The Effect of an After-School Academic Enrichment Program on Urban Elementary Student Reading Achievement

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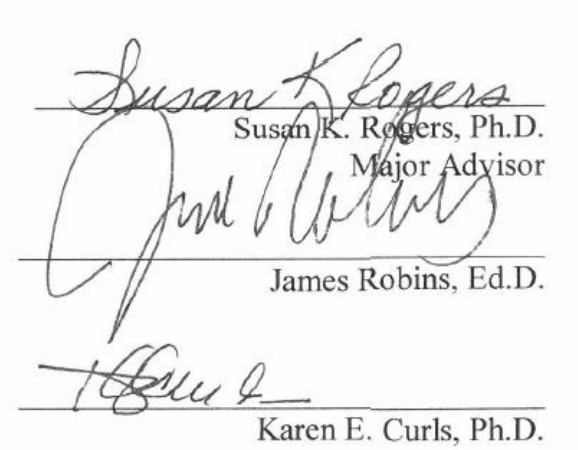

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the extent students participating in the Aim for Success after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score (Grades 1-3) or Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score (Grades 4-6). The study was based in Kansas City, Missouri with a culturally diverse student population, including African Americans, Latinos, and a significant number of recent immigrants from Africa, Asia, and Central America. The results of the data analysis related to student reading growth for first- through sixth-grade students attending an after-school program were mixed. The second-, third-, and fourth grade students did grow fall to spring. The first-, fifth-, and sixth grade students did not grow fall to spring. The third- and fourth-grade ELL students did grow from fall to spring. The first-, second-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students did not grow fall to spring. The research findings indicated a difference between fourth-grade ELL and non-ELL students, and the non-ELL grew more. The mean growth for first-, second-, third-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students was not different from the mean growth for first-, second-, and third-grade non-ELL students. Recommendations for future research include conducting an additional assessment of the after-school program to ensure that the academic content and enrichment activities are effective for increasing student learning; and conduct a qualitative study to gain the perceptions of the tutors, classroom teachers, and the participants' parents about student learning and other aspects of student achievement.

Dedication

To providing quality education to children everywhere…especially in underserved communities.

My dear wife, Mary Kathryn Barnes

My Beloved Parents,
Bishop Jesse L. Barnes & My mother, Lady Sandra I. Barnes
(1947-2016)

My Maternal Grandparents
Mr. James Maxwell McCartney, Sr. & Mrs. Mildred McCartney
(1917-1988) (1927-2013)

My Paternal Grandparents
Mr. Jacob & Mrs. Naomi Barnes
(1907-1979) (1908-1995)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Education in America has been described as the great equalizer, providing access to opportunities and careers that could empower youth to pursue their goals and live out their dreams (Autor, Katz, & Kearney, 2006; Johnson, 2012). However, many children of color, especially the economically disadvantaged living within the urban core, often have their dreams deferred (Tavernise, 2012). There are often educational disparities for children, especially those of color, living in the United States' inner cities. Class size, buildings, the quality of teacher retention, provisions of superior technology access, and outdated curriculum are significantly different for children in cities than their suburban counterparts. These effects, particularly pronounced in low-income urban schools (Barton, 2005; Sanders, 2008), have caused children in the urban core to face many challenges and obstacles that can cause complete derailment of their academic and life progression. Schools, especially in the urban core, face insufficient instruction time and large classroom sizes, often preventing schools from providing needed academic support (Anastal, Sherman, Owen, Land, & Pavcik, 2018; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002).

After-school programs have been a catalyst to support children beyond regular classroom hours and to close the achievement gap in literacy that often occurs between low-income students and those from more affluent neighborhoods (Gardner, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). Many after-school programs in urban communities attempt to support students academically (Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007). Schools in the urban core provide learning opportunities (Daniel, Quartz, & Oakes, 2019); however, some students continue to fall academically below the proficient level and widen the

achievement gap, especially in reading (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). Recently, the number of children who have failed to develop early reading skills that lead to academic and social success has led to national concern. Poor reading skills lead to lower overall academic achievement (Chall, 2000). Often, children in urban elementary schools are racially diverse, immigrant, and poor (Elias & Haynes, 2008).

Deep equity gaps remain for low-income students, especially children of color, including many immigrants, who continue to graduate from high school at rates far behind their white and more affluent peers. In addition, English language learners (ELL) and homeless students all have graduation rates below 70% (Atwell, Balfanz, Bridgeland, & Ingram, 2020). In large metropolitan cities (i.e., Chicago, Cleveland, Indianapolis, and other cities), ethnic-minority students have been lagging significantly in their academic studies affecting high school graduation rates far behind their more advantaged White peers nationwide (Tate et al., 2015). Children living in poverty have been found to have fewer educational experiences and lower academic performance compared with their higher-income peers (Xiang, Dahlin, Cronin, Theaker, & Durant, 2011), with the divide between the two groups widening in the United States (Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018). Academic failure for students with a low socioeconomic status (SES) can be a precursor to school dropout, increasing the likelihood of poor life outcomes, such as low-wage jobs, incarceration, inadequate health care, and further entrenched poverty (Reardon, 2013; Scott, Karberg, & Trends, 2015).

Mahler (2011) compared the weekly educational learning provided in standard United States classrooms to the educational enrichment provided by after-school every week and discovered that in both settings, students retain only about 20% of the

information presented. To strengthen the challenging transition from early childhood to adolescence and young adulthood, children need additional hours of academic enrichment outside of the standard classroom (Huston & Ripke, 2006). The results of the research have demonstrated that an after-school program with high academic standards is a formally organized activity or program supervised by an adult that includes other children and occurs outside of school hours (Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005), which can significantly enhance the lives of children and youth by providing reliable educational services (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Waldfogel, 2006). After-school hours programs often incorporate creative arts, sports, recreation, and academic instruction (Kahne et al., 2001). In many low-income households, parents often work different shifts and cannot afford the cost of daycare, causing children to become latchkey. Therefore, there is a sufficiently higher need for after-school care for children from those households (Waldfogel, 2006).

Background

This study was conducted at Grace United Community Ministries in Kansas City, Missouri. Through a partnership with Kansas City, Missouri Public Schools and one charter school, Grace United Community Ministries serves children in the Aim for Success After-School Academic Enrichment Program (Aim for Success). According to Grace United Community Ministries (2020), the program has been ongoing since the organization's incorporation in 2004. The after-school tutoring program currently serves approximately 100 kindergarten through sixth-grade students. Over the years, the student population has been culturally diverse, representing nearly 35 languages and includes African-American and Hispanic students and a significant number from families who are

recent immigrants from Africa, Asia, and Central America. All students qualify for free and reduced lunch at their schools. Both boys and girls attend the program, and the percentage is roughly 60-40, with a higher rate for boys (Grace United Community Ministries, 2020).

Aim for Success provides educational assistance and support for students in a positive learning environment (H. Spencer, personal communication, September 28, 2020). The program is in session after school during the school year, beginning at 3:15 p.m. and ending at 6:00 p.m., Monday-Thursday. All students receive a full snack when entering, join their academic level groups by grade, complete homework (receiving homework assistance as needed), and receive one-on-one tutoring from volunteer professionals, including retired teachers, engineers, and Kansas City Medical School students. The central purpose of the program is to provide academic enrichment while building literacy skills, which occurs for each student a minimum of twice a week. When students have completed homework, they may read, utilize educational computer programs, mentor younger students, or enjoy free time in a game room where they can mingle and enjoy positive recreational activities (Grace United Community Ministries, 2020).

Statement of The Problem

The academic school day for many children does not provide enough time to meet their educational needs (Silva, 2007). After-school programs can increase children's engagement in school learning through activities directly linked to school goals and the promotion of a broad range of skills that are needed to succeed in later life (Vandell et al., 2007). After-school programs are conceived to advance educational achievement and the

goals of children and teens as well as prevent risks for students who attend (Lester, Chow, & Melton, 2020). The Aim for Success program has not been examined to determine its impact on the reading achievement of children ages 5 thru 12 from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The impact of an after-school program on the academic performance of children ages 5 thru 12 from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds was examined during the research of this study. The program includes students who have recently moved to the United States from other countries and are acclimating themselves to the Western culture, customs, and language. This study is an analysis of the academic growth of after-school tutoring, focusing upon students who are immigrants and have ethnically diverse backgrounds. The ethnic background of students is specifically a challenge to this study because this population has been understudied in research literature. Further examined in this study is the effect an after-school program has on developing reading comprehension skills and understanding and using new vocabulary, and the critical role of this program in attaining English language proficiency. Moreover, studies have focused a great deal on American-born minorities; however, few have researched English language learners and immigrants (Greenberg, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of this study was to determine the extent first- through third-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score. The second purpose of the study was to determine the extent first- through third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as

measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score. The third purpose of the study was to determine the extent first- through third-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score. The fourth purpose of the study was to determine the extent there is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between first- through third-grade English Language Learner (ELL) students participating in the Aim for Success After-School Program and first- through third-grade non-ELL students participating in the program. The fifth purpose of the study was to determine the extent fourth- through sixth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score. The sixth purpose of the study was to determine the extent fourth- through sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score. The seventh purpose of the study was to determine the extent fourth- through sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score. The final purpose of this study was to determine the extent there is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between fourth- through sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and fourth- through sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

Significance of the Study

Identifying the strengths and challenges of reading in an after-school program for diverse populations is significant to this study. It was important to determine whether the students who attend the after-school program demonstrate growth in reading achievement while attending the program. Additionally, the researcher contends that the findings could help enhance the awareness of the importance of additional tutoring and that more individuals might partner with schools and other organizations like the Aim for Success After-School Program to help students with reading skills. The results of this study could support administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders in their search for a deeper understanding of the many issues that are impacting the reading performance of students of color. The after-school program provides one-on-one support to children who, due to larger classroom size, may not receive the additional academic support from the classroom teacher (Grace United Community Ministries, 2020). The regular classroom teacher may be unable to provide the needed additional support to build literacy skills, especially for those struggling to read on grade level and beyond. Through this study, it may be possible to determine that alternative non-traditional approaches are effective. The Aim for Success After-School Program could also motivate students of color who are academically below grade level by reviewing strategies that might provide more academic motivation. Comparing the results and skills of elementary students involved with the after-school reading program could help educators make knowledgeable choices concerning how to increase literacy and practices, especially for ELL students living in the urban core.

Delimitations

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), delimitations are characteristics that limit the scope and describe the boundaries of the study. Primarily, this study focused on one youth development initiative in a mid-size Midwestern United States city. Students from six public schools and one charter school who attend one specific after-school academic program environment located in the urban core were the participants in this study. The research sampling includes students who attended after-school programming at the Aim for Success program from various cultures and ethnicities. The study was limited due to examining two academic school years (2017-2018 and 2018-2019) testing data and student academic growth in reading.

Assumptions

This study has implicit inferences or assumptions that guided the research. The assumptions of this study pertain to an after-school enrichment program of an academic youth enrichment program based in the urban core of a Midwest city. The first assumption was that the researcher could assess the academic literacy levels of a wide range of elementary students through the administration of the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory and the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test. The second assumption was that while the investigation focused on multicultural children in a local after-school enrichment program, the feedback provided yields valuable information for some individuals and organizations that serve this population. The third assumption was that the assessments were administered in a similar format following the guidelines established by the publishers of the assessments. Finally, the fourth assumption was that

the participating students did their best on the assessments by complying with the instructions and providing well-considered answers to all of the questions.

Research Questions

The research questions in this study were created to address the academic reading growth for first- through sixth-grade students enrolled in an after-school program. Two different assessments were utilized in the program: the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory (Roe &Burns, 2010) and the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test (Milone, 2008). The overall purpose of the assessments was to measure the reading growth of each student from fall to spring using the comprehension score of the assessment administered.

RQ1. To what extent do first-, second-, and third-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score?

RQ2. To what extent do first-, second-, and third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score?

RQ3. To what extent do first-, second-, and third-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score?

RQ4. To what extent is there a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between first-, second-, and third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading

program and first-, second-, and third-grade non-ELL students participating in the program?

RQ5. To what extent do fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score?

RQ6. To what extent do fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score?

RQ7. To what extent do fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score?

RQ8. To what extent is there a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are critical elements of the study and are defined to assist the reader in understanding the full context of this study.

Academic achievement. According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020), academic achievement is defined as success in any area of study. "Evidence of future academic achievement is usually based on the results of standardized ability tests" (APA, 2020, para. 2).

After-school program. Children ages 5-12 engage and participate in programs in group settings after school and during the summer. These programs can be multipurpose (e.g., after-school clubs, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club), academically oriented, or related to specialty interests (e.g., sports clubs, theater programs) (McCombs, Whitaker, & Yoo, 2017).

