition, providing background
information and beginning understanding were the article critiques. These articles (Appendix I)
were selected by me and read by the pre-service teachers before each presentation. The
assignment was effective at creating a common language and starting place for the presentations.

Knowledge-centered. The specific objectives also contributed to creating a knowledge-
centered environment and focusing instruction on the course objectives. The course was on Early
Literacy and therefore an essential piece of knowledge outlined in the syllabus was the
components of literacy. In addition to these components of literacy, were developmentally
appropriate practices that are from the field of early childhood education. To create an
environment that simultaneously taught the components of literacy and developmentally appropriate practice, the presentation groups were required to teach their component in a manner that was developmentally appropriate for young children. As a result of this university classroom practice, the pre-service teachers were able to create lesson plans for their field experience that accurately taught their desired literacy related objective in a developmentally appropriate manner.

**Assessment-centered.** One area that could be improved and studied further was the assessment-centered piece. While the other areas combined my modeling and the pre-service teachers practice, the assessment-centered area did not. My model of assessment was formal. For example, papers were turned in, graded, and returned with comments to the pre-service teachers. While I used informal observations during the presentations, it did not affect the pre-service teachers’ final grades. I believe that this influenced the confusion about informal assessment among the pre-service teachers seen in the data. The pre-service teachers heard me discuss the benefits of informal assessment within primary classrooms, but did not experience informal assessment in their coursework potentially leading to them using informal assessment inaccurately within their presentations. Some of the pre-service teachers did, however, effectively use informal assessments within their placement classrooms. As such, in future courses, attempts should be made to model the use of informal assessments within the university setting.

**Community-centered.** Finally, the community that was developed over the course of two semesters played a role in the learning that took place. The pre-service teachers experienced first hands the benefits of active learning as can be seen in Mary’s comment, “One connection I see between participating in these group projects and early literacy learning is the students so desperately need to be involved in the learning process.” For teachers of early literacy, it is of vital importance that children are active in their learning. Clearly, these pre-service teachers possess this understanding. The pre-service teachers also appreciated and benefited from the learning community that was established in the course and one pre-service teachers mentioned classroom community when planning for instruction.

It was difficult for me to determine how the pre-service teachers applied their knowledge of community-centered practice within their field experience classrooms. I believe there were several factors that caused this. One was a result of the nature of the field experience being two
partial days per week and one full week during the semester in which this study occurred. The pre-service teachers spend three semesters with this teacher over the course of their teacher preparation program. Also, the lesson plans that were used as a method to document application of knowledge within field experience were mostly targeted to a small, specific group of students not the whole class. Further studies should be conducted to explore methods to document pre-service teachers’ application of community-centered practices within the context of the field experience.

The findings of this study concur with previous researchers such as Ball and Forzani (2010) and Darling-Hammond (2010) who suggest more detailed documentation and study of pre-service teacher course methods is needed. Teacher educators need to make a conscious effort to communicate the knowledge that their pre-service teachers possess in order to dispute other studies that state pre-service teachers lack necessary knowledge. The data in this study revealed pre-service teachers actually possess emerging knowledge and application of effective instruction and provided a different and more positive perspective than previous studies that found poor knowledge among pre-service teachers.

**Cooperative Learning in Pre-service Teacher Education**

Darling-Hammond (2010) advocates for teacher education courses to provide opportunities for practice and feedback. Cooperative learning, in the form of group presentations, can be used effectively in the university classroom to do just that. Previous studies found poor perceptions of the usefulness of collaborative groups in learning key academic skills among pre-service teachers (Whibeeck, 2000). The findings in this study present the opposite; the pre-service teachers indicated that the group presentations most contributed to their newly acquired knowledge. Designing cooperative groups requires detailed understanding of the elements of cooperative learning and sufficient time. Yet this study suggests the knowledge and time is well spent as pre-service teachers indicated it to be beneficial to them.

In this course, cooperative learning was planned in detail. Prior to assigning groups, each student was required to read an article about cooperative learning and respond to an ejournal that asked for them to discuss their previous experiences with group work and specific things that they would do to ensure a successful cooperative learning experience for the group presentation. Not only did the article serve to inform them of the essential elements of cooperative learning,
but also their ejournal responses allowed for me, as the instructor, to see what their knowledge and opinions of the assignment were.

A common response among the pre-service teachers was that there was difficulty in meeting as a group outside of class time. As a result, I provided two class sessions in which they could plan for their presentations, but with an expectation. After the first planning meeting they were required to write in their ejournal about what plans had been made, what they would focus on during the next meeting, and what materials they would bring. This was an effective way to be sure the class meetings were a beneficial use of time.

In addition, I provided the groups with a common set of goals (specific objectives) and assignment. This was effective in ensuring that the group was focused around the same outcome. Utilizing cooperative learning elements, each group had to depend on one another, but the pre-service teachers received individual grades for the assignment (Johnson et al., 2007; Stahl, 1994).