Reading comprehension. According to Grabe (2014), "reading comprehension involves abilities to recognize words efficiently, develop a very large recognition vocabulary, engage strategic processes and cognitive skills" (p. 8).

Reading tutor. Cromley (2005) defined a tutor as an adult who provides one-on-one assistance or small group support to school-age students. The tutor provides enrichment, encouragement, and support in academic components of reading, assisting children in their learning to read, and providing tips for enhancing their reading skills (Cromley, 2005).

Urban communities. The inner-city communities are "found in or involving the older, central part of a city where there are poor people and bad housing" (Cambridgedictonary.org, 2018, p. 1).

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the study and included the background, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, and the definition of terms. Chapter 2 is a comprehensive review of the literature a history of after-school programming, factors that affect academic achievement, and the benefits of an after-school program. In Chapter 3, the topics include the research design and the

specific details of how the study was conducted. The research results are provided in Chapter 4, followed by an interpretation of the findings in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

After-school programs offer academic augmentation for opportunities to decrease the achievement gap found in schools (Esquivel, 2020; Kremer, Maynard, Polanin, Vaughn, & Sarteschi, 2015). In recent years, by supplementing the primary instruction that students encounter during the school day, after-school programs have become a resource and a partner for public schools (Sanders, Galindo, & DeTablan, 2019). Despite a myriad of challenges facing children living in low-income, urban environments, after-school programs have demonstrated an ability to contribute to youth academic ability, effort, and achievement (Mahoney et al., 2005). Presented in Chapter 2 are the history of after-school programming, factors that affect academic achievement, and the role that after-school programs play in academic achievement.

History of After-School Programming

The origins of after-school programming were traced by Halpern (2000) to the turn of the 20th century during the Industrial Revolution and society being concerned with the dangers of unsupervised children who lived in urban neighborhoods. For more than 100 years, after-school programs have played a formal role in schools. In an early account of out-of-school hours, Dewey and Dewey (1915) suggested that out-of-school programming originated in the initial years of the 20th century. After-school programming occurred in many cities as juvenile labor was considered taboo and as children entered classrooms following a shift in cultural ideologies and political thoughts in the United States.

From the 1900s to the present, a significant influence on the impact of after-school programs has been the labor force. The rise of women entering the paid labor force produced a higher need for overseeing children during out-of-school hours due to a change in what has been described as a conventional family structure. Though the term is rarely used in contemporary society, children were once described as latchkey for the house key they wore around their necks (Zucker, 1944). By the end of World War II, the term latchkey was created to describe children left at home with no parent to watch them. During the 1950s, 38% of women with children between the ages of 6 and 17 had careers outside the domestic home (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). Since the middle of the 20th century, the percentage has continued to escalate each decade for nearly 40 years. From the mid-1960s until 1995, the percentage of mothers working outside the home grew from 46% to 76% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). By 2018, approximately 23.5 million women were employed with children ranging in ages from infants to high school, and nearly two-thirds worked full-time and year-round outside the household (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). After-school programs have a significant history that has been molded by each decade's social changes and shaped children's needs for a safe environment, recreational and academic enrichment. Over 70 years ago, Franklin and Benedict (1943) reminded an after-school staff member to be sensitive to what children might be feeling after a long day in school: "for many hours they have been obeying orders, completing assigned tasks. Most of the time, they have not been allowed to speak or move about without permission" (p. 14).

For decades, school educators and psychologists have advocated for after-school programs to provide enriching experiences that respected the nature of childhood and

supported the healthy understanding of the demands of adulthood and adult society (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 1981; Owens& Shaw, 2003). A wide array of community-based agencies continues to sponsor after-school programs. One program studied in previous literature is Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA), described by Rhodes and DuBois (2008) as an outgrowth of the juvenile court system's public reform initiatives in the late 19th century. BBBSA is one of the long-lasting programs, and as an out-of-school-hours program, the objective is to pair adult volunteers with youth from at-risk backgrounds. The current estimate of the number of children involved in formal mentoring relationships is over three million (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011).

The Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) were reviewed by Fredricks, Hackett, & Bregman (2010). A pioneering organization for after-school programming, BGCA focuses on youth development and incorporates education and career development, health, life skills, arts, and recreation. Fredricks et al. incorporated ethnographic data, surveys, and structured interviews to examine how inner-city African American and Latino youth often view BGCA as a haven and perceive the program as a vital resource for building reassuring and collaborative relationships with adults and peers. In an in-depth study, Hirsch (2011) incorporated ethnographic data, surveys, and interviews. Through his research, Hirsch (2011) examined the experience of ethnic minorities attending the BCGA programs, including African-American and Latino youth. Many of the minorities expressed that the program was a refuge or haven outside of their homes. In general, the youth perceived the programs provided an opportunity for them to develop impactful relationships with adults and interact with peers.

Finally, an after-school program that is used by millions of children and teens in cities throughout the United States is the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). The primary focus of the 21st CCLC model incorporates three program components: (1) youth character development, (2) academic enrichment, and (3) literacy and support programs (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004). Kremer et al. (2015) examined the associated viewpoints surrounding the level of quality, programming, and ending results of the 21st CCLCs. Overall, the three program components were considered positive by participants and staff associates, which affirmed that the components satisfied their objective of expanding opportunities for academic enrichment and impacting youth and their families' lives.

Factors That Affect Academic Achievement

Advocates of after-school programs have purported that these programs are effective because there is a need for adult supervision, and that for continued success with youth, programs incorporate creative aspects to the programs (Grossman, Walker, & Raley, 2001). Beyond academics, The Harvard Family Research Project (2003) acknowledged that a student's overall self-esteem was positively impacted through after-school programs. Comparative studies of after-school programs in both the inner-city and suburbs have shown that children from middle-class communities, in contrast to those in low-income communities, have a higher need for after-school opportunities and receive more benefits from the programming. Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, & Macias (2001) found significant strengths of after-school programs because they provide additional support to students outside their households. After-school programs examined

in the study served children who have been described as possibly at-risk, have academic challenges, and limited resources at home.

After-school programs can impact and provide resources that enhance the educational achievement of certain groups of students (Holstead & King, 2011). After-school programs have shown to be needed in the urban core to support students academically and socially. In recent years, researchers have examined the central reasons surrounding poverty, the elements and effects, and preferred program and policy initiatives launched to remove abject poverty from communities (Aber, Jones & Raver, 2007). After-school programs have the unique task of engaging students and building on their academic skill sets. Reading is at the forefront of every subject; however, literacy is often a challenge for children from low-income neighborhoods. The importance is paramount for cognitive and literacy skills within learning, and yet, it evades many. The World Literacy Foundation (2018) describes functional illiteracy as "an inability to apply reading, writing, or mathematical skills in a way that enables the individual to accomplish tasks that are necessary to make informed choices and participate fully in everyday life" (p. 4). Children's cognitive abilities play a significant role in developing academic and literacy skills, which are critical in developing children, especially in academic enrichment after-school programs. The crucial cognitive skills necessary for children throughout the stages of reading were examined by Vaessen, Gerretsen, and Blomert (2009), who discussed how the shift from phonological decoding to spontaneous word identification is accompanied by a concomitant gradual shift in the relative importance of the cognitive skills underlying reading. Peng and Kievit (2020) examined the bidirectional relations between academic achievement and cognitive abilities. The

analysis revealed that the relationship between academic achievement and cognitive abilities is impacted by a child's developmental stages, the sphere of cognitive skills, and factors pertaining to social-emotional skills.

Education is a primary catalyst to bridging the divide of socioeconomic barriers. Noble et al. (2015) addressed SES and how it affects childhood. The researchers addressed how parental educational attainment, occupation, and income are associated with early experiences essential for cognitive development. Several of these factors are necessary to establish the reason and essential need for after-school programming. There are over three million children who participate daily in an out-of-school hours or after-school programs. The programming provides the participating children a safe environment that is considered academically and socially enriching for youth at various levels. After-school programs provide support with homework, academic subjects, and sports and help students gain academic knowledge and confidence (Grossman, Lind, Hayes, McMaken, & Gersick, 2009).

Researchers have studied the process of learning to read, and many agree that phonological skills are a significant part of reading (Melby-Lervåg, Lyster, & Hulme, 2012). It is widely believed that an initial understanding of phonemic awareness occurs at about the age of four or five when children are taught to read. A correlation for reading occurs between phonological processing and literacy skills (Compton, 2002; Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling, & Scanlon, 2004). The phonemic process supports reading, and children with a limited understanding of these skills often have difficulty segmenting words into their component sounds. Another promoted viewpoint is that the central issue for children facing challenges with beginning reading often has a deficiency

in phonological processing (Vellutino et al., 2004), which is independent of intelligence quotient (IQ) (Fletcher et al., 2002). Some researchers feel that children with lower school academic skills beneath a level estimated by an IQ score (IQ discrepant) are divergent from children with poor achievement consistent with their IQ score (low achievement).

Study results have indicated that socioeconomic factors contribute significantly to a child's educational success. The term achievement gap denotes a somewhat kinder way of discussing pervasive racial and socioeconomic disparities in student achievement (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Furthermore, the socioeconomic divide has been shown to begin during a child's formative years and rarely does the achievement gap close (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). The APA (2018) describes SES as an individual's or group's financial and social status. SES is often an amalgamation of the profession, academic background, and household salary. For example, relative poverty exemplifies the dichotomy of an income for a family living in the urban core, which is far from the national median for families living in the suburbs or middle-class neighborhoods.

In contrast, subjective poverty mirrors the general public's image of impoverished economic conditions (Payne, 2019). Poverty serves as a major risk factor for non-optimal child development. Impoverishment that occurs during the early formative years, especially abject poverty, has been linked to a myriad of comprehensive challenges in development, including cognitive, psychological, and physical (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Researchers often depict the challenges of childhood poverty, which can have residual effects beyond an individual's adolescence and permeate one's viewpoints into adult years (Johnson & Schoeni, 2010).

The results of poverty are often long-lasting (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). The intellectual capacity for academic growth is evident for most children; however, there is a higher possibility of struggling in school for those born into poverty (Lipina & Posner, 2012). School districts face many challenges in addressing children's human and physical needs, especially within the urban core (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018). On average, students from high poverty schools did not perform as well on standardized tests in reading, mathematics, music, and art as students from their contemporaries attending schools located in more affluent neighborhoods (Borg, Borg, & Stranahan, 2012).

Throughout the United States, there is an unbalanced proportion of highly qualified or credentialed educators in classrooms (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2019). The contrast of the quality of teachers in suburban districts versus urban or low-income school districts is drastically different, and for far too many low-income schools, the teachers and staff are ill-fated in their training and ability as educators (Carothers, Aydin, & Houdyshell, 2019; Prince, 2002). In far too many urban and low-income schools, there is a struggle to retain teachers, substitute teachers are often hired instead of certified teachers, and for students who are ELL, there is little assistance (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Fashola, Slavin, Calderon, & Duran, 1997; Peske & Haycock, 2006).

Researchers have forecast the reasons continuing larger numbers of adolescents fail to attain a high school diploma and possible causes that students withdraw early from school. Warren and Halpern-Manners (2007) found that academic achievement has primarily been associated with high school dropout rates. During the 40 years prior to

2007, components affecting the quality of student completion of high school have been studied by researchers.

The base cause and apparent necessary ingredient of academic disparity occurring in the United States is poverty, especially for children of color and immigrants. National Center for Children in Poverty (2020) reported that in the United States, 9% of young U.S. children live in deep poverty, ranging as high as 17% in some states. In addition, the National Center for Children in Poverty (2020) reported that the families of these children have incomes below 50% of the federal poverty line or less than $10,289 for a family of one parent and two children. Children and adolescents under the age of 18 are represented at over 20% of the population considered officially poor, which means they live in households with incomes below the federal poverty line. Additionally, children on the cusp of being near-poor are represented by family units with household incomes in the range of 100% and 200% of the federal poverty line (Aber & Chaudry, 2010).

According to Hernandez (2011), children living in the urban core face inequities in the educational system. Hernandez found that one in six elementary students who are below reading level in third grade are far less likely to graduate from high school on time. This rate is four times greater than that of students who are proficient in reading. The rates estimate a higher rate for students in elementary school who are below basic readers. Of the students who are below basic readers by the time they reach high school, 23% may either drop out or fail to graduate on time from high school compared to 9% of the children with necessary reading skills and 4% of proficient readers. Therefore, 22% of children raised in impoverishment are projected to not graduate from high school, compared to 6% of children raised in a working-class or middle-class background

(Hernandez, 2011). The situation for children living in Kansas City, Missouri, often mirrors difficulties and academic disparities in other cities throughout the country (Kneebone & Garr, 2010; Moxley, 2019).