The use of cooperative learning not only facilitated understanding of the course objectives, but it also provided the pre-service teachers with practice in working with colleagues. Many schools encourage grade level teams with teachers working together to plan instruction yet teacher education programs tend to not teach pre-service teachers how to engage in collaborative planning. The use of cooperative groups in this study not only increased the pre-service teachers’ knowledge of reading content, but also of teaching responsibilities in general.

Further, as has been seen in previous studies, the presenters in this study learned the information that they taught (Krathwohl, 2002). In this case, however, in addition to the presenters, the participants in this study also had emerging knowledge of the components taught. The presentation requirement that the participants actually engaged with the material rather than passively sat and listened to the information could be said to be the reason for this learning.

It has been suggested that teacher preparation courses must be revisited and evaluated to see if changes to the methods are necessary (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This study offers a detailed description of a classroom method that yielded understanding of effective instruction among the pre-service teachers. Other teacher educators might use similar methods within their courses to enhance their pre-service teachers’ understandings.

**Pre-service Teachers Understanding of Explicit Instruction**
It is worthy of attention that the theme of explicit instruction carried across both knowledge and application. A concept many confuse with direct instruction and fumble over what to be explicit about (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2000), these pre-service teachers show considerable understanding about the practice. Knowledge about explicit instruction is important for reading instruction, as it is unlikely that children will learn to read and write simply by being in a print rich environment (Tompkins, 2010).

A number of things contributed to this understanding. First, I defined explicit instruction using the definitions from Pearson (1996) and Spear-Swerling (2005). I did not assume that the pre-service teachers understood this concept or would learn it simply by my using the method. By doing this, not only did I establish a firm understanding of the meaning, but I also modeled explicit teaching. The pre-service teachers were not expected to infer the meaning of explicit instruction as children are not expected to infer meanings simply from exposure or incidental learning opportunities (Spear-Swerling, 2005). Second, during the beginning of the course my lesson plans provided models of explicit instruction followed by time for students to construct knowledge. This modeled that learners need to be provided with time to inquire about the concept and construct knowledge about the skill by experimenting with the newly acquired information. Finally, the pre-service teachers were able to practice explicit instruction and receive immediate feedback from me during their presentations. While the presentations were being conducted, I was participating in each group and was able to follow up in the focus group interviews with suggestions for improvement or specifically highlight how I saw the pre-service teachers use explicit instruction during their presentations. This scaffolded practice of this concept resulted in the pre-service teachers understanding how to be explicit in a manner that is developmentally appropriate for young children.

Further, the pre-service teachers in this study knew what to be explicit about in their lesson plans. Allington and McGill-Frazen (2000) state that many teachers are unable to select the skills that they need to specifically teach. The rubric given to the pre-service teachers for the lesson plan provided pre-service teacher with guidance as they experimented with the concept of explicit instruction. The pre-service teachers included a rationale and specific objectives for their lesson. In the rubric description for each piece, it emphasized the importance of focusing on a specific skill that was needed for the children. In addition, the instructional strategy guidelines specifically said that no extraneous activities were to be included in the lesson. These
descriptions focused the pre-service teachers on the needs of the students and the lesson objectives helped them to be specific about the desired skills.

**Further Implications**

Preparing pre-service teachers is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to ensuring high quality teachers for all classrooms, but another equally important piece is the continued education of in-service teachers. The field of education is ever evolving as new research is emerging and policies are created. In order to ensure that teachers are current in their understanding of teaching and learning, school systems must provide continuing education. Currently, Common Core Standards are trickling down into the school systems requiring teachers to understand the standards, implement curricula that supports student learning of the standards, and use a variety of assessment methods to inform their instruction and evaluate student progress (Kendall, 2011). The description of the course in this study may be transferred to professional development in order to create effective in-service training.

**Considerations**

A limitation of this study was my dual role as researcher and instructor. While it provided me with an inside look at the phenomena of study, it could be argued that students responded as they thought I wanted them to or in socially acceptable ways (Merrian, 2009). Great attempts were made to ensure a climate of honesty and mutual respect. I believe the pre-service teachers felt that their voices and opinions mattered to me and that their feedback was helpful to me as their instructor. This belief was supported by their ejournals and course evaluations in which the pre-service teachers candidly gave their likes and dislikes of the course. Eve wrote, “In the future it may be more helpful to have a solid definition of what each group taught.” Julie said,

The hardest thing to handle was one of the group members repeatedly saying that she didn't want her own grade to be affected. It brought in a feeling of independence, like we were all in it for ourselves regardless of how the others were doing. I didn't enjoy this aspect of it, and wished we could have worked more like a team, and carried one another's burdens. The group project I was in last semester really had a feeling that we were in it together, sink or swim. This time, that was sadly lacking.

Despite the view of my role as a limitation, it could be argued that my dual role was actually a strength of the study. Schools use looping to enhance student learning by providing them with consistency of teachers. In addition, the teachers possess great understanding about
each child’s learning needs allowing for instruction to be targeted to the student. My role as the pre-service teachers’ instructor over the course of two semesters was an example of how schools of teacher education can continue and further the knowledge of the pre-service teachers.

**Reflection**

As I reflected on my experience teaching these pre-service teachers, I was inspired by the findings. It was a challenge for me in a constructivist teacher education program to educate future teachers in evidence-based practices within a county that follows a direct instruction model. My experiences as a pre-service teacher and my knowledge of teacher education research said that the link between the university course and the field experience was imperative. My goal was to provide these pre-service teachers with assignments that would be as beneficial and fit into the field experience as closely as possible. I believe many of the decisions I made were effective with these teachers.

Criticism of teachers, both pre-service and in-service, is common, as some believe that schools and teachers are failing to educate children (Honig et al., 2008). I am encouraged by the knowledge possessed by these pre-service teachers that this study revealed. Key principles of effective instruction were understood and can be applied in many different settings.

Additionally, these pre-service teachers see their job as teaching individual children not teaching a specific curriculum. This perception is of utmost importance as these pre-service teachers enter a variety of schools with multiple curriculums. They will enter a profession that is ever changing and that they believe that it is their job to meet the needs of each child will serve them well as they adapt to evolving expectations.

Building the classroom community took a great deal of instructional time, but it was time well spent. Given the amount of content that must be covered in the course, it was a risk to devote so much time to community building activities, but yielded great returns in creating a climate where students were active in their learning and willing to take risks with their understandings. This openness about their understandings allowed for misconceptions to be corrected and knowledge to be extended.

While the true measure of effectiveness of instruction is the learning that takes place, it was important to me that the pre-service teachers enjoyed learning. These students were engaged and active in their learning. The class was full of both learning and fun! This was the climate I wanted these pre-service teachers to establish in their future early childhood classrooms. By
providing them with this model, it is likely that they will spend time establishing a community within their future classrooms.

In planning future courses, I will continue to work on how to model the use informal assessments. It presents a challenge as the course syllabi are rigid and specify assignments. However, observation, discussion, and ejournals that were used could be a place to begin. In future courses I will make my use of these assessments transparent using think aloud. I will engage in the process of reflection aloud with my students with the intention of making my thinking known to the pre-service teachers. It would perhaps serve as a model that they could then experiment with during their presentations.

I view this dissertation process as a culmination of my learning through my doctoral coursework. In the courses I took, I learned new information and applied it within the context of the courses I taught. Through this process, I was required to thoroughly reflect on my practices that in turn created a detailed mental framework to think about when designing future courses. It was beneficial to engage in the reflective process because not only did it improve my instruction, but it also engaged me in the practice I was encouraging from my pre-service teachers.
APPENDIX A

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673, FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 1/6/2011

To: Kathryn Scarborough

Address: 4459
Dept.: EDUCATION

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Preparation of Future Reading Teachers: Exploring Pre-service Teachers' Understandings of Early Literacy

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.
If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 1/4/2012 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Vickie Lake, Advisor

HSC No. 2010.5099
Dear Pre-service Teacher:

I am conducting a study about how pre-service teachers’ learn to teach early literacy. If you give me permission, I would like to use some of the existing course activities and assignments that you complete in RED 4310 for this study. Specifically, this would include: your test about knowledge of literacy, lesson plans, and ejournals that were part of your coursework. Because of my dual role as researcher and instructor, Dr. Vickie Lake will serve as your contact regarding your participation and consent in this study. I will not be informed about your decision to participate or not. If you choose to participate, copies of your completed assignments will be collected and Dr. Vickie Lake will remove your name and other identifying information. An ID number will be substituted for your name. These records will be kept in a locked filing cabinet by Kathryn Scarborough until June 2012, at which time, they will be destroyed.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks to you if you agree to participate. The results may be published, but your name will not be used and your identity will be confidential to the extent allowed by law. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You should feel free to say “no” or to withdraw from participation at any time by contacting Dr. Vickie Lake. Information obtained during the course of this study will remain confidential, to the extent allowed by law.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit is that we will learn more about how training effects how teachers provide reading instruction. If you have any questions or you would like additional information, please call me at __________.

Sincerely,

Kathryn M. Scarborough, M.Ed.

I understand that assignments I complete will be used for data in this study. Further, I understand that data will be destroyed by June 2012.