A child's SES has far-reaching consequences in the child's life. Deficits in language and executive functions have been observed consistently among children raised in poverty (Noble, McCandliss, & Farah, 2007) and deprived institutional settings (Tibu et al., 2016). Despite higher- or lower-class status, the dynamics of SES are often interwoven into the school and student academic ability and have shown to be related to self-esteem and other interacting systems, including students' racial and ethnic backgrounds (Gasa, Pitsoane, Molepo, & Lethole, 2019).

Maslow (1943) addressed the basic needs of individuals. According to Maslow, children face a difficult challenge in schools and have difficulty learning if their basic needs are unmet. Maslow emphasized that because of unmet needs, the mind veers from focusing on academic education. This theory applies to children regardless of their SES. Maslow's theory incorporates the three basic needs (physical, safety, and love and belonging that must occur before they can "self-actualize themselves as individuals by reaching their potential" (Maslow, 1943, p.383). So, even though life experiences such as living in temporary housing can cause students to fluctuate between the hierarchy levels, feeling emotionally and physically safe in the classroom supports children's progress and success (Murphy & Tobin, 2011).

The housing situation for children and families living in poverty is at best distressing. Families living in poverty often live in housing conditions that are hazardous and toxic, and those conditions likely significantly impact the outcomes of children from

low-income environments (Evans, 2006). For example, the setting for families living in the inner-city or low-income areas often includes a higher exposure to buildings with inferior physical attributes such as inadequate heating, lower hygienic conditions, exposure to environmental pollutants, as well as building congestion (Leventhal & Newman, 2010). For many families living in impoverished areas, domestic life includes a lack of security, commotion, and cramped environments. These extreme factors often contribute to considerable cognitive and neuroendocrine indicators of tension and significantly impact children living in these situations (Lepore, Shejwal, Kim, & Evans, 2010; Leventhal & Newman, 2010).

In reviewing family households throughout the United States, the Urban Institute (2020) evaluated the number of occupants living in one dwelling that influences the definition of poverty. Children are impacted by poverty, and the threshold of those in homes considered impoverished is updated each year for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers. The definition of impoverished families in 2019 was described as a household with a yearly income below $25,926 for a family of four individuals with two related children (Giannarelli, Wheaton, & Acs, 2020).

Neighborhoods hold a vital role in the welfare of families and their children. Schools are often the nucleus in the community for children and play a significant role in providing essential services that impact community residents' lives (Turner, Edelman, Poethig, &Aron, 2014). The far-reaching repercussions of poverty often exist within neighborhoods of the urban core. Communities in the inner-city often have underprivileged neighborhoods that, unlike their suburban counterparts, provide few or no enrichment havens for children, such as parks, libraries, and children's programs

(Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) posited that proximity to and witnessing violence in the community could negatively affect children's social-emotional and cognitive development. In particular, parental concern for children includes harm from strangers, often referred to as stranger danger and road safety (Carver, Timperio, & Crawford, 2008), and looming dangers, including physical and social hazards, are present in some neighborhoods.

Limited opportunities and distress often heighten the dangers of an economically disadvantaged neighborhood, and these factors usually do not facilitate a balanced process of identity exploration during adolescence (Phillips & Pittman, 2003). Supple, Ghazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, and Sands (2006) addressed the possibility that a disadvantaged neighborhood may hinder healthy ethnic identity development. For example, in one study, adolescents of Latino descent residing in resource-scarce neighborhoods were negatively associated with ethnic identity exploration (Herman, 2004). However, in a contrasting study by Byrd and Chavous (2009), African-American adolescents living in a disadvantaged neighborhood were involved with similar level factors, including collective socialization, economic opportunity, and institutional resources, which did not cause a negative racial identity.

In intermediate elementary Grades 3-6, the number of times students were enrolled in a program affected their overall growth. Findings from an after-school program in the Southern region of the United States implied that the student with several years of after-school experiences benefited the most academically (McCombs et al., 2017). Wright (2002) conducted a casual-comparative study to determine the academic achievement among fourth- and fifth-grade students in Title I programs in Greenville

County, South Carolina. Participants included 260 students (138 fourth-graders and 122 fifth-graders) who participated in after-school academic programs and 651 students (360 fourth-graders and 291 fifth-graders) who did not participate in an after-school program. Wright (2002) used the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test scores to compare the achievement of both groups. Wright's findings demonstrated mixed results. The results indicated no significant differences in scores between the English language arts (ELA) groups for fourth-graders but did show substantial differences in scores between the groups in mathematics. For fifth-graders, the results indicated a significant difference in scores between the groups in ELA and no significant differences in scores between the groups in mathematics.

Racial and cultural backgrounds continue to be a challenge for children of color in academic achievement in the United States. Beginning in the 1970s, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) began conducting studies utilizing data from 9- and 13-year-olds students while examining gap changes through comparison by child age (9 vs. 13), academic subject (i.e., ELA vs. mathematics), and across historical time (Paschall, Gershoff, & Kuhfeld, 2018). Reardon, Robinson, and Weathers (2008) compiled NAEP data from 1988 and concluded, there were academic disparities racially between African-American and Caucasian children in reading. The learning gap between the two races compared to students at the age of 9 was .71 of a standard deviation (*SD*) and .53 *SD* for youth at 13 years. From 1988 until 2004, the learning gap fluctuated in size for both racial groups. The gap significantly broadened further between 1990 and 1996, yet, began to narrow until 2008. The study results revealed that as children matriculate through school, the gap between Caucasian and Latino children appears to

narrow. Reardon and Galindo (2009) compared non-Latino White students and Latino students and determined that Latino children enter kindergarten with a much lower average math and reading skills. Although the academic gaps narrow by roughly a third in the first two years of school, the gaps reoccur academically during the next four years. The development of achievement gaps varies considerably among Hispanic subgroups. Children with Mexican and Central American origins – particularly first- and second-generation immigrants – and those from homes where English is not spoken have the lowest math and reading skill levels at kindergarten entry; however, they show the highest academic achievement gains in the early years of schooling.

From an historical perspective, African-American students have encountered numerous obstacles to receiving an equitable and high-quality experience in the educational system within the United States (Diemer, Marchand, McKellar, & Malanchuk, 2016); however, considerable gaps in the research exist related to understanding the mechanisms impacting success. Since 2000, studies and reports have depicted African-American youth as having lower academic achievement in educational settings. Academic studies often emphasize racial disparities in educational outcomes, often without including the context challenges surrounding the schools, community, financial, and family dynamics into consideration (O'Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2007).

Some research has focused on at-risk children of color and the positive relationship between an after-school reading comprehension tutoring program and struggling readers' reading comprehension scores. Fram, Miller-Cribbs, and Van Horn (2007) found that children who live in poverty are more likely to attend schools with limited resources and are more likely not to be served by an institution that perpetuates

class differences. At kindergarten, the average cognitive score of children in the highest SES group is 60% above that of children in the lowest SES group. Typically, poor children attend low-resource schools with under-prepared and inexperienced teachers. In addition to the challenges that children bring with them to impoverished schools in urban communities, the pedagogical aspects in which they are taught are in some ways different from those offered to their contemporaries in schools in other areas. Finally, children in urban public schools are often in classrooms where higher percentages of their peers perform significantly lower academically, especially in reading (Cooc & Kim, 2017).

Through reviewing census reports, Patten and Krogstad (2015) found a significant racial divide of 38% between African American children, who are economically impoverished, and their White or Asian peers. The disparity or educational divide for children of color residing in the urban core has been described as occurring early by some scholars. Upon entering kindergarten, it was reported that African-American children are unprepared at higher rates than their White contemporaries (Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010).

Lee and Bowen (2006) examined whether the behaviors and academic achievement of 415 third- through fifth-grade elementary students were influenced by parental involvement. Several areas examined in the study included a parent's level of education, socioeconomic background, and racial ethnicity. Lee and Bowen indicated that classroom teachers often report a difference academically between different racial or ethnic groups. The researchers' evaluation incorporated the subject of race, and results indicated that Caucasian children are consistently reported to achieve higher grades or levels of success than their Hispanic/Latino and African-American peers. The analysis

also indicated a difference in academic performance between African-American and Hispanic/Latino students. African-American students consistently had higher scores than their Hispanic/Latino peers. Furthermore, the academic mean scores of students not living in poverty and with parents who were college-educated attained significantly higher achievement than impoverished students.

Furthermore, Lee and Bowen (2006) addressed race and ethnicity in association with variability in scores on three of the five measures of parent involvement. Caucasian parents reported more frequent involvement at school and less frequent efforts to manage their children's time use at home than parents of Hispanic/Latino and African-American children. The results also demonstrated more frequent parent-child educational discussions among Caucasian parents than Hispanic/Latino parents. There was no difference shown in parental expectations for educational goals and frequency of homework support with the three identified ethnic/racial groups.

Students who ate a school lunch were connected to four of the five varied levels that measured parent involvement Lee and Bowen (2006) reported that parents whose children were a part of the free or reduced fee lunches at the school expressed significantly less engagement and involvement in school than parents whose children did not eat a lunch provided by the school. In addition, the parents of children receiving free and reduced lunches reported lower educational outcomes and less frequent dialogue in the home. In contrast, parents of children who paid for the school lunch program reported more home engagement and time management, including time for play and watching television. The parents of paid lunch program participants also tried to ensure their child spent additional time reading.

Lee and Bowen (2006) concluded that parent support or assistance for a child's homework was not linked to participation in the school lunch program. The results of the study indicated that there was an academic association for students who had parents with varying degrees of academic or educational levels. Degree levels analyzed in the study included parents who had earned an associate's, bachelor's, or higher advanced degree. Furthermore, Lee and Bowen showed that more parent involvement would occur if a student resided with another parent or guardian who had received a minimum of an associate's degree. Students who had caregivers with some higher education reported additional academic engagement in school, healthier parent and child dialogue, and higher occupational and educational goals expressed by parents. A parent or caregiver's level of education was not directly linked to the frequency of assistance with homework or time management.

The Role that After-School Programs Play in Academic Achievement

The leaders and administrators of after-school programs have the unique challenge of making decisions that influence student's academic choices and incorporate innovations necessary to impact educational challenges. Several researchers have examined the distribution of school resources within school districts and student needs as lamentable compared to between-district allocation (Burke, 1999; Roza & Hill, 2004). Since the 1990s, after-school programs for children and youth have increased significantly throughout the United States. The U.S. Department of Education reported that more than 10 million K-12 students participate in after-school programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2014). The need to improve low-achieving students' reading skills has been the focus and concern of educators for many years (Voyer & Voyer, 2014). Specifically, for

children and adolescents of low-income and urban backgrounds, out-of-school hours and after-school programs provide the opportunity to significantly increase the educational and social experiences that their contemporaries from more affluent households regularly receive (Goudeau & Croizet, 2017). When coordinated with regular school goals, such programs support closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers (Dys, Peplak, Colasante, & Malti, 2019).

Morris, Shaw, and Perney (1990) analyzed an after-school reading program that focused on children with low academic scores in the second and third grades. Significant support was provided by one-on-one tutoring, the design of the program, and empirical academic testing. The Howard Street Tutoring Program began in the fall of 1979 as a joint venture of the Reading Center at the National College of Education (Evanston, Illinois) and the Good News Educational Workshop, an indigenous community group operating in a poor neighborhood on the far north side of Chicago. The primary focus of the program was to provide high-quality reading instruction to second- and third-grade public school children out-of-school hours, who had fallen significantly behind their contemporaries in reading. The small tutoring program served approximately 20 children per year, evolving considerably over 11 years. After pretesting the second- and third-grade low readers, the children were assessed and placed with tutors based on their pretest basal word-recognition score. Beginning with the lowest academic scores, in each respective classroom, successive scores were paired, with one child randomly assigned to the tutored group and the other child to the non-tutored or comparison group. For one academic year, the tutored group received, on average, 50 hours of one-on-one reading instruction in the after-school program; the comparison-group children received no after-

school tutorial instruction. At the close of an academic year, the second and third graders who had been tutored, along with an equal number of closely matched comparison-group students, were post-tested with the same reading and spelling assessment. Morris et al.'s findings demonstrated that overall, the tutored group outperformed the comparison group on basal passage reading. However, students tutored did not produce a full year's reading gain. Out of the tutored students, 50% made gains compared to only 20% of the comparison-group students, and 34% of the tutored children made significant gains in passage reading, while only 3% of the students who did not receive tutoring demonstrated such growth. The researchers found that the comparison group's academic gains imitated the academic achievement for many children attending inner-city elementary schools, which is two-thirds of a year of achievement for one full year in school.

Beginning in 1994, following the Improving America's Schools Act, after-school programs throughout the United States have grown extensively to support public schools (Weiss & Little, 2009). The United States Congress was cognizant of the possibilities surrounding after-school programs and, therefore, authorized the implementation of a program entitled 21st CCLC program in 1994, providing additional educational opportunities and needed support for parents and families during periods when youth are out of school (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004; Zhang & Byrd, 2006).

Rivera (2001) conducted a study using archival data to evaluate a school-based after-school program's effectiveness using report cards of students who ranged in age from 12 to 17. Participants included 43 low-income Latino and African-American students predominantly from a middle school near downtown Los Angeles, California. In the beginning, students, on average, had a grade point average of D. Students became

participants in the program after being referred by school personnel, community agencies, law enforcement, self-referral, and community members. Overall, there were no improvements in academic grades in math, English, science, and social science for the participants in the program.

Carlos (2002) examined the impact of a school district and church-based educational partnership on the academic achievement levels of African-American program participants. Moreover, the researcher addressed how the collaboration between the two entities would affect the educational growth of African-American students in a different manner than an after-school program that is operated independently (i.e., Educational Enhancement Center). The data compiled during the study included student observations, survey results, achievement test results, document examination of students' records, and focus group interviews of participants' parents and program and school personnel. The research findings provided evidence that relationships and formal partnerships between schools and churches impacted children's social skills and enhanced academic enrichment. Historically, the church in the United States has held a prestigious image in the African-American community, from slavery through the Civil Rights Movement, which continues in many communities today as an influential organization for African-American students and their families.

Frazier-Trotman (2002) conducted descriptive research that included pre- and post-tests to assess reading achievement and an alternating treatment design to consider independent, adult-assisted, and peer-mediated reading instruction. The participants in this study were 10 members (six girls and four boys) of the Milo Grogan Unit of the Boys and Girls Club located in an urban neighborhood close to Ohio State University.

Children at the club ranged from 6 to 18 years of age. All youth participants, peer tutors, and tutees resided in the club's high crime and poverty-ridden community. Frazier-Trotman evaluated peer-mediated reading instruction's effectiveness in an urban after-school program and the effects of independent, adult-assisted, and peer-mediated instruction on reading comprehension. The results indicated that peer-mediated and adult-mediated teaching were more effective than independent silent reading on students' reading achievement, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

Howze-Campbell (2004) examined the impact of an after-school program on student performance in a small, lower socioeconomic elementary school in Mississippi, where the racial demographic of students was primarily African-American. During the 2003-2004 academic year, data were collected and analyzed in five areas: (a) standardized achievement test scores, (b) report-card grades, (c) school attendance, (d) student behavior, and (e) other district information. The results of the study appeared to demonstrate that participation in the after-school program improved school attendance and student's behavior. Survey data collected from students, teachers, and parents indicated that most perceived that the after-school program provided a positive environment and significantly impacted educational achievement and behavior. Furthermore, the program was perceived as exciting, that homework assistance was provided, and had a positive impact on student achievement in the classroom.

Some study results have indicated that students who regularly attended an after-school program have improved academically in reading and mathematics as measured by state-mandated standardized achievement tests. Heyward (2005) conducted a descriptive-analytical study to examine the academic achievement of 400 students in

third- through eighth grades in the federally funded 21st CCLC after-school programs in a southeastern North Carolina school system during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 academic years. The study was conducted to analyze a database of the North Carolina End-of-Grade test scores from five schools participating in the 21st CCLC after-school programs in the school system. The student sample was divided by student gender and minority status. Overall, the examination of data revealed no notable differences in participants' academic achievement scores in reading and mathematics when disaggregated by gender and ethnicity (Heyward, 2005).

According to Little and Hines (2006), after-school programs allow opportunities for children to develop a love and enjoyment of reading and to expand the time outside of the regular classroom for students to read and reflect on their own while still obtaining support from educators or tutors to engage in dialogue regarding challenging words or difficult texts. Little and Hines (2006) discussed the impact of reading extending beyond the regular school day and allowing children more opportunities to imagine and immerse themselves in the experience of literacy. Expanding Horizons is an after-school program operating in five states (Connecticut, Georgia, New York, Ohio, and Washington) that incorporate global education into out-of-school-time programming. Expanding Horizons inspires youth active in the program to become lifelong readers by introducing them to books of various genres and are specifically chosen and designed to reach children at varying reading levels. Children are encouraged to allocate the majority of their program time reading books that are challenging yet continue to be engaged because of a particular interest. The books sent home with the students frequently require less effort or are simply considered an easy read. In addition, the program reciprocates out-of-

school time recommendations with an emphasis on challenge and enjoyment. The skills presented in the program assist children with the development of identity and self-discipline, empowering them to monitor their own reading levels, challenging their ability in reading, and discussing the strategies they utilize to approach the text. The after-school program provided children and youth with various book genres and promoted reading for personal enjoyment and academic growth. The study participants included 155 students in Grades 3-6from three different school districts that were racially and culturally diverse. The weekly gains of students were examined and showed statistically significantly higher scores than the national sample. The results suggest that involvement in an after-school program may increase the literacy growth of students participating for 12 weeks. Furthermore, Little and Hines indicated similar academic gains in scores across subgroups by school district, gender, and beginning reading levels. Finally, the after-school program demonstrates potential benefits for readers of various growth levels.

Lauer et al. (2006) examined 35 out-of-school hours programs. The researchers reviewed the effectiveness of school districts and public schools incorporating after-school programming to impact the academic success of urban students demonstrating poor regular classroom performance. The overall results indicated significant effects on academic achievement of youth in the subject areas of mathematics and ELA. Greater educational gains were attributed to occurring overall in after-school programs when particular elements were included, such as academic coaching or tutoring in reading comprehension. The conclusive results of the study demonstrated no differences in out-

of-school programs that occurred following a regular school day or as summer programming (Lauer et al., 2006).

Dunphy (2006) studied the effects of an after-school reading tutoring program on reading achievement and classroom academic reading performance of students in two rural middle schools in the western region of Tennessee. The participants were derived from two sample groups, with 48 students in the initial group and 18 students in the second group. The overarching goal of the study was to determine if attending and participating in an after-school tutoring program had a positive effect on students' STAR Reading scores, a computer-adaptive norm-referenced assessment, and classroom academic reading performance. The STAR Reading assessment scores were used to compare differences in reading achievement from the beginning and the end of the first semester of the 2005-2006 school year. Dunphy reviewed a comparative evaluation of students' report card grades in reading from the beginning and end of the first semester of the 2005-2006 school year. The scores of the students who participated in an after-school reading tutoring program were compared to those of students in the same school who did not participate in an after-school reading tutoring program and to those of students from another school who did not participate in an after-school tutoring program. These comparisons were used to determine if an after-school reading tutoring program made a difference in student reading achievement and classroom academic reading performance. Dunphy concluded that the reading achievement of students attending the same elementary school involved in an after-school reading tutoring compared to students who do not attend an after-school program was significant. The independent variable of tutoring showed a significant effect on the dependent variable of classroom academic

reading performance of students in different schools. The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that the variable of tutoring has a significant effect on the classroom academic reading performance of students in different schools. The independent variable of tutoring showed a significant effect on the dependent variable of reading achievement of students. The results of the multivariate analysis of variance revealed that the variable of tutoring has a significant effect on the reading achievement of students.

After-school programming has played a critical role in stimulating academic and social growth. Durlak and Weissberg (2007) found that student attendance in high-quality after-school programs was associated with better grades, work ethic, academic persistence, and social skills. Specifically, they found that these student participants had higher self-confidence measures, self-esteem, academic performance, school engagement, and reduced standards of discipline infractions. After-school program participation contributes to the success of students (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).

Vandell et al. (2007) examined after-school programs located in eight states, including six major metropolitan cities and rural and urban locations. The study sample included 2,914 youth in 35 after-school programs with 1,434 children in 19 programs that were elementary-school based and 855 adolescents in 16 programs that focused on middle-school students. The after-school programs in the study included large populations of culturally diverse and low-income youth, with over 80% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch at school. The middle-grade sample was ethnically diverse, about half Hispanic, more than 10% Black, and one-third White, with 65% receiving free or reduced-priced lunch. The researchers collected longitudinal data on sampled youth over two years. Classroom teachers in the schools linked to the programs,

participating youth, and their parents completed periodic surveys to measure the social, academic, and behavioral functioning of study participants. Teachers and youth completed three rounds of surveys in fall 2003, spring 2004, and spring 2005. Parents completed surveys in fall 2003 and spring 2005.

Vandell et al. (2007) identified and examined after-school programs that operated solely as academic enrichment centers. The research project was designed to observe how after-school programs enhance certain desired psychological, social, and educational outcomes for at-risk youth. The study was based on the assumption that all children and youth, including the impoverished, should have the opportunity to make healthy and positive choices. Vandell et al. (2007) found that although after-school programs with a focus on educational or academic enrichment are an important resource for youth in some areas, they sometimes compete to attract children and youth who have a desire to be involved with recreational programming occurring at community centers, sports leagues, and churches and other faith-based organizations. Summary findings outcomes data on both youth in elementary and middle grades demonstrated that program-based and other structured after-school experiences, along with adult supervision, improved youths' conduct and work habits during the two-year study period. Survey data analysis indicated decreased misconduct behavior for youth involved in structured supervised after-school settings compared with youth in unsupervised after-school activities. When elementary-grade youth assessed their work habits, all three supervised clusters reported improvements over two years, compared with youth in the self-care plus activities cluster. Among middle-grade youth, the three supervised clusters reported relatively less substance abuse at the end of the second year than the self-care group. Elementary

school teachers participating in the study indicated that the students who participated in high-quality after-school programming performed significantly better academically than their contemporaries who were unsupervised after-school.

Results from studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice (Baum, 2005) indicated that the rates for juvenile crimes and the victimization of juveniles peak in the after-school hours. Fundamentally, providing an environment shielding students in many ways from the myriad of dangers and crime is vital to parents and youth living in urban communities. Anderson (2008*)* conducted a study examining how the intervention incorporated into nine middle school after-school programs in Fresno County, California, affected students' increasing academic achievement. The purposive sampling identified students who were not proficient in reading to improve low test scores that would significantly impact their schools' overall reading scores. The study included a focus group questionnaire where teachers, program coordinators, and school administrators indicated how they provided support for students to improve their academic achievement based on a criteria matrix. The study incorporated purposive sampling of teachers chosen primarily on their professional experience and as accomplished educators. Each school that qualified for the study was selected based on the use of a criteria matrix. Every school that qualified for the study had highly qualified teachers providing intervention instructions. Anderson (2008) found that although student daily attendance was important, it does not ensure improved academic achievement. The STAR standardized test was used by six of the nine programs studied as the primary barometer for entrance into the after-school programs. Students were placed in the program if they fell in the categories of basic, below basic,

and far below basic on the test. In addition, Anderson (2008) recommended that the determination of students entering the after-school programs could better be defined utilizing multiple measures and formative assessments addressing students' particular needs. The results of the study indicated that the participating nine after-school programs supported students and used practices that impacted academic performance. Increased or frequent school attendance was reported by four of the participating after-school programs as evidence that it helped students. The second common practice that supported academic achievement in after-school programming was parent support and engagement. Finally, the third practice that impacted academic growth in an after-school was the positive feedback provided by classroom teachers in support of students (Anderson, 2008).

Study results have shown that after-school tutoring does affect the reading achievement of students. Arbreton, Sheldon, Bradshaw, and Goldsmith (2008) conducted an eight-year study for The James Irvine Foundation on student educational growth through attendance at an after-school program in California. The impetus for the Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (CORAL) was to provide educational enrichment during after-school hours in five California cities to children and youth in academically underperforming schools. The CORAL program initially served children from economically disadvantaged families and ELLs living in the following cities: Fresno, Long Beach, Pasadena, Sacramento, and San Jose. The academic levels of those enrolled in the program included fifth grade through middle school. At the median point of the study, the outcomes were dismal despite the myriad of programs provided to students enrolled in the program. The Irvine Foundation dedicated nearly $60 million

toward increasing program quality, providing academically rich literacy experiences, and high standards for staff development. Toward the end of the study, Arbreton et al. (2008) found significant growth was demonstrated in reading comprehension, fluency, context, and overall literacy strengths. The results of the study demonstrated that the impact of balanced literacy incorporated with quality programming changed literacy performance and effectively raised student reading growth. Results from the study included 10 outcomes that supported youth participant responses regarding their views of the programming and the productive changes in academic conduct in their regular classroom.

Brown (2008) studied the continuing effects of the 21st CCLC Initiative After-School Program on student achievement in rural Georgia as measured by the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) scores in reading and math and report card grades. Brown's descriptive research study examined three years of student performance on the CRCT and academic scores in mathematics and reading. Brown concluded that it could not be determined if the participants of the study attending the CCLC After-School Program had demonstrated significant improvement in academic achievement during the study.