________________________________________  ___________________________________  ____________
(Print your name)                        (Signature)                        (Date)
If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Review Board, through the Vice President for the Office of Research at (850) 644-8633.
# APPENDIX B

## Presentation Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phonological Awareness</td>
<td>The student will be able to: define phonological awareness, phonemic awareness; sequence the development of phonological awareness skills; identify phonological awareness tasks; segment, blend, and delete phonemes; identify and count speech sounds in words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>The student will be able to: define phonics, morpheme, grapheme, diagraph, diphthong, blend, alphabetic principle; describe the developmental stages of phonics; explain the necessity of explicit, systematic phonics instruction; identify and classify short and long vowel sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary: Specific Word Instruction</td>
<td>The student will be able to: explain why instruction in specific words is necessary; order the steps for providing specific word instruction; explain the difference between regular and irregular high frequency words; list the benefits of specific word instruction prior to reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary: Word Learning Strategies</td>
<td>The student will be able to: explain why instruction in word learning strategies is necessary; describe the strategies necessary for student’s to know in order to determine meanings of unknown words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>The student will be able to: define reading comprehension,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expository, narrative; list strategies for promoting reading comprehension for narrative texts; list strategies for promoting comprehension for expository texts; list and define the 8 comprehension strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fluency</strong></td>
<td>The student will be able to: define reading fluency, prosody; describe the different contexts and meanings of the term fluency; describe characteristics of fluency development; list strategies for promoting reading fluency in class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Ejournal Prompts

adapted from Jones and Lake (2005).

Ejournal 1: After reading the article about tutoring posted on Blackboard, please think about what the benefits are to you from this type of tutoring experience. What will you learn about early literacy? reading instruction? assessment? differentiating instruction? Think about not only what is explicitly stated in the article, but also what your opinions are.

Ejournal 2: Talk about literacy assessment. What are the purposes? How are they used? What skills are assessed via DIBELS Next? How do you see this information being helpful in planning for instruction?

Ejournal 3: Discuss your previous experiences with cooperative learning.

Have your experiences been true cooperative learning experiences as described in the reading for the week? Explain. How has cooperative learning or a form of it helped and/or hindered your learning of key objectives? Be specific. What have you liked and disliked about working in groups in the past? Again, provide examples. What will you do to ensure a successful experience in this class (think about guidelines from the reading)?

Ejournal 4: How did planning go last class? What is the game plan for planning next week? (What materials will you bring? What needs to be decided?) How is the group working together? Are you united behind the common goal? Are you depending upon each other? What questions do you have about the presentation?

Ejournal 5: What elements need to be included in literacy instruction? What is important to consider when planning for literacy instruction? How do children learn to read?
Ejournal 6: The group presentation requirements ask you to teach specific objectives in a developmentally appropriate manner and assess participant learning. Provide specific examples of how you will apply these concepts in your future classroom.

Ejournal 7: Discuss your understanding of creating a literacy environment. What are essential elements of a classroom?

Ejournal 8: Discuss your understanding of literacy instructional practices. What are effective techniques? How do you decide what to methods to use?

Ejournal 9: Discuss your understanding of literacy assessment. What is it? How can it be conducted? What are the purposes of it?

Ejournal 10: Provide specific examples of the connections you see between participating in group presentations and early literacy learning. Discuss thoughts on the content, instructional strategies, assessment, and the environment.

Ejournal 11: Describe the classroom culture in RED4310. In what ways did class activities contribute to or take away from a climate of learning? Discuss ways in which you were encouraged to construct knowledge about early literacy and effective instruction.

Ejournal 12: Why is it necessary to teach word learning strategies and what are some strategies? What is reading comprehension? What are comprehension strategies that should be taught and modeled? What is reading fluency? How can reading fluency be developed?
### APPENDIX D

Lesson Plan Rubric (adapted from Wolfe, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Instructional Activities</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Rationale is not mentioned in the lesson.</td>
<td>Objectives are missing, unclear, or are not related to learner(s).</td>
<td>Activities are unrelated to objectives. Many activities are extraneous and irrelevant. No attempt is made to individualize activities for learning styles or strengths.</td>
<td>Assessment is unrelated to objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Rationale is alluded to in lesson, and lesson is not related to learner(s). Objectives do not provide a clear sense of what students will be able to know and be able to do as a result of the lesson.</td>
<td>Activities relate peripherally to objectives. Some activities are extraneous or irrelevant. Activities are not accessible to students with different learning styles and strengths.</td>
<td>Assessment is somewhat related to objectives. Assessment is not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Rationale is stated and somewhat related to learner(s). Objectives provide some sense of what students will know and be able to do as a result of the lesson. Most of the objectives are related to learner(s).</td>
<td>Activities relate to objectives. A few activities may be extraneous or irrelevant. Activities are accessible to students of more than one learning style or strength.</td>
<td>Assessment is related to objectives. Assessment is less</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Rationale is clearly stated and directly related to learner(s). Objectives provide a clear sense of what students will know and be able to do as a result of the lesson. All objectives are clearly and closely related to learner(s). Activities provide a logical path to meeting objectives. No activities are extraneous or irrelevant. Students of many learning styles and strengths can benefit from activities.</td>
<td>Activities are directly related to objectives. Assessment is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