An area of discussion for researchers is the effectiveness of after-school programming in raising the academic achievement of children in lower-income neighborhoods. Van Roekel (2008) examined the benefits of after-school programs, especially for children living within the urban core. Van Roekel focused on L.A.'s BEST, a citywide elementary after-school program in Los Angeles, and included children from the area who demonstrated higher educational goals for high school and college education. Van Roekel reported that high school students participating in the L.A.'s

BEST after-school program demonstrated a 20% higher in-school attendance rate than students not attending the program. A critical factor for after-school programs is that children receive adult supervision for physical safety and positive guidance to prevent the influence of delinquent behavior.

Based on the number of children who are a part of these programs, statistical reports support the effectiveness of students being a part of a high-quality after-school program. In 2008, approximately 8.4 million children attended an out-of-school-time or after-school program in the United States (Grant & Morial, 2009). Davis-Allen (2008) conducted a quantitative study to analyze the impact of an after-school enrichment program created as a positive intervention for at-risk children in Georgia. The participants were 21 African-American students in the third, fourth, and fifth grades from an urban, public elementary school. The researcher used data from the Georgia CRCT. Incorporated into the study was a pretest-posttest designed for one group and included a convenience sample. The overall objective of the study was to examine if youth participating in an out-of-school enrichment program would demonstrate educational growth in the core subjects of mathematics and ELA on the CRCT (post-test) and if participation improved consistent school attendance. To further analyze the perceptions of the program, 12 participants were selected with an equal gender balance of male and female from the chosen grade levels. Davis-Allen used a survey that included closed-ended questions and a follow-up interview to increase additional credibility to the survey responses. The survey and the follow-up interview data supported data relevant to the effectiveness of the after-school program for helping students with challenges to achieve in the classroom academically. The study results indicated that the participants in the

after-school program reported positive experiences. A review of the data indicated that the after-school program did not improve the reading achievement performance for third-graders, and there was no difference in third- and fourth-grade between the pretest and posttest in mathematics. The results from the CRCT standardized test in reading demonstrated that the fourth-and fifth-grade participant's performance was improved, and significant improvement occurred for fifth-graders in mathematics.

Gardner et al. (2009) examined the growing body of studies on the strength of educational outcomes linked with students actively participating in after-school programs. Gardner et al. concluded that involvement in after-school programs impacts a myriad of educational outcomes for young people, including enhanced classroom performance, positive attitudes toward school and education, academic behaviors that convey a positive approach towards learning, and higher school attendance. Gardner et al. indicated that after-school programs more often lead to improvements in attitudes and behaviors than academic performance measured by standardized tests.

Study results have indicated that after-school programs are instrumental in affecting elementary children with challenging behavior, especially when they target more than just the behaviors. Brock (2009) assessed the effects on African-American elementary school-aged boys attending a community-based after-school program focusing on a school-centered evidence-based curriculum. The study used a strategy exploring the development of the participants through the efficacy and fidelity of the curriculum. Brock collected additional data by incorporating descriptive and inferential statistics and using qualitative techniques. A pre-developed scientifically reliable and valid instrument entitled the Teacher-Child Rating Scale was used to assess the

participants' social emotional competence by measuring the subscales of social interaction with peers, orientation of task, self-control, and personal assertiveness. Throughout the study, interviews were conducted with a focus group of staff, providing empirical data verifying observations and daily experiences. The research data indicated improvement for youth who were involved in an after-school program (and curriculum). Moreover, the results of the data analysis reinforced that the curriculum could potentially benefit students if utilized in the after-school context.

Carbone (2010) completed a study of an after-school tutoring program for middle school students. A student's eligibility or the ability of students to attend the program was determined from the standardized test scores of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and 4Sight, a periodic benchmark assessment. The study compared students who did attend the after-school program with students who did not attend the program. Carbone conducted the study during the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 academic years. Following the completion of the study, Carbone determined that the tutoring program had no significant effect on student performance on the PSSA and the 4Sight in mathematics and reading. However, the results indicated that tutored students had higher mathematics scores on the 4Sight during the 2007-2008 academic year. Carbone recommended that to enhance the after-school program, several changes were needed. Specifically, it was felt that staffing was needed to impact the students through assessment techniques. Data analysis of the student work was needed to be procured by a program coordinator who would review the systematic work of the administrator, classroom teacher, tutor, parents, and the student. Additionally, evidence-based

curriculum, instruction, and assessment techniques should be incorporated into the program.

Delucchi (2010) conducted a mixed-method study to analyze urban economically disadvantaged areas and the effects of after-school programs in urban communities. During the four-year study, Delucchi evaluated after-school programs through the lens of three components: homework assistance, recreational activities, and a cultural component. Delucchi wanted to determine the effect on academic and social behaviors and sought to evaluate the attitude towards the program by students, teachers, and parents regarding student progress and the effect of participation in an after-school program on achievement. Participants included students in Grades 4-8 in three elementary and one middle school. Parents, teachers, and students completed a survey and were interviewed. The correlation of data from standardized test results of participants and non-participants were incorporated into the analysis. Data collected from student surveys and interviews of youth attending the after-school program provided evidence that students perceived that the after-school environment was positive, allowing for building relationships, enhancing attitudes towards self-esteem, building self-confidence, and positively impacting classroom academics. The quantitative results revealed inconsistencies in Grades 4-6 in the academic areas of ELA and mathematics in which participating students demonstrated greater proficiency than non-participating students. However, non-participating fifth-grade students demonstrated compelling improvement in comparison with students participating in the program. Delucchi's study results from teacher interviews demonstrated gains in student interaction and behavior and overall higher daytime school attendance. The parents surveyed and interviewed unanimously

expressed a need for an after-school program for their children to receive assistance with homework and build interaction through socialization skills.

Crawford (2011) conducted a meta-analysis to evaluate the impact that afterschool programs have on reading and mathematics outcomes in kindergarten through eighth grades during the time periods of 2000-2002, 2003-2005, and 2006-2009. As a theoretical basis, the researcher utilized the theory of change. The study analysis included moderator variables. Three areas were examined student grade level, daily time periods, and the course subject. The overall results from the meta-analysis and sub-analyses demonstrated that the independent variable, after-school programs, affected the dependent variables, reading and mathematics outcomes. The results of the study provided evidence that after-school programs provide significant support to the academic achievement of students in the areas of reading and mathematics. The study results provided more information for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to make practical research-based decisions about after-school to determine the applicability of such in their educational setting.

Ferrell (2012) conducted a mixed methods study to examine the effectiveness of an out-of-school time reading comprehension tutoring program for elementary students in the first, second, and third grades in Kentucky. The eight-week study included 20 African American students as participants. The students reading comprehension scores were analyzed by the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). The results of the study indicated a significant gain in the pre- and post-intervention DRA scores. Tutors participating in the study answered open-ended questions created to determine their perceptions of the reading comprehension scores and the relationship of the reading

comprehension instruction given to readers with challenges and the DRA assessment. The tutor's responses revealed overall perceptions that the program benefitted the students. Responses from a parent questionnaire revealed that parents perceived the tutoring program to have helped their children's reading comprehension (Ferrell, 2012).

McWilliams (2011) utilized an analysis of a 21st CCLC program to evaluate whether the additional out-of-school opportunities impacted the reading achievement of four at-risk students attending an after-school program in the Northeast region of the United States. The study examined youth participants in an after-school program that incorporated an additional three hours to the traditional school day as an incentive for students who enrolled in special sessions provided during the school year. During the 2009-2010 academic year, the CCLC after-school program incorporated three ten-week sessions, which ran during the fall, winter, and spring semesters and included both an educational and recreational portion. An hour of the after-school schedule was dedicated to assisting students with academic support or homework, specifically reading. The four identified study participants were considered at-risk due to scoring below the benchmark in reading in crucial areas of literacy, based on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Assessment. The primary goal of the after-school program was to support the participants in literacy areas through specific support in oral reading fluency, decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. The program supplemented academic and reading skills through enrichment activities, including the arts, sports, technology skills, music, and drama. The findings of McWilliams's study showed that the after-school program had a positive impact on reading achievement and that the

additional academic support increased reading fluency, self-esteem, and reading comprehension of the participants.

After-school programs have made strides in addressing student challenges in literacy and low academic achievement. Kim, Capotosto, Hartry, and Fitzgerald (2011) examined the Read 180 Program, a national program implemented in schools and after-school programs throughout the United States. Scholastic produced the Read 180 Program, which includes several core elements of reading, including phonological and phonemic awareness, reading fluency, vocabulary skills, and comprehension. Kim et al. (2011) identified 419 students for participation based on a 90 standard score or below on the Test of Silent Reading Efficiency and Comprehension. Participating students were randomly assigned and engaged four to five days weekly in an hour-long instruction incorporating 30 minutes of computer-based instruction and 30 minutes of small group tutoring. The study focused on the literacy outcomes of 312 fourth- through sixth-grade students enrolled in an after-school program located in the Chicago, Illinois area. Kim et al. estimated the program's impact on several literacy outcomes of children reading below proficiency on a state assessment at baseline. In the study, the READ 180 Enterprise students outperformed the control group students on vocabulary and reading comprehension but failed to outperform their peers in spelling and oral reading fluency.

Akinola (2013) conducted a mixed-method exploratory study using the mathematics and reading standardized test scores of 30 African-American and 30 Caucasian students. Participants in the study attended public schools and were a part of after-school programs in Lee County, Florida. The study results indicated that participation in the after-school program did not significantly affect the achievement gap

between African-American and Caucasian students. Additionally, administrators and teachers did not perceive that the after-school programs reduced the gap.

Herbert (2013) conducted a quantitative study to examine 29 at-risk fifth-grade students from 2008-2012 and their proficiency on the California Achievement Test in the subjects of ELA and mathematics. The participants included 15 boys (53%) and 14 girls (47%), and the effect of their involvement was measured with the enrichment program and elementary students' educational achievement. The participants attended the district's 21st CCLC after-school program, and their academic score range was the same as their contemporaries, who were considered above-average and without the need for additional after-school support. The results from the study provided evidence that the participants attending the after-school program regularly received similar test scores as their peers who were not considered needing additional academic support.

The after-school academic impact in mathematics and reading upon intermediate elementary and middle-grade students was the focus of one study in Mississippi. Hailey (2014) utilized a mixed-method research design to study the academic achievement in a Title I, 21st CCLC after-school program during the academic years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of an after-school program's administrative components on student achievement and to evaluate if an after-school program positively impacted the educational outcomes in the areas of ELA and mathematics. Participants in the study included 400 fifth- through eighth-grade students. Hailey incorporated a narrative approach to provide responses to the initial research question. The results from the study showed that for students in Grades 5-8, significant components (i.e., leadership skills, educational enrichment activities, and

partnerships) of an after-school program provide a positive effect on student academic success in mathematics and reading.

Another study based in the Southern region of the United States further examined academic achievement in after-school programs. Bishop (2014) utilized a mixed-methods research design to examine the effect of a supplementary after-school program on academic achievement and standardized test scores for third grade students in a major metropolitan city in Georgia. The quantitative portion of the study concentrated on 17 third-grade students who had academic challenges and did not reach the base score of 800 on the CRCT standardized test. The identified students became participants in the after-school program designed to impact reading and comprehension growth. The students' racial demographics were African-American, with 80% female and 20% male. Four third-grade teachers were included in the study. Participating students' scores on the CRCT were used to analyze reading skills acquired prior to and following their participation in the after-school literacy support program. Bishop (2014) determined that there were no significant differences observed between the reading performance of the students on the pre-test and the post-test.

Debellis (2014) conducted a qualitative study to determine the quality of relationships between student participants and staff in a 21st Century After-School Program and how that relationship was correlated to academic outcomes in mathematics and reading. Participants included approximately 506 students in Grades 4-8. The findings are particularly compelling because the participants in this research study are also economically disadvantaged, ethnic-minority children and youth attending underperforming schools. Debellis's focused directly on how 21stCCLC after-school

programs build quality relationships between student participants and a high standard of staff in evaluating the overall effectiveness of the program.

Debellis's (2014) findings showed evidence that participant-staff relationship quality, in particular, was a significant predictor of after-school participants' engagement in positive academic behaviors. Debellis concluded that participant-staff relationship quality was a significant predictor of engagement for enriched academic behaviors and math achievement; however, participant-staff relationship quality was not a significant predictor of ELA achievement. Program attendance and the interaction between participant-staff relationship quality and program attendance were not significant predictors of ELA achievement. Students who were successful academically in mathematics and ELA seemed to be the strongest predictors of ELA achievement. Debellis's findings indicate that after-school programs that attempt to help students impact their reading and writing abilities may need to offer different activities or intervention strategies to impact these skills. The current classification of activities offered in many after-school programs, such as homework assistance and project-based learning activities, may lack the academic intensity to improve student achievement in ELA. The results of the study provide evidence that 21st CCLC programs can children and youth succeed academically if they are of high quality.