97
| **Reflection** | Reflection is not mentioned in the lesson. | appropriate for all students’ learning styles and strengths. Reflection focuses on student enjoyment and behavioral concerns. | accessible for students with certain learning styles and strengths. Reflection alludes to assessments and somewhat is tied to mastery of objectives. | opportunities for students with varying learning styles and strengths to excel. Reflection includes assessment evidence and focuses on mastery of specified objectives. |
APPENDIX E

Participant Observation Notes

Adapted from Creswell (2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Length of Activity:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sketch of Classroom:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F
Course Description and Objectives

Description:
This is an undergraduate course to develop in pre-service teachers the knowledge and skills to teach beginning reading in a classroom setting. The course will enhance knowledge of instructional practices that use research-based strategies to promote reading success for all students. It will focus on moving theory into best practice in order to design and implement instruction that targets the individual needs of a wide range of learners, including those of varying abilities and from diverse cultures. This course builds a framework of the following elements for instruction in beginning reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency development, vocabulary development, and strategy instruction for comprehension of a wide variety of texts. Discussions and activities will address instructional and assessment issues.

Objectives:

• Identify and apply knowledge and research-based theories of literacy/language development to inform instructional practices in a classroom of diverse learners
• Identify and apply the content and strategies for an emergent literacy program
• Identify and utilize assessment measures to observe, monitor, and evaluate the developmental stages of reading, recognizing the implications of cultural and linguistic diversity in the classrooms, particularly for Florida’s LEP population
• Interpret formal and informal assessment data and use this information for planning beginning reading instruction, to include adapting tests appropriate for assessing students with Limited English Proficiency
• Identify and apply effective strategies for assessment and instruction of fluency development
• Demonstrate knowledge of strategies for decoding and encoding that are used as part of the reading process
• Demonstrate knowledge and application of effective strategies and instructional methods for developing word recognition, including multi-sensory strategies
• Identify strategies to promote students' vocabulary development
• Identify strategies to promote students’ comprehension
APPENDIX G

Interview Questions

What went well during your presentation? How do you know?

What areas could be improved in your presentation? How do you know?

Did you make any changes in your instruction during the presentation? If so, why?

How did you assess participant learning?

What do the assessments tell you? How can this information be used to inform the follow up lesson? (if necessary)

What do you feel was beneficial about providing participants with hands-on learning?
## APPENDIX H

**Preparedness Survey (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please indicate your degree of agreement with each item.</th>
<th>Where did you learn this skill? (Check all that apply.)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel well prepared to...</td>
<td>group presentations</td>
<td>course work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess students to identify strengths and weaknesses in literacy development.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze students’ error patterns in reading.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt instruction for struggling readers to meet individual needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate student progress in developing literacy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Select appropriate materials for reading instruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence and organize literacy lessons.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrate all of the area of language arts instruction.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help children develop phonological awareness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach the relationship between letters and sounds (phonics).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach children to decode words (phonics).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop students’ reading fluency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach comprehension strategies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop students’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>awareness of text structures.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use morphology to explain spelling.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach struggling students to read.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

Course Supplemental Readings


APPENDIX J
Guidelines for Feedback Letters

Sometimes you learn so much by watching others, hence observation and practicum! So here is your chance to respond to what you have seen. When writing your letter, remember your goal is to provide thoughtful, helpful, and constructive feedback to the presenters. You may wish to talk to all the members or highlight key elements you liked from individual presenters. This is not to be an evaluation merely your response to the presentation. To help guide your letter writing focus on the following 3 areas in your letters.

Area 1: Describing affect for teachers and learners

Consider the seemingly invisible signals that the “teacher” is sending about his or her attitudes toward the audience. Do the teachers show respect for participants as learners? Do they seem to care about what they are teaching? Do they put effort into involving us in the learning? What can you say to support you colleagues’ emerging talents as a teacher?

Area 2: Articulating best practice

According to Janet Swenson, best practices are defined as “methods that positively affect learning and productively address problems acknowledged by those in the discipline to be at once fundamental and profound.” Included in this category are such attributes as beginning with students lived experiences, invoking the use of multiple intelligences, addressing various learning styles. What best practices did you notice in the presentation? What made them especially effective? Why?

Area 3: Questions arisen

As you listened to and participated in the presentation, what questions came to your mind? What would you like to ask the presenters? As you discuss the presentation in your group, how did the group as a whole internalize and theorize the information? Were there questions you need to have answered to fully embrace and understand the material?
APPENDIX K
Course Syllabus

Syllabus-RED 4310

Early Literacy Learning

Instructor
Kate Scarborough

Course Description
This is an undergraduate course to develop in pre-service teachers the knowledge and skills to teach beginning reading in a classroom setting. The course will enhance knowledge of instructional practices that use research-based strategies to promote reading success for all students. It will focus on moving theory into best practice in order to design and implement instruction that targets the individual needs of a wide range of learners, including those of varying abilities and from diverse cultures.

This course builds a framework of the following elements for instruction in beginning reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency development, vocabulary development, and strategy instruction for comprehension of a wide variety of texts. Discussions and activities will address instructional and assessment issues.

Course Objectives and Goals
1. Assignments to demonstrate knowledge and/or application of course objectives may include observations, professional journal responses, lesson plans, classroom demonstrations and tests. Additional assignments will be completed with elementary students as part of your field practicum. These include literacy assessments and reading tutorial sessions. All assignments will be discussed in detail during the semester with explanations of the objectives they cover. (This information may be useful as you document competence in the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices, as well as ESOL competencies.)

2. Identify and apply knowledge and research-based theories of literacy/language development to inform instructional practices in a classroom of diverse learners (Accomplished Practice #7; ESOL #11). Assignments: Lesson Plan #1 - Phonological Awareness, Reading Tutorial Summaries

3. Identify and apply the content and strategies for an emergent literacy program (Accomplished Practices #’s 5, 7, 8: ESOL #’s 16, 18). Assignments: Reading Tutorial Summaries
4. Identify and utilize assessment measures to observe, monitor, and evaluate the developmental stages of reading, recognizing the implications of cultural and linguistic diversity in the classrooms, particularly for Florida’s LEP (Limited English Proficiency) population (Accomplished Practices #’s 1, 5, 7; ESOL #’s 4, 14). Assignments: Literacy Assessment (DIBELS)
5. Identify and apply effective strategies for assessment and instruction of fluency development (Accomplished Practices #’s 1, 8; ESOL #6). Assignments: Literacy Assessment (DIBELS); Reading Tutorial Summaries; Final Exam.
6. Interpret formal and informal assessment data and use this information for planning beginning reading instruction, to include adapting tests appropriate for assessing students with Limited English Proficiency (Accomplished Practices #’s 1, 10; ESOL #12). Assignments: Literacy Assessment (FAIR)
7. Demonstrate knowledge of strategies for decoding and encoding that are used as part of the reading process (Accomplished Practice #8).
8. Demonstrate knowledge and application of effective strategies and instructional methods for developing word recognition, including multi-sensory strategies (Accomplished Practices #’s 7, 8, 10; ESOL #11). Assignments: Classroom Demonstration - Phonics Lesson
9. Identify strategies to promote students' vocabulary development.. (Accomplished Practices #’s 5 & 7; ESOL #13). Assignments: Reading Tutorial Summaries, Final Exam
10. Identify strategies to promote students’ comprehension. (Accomplished Practices #’s 5 & 7; ESOL #13). Assignments: Reading Tutorial Summaries, Final Exam
11. Become familiar with materials and resources, including computer technology and other media, to enhance learning in a classroom of varying abilities, cultural, and language backgrounds (Accomplished Practices #’s 8, 12; ESOL #15).
12. Become acquainted with professional journals and organizations in order to keep abreast of current trends and issues in the field of Reading/Language Arts (Accomplished Practice #3). Assignments: Summary of Professional Journal Article

**Required Text**
Novato, CA: Arena Press.
Assessment and Evaluation

Please note that points earned and the discretion of the course instructor determine final grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejournal</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Article Critiques</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Lesson Observation</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Plan and Reflection</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Assessment</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutoring Journal</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
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<td>Test</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Group Presentation</td>
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</table>

Total 177

Grade Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94%-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>83%-86%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73%-76%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63%-66%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%-82%</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%-72%</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>60%-62%</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<td>87%-89%</td>
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<td>67%-69%</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<td>&lt;60%</td>
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Rubric Scale

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Explain the key purposes and provides specific details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Well organized and easy to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There are few errors or mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Explain the key purposes but does not provide enough details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good organization and fairly easy to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some minor errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Explain some of the purposes but misses the key purposes and does not provide details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat organized but hard to follow in places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Numerous major and minor errors but the meaning is still clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>Does not refer to the purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not organized at all and difficult to follow most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Errors are so numerous and serious that they interfere with communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Assignments

A description and criteria for assignments are given in the appendix with accompanying rubrics.
**Assignments must be submitted on time for maximum scores.** Permission to resubmit work must be received from the instructor.