The effect of social and economic circumstances on academic achievement may vary by students' grade level. Studies of students attending after-school programs in several states demonstrated achievement differences. Price (2014) conducted a quantitative study that incorporated a matched pair design to compare the mean test score gains of students who participated in the after-school program and the non-participants in

after-school programs while accounting for program attendance. Price defined frequent participants as students who attended the program for at least 90 days during the school year. Participants included students in Grades 3-6 attending after-school programs in Fresno, California. The findings showed that frequent after-school participants in third through sixth grades demonstrated significantly more mean gains on the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 California Standardized Tests (CST) in mathematics than a matched control group of non-participants. For ELA, there were no significant differences between groups when mean gains on the CST in ELA or the California English Development Test for English as a Second Language were compared (Price, 2014).

Mulkana (2015) conducted a causal-comparative research study in the Jenkins School District in Mississippi. The participants were 74 third- and fourth-grade students enrolled in a dual in-school and after-school program. The students were having difficulty reaching grade-level expectations in reading/language arts. Mulkana examined the differences in performance on the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2nd edition and STAR reading assessment between those that qualified for the program and participated and those who qualified and chose not to participate. The results of the study indicated that there were no significant differences in reading achievement between the two groups. Additionally, there was no statistically significant difference based on student attendance at the program.

In recent years, one focus of after-school programming has been an extension of one-on-one time with students to provide additional learning for students. Scaletta (2015) conducted quantitative research to determine the relationship between participation in an after-school program and student learning in reading and mathematics.

Participants included approximately 313 students in Grades 1-6 in an elementary school. The study was divided into four groups of participants attending the after-school programming. Students were placed into four components: a high attendance level of students (attending 100 to 75% weekly), a satisfactory attendance level (attending 74 to 50% weekly), a low attendance level (49 to 25% weekly), and an unsatisfactory level of attendance (24 to 0% weekly). Scaletta's findings from the study do not suggest a significant correlational relationship between students attending after-school programs and strong academic improvement.

Towler (2015) analyzed two groups of Title I middle school students enrolled in a 21st CCLC after-school program while conducting a quantitative study that included descriptive comparative statistics. The participants were eighth-grade public school students in an urban northern New Jersey school district. Towler examined data from the New Jersey standardized test for 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 and compared the variation between the two groups of students in two contrasting settings. For 2020-2011, 330 Title I eighth-grade students' achievement scores, and for 2011-2012, 353 students' scores were analyzed. Reading and mathematics achievement scores were measured using a co-variance that displayed the statistically significant differences in the students' achievement scores. The differences between the participants in the study were determined by the Expanded Learning Time theory, which defines the importance of afterschool programs as an expansion of the school day for students' learning and academic success. Statistically significant differences were found in the student achievement area of ELA. Students demonstrated significant achievement in the areas of reading. The reading scores (literacy skills or reading ability from prior grades) of

eighth-grade female students enrolled in the 21st CCLC afterschool program were higher than female students not enrolled when compared to literacy skills of prior reading ability in the program. The study results showed that in the area of prior reading ability, there was a substantial difference in the reading scores of eighth-grade male students who were enrolled in the 21st CCLC afterschool program and eighth-grade female students not enrolled in the program.

In the Midwest, researchers have also examined the impact of 21st CCLC after-school programming. By 2016, over 400 21st CCLC After-School Programs existed in the Midwest; 56 % of the programs served elementary school-age children, and 44% supported adolescents in middle school and high school. Paluta, Lower, Anderson-Butcher, Gibson, and Iachini (2016) examined the quality of 21st CLC After-School Programs in Ohio. The study was conducted during the 2012–2013 academic year. The school or district operated 48% of the programs, 23% by a community partner (for example, the YMCA), 21% were an educational service center, and 9% were operated by another public entity. Paluta et al. (2016) found that the staff perceived that the program quality and results examined were favorable. The interaction between students and staff at 21st CCLCs was positive, demonstrating that the after-school programs accomplished their goal of extending educational enrichment opportunities and an aide for families and youth within the urban core, who often face adversity.

Lindo, Weiser, Cheatham, and Allor (2018) examined the effectiveness of tutors, who had nominal training, to impact the reading ability of children in kindergarten through sixth grade. The study was conducted over two semesters with tutors involved with a formal reading curriculum who worked with low-income urban students with low

standardized reading scores. During the first semester, 19 undergraduate college student tutors were included in the study, and the following semester, 20 undergraduate college tutors participated. The DIBELS assessment instrument used to evaluate students' reading, including subtests, Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF), Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). Of the 66 students who were screened, 39 students did not meet published reading benchmarks and qualified for the study. Specifically, Lindo et al. (2018) conveyed that college students worked well with basic coaching from a research assistant to enact the after-school program. The study participants in elementary school grades kindergarten through sixth-grade demonstrated a clear difference compared to their peers who lacked tutoring support and intervention. The study data results indicated stark academic differences for the after-school participants receiving tutoring assistance, especially in the concentrated literacy areas of phonics, word recognition, and overall reading comprehension. Students in the treatment and control groups from the after-school program showed growth from the pretest score to the posttest score and advancement academically was measured in phonemic awareness (DIBELS PSF), alphabetic skills (DIBELS NWF), and oral reading fluency (DIBELS ORF). Furthermore, participants in the after-school tutoring program who attended over 25 sessions in the academic school year demonstrated more significant growth in reading and comprehension than students who were not tutored. Finally, overall there was significant growth for students in the program (Lindo et al., 2018).

Kershner (2018) conducted a qualitative program evaluation of a small urban after-school reading intervention program for children facing challenges with literacy skills in the classroom. The two-year study occurred from 2016 to 2018 and focused on

17 first-through fourth-grade students and their parents in a focus group discussion of the After-school Reading Club based in Baker City. The primary goal of the study was to examine how students provided with guided educational instruction focused additional time with literature through appealing independent level texts and a positive learning environment. The ultimate goal was for students involved in the program to become proficient readers and continue to enjoy reading into adulthood. Kershner found that the processes of vocabulary instruction, independent reading periods, and a positive learning environment helped stimulate improvement in students' receptive and expressive vocabularies, endurance, and fortitude towards reading, and overall some aspects of confidence in reading.

Jenkins-Roberts (2019) conducted a mixed methods study using quantitative and qualitative data to examine the after-school programs in Memphis, Tennessee. The study included 355 participants who attended and did not attend Extended Learning Opportunities Programs (ELOP). Jenkins-Roberts found that African-American parents disproportionately relied more on after-school programs to provide out-of-school care than other races. Jenkins-Roberts determined that students not enrolled in ELOPs scored higher in math than those attending the program; however, in ELA, there was no significant difference between those attending the after-school programs and students who did not attend after-school programs.

During these difficult times, after-school programs have included positive and imaginative leadership to impact children's lives, especially in the urban core. In recent years, after-school programs have incorporated human and physical resources. After-school programming has been an important link for many children (English, 2020).

Yilmaz (2020) examined the reading proficiency attained through the support of a rural Midwest city after-school program. During the 2018-2019 academic year, the researcher studied literacy achievement through individual student school assessment data from five elementary schools. The participating schools were selected for the program based on the student need for reading support for a high ELL population and abject poverty occurring within the district. The after-school program, Reading Roadmap, is designed to associate a roadmap of practices to be utilized by elementary schools to raise literacy achievement. Nationally, over 10,000 students are involved in the program, and Reading Roadmap programs have been implemented in several states, including Kansas and Mississippi. A quasi-experimental design was incorporated in the study of the after-school program. Yilmaz focused on low-income schools and at-risk students who attended the Reading Roadmap after-school program. The results of Yilmaz's study revealed that the after-school participants demonstrated a higher growth in reading than their peers throughout the school district. A total of 1,064 students in Grades 2-3 increased their scores an average of 35.64 points between the fall and spring assessment scores. A 12 to 16% boost in students' reading development through involvement in the after-school program was found during one academic year. In addition, after-school participants displayed a reading strength of 76% compared to their counterpart's 68% growth. Yilmaz (2020) concluded that participation in after-school programs significantly impacts the effect of school attendance on a student's reading skills and suggests a meaningful boost to participant reading proficiency.

Summary

The literature review conveyed that out-of-school programming, specifically after-school enrichment programs, are effective tools when combined with public education. Furthermore, after-school programs, given the proper elements and staffing, can provide a framework to support urban reform efforts. After-school programming can also impact the type of environment that may ultimately produce academically qualified students to strive for increased life goals and achievement. Also examined in this chapter were several important issues, including poverty, race, literacy, educational reform efforts, and at-risk children in the urban core. The chapter served as a foundation for the empirical portion of the study in which the efficacy of an after-school enrichment program located in an urban Midwest City was evaluated. In Chapter 3, the methodology used in this study is described.

Chapter 3

Methods

This chapter highlights the procedures that were used to guide the research methods used in this study. First, the chapter focuses on the research design. Second, the chapter focuses on how students were selected as participants in the program. Third, the measurement is discussed, followed by data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, and the limitations.

Research Design

The design of this study was quantitative descriptive and causal-comparative. Quantitative descriptive research involves the description of phenomena in our world. The purpose of quantitative research within this research design was to determine the impact an after-school tutoring program has on the reading achievement of elementary students from an urban Midwestern school setting. The independent variables were student grade level (first, second, third, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth) and ELL status (ELL, non-ELL). The dependent variables were student reading growth (fall 2017 to spring 2018 and fall 2018 to spring 2019) on the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory or the CORE Reading Maze Comprehension Test.

Selection of Participants

Grace United Community Ministries, which houses the Aim for Success After-School Enrichment program for at-risk children, was selected because it provides the convenience sample needed to conduct the research project. The target population was comprised of students enrolled in an after-school program. The participants were students who enrolled in the Aim for Success After-School Tutoring Program in the

urban core of Kansas City during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. Purposive sampling was used to select this sample because of the researcher's knowledge of the after-school program. "Purposive sampling involves selecting a sample based on the researcher's experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled" (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 17). The first criterion used to select the participants for this study was enrollment in the first through sixth grades during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. Secondly, students had fall 2017 and spring 2018 or fall 2018 and spring 2019 assessment scores.

Measurement

The Aim for Success After-School Program utilized two formal assessments to analyze the literary skills of first through sixth-grade elementary students. The Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory is used in the after-school program specifically for first-, second-, and third-grade students. The CORE Reading Maze Comprehension Test is the tool incorporated in the program to assess fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students.

The Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory. According to Meikamp and Suppa (2007), the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory "assesses multiple aspects of a student's reading skills in an authentic format" (p. 3). The Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory is not forced or formally controlled by authoritative directions, time limits, or confined procedures. The reading text presented to students incorporates narrative texts and includes both fiction and nonfiction. Fundamentally, the graded word lists function as placement instruments to help the examiner determine where to begin administering the reading passages. Based on the results from orally reading the word

lists, the student reads graded passages that gradually increase in difficulty. These passages are then used to assess the student's silent reading and listening comprehension.

The Aim for Success After-School Educational Enrichment program utilizes this assessment for Grades 1, 2, and 3 students. As the student reads, the examiner observes and records strengths and weaknesses and asks questions probing for understanding and knowledge. The bulk of the Informal Reading Inventories diagnostic information comes from reading the passages. Each time the student finishes reading a passage, the examiner asks 8 to 10 comprehension questions. The types of questions asked include main idea, detail, inference, sequence, cause-and-effect, and vocabulary. Thus, the emphasis is placed on learning about the reading skills, abilities, and needs of the student, since the fall score will be subtracted from the spring score. The range in scores for the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory is pre-primer through second grade. The range of scores is a percentage based on word recognition and comprehension scores. Scoring for first- and second-grades is 85% for Instructional Level based on word recognition and 75% based on reading comprehension.

The Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory is utilized for students who are emerging readers, beginning readers, and advanced readers. Overall the assessment evaluates literacy levels at a primary reading level for grades 1, 2, and 3 because it measures phonics skills and reading comprehension skills. For this study, the fall 2017 scores were subtracted from the spring 2018 scores, and fall 2018 scores were subtracted from the spring 2019 scores to determine student growth. The assessment evaluates each student orally, and each child reads aloud to an examiner. The students are given a reading readiness test in the fall and then again in the spring to compare their reading

growth. Student growth is demonstrated by diagnostic scoring evaluation of word lists, listening comprehension tests, and independent reading comprehension assessments.

CORE Reading MAZE Comprehension Test. The curriculum-based measurement-Maze is a timed assessment tool used primarily for evaluating reading comprehension. The Aim for Success After-School Educational Enrichment program utilizes this assessment for the upper third- through fifth-grade students. The student is presented with a specially formatted sample reading passage. The student reads the Maze passage. To assess student ability, the initial sentence of the passage is left in the standard or correct form. The following sentences change every seventh word. The seventh word is then transposed into the passage as a response item that includes a synonym with two incorrect words (foils). The three choices are arbitrarily incorporated into the text for the reader to decipher. Researchers examining Maze passages with similar assessments have determined that the passages are a more accurate analysis of student's reading maturation in the future (Hosp, Hosp & Howell, 2007).

The CORE Reading MAZE Comprehensive Test is used to assess Grades 4, 5, and 6 students in the program. The range in scores for the CORE Reading MAZE Comprehensive Test is measured by subtracting fall to spring scores involving knowledge of essential sight words. In addition, growth involves knowledge of basic sight words as well as accurate comprehension (75% +) and movement across increasingly more difficult text. All evaluations are based on 75% comprehension accuracy plus movement to the next higher level.

The assessment is used to evaluate older students in the program who have mastered phonics skills and can be administered in small groups. The spring

comprehension score is subtracted from the fall comprehension score using percent correct (75% is the cut-score between grade levels). For this study, the fall 2017 scores were subtracted from the spring 2018 scores and fall 2018 scores were subtracted from the spring 2019 scores to determine student growth.

Validity and reliability. Experts agree that the reliability and validity of tests are important (Nilsson, 2013). Both Spector (2005) and Nilsson (2013) focused their evaluations of informal reading inventories (IRIs) on the absence of evidence for reliability. Like most IRIs, the test developers have not found a way to establish the reliability of the Burns and Roes Informal Reading Inventory and the CORE Reading Maze Comprehension Test. According to Spector (2005), the absence of evidence for the reliability of the test limits its usefulness for the evaluation and placement of students in need of reading intervention. However, for the current research, there are no issues associated with the placement of students. These tests were used to assess the reading growth (fall to spring) of students in an After-School Reading Program. Spector (2005) and Nilsson (2013) noted that IRIs are acceptable tools to measure reading skills.

Data Collection Procedures

A request to conduct the research at Grace United Community Ministries, an urban, after-school program, was submitted to the program director and program administrators at this site and was approved on November 16, 2020 (see Appendix A). The researcher submitted an Institutional Review Board (IRB) form to Baker University in accordance with federal standards for the protection of human subjects; it was approved on January 15, 2021(see Appendix B). Achievement test data from the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019school years for reading and attendance records were obtained from

the program administrators. Confidentiality of students was achieved by not revealing the student's names. The data were downloaded to an Excel file and were provided to the researcher.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Data collected were imported into IBM SPSS Statistics Faculty Pack 27 for analysis. Each research question is followed by the associated hypothesis statements and the method of data analysis. Eighteen one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ5, RQ6, and RQ7. Six independent-samples *t* tests were conducted to address RQ4 and RQ8.

RQ1. To what extent do first-, second-, and third-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score?

***H1*.** The first-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H2. The second-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H3. The third-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ1. For each test, the sample mean for the growth was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was

chosen for these hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

RQ2. To what extent do first-, second-, and third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score?

H4. The first-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H5. The second-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H6. The third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ2. For each test, the sample mean for the change score was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for these hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

RQ3. To what extent do first-, second-, and third-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score?

H7. The first-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from all to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H8. The second-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H9. The third-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ3. For each sample, the mean for the change score was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for these hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

RQ4. To what extent is there a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between first-, second-, and third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and first-, second-, and third-non-ELL students participating in the program?

H10. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between first-grade ELL students participating in an after-school program and first-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

H11. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between second-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and second-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

H12. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and third-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

Three independent-samples *t* tests were conducted to address RQ4. For each test, the change score's sample mean was compared to a test value (0). This test was chosen because the average score for ELL students was compared to the average score for non-ELL students. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

RQ5. To what extent do fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score?

H13. The fourth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

H14. The fifth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

H15. The sixth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ5. For each test, the sample mean for the change score was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for these hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

RQ6. To what extent do fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score?

H16. The fourth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

H17. The fifth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test Score.

H18. The sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ6. For each test, the sample mean for the change score was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for these hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference

between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

RQ7. To what extent do fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score?

***H19*.** The fourth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

***H20*.** The fifth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

***H21*.** The sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test Score.

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ7. For each test, the sample mean for the change score was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

RQ8. To what extent is there a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading

program and fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program?

H22. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between fourth-grade ELL Students participating in an after-school reading program and fourth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

H23. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between fifth-grade ELL Students participating in an after-school reading program and fifth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

H24. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between sixth-grade ELL Students participating in an after-school reading program and sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

Three independent-samples *t* test were conducted to address RQ8. This test was chosen because the average score for ELL students was compared to the average score for fourth- through sixth-grade non-ELL students. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

Limitations

Limitations are defined as areas in the study that possibly could be seen as disadvantages or challenges out of the sphere of the researcher's control (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study may be limited in scope because it focused specifically upon one youth initiative in a mid-size Midwestern city. In addition, the study may yield more

pertinent information if it included the scores of a larger pool of participants. The current study has the following limitations:

1. The participants in the study may have unknown levels of English proficiency. The results may not be able to be generalized to students who participate in other after-school programs.
2. The number of participants is a minimal sample size in comparison to some after-school programs.
3. The attendance of the students is a variable that cannot be controlled. If there is a high absentee rate, it becomes difficult to help students improve their reading skills.
4. There is a lack of available reliability and validity information for both instruments, The Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory and the CORE Maze Comprehension Test.

Summary

The objective of this chapter was to examine the research methodology used in this study. Covered in this chapter were the research design, selection of participants, measurement, data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, and the limitations of the study. The goal of Chapter 4 is to provide the descriptive statistics and the results of the data analysis.

Chapter 4

Results

This quantitative study addressed the impact of an after-school program by examining the relationship between academic tutoring and student achievement in an urban setting. The primary purpose of the study was to separately determine whether ELL and non-ELL students enrolled in an after-school program demonstrated reading growth as a result of their participation in the program and a comparison of the groups. Presented in this chapter are the descriptive statistics and the results of the data analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

There were 142 participants in this study. Included in Table 1 are the number of participants by grade level and ELL status. For each grade quadrant, students were further segmented based on whether they were ELL or non-ELL.

Table1

Frequency Table of Grade Level Crossed With ELL Status

Grade	ELL	Non-ELL	Total
1	10	8	18
2	18	14	32
3	16	12	28
4	14	18	32
5	12	2	14
6	12	6	18

Hypothesis Testing

To address the research questions, data were compiled from the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. Each research question and data analysis paragraph are followed by the associated hypothesis statements and the results of the data analysis.

RQ1. To what extent do first-, second-, and third-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score?

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ1. For each test, the sample mean forcing the growth from fall to spring was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for these hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

H1. The first-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(17) = 0.799$, $p = .435$. The sample mean ($M = .06$, $SD = .29$) was not different from the test value (.00). H1 was not supported. The first-grade students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H2. The second-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(31) = 2.189$, $p = .036$, Cohen's $d = 0.387$. The sample mean ($M = .10$, $SD = .25$) was significantly higher than the test value (.00). H2 was supported. The second-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grew fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score. The effect size index, Cohen's *d*, indicated a small effect.

H3. The third-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(27) = 3.205$, $p = .003$, Cohen's $d = 0.606$. The sample mean ($M = .20$, $SD = .32$) was significantly higher than the test value (.00). H3 was supported. The third-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grew fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score. The effect size index, Cohen's *d*, indicated a medium effect.

RQ2. To what extent do first-, second-, and third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score?

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ2. For each test, the sample mean for the growth from fall to spring was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for these hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

H4. The first-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(9) = 0.823$, $p = .432$. The sample mean ($M = .08$, $SD = .32$) was not different from the test value (.00). H4 was not supported. The first-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H5. The second-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(17) = 1.556$, $p = .138$. The sample mean ($M = .09$, $SD = .23$) was not different from the test value (.00). H5 was not supported. The second-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H6. The third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(15) = 2.580$, $p = .021$, Cohen's $d = 0.645$. The sample mean ($M = .23$, $S\,D = .36$) was significantly higher than the test value (.00). H6 was supported. The third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading

program grew fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score. The effect size index, Cohen's *d*, indicated a medium effect.

RQ3. To what extent do first-, second-, and third-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score?

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ3. For each test, the sample mean for the growth from fall to spring was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for these hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

H7. The first-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(7) = 0.207$, $p = .842$. The sample mean ($M = .02$, $SD = .27$) was not different from the test value (.00). H7 was not supported. The first-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H8. The second-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(13) = 1.495$, $p = .159$. The sample mean ($M = .11$, $SD = .28$) was not

different from the test value (.00). H8 was not supported. The second-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

H9. The third-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(11) = 1.855$, $p = .091$. The sample mean ($M = .15$, $SD = .28$) was not different from the test value (.00). H9 was not supported. The third-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.

RQ4. To what extent is there a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between first-, second-, and third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and first-, second-, and third-non-ELL students participating in the program?

Three independent-samples *t* tests were conducted to address RQ4. For each test, the growth score's sample mean was compared to a test value (0). This test was chosen because the average score for ELL students was compared to the average score for non-ELL students. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

H10. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between first-grade ELL

students participating in an after-school program and first-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

The results of the independent-samples *t* test indicated no difference between the two means, $t(16) = 0.447$, $p = .661$. The mean growth for first-grade ELL students ($M = .08$, $SD = .32$, $n = 10$) was not different from the mean growth for first-grade non-ELL students ($M = .02$, $SD = .27$, $n = 8$). H10 was not supported.

H11. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between second-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and second-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

The results of the independent-samples *t* test indicated no difference between the two means, $t(30) = -0.299$, $p = .767$. The mean growth for second-grade ELL students ($M = .09$, $SD = .23$, $n = 18$) was not different from the mean growth for second-grade non-ELL students ($M = .11$, $SD = .28$, $n = 14$). H11 was not supported.

H12. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and third-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

The results of the independent-samples *t* test indicated no difference between the two means, $t(26) = 0.669$, $p = .510$. The mean growth for third-grade ELL students ($M = .23$, $SD = .36$, $n = 16$) was not different from the mean growth for third-grade non-ELL students ($M = .15$, $SD = .28$, $n = 12$). H12 was not supported.

RQ5. To what extent do fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score?

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ5. For each test, the sample mean for the growth from fall to spring was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for these hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

H13. The fourth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(31) = 2.420$, $p = .022$, Cohen's $d = 0.428$. The sample mean ($M = .09$, $SD = .21$) was significantly higher than the test value (.00). H13 was supported. The fourth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grew fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score. The effect size index, Cohen's *d,* indicated a small effect.

H14. The fifth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(13) = 1.562$, $p = .142$. The sample mean ($M = .07$, $SD = .16$) was not different from the test value (.00). H14 was not supported. The fifth-grade students

participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

H15. The sixth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(17) = 1.641$, $p = .119$. The sample mean ($M = .08$, $SD = .21$) was not different from the test value (.00). H15 was not supported. The sixth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

RQ6. To what extent do fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score?

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ6. For each test, the sample mean for the growth from fall to spring was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for these hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

H16. The fourth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the group mean and the test value, $t(13) = 3.097$, $p = .008$, Cohen's $d = 0.828$.

The sample mean (M = .19, SD = .22) was significantly higher than the test value (.00). H16 was supported. The fourth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grew fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score. The effect size index, Cohen's *d*, indicated a large effect.

H17. The fifth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test Score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(11) = 1.860$, $p = .090$. The sample mean (M = .09, SD = .17) was not different from the test value (.00). H17 was not supported. The fifth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

H18. The sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(11) = 2.029$, $p = .067$. The sample mean (M = .12, SD = .20) was not different from the test value (.00). H18 was not supported. The sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

RQ7. To what extent do fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score?

Three one-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ7. For each test, the sample mean for the growth from fall to spring was compared to a test value (0). The one-sample *t* test was chosen for hypothesis tests because it examines the mean difference between a sample mean and a test value. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

***H19*.** The fourth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(17) = 0.360$, $p = .724$. The sample mean ($M = .01$, $SD = .16$) was not different from the test value (.00). H19 was not supported. The fourth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

***H20*.** The fifth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(1) = -1.500$, $p = .374$. The sample mean ($M = -.06$, $SD = .06$) was not different from the test value (.00). H20 was not supported. The fifth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

H21. The sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test Score.

The results of the one sample *t* test indicated no difference between the mean and the test value, $t(5) = 0.057$, $p = .957$. The sample mean ($M = .01$, $SD = .22$) was not different from the test value (.00). H21 was not supported. The sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

RQ8. To what extent is there a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and fourth- through sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program?