**Course Outline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Number</th>
<th>Class Topic</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Related Readings</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Syllabus</td>
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<td>Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Structure of the English Language Print Awareness</td>
<td>TSWBAT: identify common features of the English language; list the components of print awareness; describe ways in which print awareness can be taught and scaffold in the early childhood classroom</td>
<td>CORE Chapters 1, 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>TAILS training</td>
<td>TSWBAT: implement the TAILS tutoring program with an individual student in her placement</td>
<td>Posted on Blackboard</td>
<td>*Ejournal *Reading Lesson Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Topic Description</td>
<td>TSWBAT:</td>
<td>Specific Reading Instructional and Assessment Methods</td>
<td>DIBELS Next Manual Chapter 1 (on BB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Developmentally Appropriate Reading Instructional and Assessment Methods</td>
<td>identify developmentally appropriate reading instructional methods; identify and select developmentally appropriate assessment methods; use assessment results to plan for instruction</td>
<td>DIBELS Next Manual Chapter 1 (on BB)</td>
<td>*Ejournal *Bring DIBELS Next materials to class!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Group Planning Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>Posted on Blackboard – Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>*Ejournal *Bring DIBELS Next materials to class!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Phonological Awareness</td>
<td>TSWBAT: define phonological awareness, phonemic awareness; sequence the development of phonological awareness skills; identify</td>
<td>CORE Chapter 5</td>
<td>*Ejournal *P.A. Article Critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>TSWBAT: Define phonics, morpheme, grapheme, diagraph, diphthong, blend, alphabetic principle; describe the developmental stages of phonics; explain the necessity of explicit, systematic phonics instruction; identify and classify short and long vowel sounds</td>
<td>CORE Chapters 4, 6</td>
<td>*Ejournal *Phonics Article Critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2/17</td>
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<td>Phonics</td>
<td>TSWBAT: define phonics, morpheme, grapheme, diagraph, diphthong, blend, alphabetic principle; describe the developmental stages of phonics; explain the necessity of explicit, systematic phonics instruction; identify and classify short and long vowel sounds</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vocabulary: Specific Word Instruction</td>
<td>TSWBAT: explain why instruction in specific words is necessary; order</td>
<td>CORE Chapters 11, 12</td>
<td>*Ejournal *Vocabulary (SWI) Article Critique</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Vocabulary: Word Learning Strategies</td>
<td>TSWBAT: explain why instruction in word learning strategies is necessary; describe the strategies necessary for student’s to know in order to determine meanings of unknown words</td>
<td>CORE Chapter 13</td>
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<td>*Ejournal (WLS) Article Critique</td>
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<td>3/10</td>
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<td>No Class – Spring Break</td>
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<td>3/17</td>
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<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>STWBAT: define reading comprehension, expository,</td>
<td>CORE Chapters 9, 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Ejournal *Fluency Article Critique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading Strategies</td>
<td>CORE Chapters</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/24</td>
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<td></td>
<td>narrative; list strategies for promoting reading comprehension for narrative texts; list strategies for promoting reading comprehension of expository texts; list and define the 8 comprehension strategies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 3/31  | 11   | Fluency | TSWBAT: define reading fluency, prosody; describe the different contexts and meanings of the term fluency; describe characteristics of fluency development; list strategies for promoting reading fluency in class | Chapters 14, 15 | *Ejournal  
*Comprehension Article Critique |
| 4/7   | 12   | Test    | TSWBAT: explain the benefits of |              | *Ejournal  
*Tutoring |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/14</td>
<td>No Class – Full Time Teach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>Wrap Up</td>
<td>*Ejournal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Course Evaluations</td>
<td>*Lesson Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix: Assignments and Rubrics**

+ Please note these are the critical tasks for RED 4310 and must be submitted to the instructor via Chalk and Wire as well as in class.

**Class Participation**

You will have the opportunity to earn 2 points each class. Your thoughtful participation in class is expected each meeting; being physically present is not enough. You are professionals and if you choose to miss class you will lose the points for that class meeting. Tardiness will result in loss of points. You have the potential to earn 24 points.

**Ejournal**

Reflective practice is important for effective teachers. In order to encourage this behavior, you will complete weekly journal entries reflecting on what you learned about early literacy either from our class or your placement. At times, you will be provided with specific prompts. Each journal entry is worth 2 points and will be completed via the Discussion Board. Posts are due by Wednesdays at midnight. Your first journal entry is due January 19 at midnight.

**Professional Article Critiques**
You will read articles from professional journals on five out of the six components of literacy instruction that will be presented on in class. (Do not do a summary for the component you are presenting on!) After you have read each article prepare a 1 page “executive summary.” It should include what the research says and the direct implications for early childhood classrooms. Each summary is worth 8 points.

Rubric for Professional Article Critiques (5 critiques @ 8 points = 40 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research findings</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implications for classroom practice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading Lesson Observation**

Observe your classroom teacher as she/he teaches her/his reading lesson(s) and discuss with her following the lesson. This should be the entire period where the teacher instructs both the whole class and small groups in reading. Your reflection should be a maximum of two pages and should include:

- A description of the lesson: materials used, teacher’s objectives/rationale for the lesson, teacher’s instructional methods, include details about what the students were doing while the teacher was instructing, both those students being instructed and those working independently

- A description of students’ actions:
  
  Did all students participate?
  
  How did students respond to lessons?
  
  What types of off-task behaviors (especially while the students were not being directly instructed) did you observe?

- Pay special attention to how your teacher does the following
  
  Did the teacher include opportunities for both group and individual responses during the lesson?
  
  How did the teacher correct incorrect student responses?
  
  How did the teacher monitor student behavior for those students not being directly instructed during small-group lessons? What classroom management techniques did she/he use?

- Your thoughts and opinions regarding the lesson.

**Rubric for Reading Lesson Observation** (8 points)
Description of lesson and behaviors  4  3  2  1
Thoughts/Opinions  4  3  2  1

**K/1 Literacy Assessment and Plan for Instruction +**
Work with your supervising teacher to assess one student (the student should be your TAILS student). You will test the student two times, once in the beginning of the semester before beginning TAILS tutoring and once at the end of the semester after completing the TAILS tutoring using DIBELS, and develop a plan for instruction based on the assessment results.
You will be trained on DIBELS assessment measures during class time. You will turn in the score book, plans for instruction and a summary of test results. You will upload the plans for instruction and summary of test results to Chalk and Wire under Student Interview. All of this information MUST be kept confidential therefore you should make up a name for this student or use only the child’s first name in all of your writing.

**Rubric for K/1 Literacy Assessment** (17 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment records</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary and interpretation of results from initial</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and interpretation of results from final</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for instruction following initial</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for instruction following final</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lesson Plan and Revision +**
Work with your supervising teacher to select a group (3-5) children who need some extra work with one or more of the five components of literacy instruction. Create a lesson plan to promote the development of those skills in these children. You will also need to include accommodations you will make for English language learners as well as students with disabilities. Be sure to note the grade level. It is strongly suggested you choose to teach a lesson that focuses on the component of literacy instruction you will be presenting on! Prior to teaching the lesson, we will revise it in class. You will receive a score (worth 4 points) for the initial submission. After implementing your lesson, reflect on how you feel the lesson went. Think about what you would do the same and differently if you taught the lesson again. Discuss how students responded to the lesson, understood the objectives. Talk with your supervising teacher about suggestions he/she would make both in lesson content as well as your delivery. You may find it helpful to tape yourself to watch while writing your reflection.
You will submit the revised lesson plan and revision in class and to chalk and wire.

**Rubric for Lesson Plan and Reflection (22 points)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Audience</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>1 yes</td>
<td>0 no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tutoring Journal**

All classroom teachers have students who need extra attention. Ask your directing teacher which student he/she would like you to mentor using TAILS. You will tutor the child 2 times per week for 30 minutes each session. In your weekly summary and reflection you should include the lessons you worked on, student behaviors, student progress, and general thoughts about the effectiveness of the lessons. You should have a total of five entries by the end of the semester (10 tutoring sessions). Mentoring a child over an extended period of time will give you an opportunity to see the child’s strengths and weaknesses and how working one-on-one with a child is an excellent intervention strategy to clarify or reteach any skill. Please use only the child’s first name.

**Rubric for Tutoring Journal (5 entries @ 3 points=15+1 point=16 total points)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Times and dates of meeting and signature of supervising teacher</th>
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<th>0 no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of week</td>
<td>1 yes</td>
<td>0 no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection of week</td>
<td>1 yes</td>
<td>0 no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well written/proper grammar</td>
<td>1 yes</td>
<td>0 no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test**

At the end of the semester, you will be given a test designed to assess your knowledge associated with the five components of literacy instruction. The test is worth a total of 10 points.

**Group Presentation**

In a group assigned by the instructor you will present to the class on one of the components of literacy instruction. You will be given specific learning objectives that you must cover during your presentation. The presentation must be done using teaching methods appropriate to an early childhood classroom and the direct instruction portion may last no longer that 10-15% of your total presentation 60 – 90 minute presentation time. Built in to the presentation must be an
assessment to determine whether or not the participants learned the desired objectives. Following your presentation, you will meet in your group with the instructor to review assessment results and plan a re-teach lesson if necessary. Following the group presentations, participants in groups will write letters to the presenters reflecting on the lesson. You will be provided with guidelines for these letters. You will email one feedback letter from the group to the instructor by the end of class time.

**Rubric for Group Presentation (30 points)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives clearly covered</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE classroom practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement/enjoyment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback letters (5@ 2points each)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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REFERENCES


NY: Palgrave.


National Center on Response to Intervention. (2010). *Essential components of RTI – A"


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kathryn McGaughy Scarborough received her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from the Florida State University in 2002. She attended the University of Virginia where she earned her Master of Education degree in Education Leadership in 2004. She received her Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Florida State University in 2011. Kathryn Scarborough taught kindergarten, first grade, and second grade in public schools in Fairfax County, Virginia and Orange County, Florida.