Three independent-samples *t* testwere conducted to address RQ8. This test was chosen because the average score for ELL students was compared to the average score for fourth- through sixth-grade non-ELL students. The level of significance was set at .05. When appropriate, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated and reported.

H22. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between fourth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and fourth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

The results of the independent-samples *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two means, $t(30) = 2.506$, $p = .018$, $d = 0.893$. The mean growth for fourth-grade ELL students ($M = .19$, $SD = .22$, $n = 14$) was higher than the mean

growth for fourth-grade non-ELL students (M = .01, SD = .16, n = 18). H22 was supported. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between fourth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and fourth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program. The effect size index, Cohen's *d*, indicated a large effect.

H23. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between fifth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and fifth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

The results of the independent-samples t test indicated no difference between the two means, $t(12) = 1.217$, $p = .247$. The mean growth for fifth-grade ELL students (M = .09, SD = .17, n = 12) was not different from the mean growth for fifth-grade non-ELL students (M = -.06, SD = .06, n = 2). H23 was not supported.

H24. There is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program.

The results of the independent-samples t test indicated no difference between the two means, $t(16) = 1.094$, $p = .290$. The mean growth for sixth-grade ELL students (M = .12, SD = .20, n = 12) was not different from the mean growth for sixth-grade non-ELL students (M = .01, SD = .22, n = 6). H24 was not supported.

Summary

The descriptive statistics and the results of the data analysis associated with the 24 hypotheses were presented in this chapter. The results of the data analysis were mixed. Chapter 5 includes a study summary, findings related to the literature, and the conclusions.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

Children living in the inner-city encounter a myriad of barriers and drawbacks, which often cause an impediment to their overall educational achievement and life progression. This study was conducted to examine the impact of an after-school academic enrichment program on inner-city elementary student reading achievement. This chapter contains a study summary, findings related to the literature, and the conclusions.

Study Summary

This section provides a summary of the current study. Included in this section is information regarding an overview of the problem and the purpose statement and the research questions. Finally, a review of the methodology and the major findings of the study are presented.

Overview of the problem. Reaching the academic needs of students is a goal that schools and teachers throughout the United States strive to accomplish. However, schools, especially in the urban core, face insufficient instruction time and large classroom sizes, which often prevent schools from providing needed academic support (Anastal et al., 2018, Gettinger & Seibert, 2002;). After-school programs support academic instruction during out-of-school hours by providing one-on-one tutoring and additional educational resources. Although research has been published on after-school programs (Lester et al., 2020), additional studies are needed to address the impact of academic tutoring on children in after-school programs that lead to higher levels of reading performance.

Purpose statement and research questions. The first purpose of this study was to determine the extent first- through third-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score. The second purpose of the study was to determine the extent first- through third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score. The third purpose of the study was to determine the extent first- through third-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score. The fourth purpose of the study was to determine the extent there is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, between first- through third-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and first-through third-grade non-ELL students participating in the program. The fifth purpose of the study was to determine the extent fourth- through sixth-grade students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score. The sixth purpose of the study was to determine the extent fourth- through sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score. The seventh purpose of the study was to determine the extent fourth- through sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program grow from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score. The final purpose of

this study was to determine the extent there is a difference in growth from fall to spring, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score, between fourth- through sixth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and fourth- through sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in the program as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score. To address the purposes of this study, eight research questions were posed, and 24 hypotheses were tested.

Review of the methodology. The research design utilized in this study was quantitative descriptive and causal-comparative. The independent variables were student grade level (first- through sixth-grades) and ELL status (ELL, non-ELL). The dependent variables were student reading growth (fall to spring) on the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory for Grades 1-3 and the CORE Reading Maze Comprehension Test for Grades 4-6 during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. One-sample *t* tests were conducted to address RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ5, RQ6, and RQ7. Independent-samples *t* tests were conducted to address RQ4 and RQ8.

Major findings. The results of the data analysis related to student reading growth for first- through sixth-grade students attending an after-school program were mixed. When the data were analyzed for all students participating in an after-school reading program, the results indicated the following for first through third-grade students, as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score, and fourth through sixth-grade students, as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score:

- The second-, third-, and fourth-grade students did grow fall to spring.

- The first-, fifth-, and sixth grade students did not grow fall to spring.

The data were analyzed for ELL students participating in an after-school reading program, and the following findings provided evidence for growth or non-growth of first through third-grade ELL students as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score and fourth through sixth-grade ELL students as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score.

- The third-and fourth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score.
- The first-, second-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students did not grow fall to spring.

When the data was analyzed for non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program, it was determined that the first through sixth-grade non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did not grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score for first through third graders and the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score for fourth through sixth-graders. When the data was analyzed to determine whether there was a difference between the mean growth for ELL students and non-ELL students participating in an after-school reading program; the following findings were indicated for first through third-grade students as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score and fourth through sixth-grade students as measured by the change in the Core Reading Maze Comprehension Test score:

- There was a difference in growth from fall to spring between fourth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program and fourth-grade non-ELL students participating.
- The mean growth for first-, second-, and third-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students was not different from the mean growth for first-, second-, and third-grade non-ELL students.

Findings related to the literature. The findings from this study related to the literature on the impact of student reading achievement in an urban after-school academic enrichment program are included in this section. Reading growth of students participating in an after-school program was examined in this study. Research studies were limited due to the fact that a number of the studies conducted comparisons of students enrolled in an after-school program with students not attending an after-school program. Similarly, many studies looked at the perceptions and viewpoints of various stakeholders involved with after-school programs. No previous studies were found that focused on children who were ELL and non-ELL in an after-school reading program and their reading achievement while attending a specific program. Therefore, comparisons were not always able to be drawn.

The findings of the current study indicated that when the entire sample was examined, second-, third-, and fourth grade students did grow fall to spring and that first-, fifth-, and sixth grade students did not grow fall to spring. These findings support the findings of Lauer et al. (2006), Arbreton et al. (2008), and McWilliams (2011). Students in the Aim for Success program are in elementary grades. The research conducted by Lauer et al. (2006) examined 35 out-of-school hours programs, and the overall results

indicated significant effects on academic achievement of youth in the subject areas of mathematics and ELA. In correlation to the Aim for Success program Arbreton et al. (2008) compared the relationship between reading programming with academic gains to understand further the role that after-school programs may play in improving academic achievement with student participants. Arbreton et al. (2008), towards the end of the study, found significant growth was demonstrated in reading comprehension, fluency, context, and overall literacy strengths. The findings of McWilliams's (2011) study demonstrated like the Aim for Success program, the ability of an after-school program holds in providing a positive impact on reading achievement and that the additional academic support increased reading fluency, self-esteem, and reading comprehension of the participants

In this study, the overall mean growth for first-, second-, and third-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students was not different from the mean growth for first-, second-, third- and fifth-grade non-ELL students. Comparison results for out-of-school programs varied in study viewpoints. Little and Hines (2006) found that the after-school program demonstrates potential benefits for readers of various growth levels. A review of Davis-Allen's (2008) data indicated that the after-school program did not improve the reading achievement performance for third-graders, and there was no difference in third- and fourth-grade between the pretest and posttest in mathematics. The results from the CRCT standardized test in reading demonstrated that the fourth- and fifth-grade participant's performance was improved, and significant improvement occurred for fifth-graders in mathematics (Davis-Allen, 2008). The findings from the current study support the findings of Little and Hines (2006), Davis-Allen (2008). The research by Scaletta (2015)

differed from the current study and examined student attendees and non-attendees of an after-school program. Scaletta's findings do not suggest a significant correlational relationship between students attending after-school programs and strong academic improvement, a contrast from the Aim for Success Program. The findings from the current study contrast with the findings of Scaletta (2015).

The third-and fourth-grade ELL students participating in an after-school reading program did grow fall to spring as measured by the change in the Burns and Roe Informal Reading Inventory score. The first-, second-, fifth-, and sixth-grade ELL students did not grow fall to spring. The Aim for Success program, in comparison to previous research of an after-school program conducted by Rivera (2001), displayed similar results, although at different grade levels. Rivera evaluated a school-based after-school program's effectiveness, and participants included 43 low-income Latino and African-American students predominantly from a middle school near downtown Los Angeles, California. Rivera found no improvements in academic grades in math, English, science, and social science for the participants in the program. The results of this study support the findings of Rivera (2001).

Conclusions

This section provides conclusions drawn from the current study determining whether the students who attend the after-school program demonstrate growth in reading achievement. In addition, implications for action and future research are included. The section ends with concluding remarks.

Implications for action. Based on the findings of this study, the analysis of the program yielded mixed results and could impact reading achievement in conjunction with

classroom learning. This study provided the researcher and the school community with data and insights connecting after school programs and student learning. Programs like the one described in this study provide students with increased learning opportunities in a safe environment beyond out-of-school hours. This study has implications for program administrators, building administrators, teachers, and parents. This study offers insight into the power of academic enrichment beyond standard classroom configurations and how this further impacts student achievement. Through partnerships, building administrators should be aware of the training and support that classroom teachers require in providing students with increased educational opportunities for learning, mentoring, and interaction in an environment that is different from that of the traditional school day. It is the responsibility of schools to prepare students for the future and provide them with learning opportunities that foster a life-long interest in reading and learning. Reading instruction is significant to learners because, no matter what path students take as they mature into adulthood, it is vital that they become literate. Otherwise, they may have difficulty obtaining gainful employment and achieving their life goals. This study produces findings that suggest that after-school programs foster both social and cultural dimensions of literacy. The increased time through out-of-school hours learning opportunities provided for these students resulted in increased reading achievement and confidence as readers. The program incorporated the concept of volunteer one-on-one tutoring for academic enrichment. Further collaboration of after-school program tutors with regular classroom teachers is necessary to establish better learning consistency from the classroom to the after-school program. In addition, the tutoring strategies could be further examined to provide additional academic enrichment to students. Although the

after-school staff currently contacts the classroom teachers of students enrolled in the program, this practice must be expanded to include discussions regarding the students' specific needs, progress, and strategies that could impact student learning. Finally, there is a need to consider the assessment tools currently being utilized to pre- and post-test the participants in the after-school program. The program could consider using different assessments to determine reading growth. Finding an assessment tool that was valid and reliable might provide a more accurate determination of reading growth.

Recommendations for future research. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of an after-school academic enrichment program on urban elementary student reading achievement. Thus, the first recommendation that stems from this study would be to conduct an ongoing assessment of the after-school program to ensure that the academic content and enrichment activities are effective for increasing student learning over a six-year period to assess the full impact of a group of students who advance from first through sixth grades. Through additional research, reading achievement could be evaluated over time to examine growth. A second recommendation for future research would be to compare the results of program with a similar reading enrichment after-school program comparing students with similar pre-test scores who attend the Aim for Success program with students who do not receive tutoring in a program. A third recommendation would be a qualitative study to gain the perceptions of the tutors, classroom teachers of the participants, and the parents of the participants about student learning or other aspects of student achievement.

Concluding remarks. Literacy is an essential component for success in every aspect of life. Building reading skills is a goal of most schools and educators for students

as they matriculate through school. Unfortunately, many children living in the urban core have continued to have poor academic performance in reading; however, some schools and out-of-school hours programs creatively provide opportunities to teach all students with limited resources and staff. The results of the present study provided information on the impact of reading achievement in an after-school program for urban students enrolled in an academic program located in the urban core. By examining the reading growth of students participating in an after-school program, educators can further support out-of-school hours for children as a strategy for impacting academic achievement, specifically in reading.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Permission to Conduct the Study

From: Howard Spencer <howardaspencer@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 9:50 AM
To: Jesse Barnes <jbbarnes@hotmail.com>
Subject: Re: Request to use information for Results in Dissertation

Dear Mr. Barnes,
You have my total permission to use our archival data at Grace United and also have my permission to use the Aim for Success title.

Sincerely,

Howard A. Spencer

Howard A. Spencer
Vice Chairman of Grace United Community Ministry Board of Directors

From: Jesse Barnes
Sent: Sunday, November 15, 2020 5:24 PM
To: Howard Spencer
Cc:judy.k.knorr@gmail.com
Subject: Request to use information for Results in Dissertation

Mr. Spencer,
Good Evening. Attached please find a letter requesting the use of the archival data to continue my dissertation research and I also need permission to use the Aim for Success title. As I have discussed with you, I have also included a draft of my dissertation, this includes edits that I am currently revising, but you will get the premise of my work.

I have to receive formal confirmation to continue the study.

Thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully,
Jesse

Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter

Baker University Institutional Review Board

January 15th, 2021

Dear Jesse Barnes and Susan Rogers,

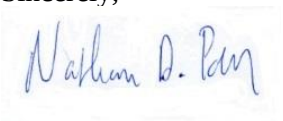
The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Exempt Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,



Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Sara Crump, PhD
Nick Harris, MS
Christa Manton, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD