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Implementation of Language and Literacy Practices by Prekindergarten Teachers in the West Virginia Universal Pre-K System

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IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY PRACTICES BY PREKINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IN THE WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSAL PRE-K SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Implementation of Language and Literacy Practices by Prekindergarten Teachers in the West Virginia Universal Pre-K System

This study investigated the perceived frequency of implementation of language and literacy practices for 217 West Virginia Pre-K teachers. Teachers were employed in public school-based and community-based classrooms for 4-year-olds. Respondents completed the *Language and Literacy Practice Survey (LLPS),* which measured their perceived frequency of implementation of 18 language and literacy practices. Their overall perceived ability level for implementing effective language and literacy instruction was also assessed.

Respondents also rated their use of resources and materials to facilitate effective language and literacy instruction. Additionally, respondents answered open-ended qualitative questions to determine perceived constraints that may hinder their effective implementation of language and literacy practices and to identify areas of additional support or professional development needed to enhance their ability to implement quality language and literacy instruction. Data were distinguished by three variables: preschool teaching experience, degree level and professional development clock hours completed.

Results indicated that West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceived their overall ability to implement effective language and literacy instruction as *Competent* or *Optimal*. Likewise, their perceived frequency of implementation of the majority of associated language and literacy practices is *Almost Always*. Furthermore, their use of resources and materials corresponds with their perceived frequency of implementation.

Practices associated with book selection and read-aloud activities were perceived to be implemented the most frequently of all 18 practices; whereas practices associated with writing and print awareness were perceived to have been the least effectively implemented. Moreover, the most significant indicator of perceived frequency of language and literacy implementation was the number of professional development clock hours completed.

The qualitative data indicated that, of the constraints reported by West Virginia Pre-K teachers, the current curriculum (Creative Curriculum) and the lack of time were the most prominent. In addition, teachers indicated the strongest need for support or professional development in reading and writing practices, general language and literacy practices and early childhood best practices. The conclusions are that, overall, WV Pre-K teachers perceived themselves as implementing language and literacy instructional practices frequently and optimally and that they desire more professional development opportunities to improve the quality of their language and literacy practices.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband, family and friends for their patience and encouragement as I traversed this path. I am continually thankful for their guidance and contributions throughout my life.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest gifts adults can bestow upon children is the gift of language and literacy. School systems and families worldwide strive to ensure that children are given an education that will ultimately prepare them to become self-sufficient and literate adults. At the heart of that education is a foundation of emergent literacy and language skills and competencies developed in the early childhood years.

Language and literacy development begin at birth. In the first three years of life, children learn to communicate (listen, understand and express their needs). They interact with, and respond to, their environment through play and socialization. Within their environments, home and child care/school, language and literacy development ensues. Because this development occurs mainly through social interaction, the quality of those interactions is imperative. Learning opportunities arise naturally and through planned instruction. The more knowledgeable teachers are about the development of language and literacy, the better they will be equipped to plan, deliver and evaluate appropriate language and literacy instructional practices. Likewise, the more knowledgeable families are, the better they will be able to support and extend the effects of school instruction at home and to maximize natural interactions with their children.

Early Language and Literacy Development

Language occurs through two complementary processes: receptive and expressive. Receptive language is language that is received – understanding what is said, written or signed. Expressive language is language that is expressed – the act of

speaking, writing or signing. Before a child begins to use words and sentences, he/she must have a strong receptive base. Children can understand words and sentences, body language and facial expressions before they learn to make sounds, words and sentences for themselves.

Children's expressive language begins at birth. Between zero and three months of age, infants cry and "coo and goo." Their cries become differentiated for different feelings such as pain or hunger. Between the ages of four and six months, children begin using prespeech. Their babbling at this age begins to resemble letter sounds. At approximately seven to 12 months, first words become recognizable. Between the ages of one and two years, children accumulate more words and use these words to make two-word sentences that telegraph meaning. As vocabulary develops at two or three years of age, multiple-word sentences are used and meanings become clearer. Children begin to name, describe and comment on objects in their environment. Between three and four years of age, children create more complex sentences and can talk about their experiences. Between ages four and five, children begin to speak clearly and fluently. They can construct longer, more detailed sentences and can tell detailed stories using correct grammar. At this point, they can communicate easily with adults and other children (Berk, 2007, chap.5).

Children's language development is also greatly influenced by social interactions with families, teachers, caregivers and others regularly involved in their lives. The founding father of this sociocultural theory of language development is Lev Vygotsky (Siegler & Alibali, 2005, chap. 4). He was the first to theorize that the development of all higher psychological processes, specifically language, is based in social interactions. His

theory emphasizes two major themes: 1) cognitive development occurs through social interactions and 2) human behavior is determined by cultural aspects such as technical tools used for acting on the environment and psychological tools used for thinking (Siegler & Alibali, 2005, chap. 4).

Vygotsky firmly believed language to be the most important psychological tool. He proposed that developmental change occurs through the *internalization of socially shared processes* (Siegler & Alibali, 2005, chap. 4). Children develop specific word meanings, phrases, usages and dialects from the social interactions within their culture.

Initially, children perform cognitive tasks with social partners. Then they gradually internalize such interactions until the task can be performed independently. Thus, when considering language, social influence can elaborate or restrict language development. The quality and amount of communication with those closest to them establishes a foundation for children's future communication with other adults and peers.

According to Vygotsky, children use language to control their behaviors and thinking. One example is that of *private speech.* Children may talk to themselves as they complete a complex activity. "Self-talk" speech guides their thought process throughout the completion of the activity. Vygotsky suggests that, over time *private speech* changes to whispers, to lip movements and eventually to silent thoughts. Private speech is initiated when adults interact with children to complete a task that is too difficult for them to complete on their own (Berk, 2007, chap. 7). When adults provide differing levels of support to guide a child through a complex task, it is referred to as scaffolding. Children acquire the language from dialogues with adults during scaffolding, make it a part of their private speech and use that speech to manage their independent efforts (Berk, 2007). In

addition, Vygotsky is well known for his concept *zone of proximal development*. He proposed that cognition is transferred from more skilled individuals, such as adults, to less skilled individuals, such as children. When a child is assisted and guided by an adult he/she can accomplish more complex tasks than when he/she is working independently. This area between what children can accomplish independently and what they can accomplish with guidance is the *zone of proximal development* (Siegler & Alibali, 2005, chap. 4). As a result, Vygotsky believed a child's knowledge could not be assessed only on what he/she can do independently but also on what can be demonstrated in the *zone of proximal development*.

The social nature of language development can also extend to literacy development. The use of scaffolding or social guidance can be beneficial to the development of literacy and language. As children's language progresses and they begin to communicate, emergent literacy ensues. Emergent literacy is the foundation upon which conventional literacy is built; it is the period of time before children learn formal conventions of reading and writing. Children's interactions with adults within their zone of proximal development affect their emergent literacy development.

Emergent literacy is described as the skills, knowledge and attitudes that precede conventional forms of reading and writing and the environments that assist these developments. Components of emergent literacy are identified as oral language (expressive and receptive language, such as vocabulary development), phonological awareness (rhyming, blending, segmenting), print awareness and alphabetic knowledge (letter-sound knowledge) (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

Reading, writing and oral language develop concurrently and are embedded in children's social interactions involving literacy activities such as playing, reading books, scribbling, communicating and interacting with adults. Therefore, rich language and literacy experiences in the early years are crucial to the language and emergent literacy development of children. Children entering school having such experiences may become more successful readers and writers.

Early Childhood Education Initiatives

Beginning with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and continuing to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the educational community has become increasingly cognizant of the importance of providing high quality education at a younger age and the impact it will have on children's literacy development and school achievement. As a result, many initiatives and programs to ensure the success of young children, especially those at-risk, have been established.

Some of the most successful programs that have been initiated are Head Start and Early Head Start programs, state-funded programs and model intervention programs (both short-term and on-going). Some programs, such as Head Start, are referred to as *targeted programs* because these target specific populations of children usually based on race or socioeconomic status.

Universal Programs

Although most states have existing targeted preschools, some have moved toward voluntary access to preschool for all 4-year-olds. This type of early childhood education is usually referred to as Universal Preschool, Voluntary Preschool or Preschool for All. This preschool model offers access to quality education for all 4-year-olds regardless of

race or socioeconomic status. Universal preschool is a state-funded initiative. As a result, each state varies considerably with regard to teacher qualifications, program implementation, program standards and funding. Several states have successful universal preschool programs such as Georgia, Oklahoma and West Virginia.

Georgia. In 1995, the Georgia Pre-K Program was universally opened to all eligible 4-year-olds, not just at-risk populations, making it the first universal preschool program in the United States. It is funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education. Its purpose is to provide high quality preschool experiences to Georgia's 4-year-olds. The program is free and is provided by public and private schools and child care centers. The program has continued to expand over the years, and by the tenth anniversary of Georgia's Pre-K Program in 2002-03, over 500,000 children had participated (Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, 2009).

Georgia has developed a set of content standards for their Pre-K program. Its main goal is to better prepare children for Kindergarten. As a result, each Pre-K content standard is aligned with an appropriate Kindergarten Georgia Performance Standard (GPS). The basis for the language and literacy content standards is that language and literacy are developmental processes occurring within children's social environments. Therefore, Georgia Pre-K emphasizes the importance of daily interactions that promote "language skills, print awareness and writing skills" (Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, 2007, p.15).

According to *The State of Preschool* (NIEER, 2008), Georgia Pre-K programs enroll 76,491 4-year-olds (53% of the estimated total four-year-old population served) (National Institute for Early Education Research, NIEER, 2008). Based on NIEER's

Quality Standards Checklist (NIEER, The State of Preschool, 2008), Georgia Pre-K met eight of the 10 benchmarks considered necessary for a high quality preschool program, falling short in the area of *Teacher Credentials and Training*. Georgia only met benchmark requirements on two of the four items in this area: Teacher Degree and Assistant Teacher Degree. However, currently there are little, if any, independent quantitative or quasi-experimental research studies to substantiate the effects of teacher credentials on the language and literacy development of young children.

Preschool teachers in Georgia are only required to have an Associate's Degree or Montessori diploma, and assistant teachers are only required to have a high school diploma. Although Georgia Pre-K does not meet the benchmarks for degree level, teachers are required to have specialized training in early childhood education by either having a certification in early childhood education or by meeting Montessori requirements. Teachers are also required to have a minimum of 15 clock hours of in-service training or professional development annually (Starting at 3, Georgia, 2008). Again, the effects of teacher credentialing on the expected outcomes for children have not been substantiated with any independent, data-driven studies.

Oklahoma. Oklahoma's universal preschool program is currently the top-ranked program in the United States. Like Georgia, it initially aimed to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged children but expanded in 1998 to include all 4-year-olds. Its unique characteristics are that it requires all teachers to have a bachelor's degree and it pays its preschool teachers on the same pay scale as elementary and secondary teachers. It also reaches more 4-years-olds than any other program in the nation (Gormley, Gayer, Phillips & Dawson, 2005).

Oklahoma developed a set of early learning guidelines through a task force of multiple early childhood members from across the state. These guidelines are based on current research regarding growth and development, appropriate program planning, children's learning outcomes and best practices in early childhood education. Language and literacy development are addressed through emphasizing communication skills by engaging children in meaningful activities that require them to "effectively express ideas and feelings, listen, and understand others" (Oklahoma State Department of Education, n.d., p. 15).

The *State of Preschool 2008* continues to rank Oklahoma's Early Childhood, Four-Year-Old Program number one in access. Oklahoma serves 35,231 children, which is 71% of the total population of 4-year-olds (National Institute of Early Education Research, NIEER, 2008). In addition, Oklahoma met nine of the 10 benchmarks on NIEER's Quality Standards Checklist, falling short on their requirements for assistant teacher degrees.

Oklahoma requires early childhood education teachers to have a bachelor's degree and an early childhood education certification. They are also required to complete a minimum of 75 clock hours of in-service training or professional development over a five year period. NIEER's benchmark requirement for assistant teacher degrees is a Child Development Associate (CDA) or its equivalent. Oklahoma requires assistant teachers to have an Associate Degree, 48 hours of college coursework, or pass one of two state-approved tests (Starting at 3, Oklahoma, 2008).

West Virginia. West Virginia, in 2002, implemented legislation stipulating that all 4-year-olds have access to State-funded universal prekindergarten regardless of

socioeconomic status (SES). The target for full implementation is September 2012. In 2002-03 West Virginia's program ranked 6th in the nation in enrollment of 4-year-olds and in 2004 served 7,911.

West Virginia Universal Pre-K includes early learning standards to guide administrators and teachers for implementing language and literacy practices. The premise for these standards is based on current research from national early childhood organizations such as The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) and the International Reading Association (IRA). The guiding premise behind West Virginia's Universal Pre-K early language and literacy development is that such skills develop within the context of children's social experiences and culture. The framework for implementation of language and literacy practices in West Virginia's Universal Pre-K focuses on three domains: *Listening and Speaking, Writing* and *Reading*. These domains are considered to be interrelated and interdependent (West Virginia Department of Education, West Virginia Universal Pre-K,n.d.).

Because West Virginia's Pre-K system is relatively new, there is minimal research regarding the effects on children's emergent literacy skills and on teacher implementation of language and literacy practices. However, West Virginia currently offers training and staff development related to language and literacy implementation. The most recent project involving West Virginia preschools is the Literacy Environment Enrichment Project (LEEP), which started in 2005 and will continue until 2012. This project was designed to help preschool teachers promote language and literacy in early childhood classrooms. Researchers are collecting data to determine its effectiveness in providing

content-rich professional development to support West Virginia preschool teachers. However, no formal research results have been published to date.

The most recent *State of Preschool 2008* states that the current enrollment of 4-year-olds in the West Virginia Universal Pre-K System is 12,404, which is 43% of the total four-year-old population (National Institute for Early Education Research, NIEER, 2008). In addition, the West Virginia Universal Pre-K System met seven out of 10 benchmarks on the Quality Standards Checklist (NIEER, 2008). The program fell short in the area of *Teacher Credentials and Training*, only meeting two of the required four benchmarks (*Teacher Specialized Training* and *Teacher In-service*).

Degree requirements vary in West Virginia depending on the preschool setting in which teachers are employed. Early childhood education teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree only when teaching in a public school preschool program. If the program is a community collaborative (which is mainly private settings), or a blended program (which is mainly public programs such as Head Start), the teacher is required to have only an associate's degree (Starting at 3, West Virginia, 2008).

Benchmarks related to teacher credentials and training are based on West Virginia's policy requirements and not actual practice. As a result, individual schools may exceed state policy requirements but others may fail to meet these same requirements. For example, many teachers may exceed these requirements by holding a master's degree or higher. Others may not meet the requirement and are working on a provisional basis with the agreement that the appropriate course work and steps are being taken to obtain certification. Consequently, the varying degree levels and levels of training contribute to varying levels of instructional quality within the classrooms. This divergence can

potentially affect children's level of preparedness for kindergarten and future grades. Parents, because of various social and economic circumstances, are continuing to turn over the education of their young children to these teachers and programs. As a result, it is imperative that these programs achieve a level of effective teacher preparedness that is consistent and reliable.

State-funded Universal Preschool

Currently, 38 of the 50 States have state-funded preschools. Of those 38 states, 31 have limited access due to income requirements (National Institute of Early Education Research, NIEER, 2008). States that do not have eligibility requirements have implemented a universal preschool model (preschool for all 4-year-olds). The three states leading in access, enrollment and quality that have fully implemented universal preschool programs are Florida, Georgia and Oklahoma. Three other states have committed to full implementation of universal preschool between 2012-2014: Illinois, New York and West Virginia (Ackerman, Barnett, Hawkinson, Brown, & McGonigle, 2009).

The majority of states implementing state-funded preschool programs offer services in different settings such as public schools, private childcare centers and Head Start settings. The number of children enrolled in each of these settings varies by state. Whereas utilizing these different settings can expand access for children and possibly increase enrollment by providing additional physical space, it can also prove difficult to unite so many differently organized programs under one common set of standards and guidelines (Ackerman, et al., 2009). Private childcare centers are historically accustomed to more autonomy when making curriculum and hiring decisions. Head Start programs

have federal standards and guidelines for curriculum and teacher qualifications. Encouraging these different settings to adhere to a common set of standards and guidelines is a challenging, albeit necessary, task for the strength and effectiveness of universal preschool programs. Failure to successfully unite these settings under one common umbrella can lead to differentiation in teacher preparation and create a lack of consistent standards for effective practice.

Due to the lack of national guidelines/standards for state-funded preschool, states have relied on the research and recommendations of organizations and associations such as The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). These two organizations endorse the concept that teachers who have specific training, knowledge and skills in early childhood education are more likely to provide richer language experiences, to provide more positive interactions and to promote higher quality learning environments.

Concerning best practices for early childhood education in language and literacy development, NAEYC's guidelines and recommendations are by far the most widely endorsed and used. NAEYC's evaluations include 10 quality standards. The first five standards focus on children's learning and development. Standard 3 (Teaching), in particular, addresses the implementation of effective teaching practices that are appropriate for eliciting language and literacy. Standard 6 (Teachers) similarly focuses on teacher knowledge of effective skills and practices and further notes the need for teacher self-monitoring and evaluation of performance. Additionally, it notes that teachers should have an associate's degree or equivalent. Standards 3 and 1 also describe

the importance of "relationships" and the nurturing of young children by implementing effective and appropriate teaching practices.

In addition to the standards, The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) issues policy statements on appropriate instructional practices, including the importance for teachers to have a knowledge base about core practices, particularly those identified by research. Together with the IRA (International Reading Association), NAEYC provides guidelines specific to appropriate literacy practices for reading and writing, such as developing phonemic awareness and print rich activities for children to see and use written language. However, considering that these are only guidelines and not required policies, many early childhood facilities vary greatly in interpretation, philosophy and implementation, thus differing in quality.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) is more specific with regard to teacher qualifications. It sets its philosophy and policies to 10 quality standards that are claimed to be research-based in regard to current research literature. Four of the ten focus on teacher quality, e.g. degree requirements (B.A.) and specialized training in early childhood education, with 15 clock hours of professional development required annually (National Institute of Early Education Research, NIEER, 2008). However, NIEER sets no specific standards regarding effective and appropriate teaching practices and defers to The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) on that matter. Because The National Institute for Early Education Research's (NIEER) benchmark requirements are only used as evaluation tools and are not adhered to by each state, there are many programs in place with a range of instructional quality.

Background for Statement of the Problem

One of the most prevalent social circumstances in the United States over the past decade has been the changing role of women in the home and the workforce, thus changing the structure and function of families. Women began leaving the home to enter the workforce in the late 18th and early 19th centuries due to industrialization and wars. As more and more women entered the workforce, equal opportunity and pay quickly became issues. In the 1960s, with the passing of the Equal Pay Act and the Civil Rights Act, women began to find their way into better jobs, which in turn became careers in medicine, law, finance and politics (Kessler-Harris, n.d.). Thus, the increase in the number of women in the workforce brought about an increased need for childcare facilities.

In addition to the increase in the number of families in which both parents work, during the past 20 years the United States has experienced an increase in the number of single-parent households due to divorce and unmarried single mothers (Klein, 2004). Similarly, single-parent households are also in need of early childcare services. These changing family structures resulted in parents relinquishing their role as educators to early childcare providers. Working parents tend to have less time at home with their children, which may lead to fewer opportunities to engage in language and literacy experiences.

This shift in family structure and function may have an impact on literacy development because it is a process embedded in children's social and educational environments and the consistent ways in which children are provided opportunities to become involved with books and writing materials (McLane & McNamee, 1991).

Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) refer to emergent literacy as not only the skills of oral language development, phonological awareness, print awareness and alphabetic knowledge, but also to the environments that support such skill development. They categorize these environments into two groups: home literacy environments and day care/preschool environments. Research consistently supports the importance of these environments for emergent language and literacy development of children (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Peisner-Feinberg, et al., 1999; Isaacs, 2008). As a result, the changes and shifts in home environments may affect changes and shifts in early childhood education.

As the family structure continues to change and shift, the need for a stable, secure, consistent school environment is more important than ever. Diminishing or inconsistent language and literacy opportunities within the home environment make those provided within early childcare programs increasingly important to the development and academic success of children.

Ten years ago, it was not uncommon for children ages birth to five to be educated solely in the home. Until formal schooling began, parents assumed the role of educators. As noted, however, parents are turning over their role as educator to those outside of the family, particularly to emerging preschool programs and their practitioners. There is now a strong dependence on the personnel in these programs to provide children with appropriate and effective instruction based on researched best practices.

Statement of the Problem

Are practitioners, as a whole, prepared to achieve emergent literacy instruction? Are they knowledgeable about effective instructional practices and are these being implemented? The major purpose of this study is to determine, through qualitative and

quantitative methodologies, the extent to which practitioners teaching 4-year-olds in West Virginia Pre-K settings perceive that they consistently implement effective and appropriate language and literacy practices their classroom instructional goals and classroom activities. Additional purposes of this study are to determine if the perceived implementation of such practices is related to years of preschool teaching experience, the different degree levels held by practitioners and the completion of language and literacy professional development activities with regard to their current preschool teaching assignment.

Effective and appropriate language and literacy practices in this study refer to intentional teaching practices grounded in current research. Descriptors of such language and literacy practices are found on the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey (LLPS),* the major data collection instrument for the current investigation. This survey was modified, by the researcher, from the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool, Pre-K (ELLCO Pre-K)*. The *ELLCO Pre-K* is an observation instrument specifically designed for use in center-based classrooms for 3- to 5-year-old children. It measures the support provided children for their language and literacy development. There are 19 items on the *ELLCO Pre-K* organized into five main sections: *Classroom Structure, Curriculum, The Language Environment, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing*. The *ELLCO Pre-K* can be used by researchers and administrators to evaluate the quality of language and literacy practices in early childhood classrooms or by teachers as a self-evaluation tool (Smith, Brady & Anastasopoulos, 2008).

The modifications of the *ELLCO Pre-K* resulted in 18 language and literacy

descriptors of effective language and literacy instructional practices. These are the basis for assessing the respondents' perceived level of implementation of the respective practices in their instructional settings. The *LLPS* was applied as a teacher self-evaluation tool in the current investigation.

Background for Rationale

High quality early childhood programs are cost effective and provide benefits to families and society by promoting higher achievement for children throughout their early education and into their formal education experience. This higher student achievement may contribute to fewer children receiving special education services, fewer dropouts and a more educated, prepared workforce. In addition, family and health services offered by most preschool programs can help strengthen families and the continued health of children. Thus, the quality of early childhood education provided children is not only a child or family issue, but also a significant community and societal issue (Winter & Kelley, 2008).

Today, more than 80 percent of all 4-year-olds attend a preschool program. Thirty-nine percent of these children attend a publicly funded program, such as state funded preschool, Head Start or special education programs. Data collected in 2006/07 indicated that West Virginia's statewide participation for 4-year-olds in state-funded preschool rose from 26 percent in 2002-03 to 43 percent in 2006-07 (Regional Educational Laboratory, REL, 2009). In the 2007-2008 school year, state funding for preschool rose across the country to almost $4.6 billion (National Institute for Early Education Research, NIEER, 2008). However, according to NIEER, the spending in most states is not adequate enough to ensure that programs meet all 10 benchmarks for

quality standards. Although enrollment in West Virginia Pre-K has increased, state funding per child had not increased significantly, from $4,250 in 2002 to $4,703 in 2007.

With enrollment in preschool programs and funding for such programs on the rise, policymakers, parents, educators and tax payers are examining the benefits, or lack thereof, for such expensive and expansive efforts to increase access and quality of early childhood education (Ackerman, Barnett, Hawkinson, Brown & McGonigle, 2009; Isaacs, 2008; Regional Education Laboratory Appalachia, 2009). Peisner-Feinberg, et al., (1999) report that the quality of early childhood education, specifically high quality classroom practices and teacher-child relationships, is related to the acquisition of cognitive and behavioral skills in the classroom that continue to affect development into kindergarten and often through the end of second grade. The supposition is that these programs have cost benefit if quality teaching and related practices can be ensured.

Rationale

Because of the large increase in these programs and the millions of children now being served at a critical time in their academic development, a need for an enormous number of qualified teachers has surfaced. Mead (2008) indicates that the quality of teacher-child interactions in the classroom is a better predictor of student outcomes than teacher education level or certification. As a result, the need for professional development to specifically target teacher-child interactions and research-based teaching practices to improve emergent literacy development is critical. Obviously, the training and preparation of teachers are major determinants in the provision of quality programs and instruction. Teachers with appropriate credentials and research-based training who will elicit language and literacy development are a necessity.

Research-based outcomes have been sparingly examined in the literature and are virtually non-existent for the West Virginia population. A beginning point for such research is to know if practitioners are knowledgeable about effective and appropriate teaching practices and to what extent they perceive these to be consistently implemented in their classrooms. Self-evaluation and personal performance monitoring can be the first approximation of progressive change.

More children are enrolled in preschool programs now than ever before. Currently, there are inconsistent, and in some cases, meager standards for the implementation of effective language and literacy instructional practices and for qualifications of early childhood professionals. The results of this study will be important to the respective practitioners and their immediate supervisors. These results may also prove beneficial for early childhood curriculum specialists and administrators, higher education faculty and administrators, state and local professional development staff and West Virginia policymakers who are responsible for funding and evaluating early childhood education programs. The results of this research will add to the existing literature on the implementation of language and literacy development in universal preschools in the United States in general and on the implementation of language and literacy development in West Virginia universal preschools in particular.

Additionally, early childhood curriculum specialists could ascertain the current practices of early childhood educators with regard to the implementation of appropriate language and literacy instruction. This knowledge may further their ability to evaluate programs and educators. Furthermore, these results should provide information that will

aid these personnel in structuring appropriate programs and developing strategies for future improvements in teaching practices via professional development activities.

By studying the types of language and literacy practices and the extent of their implementation in the classroom, teacher preparation faculty and administrators in higher education in West Virginia will be able to correlate their related curriculum to these findings, particularly in field-based practica and student teaching where initial instructional practices are born. Likewise, state and local professional development personnel could identify areas requiring further education and training as well as those areas not requiring as much emphasis. As a result, staff development could be targeted to better meet the professional development needs of West Virginia's early childhood practitioners.

Finally, the data generated by this investigation may also impact West Virginia policymaking. In the midst of the current economic crisis in the United States, state and local funds can be better allocated to meet the needs of the West Virginia Universal Pre-K System to improve program access and teacher quality. Policymakers may also be able to account for the consistencies or inconsistencies regarding teacher implementation of effective practices, thus emphasizing a need for more common and precise standards and requirements for teaching in the West Virginia Universal Pre-K System.

Research Questions

1) To what extent do West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceive that they implement effective instructional practices for teaching language and literacy in their current instructional routines?

2) To what extent does teaching experience influence how often West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceive that they implement effective instructional practices for teaching language and literacy in their current instructional settings?

3) What is the relationship between the level of academic training and the perceived level of implementation of effective and appropriate literacy and language practices by West Virginia prekindergarten teachers in their current instructional settings?

4) What is the relationship between the number of language and literacy professional development clocks hours completed and the perceived level of implementation of effective and appropriate literacy and language practices by West Virginia Pre-K teachers in their current instructional settings?

5) What are the overall perceived levels of abilities among West Virginia Pre-K practitioners to effectively teach language and literacy in their current instructional setting?

6) To what extent does the adaptation of the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* estimate internal consistency compare to the original version of the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation* in regard to the instructional practices items?

Methodology

The research methodology employed in this proposal will be a single-group, cross-sectional quantitative and qualitative survey design accompanied by two open-

ended questions intended to gather additional qualitative data. The survey instrument, *Language and Literacy Practices Survey,* was designed by the researcher with items keyed to a numerical rating scale to assess the perceived level of implementation of effective and appropriate language and literacy practices by West Virginia Universal Pre-K teachers in their classroom settings. The items on the survey were selected and modified by the researcher from the criteria and related instructional descriptors on the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool, Pre-K (ELLCO Pre-K). Once selected and arranged, these criteria were keyed to a 6-point numerical rating scale arranged from lowest (1) to highest (6) frequency of perceived implementation. Qualitative items were included to provide information about perceived constraints inhibiting effective language and literacy practices and to identify additional supports or professional development trainings needed to enhance these practices.

Limitations

1. The data collected for this research resulted from self-reported surveys that relied on the participants' willingness to accurately report.
2. Full access to the population was limited due to availability of participants' contact email addresses.

Delimitations

1. This study focused on 4-year-olds in West Virginia Pre-K programs.
2. This study focused on a specific geographical location: West Virginia.
3. This study utilized the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* developed by the researcher.

Summary

In summary, research shows that language and literacy development is a social and academic process in which adult interactions with young children are vital. The preschool years, ages three to five, provide an important window of opportunity to promote successful language and literacy development and to increase success in subsequent grades.

Because family structure and educational opportunities within the home are changing, it is of ever-growing importance that the adults entrusted to care for and teach our children are knowledgeable about effective and appropriate practices and are implementing these in their day-to-day instructional activities. Once known, such information and data can be organized, interpreted and applied for developing appropriate language and literacy strategies, including professional development opportunities based on current early childhood education research and best practices.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In recent years, the quality of early childhood education has been a significant item on the national reform agenda in the education community. Key topics such as emergent literacy, universal preschool, high-quality preschools and high quality personnel have become relevant research issues. As school districts examine ways to improve the learning of their young children and to close achievement gaps, they look to the quality of preschools and to the quality of preschool practitioners. These practitioners could create learning environments that would ensure and expand literacy development and acquisition for young children and give them a jumpstart on formal school readiness.

This literature review is comprised of four sections: *Emergent Literacy Skills*, *Home Literacy Environment*, *Preschool Literacy Environment* and *Quality of Instructional Practices*. These topics were chosen because of their unique contributions to children's reading acquisition. Quantitative and qualitative research outcomes are considered in each of the four sections along with implications for the current investigation.

Emergent Literacy Skills

In this section, the predictive nature of emergent literacy skills gained in preschool is discussed. Emergent literacy includes four major components: oral language (expressive and receptive language, such as vocabulary development), phonological awareness (rhyming, blending, segmenting), print awareness and alphabetic knowledge (letter-sound knowledge). Questions abound about how these components, singularly or in combination, influence reading acquisition. How do the components of emergent

literacy, together or separately, affect early reading and writing achievement? Which emergent literacy skills have the greatest effect on reading and writing achievement? If these emergent literacy components do positively impact reading and writing achievement, does this impact continue into upper grades? Recent research has sought to answer these and other questions and to determine best practices for developing such emergent literacy skills.

A considerable amount of research exists about the importance of emergent literacy skills and future reading success in kindergarten and first grade. Most research, however, focuses on isolated specific skills and the impact on reading and/or writing success. Since emergent literacy consists of multiple components (oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness and alphabetic knowledge), research that examines just one component is not providing a complete representation. This section begins with research that examines the effects of multiple components and then reviews research that considers these components separately.

An understanding of the broad concepts of emergent literacy and how each component works together is necessary. Missall, et al. (2007) examined multiple preschool early literacy skills and their predictive validity for subsequent development of such skills in kindergarten and first grade. One hundred forty-three children were given the Early Literacy Individual Growth and Development Indicators (EL-IGDIs) to assess language and literacy outcomes such as Picture Naming, Rhyming and Alliteration. Several times each year, between preschool and the first grade, subjects were given standardized assessments for important literacy skills such as Letter Naming and Letter-Sound Correspondence to Phoneme Segmentation and Passage Reading.

These measures (fall, winter and spring) were significantly related to the end-of-year kindergarten reading assessment ($p < .01$). Additionally, all preschool measures were significantly correlated with the end-of-year first grade reading scores ($p<.01$). The results indicated that emergent literacy skills acquired in preschool transfer to student reading achievement in kindergarten and through the end of first grade. Therefore, it is beneficial to children's reading success to acquire these critical literacy skills.

Similarly, Lonigan, Burgess and Anthony (2000) argued that there is a predictive relationship between emergent literacy and subsequent phonetic skills and letter knowledge. Subjects were 96 younger preschoolers between the ages of 25 and 61 months and 97 older preschoolers between 48 and 64 months. Each group was given initial (Time 1) and follow-up (Time 2) standardized measures that tested a variety of literacy skills such as phonological sensitivity, oral language development, letter knowledge, print concepts and decoding skills.

In the younger group, phonological sensitivity predicted oral language and letter knowledge ($R^2 = .25$). In turn, oral language and letter knowledge predicted print concepts ($R^2 = .23$). In the older group, Time 2 phonological sensitivity was perfectly predicted by phonological sensitivity at Time 1 ($R^2 = 1.00$). In addition, Time 2 letter knowledge was predicted by Time 1 letter knowledge only ($R^2 = .72$). Interestingly, the only significant predictors of reading were phonological sensitivity and letter knowledge at Time 2 ($R^2 = .54$) accounting for over one-half of the variability.

The results of these two studies indicate the impact that development of early literacy skills can have in future grades. The authors' data make an argument for assessing children in preschool or kindergarten to possibly identify those at risk for later

reading problems. These results also suggest that early literacy skills in the preschool years have substantial predictive relationships to later reading skills, especially phonological sensitivity and letter knowledge, but more so for older preschoolers. If emergent literacy skills are linked to reading achievement in kindergarten and first grade, then the same linkage can be applied to the lack of emergent literacy skills.

Considering that Lonigan, Burgess and Anthony (2000) found phonological sensitivity and letter knowledge to be substantial predictors of reading, it is worthwhile to examine this relationship in other research contexts. Koehler (1996) examined the effects of phonological awareness intervention combined with letter naming instruction on reading acquisition of at-risk first graders. Participants were 37 children with reading difficulties who were divided into three groups to receive instruction in either phonological awareness, or phonological awareness combined with letter naming or reading.

Subjects' skills were measured using classroom assessments and standardized reading comprehension and fluency tests. These measures were given in a pre- and post-test design to determine change between groups. Significance was found between group and score on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test, Word Attack subtest (WRMWA) post-test only ($p < .05$). Those with the highest scores on the WRMWA benefited from the reading only intervention, whereas children with scores in the mid-range benefited from the phonological awareness intervention. Finally, those with the lowest initial WRMWA scores benefited most from the combination of phonological awareness and letter naming.

What these results mean is that children with extremely low initial composite reading scores benefited the most from phonological awareness that included letter naming. Thus, those with high initial reading composite scores may have already attained a sufficient level of proficiency in the early literacy skills needed to benefit from reading instruction. As a result, these learners only required additional conventional reading instruction to progress with their reading acquisition.

Confirmation of the importance of phonological awareness was given by Gettelfinger (2000) who examined cognitive processes as predictors of reading success for 105 students from an elementary and middle school in East Tennessee. Ages ranged from 5 to 12 years old. The cognitive processes included phonological awareness. These processes were used to predict word reading, phonetic decoding, comprehension and reading achievement.

The Test of Dyslexia and Dysgraphia (TODD) was given to examine underlying cognitive processes and reading components noted above. The TerraNova achievement test was used to assess reading achievement. Results from the TODD indicated Phonological Awareness accounted for 76% of the variance in Letter-Word Calling and 83% of the variance in Decoding. Phonological Awareness also accounted for 54% of the variance in Reading Comprehension. Results from the TerraNova achievement test indicated Phonological Awareness as the best predictor of spelling (21% of the variance) and the only significant predictor of the Reading Composite (49% of the variance).

These results confirm, as did the previous studies cited, the importance for phonological awareness as a predictor of reading ability. Implications for teachers and specialists when planning day-to-day instruction or interventions are apparent. There is

evidence of the necessity for intensive interventions with children having phonological processing problems. In the current investigation, this aspect will be examined in regard to the extent that practitioners are using informal and formal methods to engage children in building sound awareness and to use the sounds of language apart from written meanings.

It is clear that phonological awareness is a valid predictor of reading ability of older children, but what about younger children? Paulson (2004) compared the phonological awareness skills that lead to phonemic awareness for 80 four and five-year-old children who had not yet entered kindergarten (39, 4-year-olds and 41, 5-year-olds). Children's phonological and phonemic awareness were measured by adapting three related measures of literacy achievement. The levels of linguistic complexity within the component skills of rhyming (detection and production), alliteration (detection and categorization), blending and segmenting (syllables, onset and rime units and phonemes) were examined. The relationship between the variables was measured with several inferential analyses including multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Results indicated that the combined dependent variables (rhyming, alliteration, blending and segmenting and total composite score) were significantly affected by age (four and five year olds, $p < .05$). Also, each dependent variable when examined separately was significantly affected by age (four and five year olds). Dependent variables for half-ages were analyzed and these increments were also significant ($p < .005$). The increase in half-year scores indicated that, as children get older, they may be more responsive to phonological awareness activities.

The Guttman Scale was used to determine an order of attainment of the phonological awareness sub skills. Based on a scale from 1 (easiest) to 10 (difficult), blending and segmenting syllables and rhyme detection are less difficult. Alliteration, rhyme production and blending are moderately difficult with segmenting onsets and rimes; blending phonemes and segmenting phonemes are the most difficult. The assumption is that, if students demonstrate mastery of a more difficult skill, it is likely they have mastered the previous, less difficult skill.

These results support the argument that literacy skills are developing at an early age and also identify a progression of development from phonological to phonemic awareness. Larger linguistic units of syllables were more developed at a younger age than smaller linguistic units such as phonemes. This continuum of development can assist in the development of curricula for early childhood programs and enhance instructional practices. Because 4- and 5-year-olds are beginning to develop literacy skills, instruction should match the development of these skills or be consistent with their zone of proximal development as previously described. Preschool teachers can apply this theory by guiding children during literacy activities to provide the necessary amount of support that promotes understanding and retention. It will be informative to know if the practitioners in the current investigation are quite aware of this progression and if they have the associated practices to further its development through rhyming alliteration and sound segmenting activities.

In addition to phonological awareness and alphabetic knowledge, oral language, which includes receptive and expressive speech, contributes to future success in reading

achievement. The relationship of receptive and expressive language and emergent literacy skills offers additional insight into predicting reading success.

Dundorf (1999) examined the relationship between receptive and expressive language skills, including language complexity, from word reception and expression to expository text reception and expression. Subjects were 71 children ranging in age from 40 to 68.5 months. Factors were coded to reflect high, middle and low ability levels. Results indicated that significantly fewer children had high expressive ability while at the same time having low receptive ability ($p < .001$). This finding suggests that receptive language is a precursor to expressive language and the two language factors are highly correlated ($r = 0.8$). The relationship of receptive and expressive language to emergent literacy skills indicated that receptive language was a significant predictor of emergent literacy ($p < .01$), rather than expressive language. The implications suggest that language comprehension – ability to listen for similar and different sounds and to identify individual sounds, syllables and words – is a key component to development of emergent literacy skills and future literacy achievement.

In a longitudinal study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Early Child Care Research Network (2005), the role of oral language in reading acquisition was examined. Researchers considered a more comprehensive set of language skills that included vocabulary knowledge, grammar and semantics. Subjects were 1,137 children followed from preschool (3-years-old) through third grade. It was hypothesized that broad oral language skills would be predictive of reading achievement in first and third grade. Two standardized measures were used to

assess broad language ability along with an additional standardized measure to assess vocabulary knowledge.

Results indicated that comprehensive language ability, without vocabulary, was directly and indirectly related to reading achievement in first and third grade. Broad oral language measures at three years and 54 months were correlated (r = .73). These early language measures were also correlated with first grade (ranging from r = .35 to r = .58) and third grade measures (ranging from r = .49 to r = .57). These findings suggest the importance of early language in building a foundation for later reading achievement. However, early childhood educators must move beyond isolated vocabulary instruction to more comprehensive language instruction that includes semantics and grammar. Vocabulary acquisition is a key instructional area in the West Virginia investigation. Whether practitioners are conducting isolated instruction of word acquisition or comprehensive, age appropriate instructional strategies such as "word wall," dictation, observational drawings and personal experiences with words will be examined.

Even though literacy is defined as including reading and writing, thus far research has examined only the relationship of individual skills to emergent literacy development and reading achievement. Madison (1991) included both domains as she employed a developmental model of print awareness to determine whether it was substantiated by the reading and writing behaviors of 4- and 5-year-olds.

Print awareness was measured to determine subjects' awareness of book orientation, directionality of print, words, letters, space and punctuation. In addition, children were assessed to determine their understanding of the function, form and conventions of print.

Data were collected individually with 33 children (17 4-year-olds and 16 5-year-olds) at the beginning and end of the school year. Results for print concepts showed that 5-year-olds performed significantly better than 4-year-olds ($F = 10.20$, $p < .003$) and both groups' tested significantly higher for the second testing than the first ($F = 63.88$, $p < .000$).

Five-year-olds also demonstrated more knowledge about reading and print than did 4-year-olds ($F = 7.93$, $p < .008$) and both groups' scores were significantly greater for the second assessments ($F = 93.00$, $p < .000$). However, on subtests related to the three levels of print awareness, 5-year-olds scored higher than 4-year-olds only on function and form. No significant difference occurred for conventions of print between the two age groups. A significant interaction indicated that 5-year-olds had a greater tendency for growth than 4-year-olds ($p < .0521$). The author suggests this interaction could be due to the larger number of real readers in the 5-year-old group during the second assessment. These data imply that, as children become real readers, their growth in knowledge about print conventions is accelerated. A caution here is that there is room for experiential and maturational growth between the assessment periods. A five- to eight-month period of maturation for children between the ages of four and six years can be a significant predictor of achievement, regardless of intervention and experience. The West Virginia investigation will, in fact, be examining practices of teachers with children in these age ranges and will need to account for this variable.

These data resulted in a developmental model proposing three levels of knowledge about reading and print awareness: Function of Print (print represents speech and has meaning), Form of Print (interest in letters and letter-sound relationships) and

Conventions of Print (book handling skills, book knowledge and word reading). This model signifies a connection between reading and writing within a hierarchy of developmental emergent literacy stages. The implication is that there is a need for practitioners to be aware of these connections and to match instruction to the developmental level of children. Discrete skills instruction that focuses on higher-level skills such as conventions of print will unlikely prove effective unless lower level skills are accomplished and children are functioning at a concurrent literacy stage. In the current investigation, these discrete skills are represented by each descriptor on the survey. Teachers' perceived understanding and application of this level of instruction will be a particular focus.

Current research, considering emergent literacy skills separately or in combination, confirms the importance of early childhood education. Young children are indeed developing pre-reading and writing skills before formal, conventional instruction takes place. Therefore, the richer their daily experiences are in the areas of oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness and alphabetic knowledge, the more success they likely will have as readers and writers. The current investigation aims to examine all four components and whether these are being implemented effectively and appropriately by West Virginia Pre-K teachers. It is presumed that, if teachers are implementing language and literacy instruction appropriately and consistently, children will have greater success in reading and writing.

Home Literacy Environment

The home environment is one context that assists in the development of language and emergent literacy. This section describes research that focuses on the contribution of

the family and its effects on language and literacy development in young children. Based on Vygotsky's theory, young children develop language and literacy skills through social interactions with adults. This makes families and other adults providing care and instruction crucial partners in the language and literacy development of children.

Emergent literacy refers to the set of skills involving reading and writing and also to the environments in which these skills are developed. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) categorize literacy environments into Home Literacy Environment and Daycare/Preschool Environment. The home literacy environment plays a crucial role in the future academic success of children because of the naturalistic interactions between parent and child. The home environment can potentially provide a developmentally sensitive context for children to learn language and literacy skills (Storch & Whitehurst, 2001). Many home environments, however, have changed. The increase in households with single parents or two working parents, and those with low to poverty level socioeconomic status, have limited children's access to varied, language and literacy-rich experiences within the home. With language and literacy being developmental processes embedded in the contexts of children's social and educational environments, it is important to know how these contexts support and engage young learners in their early literacy development.

The relationship between home environment and children's language and literacy skills was examined by Bennett, Weigel and Martin (2002) with 143 families and their preschool aged children. These researchers examined three theoretical models of the family's contribution to language and literacy acquisition of young children: *Family as Educator, Resilient Family and Parent-Child Care Partnership*.

The *Family as Educator* model describes the family as an educating agent, positively affecting children's language and literacy development. Parent involvement was identified through a survey that assessed their literacy related activities such as reading aloud and telling stories. Additionally, parents' reading beliefs were assessed along with how much time they spent reading to their child, how much they read, how often their children saw them writing and what level of formal education they had attained (Bennett, Weigel & Martin, 2002).

The *Resilient Family* model refers to the family's ability to control every day stressors (e.g., economic strain, demands on family members, family emotional climate) and to manage resources and to function in a manner that promotes and supports children's well being, thus allowing them the opportunity to benefit from formal instruction at school. Again, surveys were completed to identify engagement in family practices and routines such as having dinner together. In addition, adequacies of family resources such as food and external support were assessed to determine how often minor hassles occur within the family and the perceptions of the severity of these hassles.

The *Parent-Child Care Partnership* model proposes that parents who actively support schools' efforts and have positive relationships with teachers and the school are more successful in promoting children's language and literacy development. Parents' attitudes about involvement with their child's teachers and school were measured. These measures included how often parents helped the school, how often they communicated with their child's teacher or the school and how they felt about their interactions with teachers.

The relationship between the three family models and four selected language and literacy outcomes of the children (children's book knowledge, writing skills, receptive language skills and expressive language skills) was examined. These skills were assessed using task analysis and standardized tests.

Results indicated that only the *Family as Educator* model was significantly related to book knowledge and writing skills ($p < .01$) as well as receptive and expressive language ($p < .01$). Researchers suggested possible reasons why the other two models were not significant, such as the sample being restricted to middle income families. Different results may have occurred with lower income families. In addition, the study examined these family models with preschool-aged children instead of older children. Researchers suggested that the *Family as Educator* has a greater impact on younger children because these children are more parent-dependent and because of the window of opportunity for learning language and emergent literacy skills at this age. This means that the home environment can contribute significantly to children's language and literacy development at an early age. Thus, children being provided language and literacy opportunities in the home at a young age are more likely to succeed in future reading endeavors. The current investigation will also focus on the preschool age population and whether teachers are providing the appropriate opportunities for language and literacy development.

Senechal and LeFevre (2002) examined the relationship between parental involvement and children's literacy from the preschool years through third grade. Included were 159 kindergarten and 58 first grade children. Parents completed a survey with two measures of parental home literacy experiences – frequency of parental

instruction in reading and writing and parents' storybook exposure. They also completed a questionnaire about home literacy experiences, which included items such as number of children's books in the home, frequency of library visits and the age at which parents started reading to their child. Children were assessed in the areas of receptive language, phonological awareness, emergent literacy and reading achievement using a variety of assessments.

The two types of home literacy experiences examined were differentially related to child outcomes. Storybook reading was related to children's receptive language development ($R^2 = .28$, $p < .001$) and parental instruction was related to emergent literacy skills ($R^2 = .41$, $p < .05$) but not directly related to phonological awareness. In addition, early parent involvement was not directly linked to subsequent reading performance; however, indirect relations were present. For example, parental instruction accounted for variance in emergent literacy, which in turn accounted for variance in first grade reading. Also, storybook reading accounted for variance in receptive language, which in turn accounted for variance in third grade reading. In summary, literacy experiences in the home, whether directly or indirectly related to reading success, support development of necessary skills that have been shown to positively impact future reading success. Once again, the contributions of the home environment to the language and literacy development of children cannot be underestimated. Unfortunately, these effects are not so easily accounted for when children initially enter formal schooling.

When examining home literacy environments, the Senechal and LeFevre (2002) study looked at direct reading and writing instruction and storybook reading. Roberts, Jurgens and Burchinal (2005) examined more specific home literacy practices such as

shared book reading frequency, maternal book reading strategies, child's enjoyment of reading and maternal sensitivity. A global measure of the quality and responsiveness of the home environment was also considered in relation to language and emergent literacy skills of children aged three to five.

In this study, 72 African American children from low-income homes with mothers as the primary guardian were interviewed annually when children were between 18 months and five years of age. Mothers were asked about the frequency of shared book reading and the child's enjoyment of book reading. They were also videotaped and coded to examine maternal book reading strategies such as simple description, elaborate description, prediction/inferences and letter-sound relationships. Maternal sensitivity was coded to include levels of warmth, sensitivity, responsiveness, encouragement of initiative, stimulation value and elaborateness. HOME, a global measure of the quality and responsiveness of the home environment, was also used which includes, for example, emotional and verbal responsiveness, acceptance of the child's behavior, organization of the environment and academic and language stimulation.

The frequency of shared book reading and child enjoyment of reading were not significantly correlated with language and literacy outcomes. Maternal sensitivity and maternal use of book reading strategies were significantly related to children's receptive vocabulary ($r = .47$, $p < .05$). The global measure of the home environment was the most consistent predictor of children's language and literacy skills. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that the home literacy environment involves a variety of characteristics outside a specific set of skills and literacy activities. A home environment that fosters an overall positive and supportive environment for growth and development concurrently supports

language and literacy development that equips children with the necessary skills and attitudes to become successful readers and writers.

Taking a closer look at maternal characteristics and how these may impact child development, Weigel, Martin and Bennett (2009) researched literacy beliefs of 79 mothers and their connections with the home literacy environment and their pre-school children's literacy development. A combination of interviews and parent questionnaires were used to assess parental literacy beliefs and home literacy environment. In addition, children's emergent literacy skills were assessed using a print knowledge task and an emergent writing task requiring them to write their names and their age. Two clusters resulted from the parental literacy belief questionnaire – Facilitative and Conventional mothers. Facilitative mothers believe the best way to help their children perform better in school is by teaching them at home. They read to their children often and expressed positive attitudes toward reading, such as reading helps children learn vocabulary, gain knowledge and improve communication skills. Conventional mothers believe the role of educating their child lies with the school rather than in the home. They read to their children less frequently and expressed negative attitudes toward reading, such as children are too young to benefit from shared book reading and they have difficulty engaging their children in shared book reading.

When comparing these two clusters to the home literacy environments, it was determined that Facilitative mothers provided additional home literacy activities, more experiences with books and literacy materials at a young age, spent more time engaged in language and literacy related activities and demonstrated positive attitudes toward literacy. Conventional mothers, on the other hand, held a less positive attitude toward

literacy and therefore were less frequently involved with their children and in their own literacy activities. Conventional mothers also reported more frustration and challenges when trying to engage in literacy activities with their children.

Results also indicated a relationship between mothers' literacy beliefs and children's emergent literacy skills. Children of Facilitative mothers had greater print knowledge and interest in reading books than those of Conventional mothers. The characteristics of the Family as Educator model are similar to the characteristics of Facilitative mothers. Clearly, parents who have positive attitudes toward literacy convey literacy in a positive light and share their interest in reading with their children. Taking an active role in providing opportunities for children to have experiences with language and literacy provides children with a foundation for future instruction.

The importance of family/parents to the language and literacy development of young children was examined by Dodici, Draper and Peterson (2003). Twenty-seven families living in low-income households were observed and videotaped during simulated daily experiences. Data were collected when the children were at ages 14, 24 and 36 months and prior to kindergarten. Parent-child interactions were examined through semistructured play, teaching and frustration activities.

During play activities, parents were instructed to play with their child as they wished but were to use three bags of toys in the order given to them by researchers (Bag 1, 2 and 3). Parents were given a choice between two teaching activities appropriate to the three age groups and asked to teach their child how to accomplish an activity such as stacking blocks for the 14-month olds. The frustration activity was only completed at 14- and 24-months. Each session was videotaped and coded on a 5-point scale (higher scores

represented better quality). Items coded included infant/toddler language, parent language, emotional tone, joint attention, parental guidance and parental responsiveness.

In addition to the coding of the videotaped sessions, children's receptive vocabulary, letter-word identification and phonemic awareness skills were assessed. The quality of parent-child interactions was correlated with the assessment outcomes. Results indicated significant mean correlations between receptive vocabulary and quality of parent-child interactions at 36-months ($M = .63$, $p < .01$) and at 24-months ($M = .47$, $p < .05$). Also, significant mean correlations were found for letter-word identification and quality of parent-child interactions at 24-months ($M = .51$, $p < .01$) and for phonemic awareness and quality of parent-child interactions at 36-months ($M = .48$, $p < .05$). These correlations indicate that parent-child interactions are related to early literacy skills of receptive vocabulary, symbolic representation and phonemic analysis. The authors contended that providing literacy activities such as reading to children influences later language and literacy skills and that everyday interactions and involvement can positively impact children's academic growth and success. This is consistent with Vygotsky and his beliefs about the quality of children's social interactions with the adults in their world and the influence on language and literacy development.

The findings of these studies illustrate the importance of family contributions in supporting the language and literacy development of their children. Some parents may be practicing beneficial literacy activities consistently, whereas others may be doing so inconsistently or not at all. This difference only strengthens the argument for appropriate and effective classroom language and literacy practices in preschool settings because

more and more children are spending the majority of their day in a preschool/child care setting instead of at home.

It is important to note that the investigations cited generally relied on relationship data and correlation statistics. Although significant relationships were noted for various studies, these outcomes do not necessarily mean that a cause and effect relationship existed among the variables. Another methodological weakness of these studies is that the correlation values reported, for the most part, were not accompanied by effect size comparison measures. These measures are important indicators of the magnitude of a significant r-value, or the amount of variation that is accounted for by the variables or predictors in the studies.

What this may mean is that although there are overall correlations of these family variables to selected outcomes of children's literacy progression, there is likely to be a good deal of variation in these measures from family to family. Some parents may be practicing beneficial literacy activities consistently in the family, and others may be doing so invariantly or not at all. Again, this strengthens the importance of the time that young children spend in their preschool setting. Given that the implementation of appropriate language and literacy practices in the preschool setting is easier to identify and influence, data analyzed from the current investigation will identify areas of strength and weakness to enhance professional development interventions.

Preschool Literacy Environment

The need for consistent language and literacy activities and opportunities in the preschool environment is more important than ever. Research indicates that early emergent literacy skills contribute to the success of developing future literacy skills, such

as reading and writing. In addition, not all children are provided consistent language and literacy experiences within the home environment. Thus, preschool environments need to ensure that these skills are being cultivated. Unfortunately, even language and literacy experiences provided in the preschool environment can vary greatly due to different types of programs and the quality of such programs.

This section begins by discussing the impact that the preschool environment has on children's language and literacy development. Next, this review outlines the types of preschool programs and some of their inherent inequalities. The researcher then reviewed literature related to three successful state-funded universal preschool programs. The discussion concludes with research demonstrating the importance of quality within preschool settings.

In a study of 156 preschoolers, Connor, Morrison and Slominski (2006) assessed alphabet knowledge, letter-word recognition and vocabulary. They also conducted and videotaped classroom observations to determine the different types of literacy activities and instruction. Observations were coded by time spent in academic and non-academic activities such as language-literacy, math, music and playtime.

Because children were engaged in different types of activities simultaneously, researchers examined all activities, including teacher-led instruction, teacher-child led instruction and child-led instruction (independent or peer activities). Teacher-led instruction included letter writing, letter naming and rhyming. Teacher-child led and child-led instruction included language and comprehension skills such as vocabulary, listening comprehension and reading comprehension.

Results of this study indicated that teacher-child led activities positively predicted alphabet and letter-word recognition and vocabulary. The researchers maintained that small group instruction in language and literacy related activities greatly impacted children' emergent literacy outcomes. The implications of this study support the use of varied instructional strategies that target a broader array of language and literacy skills instead of narrow, skill-specific instruction. It was also apparent that children benefited more when they were involved along with the teacher in the instructional activities. Certainly, in the current investigation, the practices of the teachers will be a major focus in regard to the level of child-led and teacher-led activities and the related structures in the classroom environments. Additionally, factors will be assessed related to book and print access, including strategic location of these resources. The pertinence of these resources to the learning goals and interests of the children will also be examined.

Although research indicates the importance of multiple literacy activities involving children in the preschool environment, many preschool programs vary greatly regarding literacy implementation and practices. McGill-Franzen, Lanford and Adams (2002) examined, through naturalistic inquiry and case study contrasts, five urban early childhood programs. Of the five programs evaluated, three were publicly funded: Head Start, child development day care and pre-kindergarten. Two were private, non-profit: religion-affiliated nursery school and university daycare.

Data sources were classroom observations, transcribed audiotapes of classroom literacy interactions, transcribed interviews with focal children and teachers, classroom curriculum materials, children's work samples and state, federal and local guidelines for

program curricula and philosophy. Results indicated that, overall, children spent between 20 and 60 minutes per day engaged in literacy activities.

These results showed inequalities in the amount and types of resources provided to children in each program. Publicly funded programs (PFPs) had fewer numbers of books that were limited in content, topics, genres and quality compared to the private programs (PPs). The same was true of writing materials. Access to print was also limited in the PFPs compared to the PPs. Documents and children's work samples in the PPs placed a high value on literacy and explicitly encouraged its development. Children in the PFPs were offered a less challenging and culturally relevant approach to curriculum and teaching, whereas children in PPs experienced literacy through a more culturally relevant and purposeful approach that conveyed a sense of classroom community.

Although the guidelines and missions for these preschool programs are to help children succeed and give them a jump-start for school, the inequities in literacy related opportunities are apparent. Findings indicated a great deal of difference between the types of programs and the literacy opportunities afforded their children. The PFPs were governed by federal, state and local agencies, and the PPs were governed by a board of directors that consisted of parents as well as educators. When comparing these programs, it appears as though parent involvement in private programs contributes to a richer, more culturally relevant literacy curriculum. It is questionable whether PFPs, designed specifically to assist children of low-income families, may actually be providing an adequate literacy environment. In the West Virginia study, the researcher will be in search of compelling evidence that informal and formal instructional practices are in

place to expand all children's learning, including spoken vocabulary and related word meanings and obtaining information about potential differences in these practices across schools and level of training.

The earliest program designed to assist children of low-income families is Head Start, which was established in 1965 as part of the War on Poverty. The findings of the previous study by McGill-Franzen, Lanford and Adams (2002) portrayed a Head Start program that provided little opportunity for children's engagement and exposure to literacy concepts and activities. Similarly, *Head Start Impact Study: First Year Findings* (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2005) found that Head Start had relatively small to moderate effects or no significant effect on the assessed literacy outcomes. Three and 4-year-olds were administered direct assessments in the fall and spring in the following literacy domains: *Pre-Reading* (letter-word identification and letter naming), *Pre-Writing* (perceptual motor skills), *Vocabulary* (receptive vocabulary and color naming) and *Oral Comprehension and Phonological Awareness* (completing sentences with appropriate words and a phoneme deletion task). There were significant positive impacts for Pre-Reading, Pre-Writing and Vocabulary although the effect sizes ranged from .10 to .24. There was no significant impact for oral comprehension and phonological awareness.

Another aspect examined was the impact of Head Start on reducing the achievement gap in children's pre-reading, pre-writing and vocabulary skills when compared to national norms. By the end of the first year the achievement gap for pre-reading skills was reduced by 47% for three-year-olds and 45% for 4-year-olds. For 4-year-olds, the gap in pre-writing skills was reduced by 28% and for three-year-olds, the

gap in vocabulary skills was reduced by 8% when compared to national norms. These results meant that children attending a Head Start program will enter kindergarten better prepared and will be more likely to succeed than at-risk children not attending a Head Start programs. A smaller difference between the achievement of at-risk kindergarteners and typical kindergarteners would allow the former to benefit more from instructional practices in language and literacy.

Although the Head Start study does not show the impact anticipated, it only assessed data from the first year of the study. Future research is designed to follow these children through third grade. Effects may be relatively small for children after one year of Head Start, but this one year may provide the emergent literacy skills needed to be successful later in school. However, benefits may not become evident until more formal reading and writing instruction takes place and related learning takes place.

Even though the findings of *Head Start Impact Study* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005) and McGill-Franzen, Lanford and Adams (2002) suggested that publicly funded early childhood programs are not successful regarding school readiness, Universal Preschool programs are attracting considerable attention. Research has identified some of these programs as providing adequate opportunities and experiences for children in the areas of language and literacy. Of the several states implementing Universal Preschool programs, Georgia was the first, beginning in 1993. Oklahoma's universal preschool program (beginning in 1998) leads the nation in providing access for all 4-year-olds. It is also considered to be one of the highest in quality according to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). In comparison to Georgia and Oklahoma, West Virginia is a relatively new universal

preschool program beginning in 2002 with full implementation expected in 2012. Although West Virginia's program is comparatively new, it is experiencing success with both enrollment and quality, meeting seven out of ten benchmarks on NIEER's Quality Standards Checklist.

Georgia State University, Andrew Young School of Policy Studies (Henry, et al., 2005) examined the success Georgia Pre-K has had in kindergarten and first grade in a longitudinal study between 2001 and 2004. Direct assessments were administered to children at the beginning and end of preschool, at the beginning of kindergarten and at the end of first grade. These included e.g., receptive vocabulary, letter/word recognition and expressive language.

Results indicated that initial receptive vocabulary mean scores were 92.9, below the national norm (100), but at the end of kindergarten these matched the national norm with a mean score of 100.7. However, these skills fell below the national norm at the end of first grade with a mean score of 98.0. Letter/word recognition skills were above the national norm in preschool (102.7) and increased by the end of kindergarten (112.7). However, these skills dropped slightly again by the end of first grade (111.1). Expressive language was below the norm in preschool (90.7) but continued to increase to 98.8 by the end of first grade. This indicated that children who attended Georgia Pre-K programs made gains in emergent literacy skills that positively affected their success in kindergarten. However, similar gains were not found in first grade. Such results could suggest that standards are not aligned in early childhood programs across grades from preschool through first grade.

Lamy, Barnett and Jung (2005) presented similar benefits for children attending Oklahoma's Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program. The authors questioned whether attendance in the state-funded preschool program at age four had an impact on children's academic skills at kindergarten entry. Receptive vocabulary, print awareness and phonological awareness were assessed. Results indicated that participation in Oklahoma's program impacted receptive vocabulary and print awareness but not phonological awareness. This study was a part of a larger multi-state study including Michigan, New Jersey, South Carolina and West Virginia.

Results for West Virginia Pre-K were similar indicating that children's participation in the program positively impacted receptive vocabulary and print awareness but not phonological awareness. Children in West Virginia's Pre-K program improved their vocabulary scores by 7% and their print awareness scores by 56% over the course of the preschool year with effect sizes of .27 and .93 respectively.

These three studies shed a positive light on universal preschool programs. Although Georgia, Oklahoma and West Virginia have seen positive results for children's literacy outcomes, they are ranked differently in quality by The National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER, 2008) with Georgia meeting 8 out of 10, Oklahoma 9 out of 10 and West Virginia 7 out of 10 quality benchmarks. Even with increases in enrollment and kindergarten entry scores, quality of such preschool programs remains a crucial variable to future academic success of children.

Further evidence about the quality of language and literacy instruction in preschool classrooms was provided by Justice, Mashburn, Hamre and Pianta (2007). Their goals were to determine the quality of language and literacy instruction in publicly

funded preschool programs serving at-risk children, to examine characteristics of teachers, classrooms and instructional lessons that contribute to the quality of language and literacy instruction and to determine the relationship between teachers' accurate and consistent implementation of curriculum and the quality of language and literacy instruction.

Participants were 135 preschool teachers. Each taught in state-funded preschool programs serving four-year-old children exhibiting social and/or emotional risks. Beforehand, teachers attended a two-day workshop on the quality of professional development, language and literacy development and lesson development. Teachers' accurate and consistent implementation of curriculum was determined through monthly videotaping of a language or literacy lesson. Several assessments were given that focused on their beliefs, management practices and quality of language and literacy instruction provided.

A total of 83 literacy and 52 language lessons were coded. Overall literacy instruction was low in quality with a language scale rating of 1 or 2 (on a 7-point scale) for 59 of the 135 (54%) lessons and a language scale rating of 1 or 2 for 60 of the 135 (44%) lessons. Two characteristics of teachers predicted the quality of language and literacy instruction: holding an advanced degree and the number of language and literacy development workshops teachers had attended.

These results indicate that well sequenced lessons and related procedures did not ensure the quality of language and literacy instruction. The implication for professional development is that scripted, direct instruction must be balanced with dynamic, engaging, teacher-child interactions.

Primarily, the studies reviewed here were based on descriptive and qualitative data but do indicate that preschool environments play an important role in the development of language and literacy skills. Children attending a preschool program are more likely to be successful in future grades in the areas of reading and writing. However, different types of preschool programs vary in quality of instruction. These studies support the need for quality teachers in addition to quality programs.

Quality of Instructional Practices

The quality of language and literacy instruction relies greatly on the knowledge, education and practices of teachers. However, as indicated previously by Justice, Mashburn, Hamre and Pianta (2007), teachers can demonstrate perceived characteristics of quality such as curriculum fidelity, be highly educated and be knowledgeable about the importance of language and literacy development, and yet they may not provide quality language and literacy instruction. There is no question that high quality preschools need high quality teachers, but what are the distinguishing characteristics of high-quality teachers?

The importance of emergent literacy skills is apparent. However, language and literacy practices within preschool environments are not consistently implemented with high quality and with great frequency. The fourth and final section, Quality of Language and Literacy Practices, explains how different teacher factors contribute to the quality of language and literacy implementation in early childhood settings. The research examines educational levels, professional development training, attitudes/beliefs and teacher-child relationships.

Ellis (1998) questioned if five domains would predict quality instruction in Head Start classrooms (teacher education, teacher training, teacher beliefs about classroom practices, teacher beliefs about their ability to help parents in a variety of situations and classroom structure). Data sources were self-reports and checklists about teaching practices and related beliefs and teacher-parent relationships with regard to literacy instruction. Demographic variables included education level, years of experience and the completion of a Child Development Associate (CDA). Classroom structure was defined by class size and adult-child ratio.

The most effective predictors were the number of children in the classroom, years of teaching experience and teachers' appropriate beliefs and implementation of appropriate instructional activities. In classrooms with fewer children, learning environment scores were higher ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$). Interestingly, years of experience negatively impacted the learning environment scores ($r = -.24$, $p < .001$). Instances in which experience was lesser (1-5 years), learning environment scores were higher. Teachers with appropriate beliefs reported using more appropriate instructional activities ($r = .36$, $p < .001$) resulting in higher learning environment scores ($r = .17$, $p < .05$). Although these predictors significantly impacted quality assurance, the effect sizes show that there is a good deal more to the overall variance associated with quality instruction.

What is the effect of teacher education on instructional quality? Kelly (2007) meta-analyzed existing research to quantify the relationship between teacher educational attainment and quality outcome measures in early childhood education center-based classrooms. The author selected 32 studies and classified these into two distinct types. Class 1 was between-group comparisons with results from two or more categories or

groupings of teacher education (i.e. bachelor's degree, associate's degree, some college, high school). Class 2 were correlations between teacher education (years) and outcomes.

Results suggested that teachers having higher levels of educational attainment (bachelor's degree) yielded higher effect sizes than teachers with lesser education. Effect sizes of .80 or greater occurred in classrooms taught by teachers with a bachelor's degree, whereas effect sizes between .60 and .70 were found for non-bachelor's degrees. However, the overall difference in effect sizes between these two groups was roughly .16. Results may not be as powerful as controlled experimental studies, but these do provide an argument for requiring bachelor's degrees when considering teacher education reforms regarding instructional quality in early childhood education.

Considering the impact of teacher education degrees on the quality of programs, it follows that professional development training would be an effective predictor of teacher quality in early childhood settings. The link between professional development and the quality of language and literacy practices was examined by Cunningham (2007), who analyzed data from a two-year professional development initiative. The author investigated the effects of professional development coursework and coaching on the acquisition of language and literacy knowledge and practices of early childhood teachers in center and home-based early childhood settings.

Participants were 300 early childhood practitioners in four high-poverty urban areas grouped in three conditions: two treatment groups (Group 1 and 2) and one control group (Group 3). Group 1 participated in a 3-credit hour college course on language and literacy designed to provide teachers with research-based knowledge about early childhood language and literacy essential for instructional quality. Group 2 participated

in the same course as Group 1 but also received on-site weekly coaching throughout the school year. Coaches were knowledgable and proficient early childhood teachers experienced in research-based language and literacy practices. They received intensive two-day training and attended weekly professional development seminars with their supervisors and other coaches. Group 3 participated only in the data collection process and received no interventions.

Data were collected via surveys, a pre- and post-test designed to assess knowledge of early language and literacy practices and classroom observation. Results showed that professional development in general (Group 1 & 2) had a significant impact on the language and literacy knowledge of participants ($F = 3.222$, $R^2 = .423$, $p < .05$), whereas the control group (Group 3) showed no significant gains. There was no significant impact on the quality of language and literacy practices for professional development (Group 1). However, professional development in combination with coaching (Group 2) had significant impact on quality of language and literacy practices for practitioners from both center-based ($F = 9.483$, $R^2 = .266$, $p < .000$) and home-based settings ($F = 14.107$, $R^2 = .362$, $p < .000$).

Results strongly suggest the use of coaching as an effective professional development strategy. Previous research has pointed out that, although teachers may be knowledgable about language and literacy development and practices, they may not necessarily be providing quality language and literacy instruction. Consistent and extensive on-site coaching and/or mentoring may be an effective solution to this problem.

Carradine (2004) examined the beliefs of 21 Head Start teachers to determine if their beliefs about developmentally appropriate practices were actualized in the

classroom and how these related to classroom quality. Teachers were surveyed to assess beliefs about education and learning as being developmentally appropriate or inappropriate. Their classroom practices were also observed to determine the same developmental appropriateness.

Results demonstrated a positive correlation between quality and instructional practices ($p. < .000$), but no significant correlation between beliefs and instructional practices or classroom quality. All 21 teachers scored high for developmentally appropriate beliefs. However, not all teachers scored high for developmentally appropriate instructional practices and classroom quality. This result is inconsistent with what would be expected in the current investigation with regard to instructional practices and quality. Whether WV teachers will report a consistent and high-level use of effective instructional practices will be determined.

Teachers in the Carradine study with high quality classrooms perceived themselves as being in control of and having the greatest influence on their planning and implementation, whereas teachers with low quality classrooms viewed external factors as having the greatest influence on their planning and implementation. Also, teachers with high quality classrooms reported having good relationships with administrators and peers, but teachers with low quality classrooms reported mediocre relationships. These variables are likely to contribute to the lack of quality that is apparent in some classrooms. Professional development personnel need to consider these outcomes when planning program improvements.

Thus far, classroom quality has been reviewed as a matter of developmentally appropriate practices, child literacy outcomes and structural quality. Chung (2000)

examined similar indicators but focused on the relationship between teacher characteristics and the quality of teacher-child relationships. Data collected from 152 surveys of preschool teachers included demographic information (educational level, experience and level of professional training in early childhood education), a teacher efficacy rating, a parent-teacher relationship rating and teacher perceptions of relationships with children.

Results showed that teacher-child relationships correlated with teachers' level of training (r = .27) and educational degrees (r = .26). There was no difference among inexperienced and experienced teachers for the teacher-relationship ratings. Teacher efficacy (r = .25) related to teacher-child relationships, the stronger the teacher efficacy the higher the rating. Parent-teacher relationships correlated with teacher-child relationships (r = .41) and, in fact, were the strongest predictor of teacher-child relationships among the factors examined. The result is that teachers who have positive relationships with parents will likely have more positive relationships with children. This substantiates Vygotsky's theory about the quality of social interactions influencing the development of children. Practitioners should not only examine the quality of their interactions with the children in their classroom, but also their interactions with the parents due to the important influence that the home environment has on language and literacy development.

It is clear that many factors are related to teacher-child relationships. It is also apparent that the relationships between teacher and child, as well as teacher and parent, should be studied further to provide a better overall picture of quality in early childhood education. Research has demonstrated the important roles that families and teachers play

in language and literacy development. It stands to reason that when these two groups have positive relationships and productive, effective communication, both factors can positively impact children's language and literacy development.

To expand on the issues of teacher quality, the current investigation intends to further distinguish effective teacher traits. The relationship between degree level, the number of language and literacy professional development clock hours completed and implementation of appropriate language and literacy practices will be examined.

Summary

Research has highlighted the importance of emergent literacy skills as a precursor to reading and writing success. It is clear that home and preschool environments can impact the development of these skills. However, due to changes in family structure and economic hardships, many parents are forced to relinquish their role as educators to early childhood practitioners as more and more children are enrolled in preschool programs. These practitioners must be cognizant of why and how these skills are important to later reading acquisition and of how to implement appropriate language and literacy instruction to best develop these skills.

Because not all preschools are the same, the push for state-funded universal preschools abounds. As states move toward improving access to preschool programs, improving quality of such programs must also be considered. Many programs lack standards for effective language and literacy instructional practices and the requirements for the qualification of early childhood professionals.

Research on the quality of universal preschool programs is continuing. However, for newer programs, such as in West Virginia, there is very little independent research.

The current practices in these programs must be evaluated to determine the most effective and efficient course of action for continued improvement. Data from the current investigation will be analyzed to determine the level of implementation of appropriate language and literacy practices within West Virginia Pre-K settings. In addition, the proposed study will add to the limited amount of research existing for West Virginia Pre-K.

Research reviewed related to Home Literacy and Preschool Environments revealed more variability in the home environment making its effect on language and literacy development less predictable. Stronger, more definitive results for preschool environments indicate that more predictable environments have the potential to positively impact the language and literacy development of young children. Appropriate education and professional development for teachers may ensure effective instructional practices for such language and literacy growth.

A starting point is to examine the level of knowledge that exists among the many practitioners in West Virginia regarding effective instructional practices for literacy development. Furthermore, what is the status of the implementation of appropriate strategies by practitioners in preschool settings? Is the quality of instructional practices in language and literacy related to degree level or to the number of professional development clock hours? The purpose of the current investigation is to answer such questions and to provide additional data on the quality of universal preschool programs, namely West Virginia Pre-K.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology for conducting the current study. The purpose of the investigation is discussed along with the research design and the population and sample. In addition, the survey instrument is detailed from inception to completion including the steps taken to ensure its reliability. Finally, the chapter narrates the major procedures for conducting the study along with an outline of how the data were analyzed per each research question.

Purpose

The major purpose of this study was to determine, through a qualitative and quantitative survey methodology, the extent to which practitioners teaching 4-year-olds in West Virginia Pre-K settings perceive that they consistently implement effective and appropriate language and literacy practices into their classroom instructional goals and activities. Additional purposes were to determine if the perceived implementation of such practices was related to years of preschool teaching experience, to the different degree levels held by practitioners and to the completion of language and literacy professional development activities with regard to their current preschool teaching assignment. These variables addressed the question, "Is the frequency of perceived implementation affected by one's experience in the field and by level of academic and professional development training?"

Research Design

The investigation utilized a single-group, cross-sectional mixed method survey design with a purposeful sample of preschool teachers currently teaching in various West Virginia Pre-K programs. The dependent variable was the frequency of perceived

implementation of appropriate and effective instructional practices rated by participants on a Likert style assessment with a numerical scale between 1 (low frequency) and 6 (high frequency). A six-point interval scale was chosen to increase the scale sensitivity and to obtain more refined assessments than what are typically obtained with four- and five-point ratings. The six-point format also "forces" a choice in either direction beyond a median point. However, the scale also included an option to choose "not applicable" or "not relevant" to one's instructional circumstance. Additionally, data were collected regarding the participants' estimation of their abilities to implement the respective instructional practices, rated again on a scale from 1 (Optimal) to 6 (Inadequate). These data were distinguished by participants' years of teaching experience in preschool, completion of academic credentials and the completion of professional development activities in language and literacy. Two "open-ended" items were designed to provide opportunities for respondents to further clarify and explain numerical ratings. These items gave the design the quality of a "mixed" method, using both quantitative and qualitative data, resulting in a more complete picture of the relationships between the variables.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was approximately 760 West Virginia Universal Pre-K teachers in public school-based and community-based for 4-year-olds. The sample was intended to be representative of all 55 county school districts in West Virginia during the school year 2009-2010. Ideally, because the design had several grouping variables, a return rate of 50%+1 of the total sample was sought. However, a sample size calculator was applied to estimate a minimal but acceptable sample size of the total population (Wimmer & Dominick, 2009). The sample size was calculated to maintain a confidence

level of 95 % and a 5% confidence interval or margin of error. Based on that calculation, a minimum sample size of 255 was acceptable if the ideal return rate was not achieved.

Due to the voluntary nature of the survey and the fact that no intact database of WV Pre-K teachers existed, the entire population of 760 teachers was not accessible. Based on contacts with WV Pre-K County Coordinators, only 471 email addresses were obtained. Of the 471 emails sent, 14 were returned as undeliverable; thus 457 were usable. A total of 457 surveys were sent to WV Pre-K teachers, of which 221 complete surveys were returned, representing a 48.4% return rate. Data were analyzed based on these 221 complete surveys. However, the total number analyzed varied between 203 and 221 for several of the demographic variables and for selected items on the quantitative scale. The variations occurred due to respondents skipping a particular question or item. Consequently, these variations in total sample size will be noticed throughout Chapter Four in the narrative and on the statistical table for results.

Instrumentation

Literacy and Language Practices Survey (LLPS)

Quantitative data were collected by administering the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey (LLPS)*. Items on the survey were keyed to a 6-point numerical rating scale to assess the frequency of implementation of language and literacy practices by preschool educators. The LLPS was constructed by adapting the assessment format and related literacy descriptors from the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Pre-K Toolkit. Items for the LLPS were abridged from the ELLCO in three areas: *The Language Environment, Books and Book Reading and Print and Early Writing*.

The *Language and Literacy Practices Survey (LLPS)* was comprised of four parts. Part I, *Demographic Information,* provided demographic, categorical information including the number of years teaching in a preschool setting, type of program currently employed, degree level attained and completion date, current teaching certification and completion of language and literacy professional development clock hours. Part II, *Teacher Practices*, included 18 descriptors of effective instructional practices, that were keyed to a frequency rating scale from 1 to 6 with 1 being *Almost Never* and 6 being *Almost Always*. These 18 items were further arranged into three sections: *Language Environment, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing*. Part III, *Resources and Materials,* included the utilization of resources and materials to increase effectiveness of language and literacy instruction. Part IV, *Qualitative Assessment*, included two qualitative items designed to assess potential constraints on teachers regarding the implementation of language and literacy instructional practices and the kinds of supports or professional development that would enhance such implementation.

Reliability Data for the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool (ELLCO)

The *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Pre-K* (2008) is an observation instrument designed specifically for use in preschool classrooms with 3 to 5-year olds (Smith, Brady & Anastasopoulos, 2008). It is a newer revision of the original ELLCO Toolkit, Research Edition, 2002. The two instruments are essentially the same but the revisions to the Pre-K tool made it more appropriate for a preschool classroom. The ELLCO contains three major sections: *The Literacy Environment Checklist, The Classroom Observation and The Literacy Activities Rating*

Scale. The ELLCO Pre-K has integrated The Literacy Environment Checklist and The Literacy Activities Rating Scale into The Classroom Observation.

Reliability data for the ELLCO were collected in two phases from 1997 to 2002 and from 2002-2007. Between 1997 and 2002, data were gathered as a part of two research studies by the New England Quality Research Center (NEQRC) and the Literacy Environment Enrichment Project (LEEP) (Smith, Brady & Anastasopoulos, 2008).

A sample size of 255 classrooms provided the reliability database for each section of the ELLCO, Research Edition. The following Cronbach alphas were obtained: .84 for the Literacy Environment Checklist, .73 for Books and .75 for Writing. The Classroom Observation had an alpha of .90 for the Total score, .83 for General Classroom Environment and .86 for Language, Literacy and Curriculum. Reliability estimates for The Literacy Activities Rating Scale were estimated at .66. Thus, all sections for the ELLCO showed reasonably good internal consistency making it a reliable tool for evaluating the practices relevant to early childhood language and literacy environments (Smith, Brady & Anastasopoulos, 2008).

The second set of data collected between 2002-2007 included larger sample sizes (s = 547, 616 and 634). These results showed estimates of .76 for Books, .75 for Writing and .84 for the Total Literacy Environment Checklist. An alpha of .93 was estimated for Total. Reliability estimates for the Classroom Observation section were .84 for General Classroom Environment and .89 for Language, Literacy and Curriculum. The alpha for Literacy Activities Rating Scale was .90 for Full-Group Book Reading and .74 for Writing. It estimated an alpha of .72 for the Total score. These results corroborated the

previous estimates, thus ensuring the reliability of the tool (Smith, Brady & Anastasopoulos, 2008).

Throughout the various self-studies conducted with ELLCO, revisions were made to achieve greater specificity for the item descriptors at each scale point and to include a broader range of relevant measures such as phonological awareness, vocabulary development, conservations/interactions to extend thinking and learning and environmental print instruction. Consequently, the specificity and range of items should result in at least similar reliability estimates. Additionally, the increase in the item pool from 14 to 19 should have a positive effect on the estimates. Overall, there is evidence to expect that a minor adaptation of the ELLCO will result in a reasonably acceptable reliability estimate. Additional evidence will be provided regarding the clarity of items and the relevance to the overall construct of the instructional items.

Procedures

Permission to adapt the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Pre-K Toolkit* was sought and received from Brookes Publishing, Inc. and Education Development Center, Inc. (See Appendix A). The adaptation began in February, 2010 and continued intermittently for several months involving feedback and assistance from doctoral committee members. The major adaptation made was identifying ELLCO Pre-K criteria that were measurable by frequency of perceived implementation. These criteria were then rephrased into self-evaluative, numerical descriptors. Criteria relating to resources and materials relevant to effective implementation of language and literacy instruction were also revised and rephrased into self-evaluative descriptors.

Following the final adaptations, the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* was distributed to a panel of six professional educators, including two early childhood classroom teachers, two early childhood higher education professors, a state level early childhood coordinator and a research scientist in language, literacy and early learning. Panel members were given a protocol specifically designed to quantitatively assess the relevancy and clarity of the survey and to obtain their estimates about the appropriateness of the items. A copy of the protocol is in Appendix B. Results of the panel review were summarized and minor revisions were made to the survey. The revisions addressed word choices in three of the 18 criteria and removal of the phrase "best practices" due to its ambiguity. The final survey is included in Appendix C.

The survey included a cover letter explaining the purpose and importance of the investigation, giving instructions for accessing and completing the survey and verifying matters of confidentiality, including the option to decline as a participant. Concurrent with the adaptation procedures, the researcher began the process of identifying the population of preschool educators in West Virginia. West Virginia Pre-K County Coordinators were contacted via email to obtain email addresses for WV Pre-K teachers. Email addresses were also obtained from county/school websites.

Following final completion of the prospectus and its approval by the doctoral committee, the IRB Research (Protocol) Application, Form # 2 (Social/Behavioral) was submitted to the Marshall University Institutional Review Board. Following IRB approval, the survey was loaded on to Survey Monkey and an email invitation to complete the survey was distributed to West Virginia Universal Pre-K teachers. Weekly reminders were sent to non-respondents. The survey was available for a total of four

weeks. Data were then analyzed per the procedures outlined in the Data Analysis section that follows.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Versions 17 and 18 for the research questions. These data were primarily in the format of rankings (ordinal scale) and require statistical techniques that compare differences in the overall frequencies of ranks for each of the 18 descriptors on the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* and for the three conceptual sub-groupings in which the 18 items are nested. Rankings were also obtained for the categorical (demographic) variables (teaching experience, academic credentials and professional development participation). Statistical analyses primarily were conducted using the Kruskal Wallis inferential technique. Additionally, related descriptive output was obtained, including visual and numerical graphs and tables to augment the inferential data. These included tabled mean scores and variability measures, mean rank differences and graphs of frequencies chosen to highlight central tendencies and variabilities among the variables. Finally, the data were analyzed to obtain an estimate of internal consistency for the current scale. Statistical techniques are specifically identified below with the associated research questions for the investigation.

1) To what extent do West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceive that they implement effective instructional practices for teaching language and literacy in their current instructional routines? (Descriptive Visual and Numerical Summaries)
2) To what extent does teaching experience influence how often West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceive that they implement effective instructional practices for

teaching language and literacy in their current instructional settings? (Kruskal-Wallis)

3) What is the relationship between the level of academic training and the perceived level of implementation of effective and appropriate literacy and language practices by West Virginia prekindergarten teachers in their current instructional settings? (Kruskal-Wallis)
4) What is the relationship between the number of language and literacy professional development clocks hours completed and the perceived level of implementation of effective and appropriate literacy and language practices by West Virginia Pre-K teachers in their current instructional settings? (Kruskal-Wallis)
5) What are the overall perceived levels of abilities among West Virginia Pre-K practitioners to effectively teach language and literacy in their current instructional setting? (Kruskal-Wallis)
6) To what extent does the adaptation of the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* estimate internal consistency compare to the original version of the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation* in regard to the instructional practices items? (Cronbach's Alpha)

The associated qualitative items on the survey were summarized to determine if certain themes or patterns resulted in regard to perceived constraints on teacher practices and the need for instructional supports. Additionally, remarks provided by participants in "open comments" text boxes for each scale item were summarized to give additional meaning to the related numerical data and results.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the data analyses and results for the current research. The investigation utilized a "mixed" method approach, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more complete picture of the relationships between the variables.

The major purpose of this study was to determine, through qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the extent to which practitioners teaching 4-year-olds in West Virginia Pre-K settings perceived that they consistently implemented effective and appropriate language and literacy practices into their classroom instructional goals and activities. Additional purposes were to determine if the implementation of such practices was related to years of preschool teaching experience, to the different degree levels held by practitioners, or to the completion of language and literacy professional development activities with regard to their current preschool teaching assignment. Related qualitative assessments were included to add greater meaning and understanding to the quantitative results. The data are presented to answer five research questions pertaining to each variable. A sixth research purpose was posed to determine the level of internal consistency of the adapted *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* and to compare it to the original survey (*Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation)*.

The *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* assessed the extent to which West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceived that they implemented appropriate and effective language and literacy practices for young children. It was comprised of four parts. Part I, *Demographic Information,* included categorical information such as the number of years taught in a preschool setting, type of program currently employed, degree level attained

and completion date, current teaching certification and number of language and literacy professional development clock hours completed in the past two years. Part II, *Teacher Practices*, included 18 descriptors of effective instructional practices, which were keyed to a rating scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being *Almost Never* and 6 being *Almost Always*. These 18 items were further arranged into three conceptual sections: *Language Environment, Books and Book Reading and Print and Early Writing*. Part III, *Resources and Materials,* included items that assessed how effectively teachers used resources and materials to increase effectiveness of language and literacy instruction. Part IV, *Qualitative Assessment*, included two qualitative items designed to identify perceived constraints on teachers regarding their implementation of language and literacy instruction and the kinds of supports or professional development that would enhance such implementation.

This instrument was adapted by the researcher from the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Pre-K Tool*, which was specifically designed as an observation instrument for use in preschool classrooms with 3 to 5-year-olds (Smith, Brady & Anastasopoulos, 2008). The adaptation selected the descriptors from the ELLCO Pre-K for *Language Environment, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing.* These were then transformed into 18 self-evaluative statements. Additionally, seven ELLCO descriptors were distinguished as *Resources and Materials*. A copy of the complete instrument is found in Appendix C.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was 760 West Virginia Universal Pre-K teachers representing all 55 counties. These teachers were employed during the school year 2009-2010 in public school-based and community-based four-year-old classrooms.

A minimum sample size of 255 was calculated to be representative considering a confidence level of 95% with a 5% confidence interval (Wimmer & Dominick, 2009). An ideal return rate for this sample was expected to be 50% + 1 but was not realized.

Of the total population of 760 preschool practitioners in West Virginia, only 471 emails were obtained from WV Pre-K County Coordinators. Of the 471 emails, only 457 were usable. Thus, a total of 457 surveys were sent to West Virginia Pre-K teachers, resulting in a return of 221 complete and four partially completed surveys. Although this number was somewhat less than the minimum of 255 needed to be representative of the entire population, it was a 48.4% return rate of the 457 surveys sent. Data analyses were conducted for these 221 cases. The investigation was an initial exploratory study in West Virginia with early childhood practitioners to gain some baseline information and understanding about their perceived practices and abilities. A 95^{th} percentile level of significance was initially established to interpret results, with the minimum p level set at $p < .05$ which is the standard test of significance for inferential analysis. As noted previously, there are variations (between 203 and 221) in the total sample size reported as 221 for selected items and demographic variables because respondents skipped particular items when replying. These variances will be noted in the total numbers of subjects indicated in the various tables throughout Chapter Four.

Demographic Information

Demographic information collected included years employed as a preschool teacher, type of program currently employed, degree level and date of completion, current teaching certification and number of language and literacy professional development clock hours completed in the past two years. Several items were left unanswered by participants resulting in unbalanced numbers of responses. This imbalance was also true of the demographic questions. Number of years employed as a preschool teacher, type of program and degree level attained resulted in 221 responses. However, degree completion data yielded only 196 responses, current teacher certification yielded 216 responses and number of language and literacy professional development clock hours yielded 219. In some categories these data resulted in disproportional sample sizes and limited the interpretation of the results.

Of the 221 respondents, 33.8% have been employed as a preschool teacher between 0-3 years, 27.5% between 4-7 years and 38.3% for 8 or more years (Table 1). These numbers are fairly balanced but somewhat unexpected considering that the West Virginia Pre-K program was a relatively new program (since 2002). The expectation was that the majority of teachers would be in the lesser experience ranges and new to the field of education in general.

Table 1

Years of Preschool Teaching Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-3 Years (1)	75	33.8	33.9	33.9
	4-7 Years (2)	61	27.5	27.6	61.5
	8 or > Years (3)	85	38.3	38.5	100.0
	Total	221	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		222	100.0		

Note. Teaching Experience: 1= 0-3 years, 2= 4-7 years, 3= 8 or > years

Data revealed that the majority of the participants were employed in public school-based preschool programs (56.8%). The remaining participants were distributed between Head Start (9.9%), community-based programs (2.3%), special needs programs (10.4%) and Other (20.3%). The latter classified themselves as being employed in programs that combined aspects of the above such as *Head Start Public School-based, Head Start Special Needs* or *Public School-based Special Needs* (Table 2).

Table 2

Type of Program for Current Employment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Other (1)	45	20.3	20.4	20.4
	Head Start (2)	22	9.9	10.0	30.3
	Public School Based (3)	126	56.8	57.0	87.3
	Community-Based (4)	5	2.3	2.3	89.6
	Special Needs (5)	23	10.4	10.4	100.0
	Total	221	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		222	100.0		

Note. Type of Program: 1= Other, 2= Head Start, 3= Public School Based, 4= Community-Based, 5= Special Needs

Approximately fifty percent (49.5%) of the respondents held a Master's Degree followed by about thirty-seven percent (37.4%) who held a Bachelor's Degree (Table 3). As West Virginia only requires a Bachelor's degree when employed in a public school-based program, the fact that 37.4% of the participants held a Bachelor's degree was anticipated. The remaining credentials held by participants were Child Development Associate (CDA), Associate's Degree and Doctorate. *Other* was designated by 6.8% of the participants, specifying degree levels as Bachelor's plus and Master's plus.

Table 3

Highest Academic Degree Level Completed

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Other (1)	15	6.8	6.8	6.8
	Child Develop. Associate (2)	1	.5	.5	7.2
	Associate Degree (3)	10	4.5	4.5	11.8
	Bachelor's Degree (4)	83	37.4	37.6	49.3
	Master's Degree (5)	110[a]	49.5	49.8	99.1
	Doctorate (6)	2	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	221	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		222	100.0		

Note. Academic Degree Level: 1= Other, 2= Child Develop. Associate, 3= Associate's Degree, 4= Bachelor's Degree, 5= Master's Degree, 6= Doctorate

To further distinguish degree level data, participants were asked the dates of completion. Of the 221 who identified their degree level, 196 (88.6%) gave completion dates. These were grouped into three categories: *five years ago* (between 2005-2010), *ten years ago* (between 1999-2004) and *more than ten years ago* ($\leq$ 1998). Most participants completed their degree more than ten years ago (40.3%). Degree completion dates between five and ten years followed (31.6%) and finally 28.1% completed their degrees within the last five years. These data coincide with the majority of participants who have taught preschool for eight or more years.

Participants also were asked to identify their current teaching certification. Results from 216 respondents showed that 52.7% of participants have General Pre-K certification, 16.7% have Special Needs Pre-K certification, 22.5% have a combined General and Special Needs Pre-K certification and 5.4% have no Pre-K certification and

are working on Emergency Permits (Table 4). Overall, approximately 94% of participants have completed some type of professional preschool certification.

Table 4

Current Teaching Certifications

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	General PreK (1)	117	52.7	54.2	54.2
	Special Needs PreK (2)	37	16.7	17.1	71.3
	General Pre-K and Special Needs PreK (3)	50	22.5	23.1	94.4
	Emergency Permits (4)	12	5.4	5.6	100.0
	Total	216	97.3	100.0	
Missing	System	6	2.7		
Total		222	100.0		

Note. Current Teaching Certifications: 1= General PreK, 2= Special Needs PreK, 3= both General PreK and Special Needs PreK, 4= Emergency Permit

According to a report from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER, 2008), West Virginia fell short in the area of teacher credentialing and training. West Virginia has an annual, clock-hour requirement of 15 hours for completion of professional development activities; however, in this study participants were asked about their completion of professional development clock hours in the past two years in order to accommodate new teachers. The current results corresponded to NIEER's findings since 44.6% participants had completed 18 hours or less of professional development training in language and literacy in the past two years. Those participants indicating 18 hours or less in a two year time frame obviously would not meet West Virginia's annual requirement of 15 hours of professional development training, unless they are meeting the requirement by attending professional development trainings not related to language and literacy (Table 5).

Table 5

Professional Development Clock Hours Completed

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 Hours or < (1)	99	44.6	45.2	45.2
	18-30 Hours (2)	61	27.5	27.9	73.1
	More than 30 Hours (3)	52	23.4	23.7	96.8
	None (4)	7	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total[a]	219	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.4		
Total		222	100.0		

Note. Training related to language and literacy completed during the past two years, excluding collegiate academic credits. Professional Development Clock Hours: 1= <18 hours, 2= 18-30 hours, 3= >30 hours, 4= none

Research Questions/Quantitative Data Analysis

Research Question One

To what extent do West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceive that they implement effective instructional practices for teaching language and literacy in their current instructional routines?

Appendix C includes the complete *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* that was administered to West Virginia Pre-K teachers. Part II of the survey was designed to determine how often WV Pre-K teachers perceived that they implemented effective teaching practices in their instructional routines. Respondents self-rated 18 descriptors of effective instructional practices, which were keyed to a frequency rating scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being *Almost Never* (*This is not a common practice in my setting*) and 6 being *Almost Always* (*I do this daily throughout all class activities*). These 18 descriptors were also categorized into three sections: *Language Environment, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing.* It was presumed that if teachers were implementing these

descriptors frequently and effectively then they were likely providing high quality instruction in language and literacy.

Table 6 shows the means and standard deviations for all descriptors. Overall, participants perceived that they implemented the majority of the descriptors very frequently, averaging 5.46 on a 6-point scale. The items perceived to be implemented most frequently were #3 (*I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and build oral language skills*), #6 (*Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books*) and #10 (*During read alouds, I model expressive and fluent reading*) with respective means scores of 5.71, 5.88 and 5.85. Items #5 (*Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness*), #14 (*I model different purposes of writing*) and #15 (*Guidance is provided to enhance children's writing process*) were perceived to be implemented with moderate frequency resulting in mean scores of 5.15, 5.05 and 5.04 respectively. Standard deviations for several of the mean scores were relatively large, indicating that participants responded with a good deal of variance in perception for these particular items. For example, Item #7 (*Guidance is provided for children's use of books*) had the greatest amount variance in perception among respondents ($SD = 1.01$) along with a relatively low mean score ($M = 5.28$).

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Part II Teacher Practices

Item Descriptor	N	Sum	Mean	SD
1. I talk with children about their ideas, personal experiences, and learning experiences.	216	1213	5.62	.79
2. I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small group, and large group conversations.	218	1233	5.66	.72
3. I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and build oral language skills.	217	1239	5.71	.63
4. Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities.	217	1177	5.42	.85
5. Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness.	216	1112	5.15	.93
6. Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books.	217	1276	5.88	.51
7. Guidance is provided for children's use of books.	217	1145	5.28	1.01
8. Read alouds are implemented with small or large groups.	216	1242	5.75	.63
9. During read alouds, I demonstrate features of text, pictures, and ideas to support comprehension.	214	1217	5.69	.70
10. During read alouds, I model expressive and fluent reading.	215	1258	5.85	.54
11. After read alouds, children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension.	218	1180	5.41	.84
12. During read aloud discussions, children are encouraged to contribute.	218	1209	5.55	.74
13. Planned opportunities are provided for children to use their emergent writing skills.	216	1125	5.21	.96
14. I model different purposes of writing.	217	1096	5.05	.99
15. Guidance is provided to enhance children's writing process.	217	1093	5.04	.98
16. I model active and purposeful use of environmental print.	217	1133	5.22	.94
17. Environmental print is integrated into children's classroom routines.	212	1152	5.43	.87
18. I model appropriate print conventions (e.g., correct use of upper- and lower-case letters, spelling, and spacing between words).	217	1179	5.43	.97

Tables 7, 8 and 9 illustrate the results for the 18 descriptors grouped into three conceptual categories presumed to tap common underlying constructs. Table 7 shows the results for the *Language Environment* category, which included five descriptors related to

language development such as conversation, vocabulary development and phonological awareness.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Part II Teacher Practices, Language Environment

Item Descriptor	N	Sum	Mean	SD
1. I talk with children about their ideas, personal experiences, and learning experiences.	216	1213	5.62	.79
2. I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small group, and large group conversations.	218	1233	5.66	.72
3. I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and build oral language skills.	217	1239	5.71	.63
4. Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities.	217	1177	5.42	.85
5. Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness.	216	1112	5.15	.93

The descriptors related to utilizing conversation were the ones perceived to be implemented most frequently by West Virginia Pre-K teachers. Item #3 (*I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and build oral language skills*) had the highest mean score ($M = 5.71$) with the least amount of variance in response ($SD = .63$). Items #1 (*I talk with children about their ideas, personal experiences, and learning experiences*) and #2 (*I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small group and large group conversations*) also indicated high perceived frequencies of implementation with mean scores of 5.62 and 5.66 respectively. The lowest mean score (5.15) occurred for Item #5 (*Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness*) which showed a relatively low perceived frequency of implementation and a relatively high amount of variance (or inconsistency) among respondents with a standard deviation of .93.

Table 8 shows results for *Books and Book Reading* that includes seven descriptors related to teacher's use of books for read alouds and related discussion and children's independent use and exploration of books.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Part II Teacher Practices, Books and Book Reading

Item Descriptor	N	Sum	Mean	SD
6. Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books.	217	1276	5.88	.51
7. Guidance is provided for children's use of books.	217	1145	5.28	1.01
8. Read alouds are implemented with small or large groups.	216	1242	5.75	.63
9. During read alouds, I demonstrate features of text, pictures, and ideas to support comprehension.	214	1217	5.69	.70
10. During read alouds, I model expressive and fluent reading.	215	1258	5.85	.54
11. After read alouds, children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension.	218	1180	5.41	.84
12. During read aloud discussions, children are encouraged to contribute.	218	1209	5.55	.74

Books and Book Reading had the highest overall frequency of perceived implementation compared to the other two categories. The most frequently implemented item perceived by teachers was Item #6 (*Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books*) with a mean score of 5.88 and a standard deviation of .51. The latter figure indicated little variability about their perceptions; however, Item # 7 (*Guidance is provided for children's use of books*) had the lowest mean score ($M = 5.28$) indicating a relatively low frequency of perceived implementation combined with a good deal of variability among respondents ($SD = 1.01$). Items # 8 (*Read alouds are implemented with small and large groups*) and #10 (*During read alouds, I model expressive and fluent reading*) showed a high perceived frequency of implementation (*M*

= 5.75, *M* = 5.85) combined with low variance among respondents (SD = .63, SD = .54). In contrast, the items dealing with discussions after a read aloud (#11 and #12) were perceived as being less frequently implemented by respondents (*M* = 5.41 and *M* = 5.55), with moderately high variance (*SD* = .84 and *SD* = .74).

Table 9 outlines the results for *Print and Early Writing*. This category consists of six descriptors related to print awareness, print conventions and emergent writing.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Part II Teacher Practices, Print and Early Writing

Item Descriptor	N	Sum	Mean	SD
13. Planned opportunities are provided for children to use their emergent writing skills.	216	1125	5.21	.96
14. I model different purposes of writing.	217	1096	5.05	.99
15. Guidance is provided to enhance children's writing process.	217	1093	5.04	.98
16. I model active and purposeful use of environmental print.	217	1133	5.22	.94
17. Environmental print is integrated into children's classroom routines.	212	1152	5.43	.87
18. I model appropriate print conventions (e.g., correct use of upper- and lower-case letters, spelling, and spacing between words).	217	1179	5.43	.97

Print and Early Writing had an overall mean score of 5.23 with a range between 5.05 and 5.43. These scores indicated a relatively low frequency of perceived implementation for the associated practices. Moreover, all items showed a good bit of variability by respondents with standard deviations ranging from .87 to .99. The use of environmental print and appropriate print conventions (#17 and #18) was perceived as being the most frequently implemented, each with a mean score of 5.43. The lowest mean scores were found for Items #14 (*I model different purposes of writing*) and #15 (*Guidance is*

provided to enhance children's writing process) with respective mean scores of 5.05 and 5.04. Additionally, these two items had the lowest mean scores for all three categories.

Of the three categories, *Books and Book Reading* had the highest, overall mean score of 5.63. *Print and Early Writing* had the lowest overall mean score of 5.23 and *Language Environment* was located in between with 5.51. Overall, the results for the 18 items on the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* suggest that West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceived themselves as frequently implementing instructional practices involved with children's access to books and small and large group read alouds. Instructional practices involving more guidance from the teacher and engagement with the children were perceived as being less frequently implemented, especially in the area of writing and surprisingly in the area of phonological awareness.

In summary, results were variable in regard to participants' perceptions for implementing the various practices. For example, Items #6 and #10 had the least amount of variability with standard deviations of .51 and .54 respectively. Item # 7 had the highest standard deviation of 1.01 indicating considerable variability about how children are guided with regard to using books. Additionally, the *Print and Early Writing* category (Items 13-18) had high standard deviations. These standard deviations mean that teacher's perceptions about the use of print and guidance for emergent writing varies quite a bit and perhaps influences the consistency with which they implement the related instructional practices.

Research Question Two

To what extent does teaching experience influence how often West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceive that they implement effective instructional practices for teaching language and literacy in their current instructional settings?

To determine if teachers' perceived implementation of effective language and literacy instruction was affected by the number of years they have taught preschool, the Kruskal-Wallis test of significance was applied. Each category, *Language Environment, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing* was analyzed separately. Preschool teaching experience was identified in three domains: *between 0-3 years, between 4-7 years* and *8 or more years*. The number of respondents for each category exceeded a standard minimum of 30 cases (Figure 1).

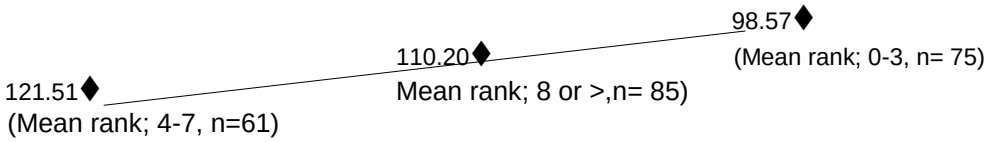

Figure 1 Comparisons of Mean Ranks between the Categories for Years of Preschool Teaching Experience

Items 1-5 comprised the *Language Environment* category, which evaluated the implementation of instructional practices centered on conversation, oral language skills, vocabulary and phonological awareness. Four of the five items retained the null hypothesis that preschool teaching experience has no effect on the perceived implementation of these practices. These results are noted in Table 10.

Table 10

Significance for Preschool Teaching Experience and Language Environment Items

	I talk with children about their ideas personal experiences and learning experiences (#1)	I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small and large group conversations (#2)	I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and build oral skills (#3)	Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities (#4)	Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness (#5)
Chi-square	.654	7.229	3.656	4.207	.983
Df	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.: p < .05	.721	.027	.161	.122	.612

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Preschool Teaching Experience 1= 0-3 years, 2= 4-7 years, 3= 8 or more years

Only Item #2 (*Opportunities to engage children in individual, small and large group conversations*) rejected the null (p = .027.). Further analysis showed a mean rank of 98.97 for those with *0-3 years* of experience compared to a mean rank of 121.51 for those *between 4-7 years* of experience. The difference in these mean ranks was significant at p .022, which indicated that those with greater teaching experience perceived that they engaged the children accordingly in creating and extending conversations in individual and group instructional formats compared to their peers with lesser teaching experience. Figure 1 illustrates the mean rank differences and the numbers of subjects in each of the groupings.

The seven items in the category of *Books and Book Reading* referred mainly to the use of books by the children and teachers and strategies to foster children's book reading skills, such as comprehension and fluency (Table 11).

Table 11

Significance for Preschool Teaching Experience and Books and Book Reading Items

	Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books (#6)	Guidance is provided for children's use of books (#7)	Read alouds are implemented with small or large groups (#8)	During read alouds I demonstrate features of text, pictures and ideas to support comprehension (#9)	During read alouds I model expressive and fluent reading (#10)	After read alouds children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension (#11)	During read aloud discussions children are encouraged to contribute (#12)
Chi-square	.154	.657	.538	1.130	2.077	6.310	6.305
Df	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.926	.720	.764	.568	.354	.043	.043

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Preschool Teaching Experience 1= 0-3 years, 2= 4-7 years, 3= 8 or more years

* Significance level: $p < .05$

Items in this category that rejected the null hypothesis were #11 and #12, both with a p level at .043. Item #11 refers to engaging children in a discussion after a read aloud and #12 refers to the children's involvement in that discussion. A significant difference was found between teachers with greater preschool experience and how frequently they perceive that they engage children in discussion after reading a book ($p < .05$). A pairwise comparison showed that teachers with *8 or more years* of preschool experience perceived themselves as more frequently engaging children in discussions after a read aloud and encouraging children to contribute during these discussions. As teachers become more experienced, they may be more likely to implement strategies to foster children's comprehension; whereas, teachers with lesser experience may simply read a book aloud and then move on to another activity without a significant discussion of what was read.

The last category, *Print and Early Writing*, consisted of six items related to the conventions of writing modeled by the teacher and exhibited in the children's emergent writing. This category had the lowest overall mean score (M = 5.23) and the greatest overall variability of the three categories. Furthermore, none of the six items showed significant differences with regard to years of preschool teaching experience. This means that teachers with greater preschool teaching experience did not necessarily perceive that they more frequently modeled active and purposeful use of environmental print than did teachers with less experience. The data supporting these outcomes are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Significance for Preschool Teaching Experience and Print and Early Writing Items

	Planned opportunities are provided for children to use their emergent writing skills (#13)	I model different purposes of writing (#14)	Guidance is provided to enhance children's writing process (#15)	I model active and purposeful use of environmental print (#16)	Environmental print is integrated into children's classroom routines (# 17)	I model appropriate print conventions e.g., correct use of upper and lower case letters, spelling and spacing (#18)
Chi-Square	1.267	2.487	3.038	4.854	2.234	2.450
Df	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.: $p < .05$	.531	.288	.219	.088	.327	.294

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Preschool Teaching Experience 1= 0-3 years, 2= 4-7 years, 3= 8 or more years

Compared to the other conceptual categories, *Books and Book Reading* had the most significant outcomes, as noted earlier, for Items #11 and #12 (p = .043). This

category also had the highest overall mean score (M = 5.63) of the three conceptual categories. It appears that preschool teaching experience most likely has the greatest influence on the perceived implementation of discussions after book reading and the importance of encouraging children to participate in such discussions and has the least effect on practices associated with print and early writing.

Research Question Three

What is the relationship between the level of academic training and the perceived level of implementation of effective and appropriate literacy and language practices by West Virginia prekindergarten teachers in their current instructional settings?

Participants' degree level was obtained to determine if it had a significant relationship with the perceived level of implementation of language and literacy practices. There were six choices for degree level: *Child Development Associates (CDA), Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate* and *Other*. Data were analyzed for each conceptual category (*Language Environment, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing*) using the Kruskal-Wallis test of significance. It is important to note that the number of respondents for each degree level was unbalanced, which likely affected the significance of the findings. Refer to Table 3 for the frequencies in each category.

For the *Language Environment* category (Items #1-5), Table 13 shows no significance for the items noted in regard to the level of degree held.

Table 13

Significance for Degree Level and Language Environment Items

	I talk with children about their ideas, personal experiences and learning experiences (#1)	I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small group and large group conversations (#2)	I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and build oral language skills (#3)	Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities (#4)	Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness (#5)
Chi-Square	9.990	4.453	5.220	3.595	3.615
Df	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.056	.348	.265	.464	.461

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Degree program level 1=Child Development Associate, 2=Associates Degree, 3= Bachelor's Degree, 4=Master's Degree, 5=Doctorate and 6=Other

*p < .05

Overall, this result means that the degree level of the teacher had little relationship to their perceptions about implementing practices related to creating a language environment that engaged children in language skills.

The results of the tests of significance for *Books and Book Reading* related to the degree level of the teacher are noted in Table 14. Only Item #9, (*demonstrate features of text*) rejected the null hypothesis (p = .026). This item refers to read alouds with emphasis on demonstrating features of text, pictures and ideas to support comprehension. A pairwise comparison showed a significant difference between those with Associate's and Master's Degrees with a mean rank of 65.14 for the latter and 15.45 for Associate's Degrees. The difference in mean ranks was significant at p .035, which indicated that teachers with a Master's Degree perceived that they implemented features of text,

pictures and ideas when reading aloud to their preschool children more so than their peers with lesser academic credentials.

Table 14

Significance for Degree Level and Books and Book Reading Items

	Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books (#6)	Guidance is provided for children's use of books (#7)	Read alouds are implemented with small or large groups (#8)	During read alouds I demonstrate features of text, pictures and ideas to support comprehension (#9)	During read alouds I model expressive and fluent reading (#10)	After read alouds children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension (#11)	During read aloud discussions children are encouraged to contribute (#12)
Chi-square	.622	5.970	5.988	12.618	8.417	7.797	1.257
Df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.961	.201	.200	.013	.077	.099	.869

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Degree program level 1=Child Development Associate, 2=Associates Degree, 3= Bachelor's Degree, 4=Master's Degree, 5=Doctorate and 6=Other

*p < .05

None of the six items noted in Table 15 for *Print and Early Writing* rejected the null hypothesis. Again, the degree level of the teacher did not appear to affect their perceptions about how frequently they modeled different purposes for writing in their classrooms.

Table 15

Significance for Degree Level and Print and Early Writing Items

	Planned opportunities are provided for children to use their emergent writing skills (#13)	I model different purposes of writing (#14)	Guidance is provided to enhance children's writing process (#15)	I model active and purposeful use of environmental print (#16)	Environmental print is integrated into children's classroom routines (# 17)	I model appropriate print conventions ,e.g., correct use of upper and lower case, letters, spelling and spacing between letters (#18)
Chi-square	1.460	6.575	1.575	5.046	2.467	4.890
Df	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.834	.160	.813	.283	.651	.299

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Degree program level 1=Child Development Associate, 2=Associates Degree, 3= Bachelor's Degree, 4=Master's Degree, 5=Doctorate and 6=Other

*p < .05

In summary, none of the three conceptual categories collectively resulted in a major effect on the perceived implementation of these practices for participants. Only one item was significant (in the *Books and Book Reading* category). The lack of overall significance may be a result of the unbalanced number of respondents for each degree level.

Research Question Four

What is the relationship between the number of language and literacy professional development clocks hours completed and the perceived level of implementation of effective and appropriate literacy and language practices by West Virginia Pre-K teachers in their current instructional settings?

In addition to comparing preschool experience and degree level to the perceived frequency of implementation of language and literacy skills, professional development clock hours were examined. Participants were asked to indicate the number of clock hours, excluding collegiate credit hours, of professional development training they had completed in the area of language and literacy in the past two years. There were four choices for the number of clock hours completed: *18 hours or less* (N = 99)*, between 18-30 hours* (N = 61)*, more than 30 hours* (N = 52) and *none* (N = 7). West Virginia requires a minimum of 15 hours of professional development training annually; however, participants were directed to report their professional development hours within the past two years in order to accommodate new teachers. This variable was considered in regard to the items nested in each of the three conceptual categories noted previously.

For *Language Environment*, the null hypothesis was rejected for four of the five items. These items (#'s 2, 3, 4, & 5) and the associated p levels are shown in Table 16. The data indicated that the perceived implementation of these outcomes was significantly affected by the number of clock hours of language and literacy professional development completed by participants.

Table 16

Significance for Professional Development Clock Hours and Language Environment Items

	I talk with children about their ideas, personal experiences and learning experiences (#1)	I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small group and large group conversations. (#2)	I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and to build oral language skills (#3)	Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities (#4)	Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness (#5)
Chi-Square	4.793	13.003	9.406	11.294	13.544
Df	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig. p < .05	.188	.005	.024	.010	.004

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Professional Development Clock Hours 1=<18 hours, 2=between 18-30 hours, 3=>30 hours and 4=None

Pairwise comparisons were then obtained for each of the four significant items and the four clock-hour categories. These outcomes are included in Tables 17, 18, 19 and 20. Table 17 shows a significant difference between all pairs.

Table 17

Pairwise for Item 2 - "I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small group and large group conversations"

Clock Hours Category	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.
4-1	46.327	18.919	2.449	.014
4-2	48.715	19.298	2.524	.012
4-3	64.861	19.469	3.332	.001
1-3	-18.535	8.296	-2.234	.025

Professional Development Clock Hours: 1=<18 hours, 2=between 18-30 hours, 3=>30 hours; 4=None

Significance level: p < .05

Respondents completing *any* number of professional development hours perceived that they implemented this practice more frequently than those having *no* hours of professional development (Pairs 4-1 = .014, 4-2 = .012, 4-3 = .001). Although these results are logical, they are limited given the small sample size (n=7) for those who reported "*none.*" However, teachers completing *18 hours or less* differed significantly from those completing *more than 30 hours* for all four items (p = .025). This pair was of greater significance because the sample sizes (*<18 hours* = 99, *>30 hours* = 52) were more than sufficient and reliably showed that teachers completing greater hours of professional development in language and literacy perceived that they engaged children in conversations more frequently compared to teachers completing fewer hours.

Table 18 shows results similar to the pairings for Item #2 in Table 17.

Table 18

Pairwise for Item 3 - "I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and to build oral language skills"

Clock Hours Category	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.
4-1	34.674	18.248	1.900	.057
4-2	35.266	18.606	1.895	.058
4-3	51.037	18.771	2.719	.007
1-3	-16.363	8.014	-2.042	.041

Note. Professional Development Clock Hours 1=<18 hours, 2=between 18-30 hours, 3=>30 hours and 4=None

Significance level: *p < .05

Again, participants having *any* amount of professional development hours perceived that they used conversation to extend knowledge and build oral language skills more frequently than those indicating they had completed *no* professional development in the

past two years (Pairs: 4-1 = .057, 4-2 = .058, 4-3 = .007). Like Item #2, these results are limited due to the small sample size of participants indicating *None* (n=7). A significant difference was found for participants having *18 hours or less* professional development compared to those who indicated *more than 30 hours.*

Table 19 shows results from a pairwise comparison for Item #4.

Table 19

Pairwise for Item 4 - "Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities"

Clock Hours Category	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.
4-2	53.231	22.078	2.411	.016
4-3	59.185	22.255	2.659	.008
1-3	-21.956	9.484	-2.315	.021

Note. Professional Development Clock Hours 1=<18 hours, 2=between 18-30 hours, 3=>30 hours and 4=None

*Significance level: p < .05

Unlike Items 2 and 3, only Item 4 showed significance for three pairs. Teachers with *more than 30 hours* and *between 18-30 hours* perceived that they integrated vocabulary learning with ongoing classroom activities more frequently than those who completed *no* professional development hours (Pairs: 4-2 =.016, 4-3 =.008). Also, teachers with *18 hours or less* perceived that they integrated vocabulary significantly less frequently compared to those having *more than 30 hours* (Pair, 1-3 = .021).

Pairwise comparison results for Item #5 are shown in Table 20.

Table 20

Pairwise for Item 5 - "Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness"

Clock Hours Category	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.
4-1	50.401	22.831	2.208	.027
4-2	65.176	23.300	2.797	.005
4-3	74.374	23.486	3.167	.002
1-3	-23.973	10.026	-2.391	.017

Note. Professional Development Clock Hours 1=<18 hours, 2=between 18-30 hours, 3=>30 hours and 4=None

* Significance level: p < .05

In examining respondents' perceived level of implementation of learning activities that build phonological awareness, those with *more than 30 hours* of professional development perceived that they implemented this with greater frequency than did teachers having *18 hours or less* of professional development (Pair 1-3 = .017). Teachers who indicated they had *no* hours of professional development in the past two years perceived themselves as implementing phonological awareness activities less frequently than teachers having *any* amount of professional development (Pairs: 4-1 = .027, 4-2 = .005, 4-3 = .002).

Although the numbers of respondents were unbalanced with only seven teachers who had completed *no* language and literacy professional development, there was evidence that teachers with greater hours of language and literacy professional development frequently reported that they use conversation to extend knowledge and to build oral language skill, integrate vocabulary learning in ongoing classroom activities

and to implement phonological awareness activities. It would also stand to reason that teachers who completed even the minimum 15 hours of professional development required by West Virginia would be more knowledgeable about language and literacy practices, and therefore be more likely to perceive that they frequently implement effective instructional practices compared to those who have a lesser number of professional development hours.

This logic would suggest that teachers' perceived use of conversation, integration of vocabulary learning in ongoing classroom activities and use of phonological awareness activities became more frequent as they gained more language and literacy professional development hours.

The category of *Books and Book Reading* showed the least significance with regard to professional development clock hours (Table 21). Only Item #11 of the seven items rejected the null hypothesis ($p = .025$) Again, a pairwise comparison found the most significant difference to be between those having *no* professional development and those having completed *more than 30 hours* ($p = .048$). However, this finding is limited due to the unbalanced numbers of respondents in these cells (n of 52 and 7).

Table 21

Significance for Professional Development Clock Hours and Books and Book Reading Items

	Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books (#6)	Guidance is provided for children's use of books (#7)	Read alouds are implemented with small or large groups (#8)	During read alouds I demonstrate features of text pictures and ideas to support comprehension (#9)	During read alouds I model expressive and fluent reading (#10)	After read alouds children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension (#11)	During read aloud discussions children are encouraged to contribute (#12)
Chi-square	2.339	1.557	.711	2.708	4.026	9.386	4.582
Df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.505	.669	.871	.439	.259	.025	.205

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Professional Development Clock Hours 1=<18 hours, 2=between 18-30 hours, 3=>30 hours and 4=None

* Significance level: $p < .05$

Three of the five items in the *Print and Early Writing* category rejected the null hypothesis: #13 ($p = .020$), #16 ($p = .016$) and #17 ($p = .019$). There was a significant difference between teachers having completed *18 hours or less* of language and literacy professional development compared to those with *more than 30 hours* ($p = .076$, $N = 99$, $N = 52$) for item #13. Tests of significance are noted in Table 22.

Table 22

Significance for Professional Development Clock Hours and Print and Early Writing Items

	Planned opportunities are provided for children to use their emergent writing skills(#13)	I model different purposes of writing.(#14)	Guidance is provided to enhance children's writing process (#15)	I model active and purposeful use of environmental print (#16)	Environmental print is integrated into children's classroom routines (#17)	I model appropriate print conventions e.g. correct use of upper and lower case letters, spelling and spacing.(#18)
Chi-Square	9.834	4.757	4.864	10.263	10.004	2.833
Df	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.020	.190	.182	.016	.019	.418

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Professional Development Clock Hours 1=<18 hours, 2=between 18-30 hours, 3=>30 hours and 4=None

*p < .05

Teachers who completed *more than 30 hours* of language and literacy professional development reported that they planned opportunities for children to use their emergent writing skills more so than their peers who completed *18 hours or less*. For Item #16 (*modeling the use of environmental print*), significance was found between teachers with *between 18-30 hours* of language and literacy professional development compared to those who completed *18 or less hours* (p = .088, N = 61, N = 99). This essentially held true for Item #17, *integration of environment print*, (p = .019, N= 99, N = 52). Again, teachers with more language and literacy professional development clock hours perceived to be more frequently integrating environment print into children's classroom routines than did their peers who completed fewer hours.

Overall, the previous variables, preschool experience and degree level, had the most significant relationships with items in the *Books and Book Reading* category. However, this was not true for the number of language and literacy professional development clock hours. This variable had the least significance for perceived implementation of the related practices for *Books and Book Reading*. This suggested that each category, *Language Experience, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing,* was affected differently by the three variables, thus must be targeted differently to obtain the highest quality of instruction within the preschool classroom.

Research Question Five

What are the overall perceived levels of abilities among West Virginia Pre-K practitioners to effectively teach language and literacy in their current instructional setting?

Item #19 on the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* combined the 18 descriptors across the three conceptual categories to examine the overall perceived level of ability by practitioners to create and structure an effective language and literacy environment. Participants responded to a 6-point scale as follows:

1 – *Less than Inadequate*
2 – *Inadequate* (Implement few practices; need major improvement and development)
3 – *Functional* (Implement some practices; many not so well; need significant improvements)
4 – *Sufficien*t (Implement many of the practices; need some specific improvements)
5 – *Competent* (Implement the majority of practices effectively)
6 – *Optimal* (Implement the great majority of practices effectively).

Two hundred eleven (211) responses were collected for this item. The majority of respondents perceived their overall level of ability to implement effective language and literacy instructional practices as *Competent* (44.6%) or *Optimal* (38.3%). Twelve

percent perceived their overall ability as *Sufficient* and one percent less than sufficient (one respondent indicated *Functional* and one indicated *Less than Inadequate*). The overall mean score for this item was 5.25. Table 23 highlights the frequencies across the rating categories.

Table 23

Frequencies of Ratings for Language and Literacy Perceived Abilities (Item 19)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than Inadequate (1)	1	.5	.5	.5
	Functional (3)	1	.5	.5	.9
	Sufficient (4)	25	11.3	11.8	12.8
	Competent (5)	99	44.6	46.9	59.7
	Optimal(6)	85	38.3	40.3	100.0
	Total	211	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	11	5.0		
Total		222	100.0		

Note. No frequencies occurred for Inadequate (2). Rating Scale: 1= Less than Inadequate, 2= Inadequate, 3= Functional, 4= Sufficient, 5= Competent and 6= Optimal

Although the mean score and percentages indicated that the majority of teachers perceived their overall level of ability to be above average when implementing language and literacy instruction, 11.3% (27) indicated their overall level of ability as *Sufficient* or less. This percentage is not a large number proportional to the sample, yet it is practically important. Twenty-seven teachers potentially impact the learning and development of approximately 540 preschool children. This figure is a large number of children that may be receiving ordinary or less than adequate language and literacy instruction, thus not benefiting from the jump start preschool may provide.

Additionally, Item #19 was distinguished by the same three variables: preschool experience, degree level and number of language and literacy professional development clock hours completed. When examining the relationship of *preschool experience* to the perceived overall level of ability of language and literacy implementation, the null hypothesis was rejected (p = .049) as shown in Table 24.

Table 24

Overall Significance for Preschool Teaching Experience and Language and Literacy Perceived Abilities (Item 19)

Chi-square	6.029
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.049

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Preschool Teaching Experience 1= 0-3 years, 2= 4-7 years, 3= 8 or more years

* Significance level: p <.05

Overall, this result means that those teachers with more experience perceived themselves as having a greater level of ability to implement effective language and literacy instruction within their classrooms than did their novice peers. Significance was found for the items in Table 25.

Table 25

Significance for Preschool Teaching Experience and Language and Literacy Perceived Abilities (Item 19)

	I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small and large group instruction (#2)	After read alouds children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension (# 11)	During read aloud discussions children are encouraged to contribute (#12)
Chi-square	7.229	6.310	6.305
Df	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.027	.043	.043

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Preschool Teaching Experience 1= 0-3 years, 2= 4-7 years, 3= 8 or more years

* Significance level: p < .05

Conversely, the degree levels of participants showed no *overall* significant relationship to teachers' perceived level of ability to implement effective language and literacy instructional practices (p = .073). Overall, participants' perceived levels of abilities were not affected by the degree level attained. These results are noted in Table 26.

Table 26

Overall Significance for Degree Level and Language and Literacy Perceived Abilities (Item 19)

Chi-square	8.570
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.073

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Degree program level 1=Child Development Associate, 2=Associates Degree, 3= Bachelor's Degree, 4=Master's Degree, 5=Doctorate and 6=Other

*p < .05

However, two of the 18 items did show specific significance where degree level was concerned. These were: Item # 1*: I talk with children about their ideas, personal experiences and learning experiences* (p .041) and Item # 9: *During read alouds I demonstrate features of text, pictures and ideas to support comprehension* (p .013). These results are noted in Table 27.

Table 27

Overall Significance for Degree Level and All 18 Items

	Chi-square	Df	Asymp. Sig.
1. I talk with children about their ideas, personal experiences, and learning experiences.	9.990	4	.041
2. I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small group, and large group conversations.	4.453	4	.348
3. I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and build oral language skills.	5.220	4	.265
4. Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities.	3.595	4	.464
5. Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness.	3.615	4	.461
6. Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books.	.622	4	.961
7. Guidance is provided for children's use of books.	5.970	4	.201
8. Read alouds are implemented with small or large groups.	5.988	4	.200
9. During read alouds, I demonstrate features of text, pictures and ideas to support comprehension.	12.618	4	.013
10. During read alouds, I model expressive and fluent reading.	8.417	4	.077
11. After read alouds, children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension.	7.797	4	.099
12. During read aloud discussions, children are encouraged to contribute.	1.257	4	.869
13. Planned opportunities are provided for children to use their emergent writing skills.	1.460	4	.834
14. I model different purposes of writing.	6.575	4	.160
15. Guidance is provided to enhance children's writing process.	1.575	4	.813
16. I model active and purposeful use of environmental print.	5.046	4	.283
17. Environmental print is integrated into children's classroom routines.	2.467	4	.651
18. I model appropriate print conventions (e.g., correct use of upper- and lower-case letters, spelling, and spacing between words).	4.890	4	.299

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Degree program level 1=Child Development Associate, 2=Associate's Degree, 3= Bachelor's Degree, 4=Master's Degree, 5=Doctorate and 6=Other

* Significance level: $p < .05$

The completion of professional development hours in language and literacy showed a significant relationship to the overall perceived level of ability ($p = .004$) noted in Table 28.

Table 28

Overall Significance for Professional Development Clock Hours and Language and Literacy Perceived Abilities (Item 19)

Chi-square	13.327
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.004

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Professional Development Clock Hours 1=<18 hours, 2=between 18-30 hours, 3=>30 hours and 4=None

* Significance level: p < .05

The most significant differences were noted among teachers having *18 hours or less* of professional development in language and literacy compared to those having *more than 30 hours*. The mean rank for *18 or less* was 92.56 compared to 122.65 for those with *30 or more*. That rank difference was significant at p .022 and indicated that those who completed greater numbers of professional development clock hours perceived a greater overall ability to implement the related language and literacy practices.

Of the three variables (preschool experience, degree level and professional development clock hours), professional development clock hours had a significant relationship with more of the 18 items. Overall, eight of the 18 items rejected the null hypothesis when considering professional development hours (Table 29). These eight items were reported to be implemented most significantly by teachers having greater levels of professional development.

Table 29

Overall Significance for Professional Development Clock Hours and All 18 Items

	Chi-square	df	Asymp. Sig.
1. I talk with children about their ideas, personal experiences, and learning experiences.	4.793	3	.188
2. I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small group, and large group conversations.	13.003	3	.005
3. I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and build oral language skills.	9.406	3	.024
4. Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities.	11.294	3	.010
5. Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness.	13.544	3	.004
6. Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books.	2.339	3	.505
7. Guidance is provided for children's use of books.	1.557	3	.669
8. Read alouds are implemented with small or large groups.	.711	3	.871
9. During read alouds, I demonstrate features of text, pictures and ideas to support comprehension.	2.708	3	.439
10. During read alouds, I model expressive and fluent reading.	4.026	3	.259
11. After read alouds, children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension.	9.386	3	.025
12. During read aloud discussions, children are encouraged to contribute.	4.582	3	.205
13. Planned opportunities are provided for children to use their emergent writing skills.	9.834	3	.020
14. I model different purposes of writing.	4.757	3	.190
15. Guidance is provided to enhance children's writing process.	4.864	3	.182
16. I model active and purposeful use of environmental print.	10.263	3	.016
17. Environmental print is integrated into children's classroom routines.	10.004	3	.019
18. I model appropriate print conventions (e.g., correct use of upper- and lower-case letters, spelling, and spacing between words).	2.833	3	.418

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Professional Development Clock Hours 1=<18 hours, 2=between 18-30 hours, 3=>30 hours and 4=None

* Significance level: $p < .05$

Preschool teaching experience rejected the null hypothesis for three items (Table 30). These items dealt with conversations and book discussions. These types of strategies are not typically scripted in curriculum guides; thus, their development may occur over time as teachers gain experience.

Table 30

Overall Significance for Preschool Teaching Experience and All 18 Items

	Chi-square	df	Asymp. Sig.
1. I talk with children about their ideas, personal experiences, and learning experiences.	.654	2	.721
2. I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small group, and large group conversations.	7.229	2	.027
3. I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and build oral language skills.	3.656	2	.161
4. Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities.	4.207	2	.122
5. Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness.	.983	2	.612
6. Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books.	.154	2	.926
7. Guidance is provided for children's use of books.	.657	2	.720
8. Read alouds are implemented with small or large groups.	.538	2	.764
9. During read alouds, I demonstrate features of text, pictures and ideas to support comprehension.	1.130	2	.568
10. During read alouds, I model expressive and fluent reading.	2.077	2	.354
11. After read alouds, children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension.	6.310	2	.043
12. During read aloud discussions, children are encouraged to contribute.	6.305	2	.043
13. Planned opportunities are provided for children to use their emergent writing skills.	1.267	2	.531
14. I model different purposes of writing.	2.487	2	.288
15. Guidance is provided to enhance children's writing process.	3.038	2	.219
16. I model active and purposeful use of environmental print.	4.854	2	.088
17. Environmental print is integrated into children's classroom routines.	2.234	2	.327
18. I model appropriate print conventions (e.g., correct use of upper- and lower case letters, spelling, and spacing between words).	2.450	2	.294

Note. Kruskal Wallis Test. Grouping Variable: Preschool Teaching Experience 1= 0-3 years, 2= 4-7 years, 3= 8 or more years

*p < .05

Degree level rejected the null hypothesis for two significant items (Table 27). The number of language and literacy professional development hours completed was twice as likely to positively affect teachers' perceived implementation of language and literacy

instructional practices as preschool experience or degree level. This result is corroborated by the significance found for Item #19 and professional development hours noted previously (p = .004) in Table 28. The best way to affect language and literacy instructional practices may be through the completion of specific professional development activities that are continually provided as teachers practice.

Research Question Six

To what extent does the adaptation of the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* estimate internal consistency compare to the original version of the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation* in regard to the instructional practices' items?

Reliability for the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation and the Language and Literacy Practices Survey

The *Early Learning and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO)* is an observation instrument designed for external observers to assess K-2 practitioners' effective implementation of selected literacy practices in three major categories of instruction: *Language Environment; Books and Book Reading and Print and Early Writing.* Nineteen items comprise the ELLCO related to the categories noted above. The authors of the ELLCO report an overall reliability estimate of .843 and reliability estimates for *Books and Book Reading* at .76; *Print and Early Writing* at .75 and .84 for *Total Literacy Environment.*

Because the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey (LLPS)* was adapted from the ELLCO, a specific reliability analysis was needed for its specific items, namely the 18 items found in Part II on the LLPS. The major adaptation occurred by rephrasing the language in the classroom observation categories of the ELLCO into 18, self-evaluative statements keyed to a 6-point rating system. These data were collected for 197

participants who fully completed the LLPS in the current investigation. Data were analyzed statistically using Chronbach's Alpha and these results are show in Table 31.

Table 31

Overall Cronbach's Reliability Estimate for the LLPS

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.943	.948	18

An overall alpha value was estimated at .943, which greatly exceeds a conventional standard or minimum of .70 in these kinds of analyses (Pallant, 2010). This value indicates that, on average, participants consistently responded to the array of items and the underlying constructs. Additionally, Cronbach's analyses further examined the effect on the overall estimate by statistically predicting gains on the original estimates if and when a particular item is deleted from the analysis. These results showed that all 18 items held consistent, showing no appreciable gain (or loss) from the original estimate. To examine reliability one step farther, estimates were obtained for each of the three major conceptual categories noted previously. These alphas estimated as follows: *Language Environment* (.867); *Books and Book Reading* (.886); and *Print and Early Writing* (.888). These results are shown in Table 32.

Table 32

Cronbach's Reliability Estimates for LLPS Conceptual Categories

Category	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Language Environment	5	.867
Books and Book Reading	7	.886
Print and Early Writing	6	.887

Although somewhat less than the overall estimate, these values do point to good internal consistency for the related items and are consistent with those found for the ELLCO.

Resources and Materials Data Analysis

In addition to obtaining data for the six research questions, *Part III* of the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* examined the use of resources and materials to support language and literacy instruction within the classroom. Participants responded to five items with a 1-4 rating scale and two items with choices of *Yes, No* or *Other*.

The first five items related to the availability and selection of books for use within the classroom. Participants rated how frequently how frequency they used these resources and materials on a 4-point scale: *Seldom (less than monthly), Occasionally (monthly), Frequently (Bi-weekly)* and *Almost Always (weekly)*. Descriptive statistics for these results are found in Table 33.

Table 33

Descriptive Statistics for Part III, Resources and Materials, Item 1-5

Scale Item	N	Sum of Ranks	Mean	Percent for Each Rating 1	2	3	4
1. Books are made available relevant to current curriculum and to children interests.	215	837.00	3.8750	0.0	0.5	6.0	93.5
2. Books are made available that vary in difficulty of text appropriate to age and ability levels of children.	216	845.00	3.9320	0.0	2.3	7.9	89.8
3. Books are made available that include fictional narrative, poetry and/or rhyming, nonfiction and concept-based books.	216	824.00	3.8148	0.5	3.2	10.6	85.6
4. I thoughtfully select read aloud books that correspond to current curriculum and children's interests.	212	832.00	3.9245	0.0	0.9	5.7	93.4
5. I thoughtfully select read aloud book in response to children's ideas and input.	214	775.00	3.6215	0.5	3.7	29.0	66.8

Scale: 1=Seldom; 2=Occasionally; 3=Frequently; 4=Almost Always

Results for items1-4 indicated that most teachers perceived that they are regularly providing books relevant to curriculum needs and children's interests (*Almost Always-93.5%*), with varied difficulty levels (*Almost Always-89.8%*), and from varied genres (*Almost Always-85.6%*). Teachers also perceived themselves to be carefully selecting read aloud books that were relevant to the curriculum and interests of the children (*Almost Always-93.4%*). However, the ratings for Item # 5 (*selecting read aloud books in response to children's ideas and input*) were relatively lower with 66.8% indicating this was done *Almost Always* and 29.0% indicating that this was done *Frequently*. Because the curriculum used in the West Virginia Pre-K Program is mostly driven by the interest and choices of the children, it was anticipated that the percent of responses to Item #5 would have been greater for the rating *Almost Always*.

An opportunity to comment on each of the five items was provided for participants.

Fifty-one participants commented on Item #1 and all comments supported the high percentage of teachers who reported that they were providing books relevant to the curriculum and interests of children. These included: "I change my library books to go along with our current interest groups"; "Books are available daily. Books are rotated weekly according to interest and units we are studying;" "Books are changed to reflect the children's interests as well as the topic or project." More detailed comments were also given:

> We have books in every Center, and always have books on our current theme in our Circle Time where the children have Library time daily individually reading/enjoying a book of their choice. I also read a book or two to them daily too.

> A basket of books is placed in the circle area with books pertaining to the topic of study. Interest areas have baskets of books pertaining to that area (ex. blocks - books on buildings, cars, blueprints & maps. Dramatic play - phone books, menus, books about family, shopping lists, etc.). The library center has books of all types.

Item #2 had 22 comments that mostly indicated the availability of books at varying levels of difficulty that were appropriate for the ages and levels of children within the classroom. "The variety of books contains easy to hard leveled books. Books with just a few words and books with lots of words"; "There are a variety of reading levels in our

classroom library at all times"; "We have board books available for the younger ones, 3 year olds with IEP or others who are functioning at that developmental level to one word per page books to multiple words on the page books."

Of the 15 comments regarding the types of books, responses were varied and indicated the regular use of books from different genres to areas needing improvement. "Every genre covered in our class"; "We always have out rhyming, numbers, letters, fictional and nonfiction (discovery area) books"; "We have few books of poetry. Something we need to correct."

Item #4, selecting read aloud books that were relevant to the curriculum and interests of children, generated 21 open comments. The majority of these was related to read alouds being chosen to support current themes/curriculum lessons. "I always have a focus book that supplements the current lesson theme"; "I also read a book at one of the story times that is about the theme"; "Based on reading series themes and then the book is placed in the children's library for them to 'read' again"; "Whatever lesson I am teaching, I have at least two books to go with the lesson." However, very few mentioned selecting books based on *children's interests*.

Item #5 related to selecting books in response to children's ideas and input. This item had the lowest percentage (66.8%) with participants indicating *Almost Always*. There were 20 comments and the majority of these indicated that children are encouraged to bring books from home or they can choose the read aloud books from a classroom library. "Children are encouraged to bring books from home that they would like to share with the class"; "Children are invited and encouraged to bring books from home to share with the class, the books do not have to be related to a theme in the classroom but can be

whatever the child chooses to bring"; "Using the book basket at my Circle area, each day one student is the Story Time selector and chooses a book to be read to the class, I also frequently read theme-related books at our morning Circle time"; "Yes, I have hundreds of books in my room and the children pick books for me to read to them along with our set story time."

These two strategies for encouraging children's ideas and input are constrained. Children may not have books at home or be allowed to remove these from the home. When children are allowed to select books from a class library, they are still confined to what the teacher has placed in the library. In other words, they are making a choice, but it is an approved choice from pre-selected books.

Items #6 and #7 related to writing tools and materials being integrated throughout the classroom and the use of a designated writing area. Response choices for these two items were *Yes, No* and *Other (please specify)*. The results indicated that the majority of teachers reported that they integrated writing tools and materials throughout the classroom and have a designated area for writing. However, the percentage of teachers with a designated writing area was almost 8% less than those integrating writing tools and materials (Tables 34 and 35).

Table 34

Frequencies for Integrating Varied Writing Materials for Literacy Instruction

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	OTHER (0)	8	3.6	3.7	3.7
	YES (1)	208	93.7	95.9	99.5
	NO (2)	1	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	217	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	5	2.3		
Total		222	100.0		

Note. Item 6, Part III, on LLPS *(Varied and appropriate writing materials are integrated throughout the classroom).* 0= Other, 1= Yes, 2= No

Item #6 only had one response of *No* and eight responses of *Other (please specify).* The comments given by the eight respondents who indicated *Other* varied from explaining the types of materials and tools used to indicating a need for improvement.

Table 35

Frequencies for Providing a Designated Area for Writing in the Classroom

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	OTHER (0)	21	9.5	9.7	9.7
	YES (1)	191	86.0	88.0	97.7
	NO (2)	5	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	217	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	5	2.3		
Total		222	100.0		

Note. Item 7, Part III on LLPS *(A designated area for writing is provided in my classroom)*. 0= Other, 1= Yes, 2= No

Similarly in Item #7, the comments given for those responding with *Other* just elaborated on the type of writing area and further explained that writing was encouraged in all areas/centers within the classroom. At first glance, the number of respondents that

indicated *Other* (almost 10%) for this item seemed to be important. However, upon examining the open comments, the great majority were nothing more than a detailed *Yes*.

The data obtained for *Part III, Resources and Materials*, were consistent with the overall data derived from the relevant 18 descriptors analyzed per the research questions. Teachers would be less likely to implement effective language and literacy practices if they did not have appropriate resources and materials to support instruction. However, the same is not true of the inverse. Teachers can be provided high quality and sufficient quantities of resources and materials, yet not implement effective language and literacy practices.

Qualitative Data Analysis

A secondary goal of the research was to gather qualitative data that would give greater meaning and understanding for the quantitative results and conclusions. The qualitative data that follows are intended to highlight various insights related to the effective implementation of literacy instruction and was in response to two, open-ended questions.

Participants were asked in the first question about what kinds of external or supervisory constraints they perceived to be hindering their ability to foster effective language and literacy instruction in their particular settings. One hundred sixty-eight (168) participants offered various responses to this query. The full body of comments is found in Appendix E. Six themes were distinguished as follows: *Curriculum, Time, Funding/Materials, Federal/State Policy, Class Size/Staffing* and *None.* In addition, there were some *miscellaneous* responses such as *Home Environment, Physical Space* and *Training*.

Table 36

Themes Related to Constraints on Instruction Expressed by Respondents

Theme	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
Curriculum	18	10.7
Time	17	10.1
Funding/Materials	16	9.5
Federal/State Policy	10	6.0
Class Size/Staffing	10	6.0
None	75	44.6
Miscellaneous	22	13.1

Note: Total respondents = 168. Miscellaneous = Home Environment, Physical Space and Training

Eighteen participants (10.7%) responded that their current *curriculum* was a constraint to their effective language and literacy instruction. These comments are exemplified as follows: "Creative curriculum allows me to follow the child's lead if interested and in the writing center, but does not allow whole group or small group instruction. Creative curriculum is child lead [sic] and instruction and paper work are not encouraged"; "Language and literacy practices are greatly supported by the BOE that I work for. I currently feel that pre-k throughout WV needs a supplemental curriculum that would help to support literacy other than the Creative Curriculum"; "I think it is hard to implement enough language and literacy with Creative Curriculum. I think a lot of emphasis is placed on scheduling and free play and not enough on instructional time"; and

> State mandates absolutely forbid worksheets of any kind. While I completely agree that a worksheet driven program is developmentally

> inappropriate, limited use of quality materials could benefit some students. I think as educators we should be trusted to make that determination.

The major themes inherent in these replies reflected the desire to implement more *direct instruction* in the areas of language and literacy and that the existing curriculum (*Creative Curriculum*) did not fit the needs of all children.

Seventeen respondents (10.1%) indicated the lack of *time* during the instructional day as a constraint. Specific comments included: "time- 3 hour day, with meals, makes it hard to have more intensive exposure to literacy"; "time for planning-- even though we are given a day for "planning" we are also required to do so many other things as well as trainings. There's just not enough time to plan and prepare, etc.."

Lack of *funding and materials* was another theme that emerged as a constraint with 16 responses (9.5%). These examples included: "Lack of finances limits materials, equipment, in-service, professional development, attending conferences, and other resources to further language and literacy" and

> The only constraints that I have seen thus far are that of monies. I do as well as I can with what is in the classroom and what I can buy out of my own pocket, however, I could do so much more with a budget to spend on items for the classroom that would foster language and literacy.

Although 16 respondents identified funding and materials as a constraint, their comments were not necessarily consistent with those given for the items in *Part III*,

Resources and Materials. Most participants indicated the frequent use of materials in *Part III* rather than commenting about a lack of materials.

Federal and state policies regarding class size and staffing were also mentioned as constraints. The majority of the ten comments referred to restrictions that Federal and State policy place on instruction, especially about the evaluation tool used by West Virginia, *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised* (commonly referred to as ECERS). Comments included: "ECERS -- They tell me my students need to play more"; "Head Start mandates and ECERS"; "Issues of HS [Head Start] mandates and ECERS-R these are really too numerous to explain."

Some comments were more explicit: "Policy discourages teachers to really teach preschool children how to write, however, I do read to, talk with, and encourage the children in my classroom to learn as much as possible"; and

> Not knowing exactly what is expected! With the collaboration effort of Pre-K and Head Start, the policies are not clearly written on anything at to what is expected and what is not expected. As a teacher if I knew what my state expected of me I could thoroughly [sic] teach my children what they need to know without interference.

Comments concerning *class size and staffing* referred to the existence of large class sizes and large numbers of special needs children without additional staffing. "The large class size and high number of moderately involved special needs students"; "Classroom size. I feel it would be more appropriate to have only 15 children in a classroom"; "Our classes are quite large. I have 19 children in the morning and 19 children in the

afternoon." More detailed comments included:

> The level of special needs in my classroom often make it harder to implement language and literacy in small group settings. With one teacher and one aide in the room there are often supervisory needs that come before instruction."

> I have a very language rich classroom. I feel that nothing hinders me from implementing [sic] language to my students. However I could open another can of worms and talk about how 3 year old special needs students (not just with language delays) need to be in their own classroom [sic] due The disturbance level that they create for the 4 and 5 year olds who are READY to do the many language activities I have planned!!!!!!"

Class size and staffing are issues that can be related to funding and materials. In a relatively new program such as the West Virginia PreK Program, enrollment can outnumber planned accommodations and funding. Programs can grow too fast.

In addition to the emergent themes, 22 (13.1%) comments were either a mixture of the five themes mentioned above or categorized as *miscellaneous* constraints (e.g., Home Environment, Physical Space and Training). These included multiple constraints such as "TIME and county adopted preschool curriculum"; "Time constraints, ex. one hour gross motor, 1/2 hour music, etc. Lack of funding to purchase items needed for literacy"; "Too few adults to support the varied needs of children. Not enough money to buy new

literature and replace old books that are worn. TOO MUCH PAPER WORK!" Miscellaneous comments were: "The amount of room I have is limited so our reading and writing area are small areas that can only cater to 2-3 students at a time"; "Even though I model appropriate language and literacy practices in my classroom, it would be helpful if the other adults could receive more training on what is effective" and:

> The children that I teach come from low ses homes. These children rarely experience conversation and good literacy practices at home. I think that this constraint makes it harder to implement these practices during the school day. Throughout the year, my goal and job is to encourage language and literacy at home and to stress to the parents that good literacy skills is extremely important, however; the response from the parents is not always positive. On a positive note, the children I teach respond well to stories, writing and phonological awareness activities and enjoy participating during the activities.

Overall, 93 participants (55.3%) indicated some type of constraint that negatively impacted their ability to effectively implement language and literacy instruction. However, unexpectedly, 75 participants (44.6%) indicated *None* or that they did not have any constraints that hindered implementation of effective language and literacy instruction. Comments ranged from a simple "None" or "No constraints at this time" to more descriptive responses such as "I do not feel there are constraints that hinder me from implementing language and literacy practices. We are encouraged on every level to implement best practice, including literacy"; "Nothing. Our county is very interested in language literacy. We recently completed the LEEP training which a language and

literacy training only four counties in the state were chosen to participate in"; and:

> The county I work in is very supportive of the implementation of language and literacy practices, as is the Head Start organization with which we are affiliated. All involved are committed to this implementation, so I would have to say that nothing hinders me from it.

> None that come to mind. We utilize Creative Curriculum-no other curriculum constraints. It's actually pretty "loose." Literacy is a large part of the curriculum-but no constraints. Each teacher can implement more or less as they deem appropriate.

Although a high number of respondents indicated no constraints, the majority (55.3%) reported that they are inhibited by constraints when trying to implement effective language and literacy instruction. All constraints mentioned by respondents are potentially reconcilable at the state, county or building level.

Whereas it is important to identify constraints of implementation, it is also important to identify areas in which participants feel they could use additional support or professional development from their school, county or state. Participants were asked in the second question about the kinds of support and professional development that they thought would enhance and support their instructional effectiveness

One hundred forty-one (141) participants responded to this question (See Appendix E). A variety of themes emerged; however, the following were the most prominent: *Specific Skills, General Language and Literacy, Early Childhood/Age Appropriate Practice*, *Collaboration* and *None Needed/Don't Know*.

Table 37

Themes Related to Support or Professional Development Needed as Expressed by Respondents

Theme	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
Specific Skills	22	15.6
General Language and Literacy	13	9.2
Early Childhood/Age Appropriate Practices	13	9.2
Collaboration	12	8.5
None Needed/Don't Know	16	11.3
Miscellaneous	65	46.1

Note: Total respondents = 141. Miscellaneous = Hands-on Activities, Curriculum Training, Funding/Materials and Class Size/Staffing

A total of 60 respondents (42.5%) indicated additional support or professional development was needed across the first four categories with 16 respondents (11.3%) who indicated either no additional support was needed or that they did not know if additional support was needed at this time. The remaining 65 respondents (46.1%) indicated a need for additional support in other areas such as *Hands-on Activities, Curriculum Training, Funding/Materials* and *Class Size/Staffing.*

Twenty-two participants indicated additional support or professional development was needed for specific skills in the areas of reading and writing. Comments were fairly balanced between the need for reading and pre-reading skills and the need for writing and pre-writing skills.

Needs in the area of reading included vocabulary development, phonological awareness, phonics and language learning and are exemplified as follows: “I think that all preschool teachers could benefit from more professional development on how to foster prereading skills especially in the area of vocabulary development”; “More phonics training”; “updated research on language learning”; “Additional professional development in the assistance of quality language and literacy practices for children with English as a second language.”

Comments about the need for support or training in the area of writing referred to print environment, creative writing, journal writing and letter formation. These needs were exemplified by remarks such as “Understanding how to have more of a rich-print environment would be really helpful”; “Ideas on journals, read alouds, story starters”; “It would be nice to have a writing program to go by in helping the children begin to form their letters”; “Instruction concerning more implementation of writing in the preschool curriculum.”

These needs corroborate previous quantitative outcomes found in which the lowest rankings by participants were associated with vocabulary learning, phonological awareness and writing. The majority of respondents indicated a need for additional support or professional development in these three areas.

In conjunction with the need for support in specific skill areas, 13 respondents reported a general need for additional support in language and literacy practices. These comments included “Training related to effective language and literacy”; “Classess [sic] on different ways to implement literacy, new information”. A more specific comment was:

> I feel that our area needs more training in language and literacy. They need to know that its not just reading a book and providing pencil and paper for children to write on. ECERS in [is] one assessment we go through every year which scores some on the language and literacy, but we also may want to consider the ELLCO which only looks at language and literacy.

Another 13 respondents indicated a need for additional support in early childhood education, particularly for children in the three to five age group. Comments ranged from the need for training targeted specifically for preschool to childhood development. Such responses included "Professional development that focuses on pre-k. Trainings are for more for upper grades"; "Probably more ideas in ways to implement language and literacy in the preschool classroom"; "I would like to see more information presented about the neurological development of preschool aged children"; "more education specifically for this age group (3-5)."

Collaboration was another area expressed by participants as a need for additional support. Most comments emphasized the need and desire to share ideas, strategies and goals with other preschool teachers, such as: "Opportunities to collaborate with other pre-k teachers on different effective activities to support good practice"; "I would like the opportunity to observe other classrooms to get possible ideas. I also would like the chance to meet with other teachers to find out what ideas/strategies they use"; "Exchanging ideas with others."

Sixty-five participants indicated the need for additional support and professional development in these categories: *Hands-on Activities, Curriculum Training,*

Funding/Materials and *Class Size/Staffing*. Six indicated a need for more hands-on activities for children: “Hands on make and take items”; “Quality trainings with hands on ideas for classroom use.” Five respondents referred to specific curricula in which they would need more training, such as: “Frequent training opportunities on language and literacy in the Creative Curriculum classroom would be helpful”; “Let's Leap into Literacy and Make Language Learning Fun.”

A small number (n = 8) noted the need for more funding and materials “More resources. Money is sometimes an issue when wanting to provide new materials or technology to preschool classrooms”; “Funding for supplies and materials to foster language development.” They also indicated a need for smaller class size and additional staff with comments such as “Smaller classes …”; “perhaps an extra set of hands in the classroom”; “Additional personnel.”

In addition to the specific supports mentioned, nine responses indicated *any* type of additional professional development would be welcome and beneficial. For example, “I think that any type of training would be beneficial”; “Continuing trainings provided by our board of education”. Conversely, 11 respondents indicated no need for additional support and five replied that they did not know if they needed additional support. Participants explained “I believe we are provide enough training”; “I feel that I have had plenty of support in this area”; “Professional development is provided quite often and many opportunities exist to enhance my effectiveness as a language and literacy practitioner”; “Don't know right now.”

In summary, qualitative data were collected to further the explanation and depth of understanding as a complement to the results found for the quantitative data collected in

the investigation. This data was collected by including two open-ended questions at the end of the survey that addressed what constraints were perceived by teachers that hindered effective implementation of language and literacy practices and what type of supports and professional development would enhance their instruction. The results of the qualitative component were plausible. Participants generally noted very similar kinds of needs and concerns. However, the large number of respondents who indicated not having any constraints on their implementation of language and literacy practices was unanticipated. Qualitative data were consistent with the quantitative data, which resulted in a large number of participants who perceived that they implemented the majority of language and literacy practices very frequently.

Interestingly, some themes that emerged as constraints were also identified as areas of additional support such as *Funding/Materials*, *Class Size/Staffing* and *Curriculum*. The majority of participants indicated a need for additional professional development in the areas of *Specific Skills, General Language and Literacy* and *Early Childhood/Age Appropriate Practice.* Overall, West Virginia Pre-K teachers tended to be uniform in their identification of constraints and the need for additional supports. This uniformity strengthens the meaningfulness of these comments and presents an argument for further program evaluation and development of literacy instruction for young children.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Purpose

This study was conducted to determine the extent to which West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceived that they implemented appropriate and effective language and literacy instructional practices in their classroom settings. Furthermore, findings were distinguished by examining the following demographic variables: years of preschool teaching experience, degree level attained and completion of language and literacy professional development activities.

Research has shown that the quality of language and literacy instruction and experiences provided in the home or classroom have a positive impact on the development of emergent literacy skills and future success in reading and writing for young children (Bennett, Weigel & Martin, 2002; Justice, Mashburn, Hamre & Pianta, 2007; Storch & Whitehurst, 2001). The education community has focused considerable attention on the quality and availability of preschool programs as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The most recent focus has been on Universal Preschool programs. These programs are free and available for all 4-year-olds regardless of socio-economic status. Consequently, nearly 80 percent of all 4-year-olds attend a preschool program (Regional Educational Laboratory, REL, 2009). Therefore, preschool programs that provide high quality instruction can prove beneficial to young children, families and society.

The premise of this study was that West Virginia Pre-K teachers who implemented appropriate and effective language and literacy instruction extensively within their classrooms contributed to developing a high quality program, which in turn would give children a jumpstart on formal education. Research has suggested a number of factors that may ensure high quality preschool programs such as the ones examined by this study: quality language and literacy instruction, teacher-child interactions, teacher experience and degree level and teacher participation in professional development activities (Carradine, 2004; Chung, 2000; Cunningham, 2007; Ellis, 1998; & Kelly, 2007). How frequently do teachers in the West Virginia Pre-K program perceive that they are implementing quality language and literacy instruction? Does teaching experience affect their perceived levels of implementation of language and literacy instruction? What is the relationship between these perceptions and the kind of academic preparation completed? Finally, what is the perceived effect on language and literacy instruction for those who have completed varying amounts of related professional development activities? This chapter discusses the conclusions and implications of these issues for preschool education in West Virginia and also provides recommendations for further research.

Summary of Demographics

The participants in this investigation represented a population of 760 West Virginia Pre-K teachers from all 55 counties. They were employed in either public-school based or community-based classrooms for 4-year-olds during the school year 2009-2010. Participants were further distinguished by the number of years employed as a preschool teacher, the type of preschool program in which they were currently employed,

the kind of academic degree or preparation completed, current professional teaching certificates held and the number of language and literacy professional development clock hours completed in the past two years.

A sample size of 255 was sought in order to maintain a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error (Wimmer & Dominick, 2009). In all, 457 surveys were sent to WV Pre-K teachers yielding a return of 217 fully completed and four partially completed surveys. This is a 47.5% return rate and was somewhat less than the 255 completed surveys needed to be representative of the entire population. Given that participants were permitted to skip questions, several unanswered items resulted in unbalanced numbers of responses. The lower return rate and the unbalanced number of responses in the cells were significant limitations of the current investigation.

The distributions in the categories for years employed as a preschool teacher were fairly balanced. Of the 221 responses for this category, 33.8% (75) had been employed between 0-3 years, 27.5% (61) between 4-7 years and 38.3% (85) for 8 or more years. The number of teachers with 8 or more years employed as a preschool teacher was unexpected. Because the West Virginia Pre-K program is relatively new, a lesser number of experienced teachers was expected. Nearly 50% (110) of respondents held a master's degree followed by 37.4% (83) holding a bachelor's degree. West Virginia requires preschool teachers in public school based programs to have a bachelor's degree and 56.8% (126) of the respondents were teaching in a public school based program.

Considering the number of teachers holding bachelor's degrees or higher, it was not surprising almost 94% (204) of respondents also held some type of professional preschool certification. A General Pre-K certification was held by 52.7% (117), Special

Needs Pre-K certifications were held by 16.7% (37), and a combination of General Pre-K and Special Needs Pre-K was held by 22.5% (50). The remaining 5.4% (12) of the respondents teach with Emergency Permits. Twelve teachers having Emergency Permits may not be a significant number. If each teacher has at least 20 children, then approximately 240 children receive instruction from a non-certified preschool teacher.

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of professional development clock hours completed in language and literacy in the past two years. Surprisingly, of the 217 responses for this category, 44.6% of WV Pre-K teachers completed 18 hours or less in the past two years. West Virginia requires 15 clock hours of in-service/professional development annually. The data showed that some had completed less than the 15 hour requirement. Additionally, it is not known if those who did meet the clock–hour requirement completed professional development activities unrelated to language and literacy instruction. Either way, it is unlikely that they would be in compliance with the annual requirements set by West Virginia. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), in their *State of Preschool 2008*, reported that West Virginia did not meet benchmark expectations in the area of teacher credentialing and training. The current findings are consistent with the NIEER data as almost half of the teachers surveyed completed fewer than the 15 professional development hours required annually by West Virginia.

Summary of Methods and Instruments

This study was a mixed-method design collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to determine the extent to which West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceived that they were implementing effective language and literacy instructional practices in their

classrooms. These data were collected using the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey (LLPS)*, which was adapted by the researcher from an existing tool designed to measure similar outcomes: the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Pre-K Toolkit*. Three subparts of the ELLCO were used to compose the items for the LLPS: *Language Environment, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing*.

The *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* consisted of four parts. *Part I* requested demographic information for participants, such as the number of years they have taught in a preschool setting, degree level attained and completion of language and literacy professional development clock hours. *Part II* contained 18 descriptors of effective instructional practices coded to a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (*Almost Never)* to 6 (*Very Frequently).* Participants used the rating scale to self-evaluate the extent to which they perceived their implementation of the associated instructional practices. Like the ELLCO, these descriptors were subdivided into three categories, *Language Environment, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing. Part III* included perceived use of resources and materials to increase the effectiveness of language and literacy instruction. Two qualitative questions comprised *Part IV* to determine teachers' perceived constraints with regard to implementing effective language and literacy instruction and the types of additional supports or professional development that would improve such implementation.

The data resulting from the responses to the 18 descriptors in *Part II* of the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* were analyzed for reliability estimates via Chronbach's Alpha for internal consistency. The reliability estimate for the sample

yielded a value of .943, which was substantial compared to a minimal acceptable level of .70 with these kinds of self-report assessments (Pallant, 2008). These data were further analyzed to determine the effect of removing selected items from the survey that might have negatively affected the overall correlations of items. That analysis confirmed that no items should be removed and that all items, on average, were substantially correlated and contributed to the internal construct of the survey. Overall, the conclusion was that the survey was useful for the purpose described in the study.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were computed to determine the overall perceived frequency of implementation of language and literacy practices and to further determine to what extent differences in perceived implementation were significantly affected by the demographic variables noted previously. The main statistical technique used was the Kruskal Wallis H Test. Additionally, descriptive measures such as mean scores, mean ranks, standard deviations and variance were employed. Finally, the two qualitative items were analyzed and summarized to provide further meaning to related quantitative data. Common themes were identified and are discussed later in this chapter.

Summary: Related Discussion, Conclusions and Implications for Research Questions

Research Questions

1. To what extent do West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceive that they implement effective instructional practices for teaching language and literacy in their current instructional routines?

The major purpose of this question was to determine the perceived frequency of implementation of language and literacy practices by West Virginia Pre-K teachers. This

perceived frequency was assessed with 18 descriptors of teaching practices divided into three categories, *Language Environment, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing* on the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey (LLPS)*. Overall, teachers perceived that they implemented the 18 descriptors *Very Frequently.* Of the three categories, teachers perceived themselves to implement most frequently practices associated with *Books and Book Reading* than the other two categories. Moreover, practices involving *Print and Early Writing* were implemented with the lowest perceived frequency of the three categories.

These results could reflect the participants' inherent knowledge of the three categories. Reading to children has long been considered a beneficial endeavor in school as well as in the home. Quite often the quality of language and literacy experiences in the home or at school were defined by the number of books present as well as the amount of time spent interacting with books. It has only been since the launch of the preschool movement that research actually began examining the quality of such book readings and the impact on language and literacy development of young children (Dodici, Draper & Peterson, 2003; Roberts, Jurgens & Burchinal, 2005; Senechal &LeFevre, 2002). Based on the qualitative comments provided by participants in the current investigation, they require support for implementing effective language and literacy practices in areas directly related to the *Language Environment* and *Print and Early Writing*. This result was somewhat inconsistent with the quantitative analysis of the data in which the majority of respondents reported *Very Frequently* for the perceived implementation of the 18 instructional practices across the three conceptual categories.

Although the overall perceived implementation of language and literacy instructional practices appeared to be effective, there were some descriptors that were perceived to be noticeably less frequently implemented than others, such as using learning activities to build phonological awareness. There is little doubt that in high quality preschool programs teachers' knowledge and effective implementation of phonological awareness activities are of great importance because research has suggested that these are among the strongest predictors of future success in reading (Lonigan, Burgess & Anthony, 2000; Koehler, 1996; Gettelfinger, 2000; Paulson, 2004). Moreover, the associated debate over "whole language" and "phonics" regarding "best practices" continues among curriculum developers and teachers who provide literacy instruction for young children (Fredrickson, 1994; Maguire, 1991).

These relationships have some grounding in the research literature. Roberts, Jurgens and Burchinal (2005) examined the importance of shared book reading in the home. Of the four characteristics examined, maternal book reading strategies and maternal sensitivity were significantly related to children's receptive vocabulary. Likewise, Dundorf (1999) indicated a significant predictive relationship between receptive language and emergent literacy. Because maternal book reading strategies and sensitivity can positively affect emergent literacy, the same logic can be implied regarding preschool teachers' book reading strategies and sensitivity. The category of *Books and Book Reading* had the greatest overall mean score of all three categories. This category is clearly a perceived strength of West Virginia Pre-K teachers.

However, the same was not true for West Virginia Pre-K teachers in the category of *Print and Early Writing*, which had the lowest overall mean score of the three

categories. Although considerable research examining the impact of emergent literacy on future reading success exists, there is limited research on the relationship between early writing skills and future reading and/or writing success. Madison (1991) indicated three levels of knowledge about reading and print awareness that denote a connection between reading and writing in a hierarchical manner. The implication is that teachers of young children should be building a foundation of print awareness and early writing skills in addition to book reading and language skills in order to establish a high quality language and literacy environment. The lack of research investigating the relationship between emergent literacy and writing may have contributed to the low overall mean score in the *Print and Early Writing* category.

An alternative explanation may be that teacher preparation programs and professional development activities may not be focusing extensively on the writing/print connections to literacy. Additionally, the whole language and phonics debate referred to previously may be complicating the issue (Fredrickson, 1994; Maguire, 1991). For example, teachers may not be particularly knowledgeable about these connections and how to implement effective print and writing instructional practices in a preschool classroom. This implication was evident in the number of qualitative responses that expressed a need for additional support or professional development in the area of writing.

In addition to the items with a low mean score for perceived level of implementation, several had relatively large standard deviations, which indicated that respondents were varied in their assessments. Such variability was evident for those items with a standard deviation of .85 or greater. These included Item #13 (using emergent

writing skills; Item # 14 (teacher modeling different purposes of writing); Item # 15 (enhancing children's writing process); Item # 16 (modeling active use of environmental print); Item # 17 (integrating environmental print into instructional routines) and Item # 18 (modeling appropriate print conventions). This variability suggests an underlying problem with instruction in literacy acquisition in preschool education. Language and literacy instruction can vary greatly due to different types of programs and the quality of those programs existing in both public and private sectors in West Virginia. Instruction emphasizing phonological awareness activities, guidance for children's use of books, print awareness and early writing varied greatly among the perceptions of respondents. These results mean it is unlikely that these practices are being implemented consistently across West Virginia Pre-K programs and should be targeted for evaluation and improvement, if and when needed.

The overall conclusion generated from the results of the data analyses is that West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceived themselves as very frequently implementing the majority of effective language and literacy practices in their classrooms. Specifically, the practices associated with *Books and Book Reading* emerged as a perceived strength, based on the average scores reported for WV Pre-K teachers. Descriptors associated with *Print and Early Writing* were perceived as being less effective. As noted, some descriptors were also perceived as being less frequently implemented than others. Furthermore, there was a great deal of variance among the responses for several items. Again, though the overall results showed that teachers perceived that they were effectively implementing the associated practices, there was variance (relatively large standard deviations), which pointed to apparent inconsistencies in perceived

implementation of language and literacy practices across the state even though all teachers are employed in the same overarching program: West Virginia Universal Pre-K System.

2. To what extent does teaching experience influence how often West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceive that they implement effective instructional practices for teaching language and literacy in their current instructional settings?

Previous teaching experience would seem to be an important factor influencing effective implementation of the related practices on the LLPS. This variable was investigated by arranging preschool teaching experience in three groupings: between 0-3 years, between 4-7 years and 8 or more years. These groupings were then analyzed separately for each of the three conceptual categories: *Language Environment, Books and Book Reading* and *Print and Early Writing*.

In the *Language Environment* category, a significant difference was found in the area of providing opportunities to engage children in conversation (in individual, small and large group contexts). Teachers with more experience perceived that they provided significantly greater opportunities to converse with children than those with less experience. In the *Books and Book Reading* category, teachers with more experience perceived that they were more likely to engage and involve children in discussions after a read aloud. These instructional practices help promote children's understanding of what has been read to them and contribute to teachers having a positive relationship with their children. Once again, no significance was found for any of the items in the *Print and Early Writing* category with regard to teaching experience.

A more in-depth examination of the literature found several variations regarding the effect of experience on language and literacy acquisition. Dickinson and Tabors

(2001) focused on the importance of oral language development in the home and the preschool classroom and future reading success of children. They identified two indicators of high quality instructional practices: varied use of vocabulary through teacher-child conversations and extended discourse during book reading. Although these authors did not examine how these practices were related to teaching experience, they did conclude that they were crucial to the future reading success of children in Kindergarten. They also concluded that the lack of language-rich experiences in the home can be compensated by those provided in the preschool setting. More experienced teachers may develop an understanding of the importance of language-rich experiences provided through conversations and book reading discussions. Novice teachers may focus more on curriculum fidelity and adhere to scripts due to their lack of experience, whereas more experienced teachers have learned the curriculum and are able focus more time on developing strong teacher-child relationships through such conversations and discussions.

Interestingly, two examples from the literature contradicted the logic of experience and effective instruction assumed in the current study. Chung (2000) emphasized the relationship between teacher characteristics and the quality of teacher-child relationship. She found no significant difference between teaching experience and strong teacher-child relationships. On the other hand, Ellis (1998) found years of teaching experience to be an effective *inverse* predictor of quality instruction. The author concluded that years of teaching experience were *negatively* related to learning environment quality and that experience, singularly, does not explain or predict perceived competence. Although it seemed unlikely, Ellis suggested that teachers with less experience had higher quality learning environments than those with more experience.

The general conclusion from the results of the data analyses for the current investigation is that teaching experience can be an important factor for their perceived implementation of quality language and literacy instructional practices, especially in areas dealing with conversations and discussions between teacher and child.

Although Ellis' and Chung's conclusions do contradict the current investigation, it is important to note that they examined the general learning environment and teachers' perceptions of relationships with children whereas the current investigation examined specific instructional practices. The instructional practices that were significantly related to greater teaching experience in the current study were the types of practices that are not scripted nor found in teaching manuals. The implication is that these are the types of instructional practices that are learned over time. Consequently, the more years of experience teacher have, the more likely they may have gained an understanding of the importance of providing conversations and book discussions, which in turn may strengthen their relationships with their children. That experience likely will be ameliorated with continuous and relevant professional development.

The overall conclusion is that preschool teaching experience layers in as an important factor affecting respondents' perceptions about the effective implementation of the related practices for establishing a language context and for incorporating book literature and reading within that context. However, the number of years of preschool teaching experience was not perceived as an important contributing factor for teaching writing/print practices.

3. What is the relationship between the level of academic training and the perceived level of implementation of effective and appropriate literacy and language practices by West Virginia prekindergarten teachers in their current instructional settings?

This study examined the extent to which the academic training of respondents affected their perceived level of implementation of language and literacy practices. Participants indicated their current academic degree level with one of six choices: *Child Development Associates (CDA)*, *Associate*, *Bachelor's*, *Master's*, *Doctorate* and *Other (please specify)*.

Overall, the academic credentials of participants had little effect on perceived implementation for the great majority of items on the survey. No items in the *Language Environment* category were significantly related to degree or training levels. It was assumed that academic training would have some influence. In contrast, Chung (2000) indicated a positive correlation between teachers' level of educational degrees and teacher-child relationships within the classroom. It was anticipated that teachers with higher academic degree levels would be greatly aware of the relationships between conversing with children about their learning experiences and the subsequent effect on their literacy development. Although the use of conversation builds language skills and vocabulary, it also establishes a relationship between the teacher and the child. Stronger social relationships may be developed through increased teacher-child conversations.

For *Books and Book Reading*, only one item (Item #9) had a significant relationship to degree level. That item referred to a strategy implemented during read alouds to enhance comprehension. Specifically, this strategy addressed calling attention to features of text, pictures and ideas during read alouds. Teachers with master's degrees

reported more frequently perceived implementation of this practice than did those with bachelor's degrees or lower.

It could be that those who have completed a master's degree program have been provided more explicit, practical and theoretical training in areas such as early childhood education, special education or reading. Therefore, they are likely to be more knowledgeable about higher level practices aimed toward improving comprehension and building stronger language and literacy foundations. On the other hand, five of the seven instructional practices in this category did not show significance. Even the significant effect for # 9 noted above could have been a random or chance outcome, particularly due to the unbalanced number of response and the related small sample sizes.

No items in the *Print and Early Writing* category were significantly related to degree level attained. Again, this outcome was not anticipated. Research has suggested a positive relationship between teachers' educational level and the quality of the instructional environment. Kelly (2007) suggested that teachers with higher academic degree levels had more quality outcome measures associated with their classrooms compared to teachers having less education. Only one item (*Item #9, During read alouds, I demonstrate features of text, pictures, and ideas to support comprehension*) from the *Books and Book Reading* category of the current investigation mirrored a positive relationship between academic degree level and the quality of the instructional environment.

In contrast, Justice, Mashburn, Hamre and Pianta (2007) found that a teacher's education level negatively predicted language and literacy instructional quality. Surprisingly, they indicated that teachers with more advanced degrees received lower

ratings for instructional quality. They caution that the majority of advanced degrees held by the teachers in their study were not in the area of early childhood education. They concluded that, although teachers may have advanced degrees, they may not have further knowledge that is applicable specifically to providing quality language and literacy instruction in the preschool setting. It was expected, in the current investigation, that degree level would be reported as a more significant contributor to the perceived implementation of language and literacy practices because our current public education system seems to imply that teachers holding advanced degrees are more "qualified" than those with lower level degrees.

The overall conclusion from the current investigation is that the degree level held by WV Pre-K teachers did not have the impact on perceived implementation of language and literacy practices that was expected. Teachers with higher academic training, compared to their peers with lesser academic training, perceived that they implemented only a single practice in their teaching: *enhancing comprehension skills by pointing out features of text, pictures and ideas during read alouds.* Perhaps as teachers move farther away from their initial collegiate training programs and gain practical classroom experience and know-how, the effects of generalized teacher preparation become less applicable in instructional environments that are highly structured to promote specific reading and literacy growth.

It should also be noted that an imbalance of sample sizes in the specific categories for credentials could have biased these results.

4. What is the relationship between the number of language and literacy professional development clocks hours completed and the perceived level of implementation of effective and appropriate literacy and language practices by West Virginia Pre-K teachers in their current instructional settings?

If prior research has indicated a positive relationship between teachers' level of academic attainment and the quality of instruction, it can be inferred that the same would exist for the completion of related professional development. In the current study, participants indicated the number of professional development clock hours completed in the past two years, excluding collegiate credit hours, in four categories: *18 hours or less*, *Between 18-30 hours*, *More than 30 hours* and *None*. Although West Virginia requires 15 hours of professional development training annually, the current investigation chose to examine the past two years of professional development training to give a broader example of participant training history and to accommodate new teachers.

Four of the five items in the *Language Environment* category were significantly related to the completion of professional development clock hours reported by participants. In general, teachers with more hours of professional development training self-reported to be frequently providing opportunities for conversation, using conversation to extend children's knowledge and to build oral language skills, integrating vocabulary learning with ongoing classroom learning activities and using learning activities to build phonological awareness when compared to their colleagues who indicated lesser hours of professional development training. The implication is that these participants, on average, perceived that the various kinds of professional development training had a great impact on language environment and language instruction in their respective classrooms. Teachers with greater hours of professional development most

likely have current knowledge and related practices that enable them to offer more comprehensive language instruction that focuses on multiple skills and to integrate that instruction throughout ongoing classroom learning activities, as research has suggested.

Additionally, those with greater hours of professional development training may have been involved with a research project currently in place in West Virginia: the *Literacy Environment Enrichment Project* (LEEP). This project has targeted six of the largest counties in West Virginia and provided content-rich professional development to promote language and literacy in early childhood classrooms. WV Pre-K teachers involved in this project are involved in face-to-face professional development or online coursework. They are also provided an in-class mentor/coach to assist with appropriate implementation of strategies and instructional practices. This project utilizes the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool* (ELLCO) and the professional development activities presented emphasize creating a language and literacy environment based in the core descriptors from which the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* was designed for the current investigation.

Unlike the category of *Language Environment*, only one item in the *Books and Book Reading* category was significantly related to the number of professional development clock hours: *engaging children in discussion after read alouds to enhance comprehension*. Teachers with more professional development training perceived that they more frequently implemented this practice when compared to their peers with less training.

Because *Books and Book Reading* was the category with the highest overall mean score, this could have affected the lack of significance found for its items with regard to

professional development clock hours. Because participants already perceived themselves as implementing these practices very frequently, the number of professional development clock hours may not have changed this perception or resulted in its being rated any higher than indicated. This category is an obvious strength for West Virginia Pre-K teachers. Therefore, professional development provided at the county or state level may be targeted in other language and literacy areas that warrant more attention.

Three items in the *Print and Early Writing* category resulted in a significant relationship with the number of professional development clock hours. Teachers who indicated more hours of professional development training self-reported more frequent implementation of practices related to planning opportunities for children to use their emergent writing skills, modeling purposeful use of environmental print and integrating environmental print into classroom routines. Teachers indicating fewer hours of professional development training self-reported that these same practices were implemented less frequently.

Similar to the reasoning behind the greater number of items being significantly related to professional development training in the *Language Environment* category, teachers involved in the *Literacy Environment Enrichment Project* (LEEP) have received specific training related to the descriptors in the *Print and Early Writing* category of the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* (LLPS). Therefore, they may perceive themselves as more frequently implementing these practices based on the LEEP training they have received. Research by Cunningham (2007) indicated that professional development, in general, significantly impacted language and literacy knowledge of participants and implementation of practices. However, when comparing two different

types of professional development, Cunningham found that professional development consisting only of coursework had no significant impact on the quality of language and literacy practices implemented compared to professional development combined with coaching. The implication is that initial training is certainly important but that it needs to be followed up to reinforce its important attributes, to evaluate its effects and to make changes when needed.

This implication is corroborated by Deweese (2008) in her case study of a year-long professional development with coaching for kindergarten, first and second grade teachers. She utilized self-reporting surveys, such as the one used in the current investigation, to collect data on teachers' instructional practices, materials usage and professional development needs. After one year of professional development with coaching, teachers' utilized small group instruction more often, spent more time teaching writing and provided more opportunities for children to write. Teachers' perceptions about the availability of materials also changed as a result of this training. By the end of the professional development period, more teachers indicated that they had adequate materials to effectively teach reading and writing. The author attributed this change to their increased knowledge of multiple ways to utilize already existing materials as opposed to relying on new materials. Additionally, teachers indicated that they had more opportunities to visit and observe other teachers in their instructional settings. Deweese's (2008) research is yet another example of the potential of professional development that is combined with coaching or related support.

In the current investigation, the type of professional development training that was completed by participants was unknown. However, the data showed that, of the

three variables, professional development had the most significant relationships across the three categories. Teachers who completed more professional development clock hours perceived that they implemented the majority practices in the *Language Environment* and *Print and Early Writing* categories more frequently than their peers who had less professional development hours. Justice, Mashburn, Hamre and Pianta (2007) confirmed the importance of professional development. Their results indicated the number of language and literacy development workshops attended by teachers was a strong predictor of the quality of language and literacy instruction.

Logically, it would be expected that a teacher having completed at least the minimum 15 hours of professional development in language and literacy instruction would be more knowledgeable about, and implement more competently, the related instructional practices. The results obtained point to the general conclusion that professional development training is the best indicator of teachers' perceived levels of implementation of effective language and literacy instruction practices and very likely suggest that they are practicing accordingly.

5. What are the overall perceived levels of abilities among West Virginia Pre-K practitioners to effectively teach language and literacy in their current instructional setting?

At the end of *Part II, Teacher Practices* on the LLPS, a cumulative question directed participants to reflect on all 18 items across the three conceptual categories and to indicate their overall perceived level of ability to implement these practices for creating and structuring an effective language and literacy environment.

The 6-point rating scale used by participants was:

1 – Less than Inadequate
2 – Inadequate (Implement few practices; need major improvement and development)
3 – Functional (Implement some practices; many not so well; need significant improvement)
4 – Sufficient (Implement many of the practices; need some specific improvements)
5 – Competent (Implement the majority of practices effectively)
6 – Optimal (Implement the great majority of practices effectively)

The majority of respondents perceived their overall ability to implement effective language and literacy instructional practices as *Competent* or *Optimal*. Although a small number of teachers perceived their ability as *Sufficient* or less, this finding does indicate that there may be teachers in West Virginia Pre-K classrooms who perceive that they are providing less than adequate language and literacy instruction. If true, this is unacceptable for classrooms that fall under the same program, adhere to the same standards and curriculum and, in some cases, have teachers who attend the same trainings/professional developments provided by the Preschool Office at the West Virginia Department of Education.

Justice, et al. (2007) examined characteristics that contributed to the quality of language and literacy instruction and the relationship between teachers' curriculum fidelity and the quality of language and literacy instruction. The author identified two teacher characteristics related to the quality of language and literacy instruction: an *advanced academic degree* and the *amount of language and literacy professional development completed*. Additionally, the author reported that although teachers may have well-written and thoughtful lesson plans and related procedures, these, singularly, did not ensure quality of language and literacy instruction. While most WV Pre-K

teachers hold appropriate academic degrees and adhere to the same curriculum and standards, their ability to create an effective language and literacy learning environment differs. This result establishes a strong argument for effective professional development activities that include on-site coaching or mentoring as well as appropriate classroom observations and teacher evaluations.

In addition to obtaining an overall rating of perceived ability levels for respondents, the data were further compared with three demographic variables: *preschool teaching experience, degree level and number of language and literacy professional development clock hours completed*. Preschool teaching experience and professional development hours significantly and positively affected teachers' perceived level of ability for implementing effective language and literacy practices. On the other hand, there was no significant relationship between degree level and teachers' perceived level of ability to implement these same practices. This finding supports that of Justice, et al. (2007) that indicated that the number of language and literacy professional development hours predicted the quality of language and literacy instruction. However, it contradicts the other finding of the Justice, et al. (2007) study, which suggested holding an advanced degree as a similar predictor.

As discussed previously, Ellis (1998) suggested that years of teaching experience was determined *inversely* to be one of the most effective predictors of appropriate instruction practices. She found that teachers with fewer years of experience had higher quality classrooms compared to those with greater years of experience. This finding was the opposite of what was found in the current investigation: teachers with greater years of experience perceived themselves as more frequently providing effective language and

literacy instruction than did those with fewer years of experience. This difference could be indirectly related to the probability that teachers with greater years of experience would have completed more hours of professional development training or advanced academic degrees, thus having obtained the knowledge and methodology needed for implementing more effective language and literacy instructional practices.

Prior research emphasized the importance of these three variables when related to quality of instruction within preschool classrooms. As noted previously, Chung (2000) pointed out the importance of teachers' perceived level of ability in general. She found that teacher efficacy was positively related to teacher-child relationships. This result indicates that how teachers perceive their abilities is just as important as preschool teaching experience, degree level and professional development clock hours completed. Guo, Piasta, Justice and Kaderavek (2010) confirmed the importance of teacher self-efficacy. They examined the effects of preschool teachers' self-efficacy on children's language and literacy learning. Results indicated that preschool children benefit more from teachers who have higher levels of confidence in their abilities to effectively implement language and literacy instruction. Preschool children experienced the most gains in the area of print awareness when their teachers had high self-efficacy.

The overall conclusion is the majority of West Virginia Pre-K teachers reported their overall ability as *Competent (Implement the majority of practices effectively)* or *Optimal (Implement the great majority of practices effectively).* However, the small number (27, 12.3%) of teachers who reported their overall ability as *Sufficient (Implement many of the practices; need some specific improvements)* or less indicates that there are some classrooms in which language and literacy instruction may be less

than adequate. Additionally, preschool teaching experience and professional development clock hours affected teachers' perceived overall ability to implement effective language and literacy instruction, whereas degree level did not.

6. To what extent does the adaptation of the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* estimate internal consistency compare to the original version of the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation* in regard to the instructional practices' items?

The *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* (LLPS) was adapted from the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Pre-K Tool* (ELLCO, 2008). For this reason, a reliability analysis of the LLPS was essential. The ELLCO includes 19 items and is used as an observational tool to assess K-2 practitioner's implementation of language and literacy practices in three major categories: *Language Environment, Books and Books Reading* and *Print and Early Writing*. In turn, the LLPS was designed with 18 items rephrased for self-evaluation and keyed to a 6-point rating system for the same three categories.

Reliability estimates for the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation* (ELLCO) were reported as .76 for *Books and Book Reading*, .75 for *Print and Early Writing* and .84 for *Total Literacy Environment*. An overall reliability of .843 was also reported. Similarly, reliability estimates for the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* reliability estimates remained consistent with those of the original instrument (ELLCO). An overall reliability estimate of .943 was obtained for the LLPS. Each of the three categories showed lower alphas than the overall estimate (*Language Environment* = .867, *Books and Book Reading* = .887 and *Print and Early Writing* = .886); however, these data also indicate good internal consistency. After examining the reliability estimates to

determine the internal consistency of the LLPS compared to the original version *(Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation, ELLCO)*, the conclusion is that the LLPS was a reliable tool to survey West Virginia Pre-K teachers for this investigation.

Resources and Materials

Aside from the 18 items in Part II of the LLPS, the survey also included a section involving resources and materials used to support language and literacy instruction (Part III, LLPS Appendix C). This section included seven items relating to the availability and selection of books (items 1-5) as well as the availability of writing tools and provisions for student writing (items 6 and 7). There was also an open comments box for each of the seven items for participants to provide more details or clarifications.

Participants responded to a 4-point frequency scale for the first five items: *Seldom (less than monthly), Occasionally (monthly), Frequently (Bi-weekly)* and *Almost Always (weekly)*. For items 1-4 most practitioners (≥85%) reported that they are *Almost Always* selecting books that are relevant to the curriculum, to children's ages and abilities and to children's interests. However, Item #5, *selecting read aloud books based on children's ideas and input* was relatively lower with 66.8% reporting *Almost Always*. These results can be found in Table 33, Chapter 4.

The open comments for the first four items clarified the frequency ratings by simply elaborating on the types of books selected and how often these materials are used or changed. Examples of details provided were: "These are available daily for free choice time"; "We have books ranging from board books and picture books, to science based factual books"; "I choose books weekly that correspond with the theme we are working on."

The comments for Item #5 provided a deeper understanding of why the rating was quite lower than for the other four items. Respondents indicated that children may bring books from home or choose from the class or school library. However, this may present a problem if children do not have books at home or are not allowed to bring these to school. In addition, if children are choosing from a pre-selected class library, they are limited to those choices, which were ultimately made by the teacher. Comments that illustrated these points were: "Children are encouraged to bring books from home that they would like to share with the class" and "Sometimes our discussions lead to the next read aloud however, if not then I have the plan of what we'll be reading next."

Provisions for the integration of varied and appropriate writing tools throughout the classroom and the inclusion of a designated area for children's writing were the focus of Item #6 and #7 (Tables 34 and 35, Chapter 4). Respondents were give choice of *Yes, No* or *Other* rating for these two items. The great majority of teachers indicated *Yes* to both items. About 94% indicated that they do integrate varied writing tools throughout the classroom and about 86% reported that they have an area designated specifically for children to write. Approximately 14% indicated *Other* for both items. However, an examination of the open comments for these items did not result in a deeper understanding about the use of these materials. Instead, these appeared to be more detailed *Yes* responses describing the types of tools used and where the designated writing area was located.

In summary, West Virginia Pre-K teachers feel that they are providing the necessary resources and materials for writing instruction, based on the perceived levels of implementation previously noted. However, they may not be implementing the guidance

and instruction required to build children's pre-writing skills and print awareness and may not be making or understanding the important literacy connection between reading and writing. This finding contradicts a case study by McGill-Franzen, Lanford and Adams (2002) that found extreme inequalities in the amount and types of resources and material provided to children in publicly funded programs and private programs. Publicly funded programs had fewer books and writing materials as well as limited print exposure and access to print knowledge. Because the majority of teachers surveyed in the current investigation were employed in public-school based programs, similar results were expected.

Qualitative Data

The overall qualitative data in the current study were collected through two open-ended questions:

1. *What constraints, (e.g., supervisory expectations, school policies/practices and county and state mandates) are hindering you from implementing language and literacy practices?*
2. *What supports or kinds of professional development would assist you in becoming a more effective language and literacy practitioner?*

Question #1 generated replies from 168 respondents and six major themes arose: *Curriculum, Time, Funding/Materials, Federal/State Policy, Class Size/Staffing* and *None.* Question #2 resulted in replies from 141 respondents and five major themes emerged: *Specific Skills, General Language and Literacy, Early Childhood/Age Appropriate Practice*, *Collaboration* and *None Needed/Don't Know*.

The main constraints indicated were curriculum (N=18, 10.7%) and time constraints (N=17, 10.1%). Participants commented that the current curriculum required in their classrooms (*Creative Curriculum*) hinders them from direct instruction and exercising some autonomy. The following comments signify these constraints: "I feel that Creative Curriculum is weak in presentation of exemplary practice for students"; "The things are available for the children to use but according to the creative curriculum you can't encourage the children to do these things"; "I'm not sure what the problem is with teaching a letter of the week as long as I am talking about other letters that go along with what we are discussing."

Participants also noted that they don't have enough time for adequate planning or in-depth instruction. Examples of these comments were: "Time with the children and time for planning these opportunities"; "Time to plan more effective language and literacy practices …"; "Having a half time preschool program that runs for only 3 and a half hours I feel is a hinderance [sic] to time constraints. Full day programs you have more time to help and support with language/literacy and writing." A study conducted by the Literacy Collaborative at Lesley University corroborates the comments given by West Virginia Pre-K teachers. The focus was to determine participants' level of buy-in to a literacy model implemented within their schools. They too indicated that they did not have enough "uninterrupted class time" to teach the accompanying language and literacy framework, nor did they have enough "time for preparation" (p.2). The time factor appears to be an overarching constraint for teachers.

The types of constraints reported were not unexpected but it was unexpected to have nearly one-half of the respondents (N=75, 44.6%) indicate that they had *no constraints* when implementing effective language and literacy instruction. A reason teachers previously reported their perceived levels of ability as being *Competent* or *Optimal* (approximately 87%, N=184) may have been that they do not feel a great deal of external constraint. Carradine (2004) researched teacher constraints and reported that teachers in high quality classrooms felt in control of their planning and implementation compared to low quality classrooms where teachers felt external factors had the greatest influence on such planning and implementation.

Identifying constraints that may hinder teachers from effectively implementing language and literacy practices provides some valuable insight into their day-to-day

practices. However, a goal of this study was to identify areas in which they could benefit from greater support or professional development. Approximately 89% (N=125) of respondents indicated they needed additional support or training to become a more effective language and literacy practitioner.

The majority of respondents (approximately 16%, N=22) indicated they needed more support in the areas of *reading and writing* with such skills as vocabulary development, phonics, creative writing and letter formation. Comments included: "Workshops that show you new books and teaching ideas with them and information on techniques to make writing more interesting"; "I would like more training in the area of phonics/phonemes [sic] when and how to teach this to my students"; "I would like to know more about implementing a word wall effectively as well as way to get children interested in writing."

Three other themes emerged for approximately 27% (N=38) of the respondents: *General Language and Literacy, Early Childhood/Age Appropriate Practice* and *Collaboration.* Respondents indicated training needs in language and literacy in general: "More literacy training and ideas …"; "I am always interested in any kind of language and literacy professional development sessions". They also specified a need for additional professional development in early childhood best practices: "Learning AGE APPROPRIATE ideas to implement into the classroom to teach lang. & lit."; "I would be interested in pre-k based workshops, however, they are simply not provided for us." In addition to general language and literacy training and early childhood best practices, practitioners would like more opportunities to collaborate with colleagues:

"Collaboration among Pre-K teachers sharing ideas, materials, effective practices …"; "Visiting other classrooms or networking with other teachers."

As noted previously, Cunningham (2007) addressed the issue of the effects that professional development has on language and literacy knowledge and practices of early childhood teachers. Coursework combined with coaching appears to be an effective professional development strategy for delivering and acquiring quality language and literacy practices. This notion is supported by the current study because respondents expressed a need for collaboration. A great deal of professional development is provided as a one-time class for a limited amount of time. Very little follow up is conducted after attending a professional development activity. School systems may be able to benefit from the idea of combining on-site coaching, or at least peer collaboration, to enhance retention and implementation.

In conclusion, close to 21% (N=28) of West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceived their curriculum (Creative Curriculum) and lack of time to be constraints that hinder their effective implementation of language and literacy instruction; however, almost half (N=75, 44.6%) of the teachers perceived no constraints. Logically it seems that teachers who reported no constraints would also report no need for additional support or professional development. However, approximately 89% (N=125) of WV Pre-K teachers reported a need for additional support to become more effective language and literacy practitioners. Most teachers perceived that more support was needed in reading and writing, language and literacy and early childhood best practices. This result provides an opportunity for state and local administrators to enhance the quality of language and literacy instruction in their programs.

Summary of Conclusions

In summary, the quantitative data analyses of this investigation indicated West Virginia Pre-K teachers perceived their overall abilities to implement effective language and literacy instruction as *Competent* or *Optimal*. The same is true of the perceived levels of frequency with which they implement the associated "best" practices. In addition, the analysis of data identified writing as the area perceived to be the least effectively implemented. Conversely, book reading strategies were perceived to be practices being implemented the most frequently. The number of professional development clock hours completed was the most significant indicator of the perceived frequency of implementation of language and literacy instructional practices. Teachers self-reported that they provide literature relevant to the preschool literacy curriculum and to the children's interests on a weekly basis. A variety of writing tools and materials are available for the children in a designated area for writing in the setting. Teachers' reported use of resources and materials is consistent with their perceived frequency of implementation of language and literacy practices, meaning that they are implementing the appropriate literacy practices and have structured the related resources and materials.

Constraints on their instruction do not appear to be major issues or distractions, but some respondents did express being inhibited by the required curriculum (Creative Curriculum) and by the lack of time for planning, teaching and evaluating. The implication is that state and local administrators should provide opportunities for teachers to contribute to decision-making involving curriculum and standards and to arrange for their input regarding scheduling and decision making involving half-day or full-day programs. In addition to constraints, teachers reported a need for additional support for

teaching reading and writing, language and literacy and for developing early childhood best instructional practices. The same teachers also indicated a desire to have more peer collaboration. These results indicate that teachers have a desire to learn more about and to improve their language and literacy instructional practices.

Overall, West Virginia Pre-K practitioners perceive themselves to be implementing quality language and literacy experiences and instruction for young children. However, the results of this study indicate that there are associated strengths and weaknesses inherent in their practices. These findings are important to local and state policy makers responsible for funding and evaluating West Virginia Pre-K programs. These are also important to curriculum supervisors who are responsible for designing and implementing future professional development endeavors targeting West Virginia Pre-K teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

From the data analyses and related findings, the following recommendations for further research regarding the implementation of effective language and literacy instructional practices by West Virginia Pre-K practitioners are suggested:

1. Considering that the results of this investigation yielded relatively high ratings overall for perceived levels of implementation of language and literacy instructional practices by WV Pre-K teachers, it would be beneficial to extend the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* to WV kindergarten teachers to determine the extent to which they are implementing such practices. Early childhood is considered to be ages birth to eight and, therefore, kindergarten teachers also provide an important foundation for language and literacy

development. Kindergarten teachers also have access to more children because attendance is required at ages five or six in a kindergarten programs, whereas preschool attendance is optional.

2. Given that existing research emphasizes the importance of preschool and the "jump start" it provides young children, it would also be beneficial to determine if children attending WV Pre-K programs are truly better prepared to be more successful in Kindergarten. This information could be collected by surveying Kindergarten teachers about the literacy readiness of children at entry level and by collecting and interpreting information and data related to monitoring student progress on beginning-of-year benchmarks. Such data could also be used to compare readiness levels of those children entering Kindergarten from various contexts, such as public school, private- and community-based programs.
3. The current investigation was limited to West Virginia Pre-K teachers. To add more extensive knowledge and understanding about these programs, a comparison of West Virginia Pre-K teachers to a similar state population (e.g., Georgia or Oklahoma) would provide additional insight about the perceived quality of West Virginia teachers compared to those teachers in more established programs already identified as being effective and of high quality. Data collected from such an investigation would also add to an important and growing national knowledge base for language and literacy instruction for young children.
4. Practitioners in the current study identified constraints upon their ability to effectively implement language and literacy practices and the kinds of supports or professional development that could assist them in becoming more effective

practitioners. An in-depth study of these constraints and supports could prove beneficial to state, county and local professional development staff and to West Virginia policymakers when setting future goals for improvement, budgeting and professional development training. Likewise, collegiate teacher training programs could use such data to assess their teacher education programs. Collegiate training is an important element of professional preparation because young teachers develop their initial perceptions, and ground their related beliefs about literacy learning and instruction in those contexts.

5. The category of *Print and Early Writing* proved to be relatively lower than the other two categories for perceived levels of implementation by West Virginia Pre-K teachers. An in-depth study may identify more specifically what types of writing instruction are being implemented or are needed in preschool classrooms and why they are important.
6. The completion of professional development clock hours was identified on the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey* as ranges. More refined analysis and understanding of these data could be examined by collecting specific numbers of clock hours and types of specific training received by each respondent. Additionally, timelines for completing professional development may also provide more relevant information if compared to the instructional practices being implemented.
7. Determining the kinds of professional development activities completed by participants could provide further insight into what is or is not successful. For example, it would be beneficial to identify those participants who were involved

in the *Literacy Environment Enrichment Project* (LEEP) and how that involvement may have affected their perceived levels of implementation and ability.

8. This study relied on self-reporting to gather data on the perceived levels of implementation of language and literacy practices within West Virginia Pre-K classrooms. An additional in-class observation component could provide much greater insight into the instruction actually being delivered in these classrooms. It would be beneficial to determine whether actual observations verify the individual perceptions of respondents.
9. Finally, a replication of the current investigation could be undertaken with a more adequate sample size to substantiate the findings, expand the results, and give greater validity to the conclusions for generalizing to the West Virginia Pre-K teacher population at large.

Even though the current study concentrated on academic descriptors and related literacy skills, preschool educators are reminded that the concomitant development of social and emotional skills and a positive sense of identity among preschool children are important elements in a program that is developmentally appropriate. These components go hand in hand with the development of cognitive learning (e.g., attending, perceiving, associating and scaffolding) and academic learning skills (e.g., letter naming, decoding, letter-sound correspondence and rhyming) in high quality programs for 4-year-olds.

Bodrova and Leong (2005) referred to a different approach to preschool education based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. They suggested that education that focuses on children's competencies that are currently developing within the zone of proximal

development instead of those competencies that exist within the child. In addition, they utilized Vygotsky's theory to propose specific characteristics that define high quality preschool education. One characteristic that stands out with regard to the current investigation refers to the use of standards as instructional guidelines. Many West Virginia Pre-K teachers reported their curriculum was a constraint to effective teaching and that they needed more professional training for developing specific reading and writing skills. Bodrova and Leong (2005) suggested that being too narrowly focused on skills and outcomes can result in the neglect of other developmental areas. Children's learning opportunities should be carefully planned to utilize scaffolding to build upon all developmental domains of children and to build strong social relationships that will guide such development.

Consequently, preschool teachers must not only perceive themselves as being able or competent in regard to achieving academic learning, but they also must conceive of that learning in a holistic context that advances children's development in becoming successful learners which is especially critical for those young children "at risk" for various academic, social and economic factors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

From: Securro, Sam
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2010 12:12 PM
To: Securro, Sam
Subject: FW: IRBNet Board Action

-----Original Message-----

From: Bruce Day [mailto:no-reply@irbnet.org]
Sent: Tuesday, May 04, 2010 4:09 PM
To: Securro, Sam; Leslie Papelier
Subject: IRBNet Board Action

Please note that Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) has taken the following action on IRBNet:

Project Title: [167942-1] Implementation of Language and Literacy Practices by Prekindergarten Teachers in the West Virginia Universal Pre-K System Principal Investigator: Samuel Securro

Submission Type: New Project
Date Submitted: April 29, 2010

Action: APPROVED

Effective Date: May 4, 2010
Review Type: Expedited Review

Should you have any questions you may contact Bruce Day at day50@marshall.edu.

Thank you,

The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION REQUEST FOR ADAPTATION OF ELLCO

Marshall University Graduate School of Education
and Professional Development
100 Angus E. Peyton Drive
South Charleston, WV 25303

October 17, 2009

Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.
PO Box 10624
Baltimore, MD 21285-0624

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Leslie Papelier and I am a doctoral candidate at Marshall University Graduate College in South Charleston, WV. I am currently working on my dissertation entitled *Implementation of Literacy and Language Practices by Prekindergarten Teachers in the West Virginia Universal PreK System.*

I am writing to you to request permission to use the items from the Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) PreK Tool to create a teacher self-survey to determine the level of implementation of literacy and language skills in the West Virginia Universal PreK System.

I wish to develop the survey items from Section III - The Language Environment, Section IV – Books and Book Reading, and Section V – Print and Early Writing. The survey will be Internet-based with a Likert scale for PreK teachers to evaluate their level of implementation of literacy and language practices within their classrooms. With this research I hope to identify strengths and weaknesses in the areas of literacy and language instruction to better target future teacher trainings in West Virginia.

Please contact me to let me know if you grant permission and any conditions that may apply. If you have any questions about this request or the research, please feel free to contact me at 304-206-1918 after 3 pm or by email at leslierinehart@suddenlink.net. My doctoral chair is Dr. Samuel Securro, Jr. He can be reached at securro@marshall.edu.

Thank You for Your Consideration,

Leslie Papelier
Doctoral Candidate
Marshall University Graduate College

From: "Enright, Peggy" <penright@edc.org>
Subject: **RE: Copyright Permission Request for ELLCO PreK Tool**
Date: February 24, 2010 4:01:22 PM EST
To: Leslie Rinehart <leslierinehart@suddenlink.net>
Cc: "Clark-Chiarelli, Nancy" <nclark-chiarelli@edc.org>

Dear Ms. Rinehart,

EDC hereby grants you permission to use and/or adapt sections III, IV, and V of the ELLCO Pre-K ("the Materials") for your dissertation. This permission to use and/or adapt the Materials is granted for this one-time, non-commercial, educational purpose only. These rights may not be transferred to any other person or organization. All other rights are reserved to EDC.

Please include the language on the survey "This survey was adapted from the ELLCO Pre-K © Education Development Center, Inc. The adaptation was developed with permission of EDC."

Best
Peg Enright

From: Leslie Rinehart [leslierinehart@suddenlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 16, 2010 4:23 PM
To: Enright, Peggy
Cc: Clark-Chiarelli, Nancy; Leslie Rinehart
Subject: Copyright Permission Request for ELLCO PreK Tool

Ms. Enright,

Nancy Clark-Chiarelli gave me your email address for my request to use sections III, IV and V of the ELLCO PreK Tool to create a survey for WV PreK teachers for my dissertation research.

I have attached my original request letter that I sent to Brookes Publishing as well as an example of how I wish to use the indicators as self-evaluative statements regarding the frequency of implementation of language and literacy instruction.

Thanks for your assistance! Please let me know if you need any further information or have any questions.

·P A U L · H ·
BROOKES
PUBLISHING Co.

Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.
Post Office Box 10624, Baltimore, Maryland 21285-0624

February 15, 2010

Leslie Papetier
Marshall University Graduate School
of Education and Professional Development
142 Roxalana Hills Drive
Dunbar WV 25064
FAX: 304-766-6611

Invoice #: PB10027
Please reference this number in all correspondence

Thank you for your request for permission to adapt Sections III, IV, and V from **Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Tool, Pre-K (2008)**, Smith et al. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc., is pleased to grant your request, contingent upon the following terms and conditions:

This material will be adapted into an electronic self-statement survey as part of your dissertation project at Marshall University. The survey shall be distributed online via Survey Monkey in 2010 for a single period of no more than 2 to 4 weeks. The survey shall be password-protected and made available only to the estimated 600 Pre-K teachers from throughout the state of West Virginia.

No print or other format, including but not limited to CD-ROM, open Internet posting, and/or email, copies of the survey may be made or distributed.

Research and data gathered from the survey may be presented in your dissertation, entitled "Implementation of Developmentally Appropriate Literacy and Language Practices by Prekindergarten Teachers in the West Virginia Universal PreK System."

A full credit line acknowledging the original source publication, author, copyright holder, and publisher must appear with the survey. The credit line shall include: the name of the editors, the copyright year, the copyright holder (Education Development Center, Inc.), the full title of the publication, our location: Baltimore, our full name: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc., and the phrase: Adapted with permission of the publisher. **Appropriate acknowledgment must also be included in your dissertation.**

A non-refundable permission fee of U.S. $25.00 is due no later than May 1, 2010. Make your check payable to Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc., and send it to my attention at P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285. Payment must be made in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank. Please reference the above invoice number. **If the payment is not received within the designated time period then permission shall be automatically revoked.**

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Permission is granted on a one-time only basis and is non-exclusive and non-transferable. The survey may be made and distributed for research purposes only, to Pre-K teachers within the state of West Virginia only. For additional copies, other versions, derivatives, mediums, or formats, a separate permission request must be submitted, and a fee may be assessed. All rights not explicitly expressed herein are retained by Brookes Publishing.

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Heather Lengyel, Senior Subsidiary Rights & Contracts Manager

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APPENDIX C: PANEL REVIEW PROTOCOL

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY PRACTICES SURVEY PANEL REVIEW

Dear Panel,

I am preparing to collect data for my dissertation soon, using a facsimile of the draft copy of the survey written below. Part One of the survey is designed to obtain feedback from preschool practitioners about a variety of instructional practices that potentially could be used to teach language and literacy to young children. There are 18 such practices noted below and what I need to know is the relative importance of these practices.

Please rate each statement using a scale from 1 to 11, where 1 indicates a least relevant, unimportant or low priority practice and 11 indicates an extremely relevant, important or high priority practice.

PART ONE: Circle the number on the scale which best identifies your judgment.

1. Children are conversed with about their ideas, experiences, and learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
2. Opportunities are provided that engage children in individual, small group, and large group conversations.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**
3. Conversation is used to extend children's content knowledge and build oral language skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
4. Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**
5. Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6. Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**
7. Guidance is provided for children's use of books.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
8. Read alouds are organized to take place with small or large groups.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**

9. During read alouds, features of text, pictures, and ideas to support comprehension are demonstrated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10. During read alouds, expressive and fluent reading is modeled.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**
11. After read alouds, children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12. During read aloud discussions, children are encouraged to contribute.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**
13. Planned opportunities are provided for children to use their emergent writing skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
14. Different purposes of writing are modeled.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**
15. Individualized instruction is provided to enhance children's writing process.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
16. Active and purposeful use of environmental print is modeled.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**
17. Environmental print is integrated into children's classroom routines.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
18. Appropriate print conventions (e.g., correct use of upper- and lower-case letters, spelling, and spacing between words) are modeled.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**

Please indicate any items you feel should be added or deleted below:

Added: Deleted:

PART TWO: Teacher Rating of Perceived Abilities

The rating scale below is designed to identify different levels of abilities perceived among preschool teachers to implement language and literacy practices.

Optimal	Competent	Sufficient	Functional	Inadequate
Implement the great majority of best practices effectively	Implement the majority of best practices effectively	Implement many of the best practices; need some specific improvements	Implement some best practices; many not so well; need significant improvement	Implement few best practices; need major improvement and development

6 5 4 3 2 1

Please evaluate the Teacher Ratings scale above by circling choices for each of the three items that follow.

1. Are the evaluation categories (optimal, competent, sufficient, etc.) mutually exclusive in their meaning? Yes No Uncertain

Comments:

2. Do the criteria under each evaluation category clearly differ? **Yes** **No** **Uncertain**

Comments:

3. Are the values in the number line consistent with the descriptive criteria? Yes No Uncertain

Comments:

PART THREE: Qualitative

This part of the survey includes two open–ended items. The first is designed for respondents to offer open comments about the kinds of *constraint*s, if any that may be hindering the implementation of what they feel are the "best" practices. The second item is designed for respondents to offer their comments about how they can be assisted to improve and to enhance their skills.

In each case, two questions are structured and we want to know which of these more effectively states the focus for respondents. Please review items below and reply to the questions that follow.

CONTRAINTS:

A. What constraints, (e.g., supervisory expectations, school policies/practices and county and state mandates) are hindering you from implementing language and literacy best practices?

B. What constraints, (e.g., internally and externally) are hindering you from implementing language and literacy best practices?

Which of the two items above will be more effective for eliciting relevant qualitative information about *constraints*?

❑ A ❑ B ❑ Either A or B ❑ Neither A nor B

COMMENTS:

SUPPORTS:

A. Describe how you could be assisted in becoming a more effective language and literacy practitioner.

B. What supports or kinds of professional development would assist you in becoming a more effective language and literacy practitioner?

Which of the two items above will be more effective for eliciting relevant qualitative information about *supports*?

❑ A ❑ B ❑ Either A or B ❑ Neither A nor B

COMMENTS:

Please feel free to offer any other kind of feedback regarding this survey that you think will improve its structure or clarity.

Thank you for your feedback! ☺

APPENDIX D: LANGUAGE AND LITERACY PRACTICES SURVEY

PART I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please complete the following:

1. Please indicate the category below with the number of years you have been employed as a preschool teacher as of May 1, 2010?

   ❑ 0-3 years ❑ 4-7 years ❑ 8 or more

2. Type of program in which you are currently employed:

   ❑ Head Start ❑ Public school-based ❑ Community-based

   ❑ Special Needs ❑ Other

3. Degree program/level and date completed:

   ❑ CDA ❑ Associates ❑ Bachelors

   ❑ Masters ❑ Doctorate ❑ Other

   Date Completed:

4. Current Teaching Certification

   ❑ General Pre-K Certification ❑ Special Needs Pre-K Certification

   ❑ Both General Pre-K and Special Needs Pre-K Certifications

   ❑ Emergency Permit/No Pre-K Certification at this time

5. Indicate the number of clock hours, excluding collegiate credit hours, of in-service/professional development training in language and literacy completed in the past two years.

   ❑ 18 hours or less ❑ between18-30 hours

   ❑ more than 30 hours ❑ none

PART II. TEACHER PRACTICES

Following are a series of statements related to instructional practices in language and literacy. Use the rating scale noted below to indicate how often you practice each of these in your teaching setting.

Rating Scale:

1	**Almost Never**	(This is not a common practice in my setting)
2	**Very Rarely**	(I do this once a week or less, depending upon the planned activities)
3	**Occasionally**	(I do this 2-3 times per week, depending upon the planned activities)
4	**Frequently**	(I do this daily but on an impromptu bases)
5	**Very Frequently**	(I do this daily with specific learning activities)
6	**Almost Always**	(I do this daily throughout all class activities)
0	**Not Applicable**	(Not relevant in my instructional circumstance/role)

A. LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT

1. I talk with children about their ideas, personal experiences, and learning experiences.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
2. I provide opportunities that engage children in individual, small group, and large group conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
3. I use conversation to extend children's knowledge and build oral language skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
4. Vocabulary learning is integrated with ongoing classroom learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
5. Learning activities are used to build phonological awareness.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0

B. BOOKS AND BOOK READING

6. Opportunities are provided for children to freely and independently access books.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
7. Guidance is provided for children's use of books.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0

8. Read alouds are implemented with small or large groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
9. During read alouds, I demonstrate features of text, pictures, and ideas to support comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
10. During read alouds, I model expressive and fluent reading.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
11. After read alouds, children are engaged in discussions that foster comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
12. During read aloud discussions, children are encouraged to contribute.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0

C. PRINT AND EARLY WRITING

13. Planned opportunities are provided for children to use their emergent writing skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
14. I model different purposes of writing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
15. Guidance is provided to enhance children's writing process.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
16. I model active and purposeful use of environmental print.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
17. Environmental print is integrated into children's classroom routines.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
18. I model appropriate print conventions (e.g., correct use of upper- and lower-case letters, spelling, and spacing between words).	1	2	3	4	5	6	0

D. OVERALL RATING FOR PART II. (TEACHER PRACTICES)

Considering the 18 practices noted above, mark the box beside the number to identify your overall level of ability to implement these for creating and structuring an effective language and literacy environment.

Optimal	Competent	Sufficient	Functional	Inadequate
Implement the great majority of practices effectively	Implement the majority of practices effectively	Implement many of the practices; need some specific improvements	Implement some practices; many not so well; need significant improvement	Implement few practices; need major improvement and development

6 ❑ 5 ❑ 4 ❑ 3 ❑ 2 ❑ 1 ❑

OPEN COMMENTS:

Please use the text box below to offer written comments to qualify or to further explain any of the ratings given for any items in PART II.

Open Comments:

PART III. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

Rate each of the following descriptors using the associated rating scale. Following each item is a text box that can be used to qualify or to further explain ratings.

1. Books are made available relevant to current curriculum and to children interests.

Seldom (Less than monthly)	Occasionally (Monthly)	Frequently (Bi-weekly)	Almost Always (Weekly)
1	2	3	4

Comments:

2. Books are made available that vary in difficulty of text appropriate to age and ability levels of children.

Seldom (Less than monthly)	Occasionally (Monthly)	Frequently (Bi-weekly)	Almost Always (Weekly)
1	2	3	4

Comments:

3. Books are made available that include fictional narrative, poetry and/or rhyming, nonfiction and concept-based books.

Seldom (Less than monthly)	Occasionally (Monthly)	Frequently (Bi-weekly)	Almost Always (Weekly)
1	2	3	4

Comments:

4. I thoughtfully select read aloud books that correspond to current curriculum and children's interests.

Seldom (Less than monthly)	Occasionally (Monthly)	Frequently (Bi-weekly)	Almost Always (Weekly)
1	2	3	4

Comments:

5. I thoughtfully select read aloud books in response to children's ideas and input.

Seldom (Less than monthly)	Occasionally (Monthly)	Frequently (Bi-weekly)	Almost Always (Weekly)
1	2	3	4

Comments:

6. Varied and appropriate writing materials and tools are integrated throughout the classroom.

❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Other

Comments:

7. A designated area for writing is provided in my classroom.

❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Other

Comments:

PART IV. QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

Please reply to the following items regarding implementation of language and literacy practices and your professional development.

1. What constraints, (e.g., supervisory expectations, school policies/practices and county and state mandates) are hindering you from implementing language and literacy practices?

Remarks:

2. What supports or kinds of professional development would assist you in becoming a more effective language and literacy practitioner?

Remarks:

☺ *Thank you for taking the time and interest to complete this survey.*

APPENDIX E: EMAIL INVITATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Greetings,

My name is Leslie Papelier, and I am currently a doctoral student at Marshall University Graduate College conducting a research study. I am writing to ask your help in a study of West Virginia Pre-K teachers being conducted as part of the requirements for completing my doctorate. Your opinions will be very important to the success of the study.

It is my understanding that you are currently a West Virginia Pre-K teacher. You were selected from a list of teachers provided by the West Virginia Department of Education. You are being asked to complete a survey regarding your implementation of language and literacy practices within your instructional setting.

Your answers are completely confidential. Data will be reported in aggregate form only, with no identification of individuals. The identifying PIN number you are asked to fill in on the survey will only be used as a method to send follow-up surveys to non-respondents. When you return your completed survey, your name will be deleted from the mailing list. Your name is not connected to your answers in any way.

There are no known risks involved with this study. Participation is completely voluntary and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you choose to not participate in this research study or to withdraw.

Please answer all questions as honestly and accurately as possible. Please complete the online survey by DATE. This survey will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete. Go to the following website to complete the *Language and Literacy Practices Survey*:

http://www.surveymonkey.com

After reading the directions, you will be asked to enter your PIN# _____. If you have technical problems with the survey please contact me at leslierinehart@suddenlink.net.

Completing the on-line survey indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply. If you have any questions about the study or would like a summary of the results, you may contact Dr. Samuel Securro at 304-746-8948 or securro@marshall.edu, or me at 304-206-1918 or the above email address.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant you may contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-4303.

Please accept my gratitude in advance for your cooperation and timely participation in this research study. Please print this page for your records.

Leslie Papelier
Marshall University Graduate Student

Email Subject: Language and Literacy Practices Survey Request

Last week you received a request to complete the Language and Literacy Practices Survey. Your name was selected from a list of West Virginia Pre-K teachers. Your answers are completely confidential. Data will be reported in aggregate form only, with no identification of individuals. When you return your completed survey, your name will be deleted from the mailing list. If you have already completed the survey, please accept my sincere thanks. If not, please do so by DATE. I am especially appreciative of your help. The survey can be accessed by clicking on the following link:

http://www.surveymonkey.com

In order to begin the survey, you will be prompted to enter your PIN# ----.

Completing the on-line survey indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply. If you have any questions about the study or would like a summary of the results, you may contact Dr. Samuel Securro at 304-746-8948 or securro@marshall.edu, or me at 304-206-1918 or the above email address.

Leslie Papelier
Marshall University Graduate Student

APPENDIX F: QUALITATIVE RESPONSES

Language and Literacy Practices Survey

What constraints, (e.g., supervisory expectations, school policies/practices and county and state mandates) are hindering you from implementing language and literacy practices?

	Response Count
	168
answered question	168
skipped question	53

	Response Text	
1	"Worksheets" are not allowed to be used. I wouldn't want to use worksheets all the time, but I would like to use writing worksheets which would include tracing the child's name and then having space for them to write it more times.	May 10, 2010 2:27 AM
2	Each of my students is an adult-dependent learner. I do not have the staffing required to provide enough adult-supported literacy activities	May 10, 2010 10:42 AM
3	The level of special needs in my classroom often make it harder to implement language and literacy in small group settings. With one teacher and one aide in the room there are often supervisory needs that come before instruction.	May 10, 2010 11:24 AM
4	None	May 10, 2010 11:31 AM
5	Issues of HS mandates and ECER-R these are really too numerous to explain.	May 10, 2010 11:31 AM
6	The children that I teach come from low ses homes. These children rarely experience conversation and good literacy practices at home. I think that this constraint makes it harder to implement these practices during the school day. Throughout the year, my goal and job is to encourage language and literacy at home and to stress to the parents that good literacy skills is extremely important, however; the response from the parents is not always positive. On a positive note, the children I teach respond well to stories, writing and phonological awareness activities and enjoy participating during the activities.	May 10, 2010 11:41 AM
7	I am fortunate with the preschool curriculum that there aren't any constraints on implementing language and literacy practices in my classroom. I feel that I am able to do pretty much what I want to foster growth in these areas.	May 10, 2010 11:43 AM
8	quiet time to spend with children	May 10, 2010 11:46 AM
9	None	May 10, 2010 12:19 PM
10	None at this time.	May 10, 2010 12:21 PM
11	I do incorporate language practices,it is part of our curriculum.	May 10, 2010 12:47 PM
12	None at this time.	May 10, 2010 1:30 PM
13	money for supplies, and center activities	May 10, 2010 1:46 PM
14	none, just my training more than anything. A lot of teachers in PK want to teach writing letters, when that isn't appropriate for most PK children. We need to focus on the fine motor strength and control. Same with learning letters. We needs to expose to books and print, not drill and kill on the ABC's!! (Unless a child IS ready)!!	May 10, 2010 2:46 PM
15	Head Start does not believe in "teaching" students. They think they learn all through play. Which is good for somethings but not all.	May 10, 2010 3:11 PM
16	None	May 10, 2010 3:15 PM
17	at this time none.	May 10, 2010 3:19 PM

	Response Text	
18	I believe that not allowing the direct teaching of letters and sounds is an injustice to the children. Without direct teaching a lot of mistakes are made and then practiced. It is easier to teach the skill correctly than unteach a mistake and then reteach it correctly.	May 10, 2010 3:28 PM
19	I feel Putnam County is very supportive in the language and Literacy practices. They have done a tremendous job of offering classes, trainings, and other learning opportunities to flourish in this area.	May 10, 2010 3:29 PM
20	none	May 10, 2010 3:35 PM
21	none	May 10, 2010 3:43 PM
22	NA	May 10, 2010 4:00 PM
23	I have no constraints, I believe the more we carry on conversations with our children the more we learn about them and can usethis information into implementing plans to make learning fun.	May 10, 2010 4:05 PM
24	None	May 10, 2010 4:14 PM
25	none	May 10, 2010 4:19 PM
26	Lowering class size would help us give individualized attention to the students.	May 10, 2010 4:45 PM
27	I have a very language rich classroom. I feel that nothing hinders me from inplementing language to my students. However I could open another can of worms and talk about how 3 year old special needs students (not just with language delays) need to be in their own classrom due the the disturbance level that they create for the 4 and 5 year olds who are READY to do the many language activities I have planned!!!!!!	May 10, 2010 5:01 PM
28	TIME and county adopted preschool curriculum.	May 10, 2010 5:06 PM
29	NA	May 10, 2010 5:13 PM
30	None that I can think of.	May 10, 2010 5:16 PM
31	school policies and procedures	May 10, 2010 5:19 PM
32	none	May 10, 2010 5:35 PM
33	There are no current constraints for me as a pre-k teacher, however, I feel that these practices are lost in our county's kindergarten program. There is little flexibility for the kind of learning we promote in pre-k. An example...I observed a typical kindergarten classroom where the teacher demanded that the children listen to her read without input, discussion, or use of comprehension strategies. I think there is more emphasis on "you will listen to me" than on developmentally appropriate practices once the children move on to kindergarten.	May 10, 2010 5:38 PM
34	The things are available for the children to use but according to the creative curriculum you can't encourage the children to do these things.	May 10, 2010 5:42 PM
35	The most constraints we have are purchasing a variety of materials for the classroom. It all seems to boil down to money. But, the teachers borrow books on specific topics that are interesting to the child from the library.	May 10, 2010 6:16 PM
36	I would like to have the ability to do worksheets with my kids. We could use these to teach the children how to work as a group and learn the sounds that go with the letters. This way they can see first hand what the sounds are.	May 10, 2010 6:26 PM
37	I really can't think of any constraints.	May 10, 2010 6:38 PM
38	none	May 10, 2010 6:43 PM
39	Too few adults to support the varied needs of children. Not enough money to buy new literature and replace old books that are worn. TOO MUCH PAPER WORK!	May 10, 2010 7:47 PM
40	None	May 10, 2010 8:19 PM
41	None. I am pursuing my Masters degree in Reading Education language and literacy is a high priority in my classroom as I feel the skills are very important.	May 10, 2010 11:53 PM

	Response Text	
42	My principal is very supportive of Pre-K literacy and our state early learning standards are age appropriate. I would like to develop a better classroom library, but funding is a problem.	May 11, 2010 12:13 AM
43	Lack of finances limits materials, equipment, inservice, professional development, attending conferences, and other resources to further language and literacy.	May 11, 2010 12:26 AM
44	Having to spend time on observations for the Creative Curriculum that the state requires. It takes away from the time I can actually be involved and interacting with the students.	May 11, 2010 3:33 AM
45	None. Creative curriculum supports language and literacy.	May 11, 2010 11:52 AM
46	I often use my own money to buy materials.	May 11, 2010 1:21 PM
47	nothing really-not having a library in the building like school programs	May 11, 2010 1:36 PM
48	None	May 11, 2010 3:24 PM
49	none Our administration is very supportive of our implementation of quality language and literacy practices.	May 11, 2010 6:28 PM
50	Head Start mandates and ECERS	May 11, 2010 7:54 PM
51	The only constraints that I have seen thus far are that of monies. I do as well as I can with what is in the classroom and what I can buy out of my own pocket, however, I could do so much more with a budget to spend on items for the classroom that would foster language and literacy.	May 11, 2010 8:40 PM
52	Time constraints, ex. one hour gross motor, 1/2 hour music, ect. Lack of funding to purchase items needed for literacy.	May 12, 2010 12:10 PM
53	I mwpould like to teach the alphabet directly rather than when the child simply shows interest. Some children show no interest at all in Literacy, Books, Writing, and or Stories. We have been told not to force the issue. When will they learn that there are times to listen and times to play??	May 12, 2010 3:12 PM
54	Lack of funds from school board for new books and supplies.	May 12, 2010 4:08 PM
55	none	May 12, 2010 4:17 PM
56	Time	May 12, 2010 4:35 PM
57	None however sometimes head start practices try to hinder taking children farther even if they are interested and ready.	May 12, 2010 5:14 PM
58	It is hard for us to write at circle on large paper because there is no room for an easel or room on the wall behind circle rug.	May 12, 2010 5:35 PM
59	Not knowing exactly what is expected! With the collaboration effort of Pre-K and Head Start, the policies are not clearly written on anything at to what is expected and what is not expected. As a teacher if I knew what my state expected of me I could thouroughly teach my children what they need to know without interference.	May 12, 2010 5:37 PM
60	time for planning-- even though we are given a day for "planning" we are also required to do so many other things as well as trainings. There's just not enough time to plan and prepare, etc.	May 12, 2010 6:50 PM
61	Nothing. Our county is very interested in language literacy. We recently completed the LEEP training which a language and literacy training only four counties in the state were chosen to participate in.	May 13, 2010 1:27 AM
62	Though it is nice to be flexible and follow the children's interests, it is often exhausting to develop activities from my own creativity. Sometimes it would be nice to have a developmentally appropriate activity guide for language, literacy and writing. Something such as Handwriting Without Tears would be useful. Often we run out of time when trying to develop our own activites and it is let go by the wayside. I do not want something that is scripted with flash cards and requires the entire day to implement.	May 13, 2010 5:13 PM
63	Just enough time, especially with 20 students, each in a different place.	May 13, 2010 7:32 PM

	Response Text	
64	I do not feel that there are any constraints hindering me from implementing language and literacy practices. Sometimes, I feel that the ECERS standards prevent me from sharing some of my favorite fables and fairy tales with my students due to the violence. e. g. Three Little Pigs, Gingerbread Man etc.	May 14, 2010 12:19 AM
65	None	May 14, 2010 12:41 PM
66	I would like to be able to inhance my student's learning through minimal printed materials.	May 14, 2010 1:56 PM
67	More money for materials -books are brought on my salary	May 14, 2010 3:09 PM
68	20 students with 2 staff greatly effects the 1-on-1 time with students, especially when students with severe behavior problems are included in the 20.	May 14, 2010 7:28 PM
69	Creative curriculum allows me to follow the child's lead if interested and in the writing center, but does not allow whole group or small group instruction. Creative curriculum is child lead and instruction and paper work are not encouraged	May 15, 2010 5:22 PM
70	None	May 16, 2010 6:24 PM
71	I have reading and writing in all areas of my class room..	May 16, 2010 6:49 PM
72	Curriculum which require two and a half hours for child initiated activities. During this time, however, there is time for small group writing, small group story time, etc.	May 16, 2010 8:09 PM
73	High Scope doesn't allow for enough structured teaching time.	May 17, 2010 12:11 AM
74	There are really no constraints that I have in my Pre-K classroom that hinder me from implementing language and literacy practices.	May 17, 2010 12:44 AM
75	ecers and creative curriculum	May 17, 2010 12:48 AM
76	Planning time	May 17, 2010 1:35 AM
77	supervisory expectations, number of children in classroom	May 17, 2010 1:55 AM
78	Constraints on substantial portion of the day to implement the correct amount of time for gross motor play, free play and still get in snack, lunch, nap etc.	May 17, 2010 11:34 AM
79	funding- I believe the school system could provide more books to be used in early education.	May 17, 2010 11:48 AM
80	None	May 17, 2010 11:56 AM
81	N/A	May 17, 2010 12:01 PM
82	We have mandated times for most of our day; therefore; we have to work around these.	May 17, 2010 12:26 PM
83	I utilize Creative Curriculum in my prek classroom which allows me to implement a strong language and literacy program.	May 17, 2010 1:28 PM
84	materials and money	May 17, 2010 1:49 PM
85	None	May 17, 2010 2:00 PM
86	none	May 17, 2010 2:10 PM
87	None, my county and my administrator expect that language and literacy activities will be implemented into the daily curriculum to help children achieve reading success.	May 17, 2010 2:23 PM
88	I'm not sure what the problem is with teaching a letter of the week as long as I am talking about other letters that go along with what we are discussing.	May 17, 2010 2:27 PM
89	Field trips are not allowed due to snow days.	May 17, 2010 2:48 PM
90	Language and Literacy are implemented daily throughout the classroom using creative curriculum.	May 17, 2010 3:47 PM
91	In this county we are encouraged and provided with a textbood that guides us with literacy ideas.	May 17, 2010 4:35 PM
92	None	May 17, 2010 4:38 PM
93	time	May 17, 2010 4:58 PM

	Response Text	
94	too much paperwork	May 17, 2010 5:12 PM
95	supervising the activities with many other activities going on.	May 17, 2010 5:14 PM
96	We are encouraged tp povide literacy activities.	May 17, 2010 5:26 PM
97	none	May 17, 2010 5:34 PM
98	Nothing is hindering me from implementing these practices.	May 17, 2010 5:42 PM
99	I do not feel there are constraints that hinder me from implementing language and literacy practices. We are encouraged on every level to implement best practice, including literacy.	May 17, 2010 6:50 PM
100	Having a half time preschool program that runs for only 3 and a half hours I feel is a hinderance to time constraints. Full day programs you have more time to help and support with language/literacy and writing.	May 17, 2010 6:54 PM
101	none	May 17, 2010 7:26 PM
102	Our only constraint is our student/adult ration which allows for brief periods of uninterrupted teaching :-)	May 17, 2010 11:34 PM
103	State mandates absolutely forbid worksheets of any kind. While I completely agree that a worksheet driven program is developmentally inappropriate, limited use of quality materials could benefit some students. I think as educators we should be trusted to make that determination.	May 17, 2010 11:52 PM
104	We need more funding to by a wider variety of books. I often complete studies but wish I had more books that related to the curriculum	May 18, 2010 12:41 AM
105	None	May 18, 2010 3:56 AM
106	eqipment like books, literacy acitivities and writing materials.	May 18, 2010 11:44 AM
107	none	May 18, 2010 12:30 PM
108	No constraints at this time.	May 18, 2010 2:47 PM
109	None come to mind.	May 18, 2010 3:43 PM
110	The large class size and high number of moderately involved special needs students	May 18, 2010 4:59 PM
111	Our school staff and administration wants us to teach more K skills that tie into their curriculums and not creative cirriculum. They have a tendency to believe that we just "play" and do not teach the students sitting skills, etc. to prepare them for K.	May 18, 2010 7:46 PM
112	None	May 18, 2010 10:53 PM
113	None. Literacy is a huge component of my classroom.	May 19, 2010 4:35 PM
114	none	May 19, 2010 6:49 PM
115	I try to work around it, but state mandates do not always allow me to implement language and literacy practices I would normally employ on my own.	May 19, 2010 7:35 PM
116	None	May 19, 2010 8:28 PM
117	Lack of funds	May 21, 2010 12:05 AM
118	none	May 21, 2010 12:08 AM
119	Classroom size. I feel it would be more appropriate to have only 15 children in a classroom.	May 21, 2010 2:12 AM
120	TIME TO PREPARE! It takes time (especially for a beginner) to think through ideas and prepare properly. There are WONDERFUL professional development meetings that we go to...but so little time left for actually processing the information and implementing everything we know we should implement.	May 21, 2010 2:47 AM
121	I really cannot think of anything at this time.	May 21, 2010 6:54 PM
122	SUPERVISORY EXPECTATIONS. BEHAVIOR ISSUES SOMETIMES COME BETWEEN WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO DO AND THE TIME I HAVE TO DO IT.	May 23, 2010 10:01 PM
123	Not enough help in the classroom	May 24, 2010 1:53 AM
124	Head Start Paper work	May 24, 2010 3:25 AM

	Response Text	
125	Social Services that teachers are having to do because we no longer have a Family Service Provider in ou Head Start	May 24, 2010 12:17 PM
126	Nothing we work on language and literacy everyday, resources for books can be difficult but we use the library for books we dont have or need.	May 24, 2010 1:08 PM
127	None	May 24, 2010 1:42 PM
128	Time to plan more effective language and literacy practices and materials that would contribute to these practices.	May 24, 2010 2:18 PM
129	Biggest constraint is lack of time for planning activities.	May 24, 2010 4:29 PM
130	The amount of room I have is limited so our reading and writing area are small areas that can only cater to 2-3 students at a time.	May 24, 2010 4:35 PM
131	None!!	May 24, 2010 4:59 PM
132	I believe it is difficult to implement many language and literacy practices because of lack of funds and resources available to our classroom.	May 24, 2010 5:27 PM
133	Time	May 24, 2010 10:29 PM
134	time- 3 hour day, with meals, makes it hard to have more intensive exposure to literacy	May 24, 2010 11:57 PM
135	Language and literacy practices are greatly supported by the BOE that I work for. I currently feel that pre-k throughout WV needs a supplemental curriculum that would help to support literacy other than the Creative Curriculum.	May 25, 2010 12:50 AM
136	Even though I model appropriate language and literacy practices in my classroom, it would be helpful if the other adults could receive more training on what is effective.	May 25, 2010 11:35 PM
137	I think it is hard to implement enough language and literacy with Creative Curriculum. I think a lot of emphasis is placed on scheduling and free play and not enough on instructional time.	May 26, 2010 1:52 AM
138	none-great Title I and Sped Support--do need more parent involvement	May 26, 2010 5:28 PM
139	Limited space and money for supplies.	May 26, 2010 6:54 PM
140	Money for supplies	May 26, 2010 10:36 PM
141	Supervision of all the children make it so that each child may not receive the same amount of literacy attention during the week and time constraints limit the amount of direct instruction somewhat. Other than this, no constraints of which I can think.	May 28, 2010 1:24 AM
142	none	May 30, 2010 11:16 PM
143	The county I work in is very supportive of the implementation of language and literacy pracitices, as is the Head Start organization with which we are affiliated. All involved are committed to this implementation, so I would have to say that nothing hinders me from it.	May 31, 2010 5:27 PM
144	None, Our school encourages implementing language and literacy daily in preschool. It is a top priority in our school	Jun 1, 2010 1:05 AM
145	curriculum, would like to do more direct instruction with some language and literacy skills	Jun 1, 2010 2:00 AM
146	administrative demands of the position.	Jun 1, 2010 2:57 AM
147	Time	Jun 1, 2010 2:57 PM
148	Policy discourages teachers to really teach preschool children how to write, however, I do read to, talk with, and encourage the children in my classroom to learn as much as possible/	Jun 1, 2010 3:42 PM
149	None	Jun 1, 2010 3:51 PM
150	None, in fact I'm expected to do what I do.	Jun 1, 2010 5:01 PM
151	Lack of funds. And that fact that the pre-k has really not been taken serious. Oh they want to have the program in the school but do not want to put money into the classroom.	Jun 1, 2010 6:16 PM

	Response Text	
152	With our program it is Headstart collaborative and we are using the Creative Curriculum. I find that this hinders my teaching because we use observations to assess the children. We cant teach the alphabet.	Jun 2, 2010 5:12 PM
153	Creative curriculum is great to boost learning through the children's interests, but not being able to have set organized skills taught.	Jun 4, 2010 3:02 AM
154	ECERS -- They tell me my students need to play more	Jun 4, 2010 12:48 PM
155	None that come to mind. We utilize Creative Curriculum-no other curriculum constraints. It's actually pretty "loose." Literacy is a large part of the curriculum-but no constraints. Each teacher can implement more or less as they deem appropriate.	Jun 4, 2010 12:56 PM
156	I feel that Creative Curriculum is weak in presentation of exemplary practice for students.	Jun 4, 2010 3:48 PM
157	I don't let anything hinder these important practices, they are implemented.	Jun 4, 2010 6:00 PM
158	Time with the children and time for planning these opportunities.	Jun 4, 2010 6:49 PM
159	None. I do know to keep Circle Time (reading) to a minimum of a 15 (maybe 20 minutes) for this age group of children.	Jun 4, 2010 7:02 PM
160	None	Jun 4, 2010 7:22 PM
161	none	Jun 4, 2010 11:14 PM
162	none	Jun 7, 2010 12:39 PM
163	Nothing	Jun 7, 2010 12:57 PM
164	We have a school library but the pre-k do not get a chance to visit it at all. Access to the library would be ideal.	Jun 7, 2010 3:52 PM
165	I have no issues concerning my implementation of language and literacy practices.	Jun 7, 2010 5:04 PM
166	Our classes are quite large. I have 19 children in the morning and 19 children in the afternoon.	Jun 7, 2010 10:45 PM
167	Children are allowed to make their decisions within the classroom. I work with the ones that chose to work with me on planned activities and try to reach the ones who chose not to in others ways.	Jun 9, 2010 12:20 PM
168	none	Jun 9, 2010 4:22 PM

Language and Literacy Practices Survey

What supports or kinds of professional development would assist you in becoming a more effective language and literacy practitioner?

	Response Count
	141
answered question	**141**
skipped question	**80**

	Response Text	
1	More staff!! I need an adult stationed in each activity center.	May 10, 2010 10:42 AM
2	Frequent training opportunities on language and literacy in the Creative Curriculum classroom would be helpful.	May 10, 2010 11:24 AM
3	?	May 10, 2010 11:31 AM
4	Professional development that is ongoing is always helpful. It needs to be targeted to early childhood and early childhood special needs. Also, new teachers should be made aware of all the assistive technology that is available and be taught how to integrate it into the curriculum.	May 10, 2010 11:31 AM
5	I think that any type of training would be beneficial.	May 10, 2010 11:41 AM
6	I think that all preschool teachers could benefit from more professional development on how to foster prereading skills especially in the area of vocabulary development.	May 10, 2010 11:43 AM
7	how to focus and prevent interuptions.	May 10, 2010 11:46 AM
8	I actually don't have an elementary degree and feel less than proficient in teaching reading skills. Therefore, I utilize title one teachers after school, during bus duty, (my duty partner is Title I) and whenever I cn. I think if preschool were included even once a month with Title I, it would help me. It is a big concern on my part that I help children want to read, love reading and understanding what they have read. I have often said that one of the greatest gift I was ever given was the gift of knowing how to read.	May 10, 2010 12:16 PM
9	Any	May 10, 2010 12:19 PM
10	Workshops pertaining to strategies that promote language and literacy development in the pre-k classroom.	May 10, 2010 12:21 PM
11	I have found workshops on the creative curriculum approach to writing have been helpful. I have recieved a lot of training in this area. I really promote the use of language and literacy in my classroom.	May 10, 2010 1:30 PM
12	pre-K literacy and language workshops promoting center activities and whole group.	May 10, 2010 1:46 PM
13	prek and teaching letters what are the expectations	May 10, 2010 1:54 PM
14	Learning AGE APPROPRIATE ideas to implement into the classroom to teach lang. & lit.	May 10, 2010 2:46 PM
15	A larger area room to have a space for more books and to have more books on the items and ideas that the students like each year. With a new room of students they seem to like something different than the year before.	May 10, 2010 3:11 PM
16	Summer classes would be helpful because I teach classes all day during the school year.	May 10, 2010 3:15 PM

	Response Text	
17	having some continuing education classes in county that are age appropriate or being aloud to attend some conferences for my age level.	May 10, 2010 3:19 PM
18	How to indirectly teach letters and sounds.	May 10, 2010 3:28 PM
19	More money to purchase my favorite books for my classroom or school library.	May 10, 2010 3:35 PM
20	For me, I enjoyed the the language treker program but they never followed through with their CD we were to receive to implement the program. Also with special needs, we are very busy with testing and assements and I feel this takes away from the lessons were I could implement even more content.	May 10, 2010 4:05 PM
21	I find that trainings that not only offer ideas but the opportunity to exchange ideas are helpful.	May 10, 2010 4:14 PM
22	Visiting other classrooms or networking with other teachers	May 10, 2010 4:45 PM
23	I would like to have some training where more technology can be used to teach language.	May 10, 2010 5:01 PM
24	More time with SMALL groups of students	May 10, 2010 5:06 PM
25	more education specifically for this age group (3-5)	May 10, 2010 5:13 PM
26	I would like to know more about implementing a word wall effectively as well as ways to get children interested in writing.	May 10, 2010 5:16 PM
27	Trainings similiar to the LEEP trainings	May 10, 2010 5:19 PM
28	Our county does an excellent job in promoting professional development experiences and is not lacking in the area of language and literacy. I have had outstanding opportunities in this area.	May 10, 2010 5:38 PM
29	Instruction concerning more implementation of writing in the preschool curriculum	May 10, 2010 5:44 PM
30	We are actually going to incorporate Language and Literacy into our Professional Learning Communities monthly meetings/trainings next school year. Our PLC's are set up for more experienced teachers to mentor new and young teachers. Plus new and young teachers offer a variety of fresh ideas that they can also share.	May 10, 2010 6:16 PM
31	I would like to get some more up to date books. I would like to include some worksheets for practice to use during transioning activities in the winter. I would like to have more chart paper to write down what the kids say so they can see letters go together to form words.	May 10, 2010 6:26 PM
32	I base a lot of my practices on several ideas. I implement the Inquiry Support System in my classroom. I continually make conscious attempts for different kinds of writing from grocery lists and menus to retelling stories. I am always open for new ideas and strategies.	May 10, 2010 6:38 PM
33	Annual updates..	May 10, 2010 6:43 PM
34	Training in helping move children who are ready to read into early reading experiences. Phonological and phonemic awareness and integration into curriculum. The elements of reading and how they relate to preschool literacy.	May 10, 2010 7:47 PM
35	Recently took a literacy training called LEEP through Ohio County Schools	May 10, 2010 8:19 PM
36	Collaboration among Pre-K teachers sharing ideas, materials, effective practices, as well as inservice opportunities are a few.	May 11, 2010 12:26 AM
37	I feel that I have had plenty of support in this area.	May 11, 2010 3:33 AM
38	More training.	May 11, 2010 11:52 AM
39	oppertunities to go to confrerences to be updated on skills	May 11, 2010 1:36 PM
40	Additional professional development in the assistance of quality language and literacy practices for children with English as a second language.	May 11, 2010 6:28 PM

	Response Text	
41	I have attended grant based college courses that have been very valuable, Content Standards and Preschoo Inclusion. We also do alot of county classes based on our needs from the ECERS results.	May 11, 2010 7:54 PM
42	more practical ideas and practices that can be used in the classroom for phonological awareness and early writing experiences	May 12, 2010 2:15 AM
43	Hands on make and take items	May 12, 2010 12:10 PM
44	I am effective as far as I am allowed to go into the subject. I feel my hands are tied and my children are not learning as much now as they have in past years.	May 12, 2010 3:12 PM
45	any	May 12, 2010 4:17 PM
46	Classess on different ways to implement literacy, new information.	May 12, 2010 4:35 PM
47	I would like more training in the area of phonics/phonenes when and how to teach this to my students.	May 12, 2010 5:35 PM
48	I feel that our area needs more training in language and literacy. They need to know that its not just reading a book and providing pencil and paper for children to write on. ECERS in one assessment we go through every year which scores some on the language and literacy, but we also may want to consider the ELLCO which only looks at language and literacy.	May 12, 2010 5:37 PM
49	perhaps an extra set of hands in the classroom	May 12, 2010 6:50 PM
50	Continuing trainings provided by our board of education.	May 13, 2010 1:27 AM
51	I am open to most good professional development. Stages of literacy training would be nice.	May 13, 2010 5:13 PM
52	Smaller classes. owever, I think the biggest problem is the expectations of children whose visual acuity isn't developed enough to tell a u from an n, a d from a b, and a p from a q. Most boys are not ready to read until ages 7 to 9, so why did we lower the expected reading age to 5 when we learned they were not yet ready at 6? It's absurd! Look at what Sweden has done. They now have a 99% literacy rate!	May 13, 2010 7:32 PM
53	Utilizing environmental print in my classroom, ideas to help students connect spoken language with the written word, creating learning activities around stories	May 14, 2010 12:19 AM
54	Refresher courses of ideas that are fun and engaging.	May 14, 2010 12:41 PM
55	It would be nice to have a writing program to go by in helping the children begin to form their letters.	May 14, 2010 1:56 PM
56	make and take workshops with literacy in mind for more effective centers	May 14, 2010 3:09 PM
57	county gives us good support for literacy enhancement; more funding for purchases would be helpful	May 14, 2010 6:46 PM
58	Training in behavior management would help; the behaviors of certain students interfere with literacy instruction. The pre-k aides need more training.	May 14, 2010 7:28 PM
59	I feel extremely confident in this area but I suppose a yearly pro. development during county pre-k meetings couldn't hurt	May 15, 2010 5:22 PM
60	Would love to find someone to give our Head Start Center used books.	May 16, 2010 6:49 PM
61	Ideas on journals, read alouds, story starters,	May 16, 2010 8:09 PM
62	I would like to see more information presented about the neurological development of preschool aged children.	May 17, 2010 12:11 AM
63	I would like to see my activities we as teachers can use in the classroom to assist us. Theories and practices change so frequently so, new ideas are always great to learn.	May 17, 2010 12:44 AM
64	Funding, planning time	May 17, 2010 1:35 AM
65	Additional personnel	May 17, 2010 1:55 AM
66	I believe we are provide enough training	May 17, 2010 11:48 AM
67	N/A	May 17, 2010 12:01 PM

	Response Text	
68	More books we could copy and make to read with the students, and then, they could take them home to read at home- incorporating family into the activities.	May 17, 2010 12:26 PM
69	I feel that I have had and have appropriate trainings to be an effectice language and literacy teacher. We are a member of STARS and have to have so many hours of training.	May 17, 2010 1:28 PM
70	phonemic awareness	May 17, 2010 1:49 PM
71	We had LEEP training for six months. I think that was adequate for most of us.	May 17, 2010 2:00 PM
72	updated research on language learning	May 17, 2010 2:10 PM
73	I believe a workshop or training on giving parents ideas of things that they can do at home with their child to increase language and literacy skills would be beneficial.	May 17, 2010 2:23 PM
74	Creative ways to teach letter recognition.	May 17, 2010 2:27 PM
75	More technology/computer training to do in the classroom.	May 17, 2010 2:48 PM
76	I am always interested in any kind of language and literacy professional development sessions.	May 17, 2010 3:47 PM
77	We have literacy training evey year.	May 17, 2010 4:35 PM
78	Funding for supplies and materials to foster language development.	May 17, 2010 4:38 PM
79	no naptime	May 17, 2010 4:58 PM
80	more time less paperwork	May 17, 2010 5:12 PM
81	Refresher courses, handwriting without tears, etc...	May 17, 2010 5:26 PM
82	I'm not sure, but it would be nice to have professional development to be a more effective language and literacy practitioner for preschoolers.	May 17, 2010 5:34 PM
83	I would like to attend workshops that teach me how to use developmentally appropriate practices with my three, four and five year olds--not watered down kindergarten and first grade activities.	May 17, 2010 5:42 PM
84	anything offered to train us on different techinques to teach these skills. How to introduce these skills with the computer or technology as well.	May 17, 2010 6:54 PM
85	Creative writing on a pre-K level	May 17, 2010 7:26 PM
86	Our county is just finishing up the LEEP program which is a Language and Early Literacy training program. It has been invaluable in having us look at our practices, look at our lessons and evaluate them for ways to improve incorporation of literacy concepts in a variety of ways throughout our day. I think Phonological awareness activities would be a good Professional Development topic!	May 17, 2010 11:34 PM
87	Quality trainings with hands on ideas for classroom use.	May 17, 2010 11:52 PM
88	The recent professional development we took was a lot of work but did give a lot of great information/techniques to implement in our classrooms.	May 18, 2010 12:41 AM
89	shared ideas for language and literacy activities among peer teachers	May 18, 2010 3:56 AM
90	Ways to get money like grant writing, knowing the best practice on teaching the alphabet and how to get those boys who dont want to write to write.	May 18, 2010 11:44 AM
91	Let's Leap into Literacy and Make Language Learning Fun	May 18, 2010 12:30 PM
92	Training related to effective language and literacy	May 18, 2010 2:47 PM
93	We have had a lot of opportunities to attend workshops, trainings, and conferences that have helped us become more effective language and literacy teachers. Our curriculum, Creative Curriculum, is a wonderful help in providing activities that enhance language and literacy skills.	May 18, 2010 3:43 PM
94	Training on language and literacy practices for co-teachers/assistants	May 18, 2010 4:59 PM
95	I'm always interested in new ways of developing ways to deliver there learning experiences. We are given training throughout the year from our employer. I enjoy talking with other teachers to discuss their techniques.	May 18, 2010 10:53 PM

	Response Text	
96	Our county has many professional opportunities available to preK teacher. We have had ECPBS (including using books to foster positive behavior), LEAP, and have had various other summer P.D. opportunities.	May 19, 2010 4:35 PM
97	Our county has had a literacy workshop.	May 19, 2010 5:35 PM
98	hands on professional development.	May 19, 2010 6:49 PM
99	I would be interested in pre-k based workshops, however, they are simply not provided for us.	May 19, 2010 7:35 PM
100	Workshops that show you new books and teaching ideas with them and information on techniques to make writing more interesting.	May 21, 2010 12:05 AM
101	i like practical hands-on ideas from practicing teachers. It is also great to get the opportunity to observe great programs in action.	May 21, 2010 12:08 AM
102	I feel we have adequate professional development and have had opportunities to participate in programs such as the LEEP Program we completed last year.	May 21, 2010 2:12 AM
103	We need problem-solving and reflective meetings instead of "let's learn the same stuff presented in a different way" meetings. We need time to prepare activities and discuss what works and doesn't work. Best case scenario: Teachers are given a list of lang/literacy skills and select goals for the year. Time is then given throughout the year to meet with other teachers with similar goals. They can share resources and ideas. The school system could provide additional resources. Then at the end, the teacher writes a brief statement in regards to his/her goal and the outcome. That may be too complicated of a system. The whole idea is to stop presenting the same basic information over and over without the necessary learning steps of practice and feedback until mastery.	May 21, 2010 2:47 AM
104	IT'S NICE TO HAVE REFRESHER COURSES THAT MOTIVATE YOU AND GET YOU BACK INTO PRACTICE	May 23, 2010 10:01 PM
105	???	May 24, 2010 1:53 AM
106	Not having to do so much paper work and spending more time with children	May 24, 2010 3:25 AM
107	Class in Early Literacy and Language	May 24, 2010 12:17 PM
108	I would like the opportunity to observe other classrooms to get possible ideas. I also would like the chance to meet with other teachers to find out what ideas/strategies they use.	May 24, 2010 1:42 PM
109	Training on new and innovative ideas for children that are at risk.	May 24, 2010 2:18 PM
110	Biggest help would be more time for planning, but also it is helpful to get preK teachers together to talk about language and literacy activities they do in their classrooms and have idea-swaps.	May 24, 2010 4:29 PM
111	I am a veteran reading teacher of 29 years. I have a Masters in Reading, Pre-K through Adult. At this time I should be teaching teachers.	May 24, 2010 4:59 PM
112	Understanding how to have more of a rich-print environment would be really helpful.	May 24, 2010 5:27 PM
113	Exchanging ideas with others.	May 24, 2010 10:29 PM
114	the trainings we have had-group discussion and exploration of the new OWL curriculum, and literacy training around specific themes has been fine. Also ideas from the yearly training from professionals such as Dr. Jean, and other specialist in early literacy	May 24, 2010 11:57 PM
115	PD dealing with the stages of skill development in literacy.	May 25, 2010 12:50 AM
116	Opportunities to collaborate with other pre-k teachers on different effective activities to support good practice.	May 25, 2010 11:35 PM
117	Anything that could help add language into the Centers in the room. A language/ litearcy games and activities workshop	May 26, 2010 1:52 AM
118	More Dramatic play ideas	May 26, 2010 5:28 PM
119	Money.	May 26, 2010 6:54 PM
120	Professional dev with supplies	May 26, 2010 10:36 PM

Response Text		
121	Training including different ideas for activities	May 28, 2010 1:24 AM
122	our county provides good staff development - language & literacy are part of this.	May 30, 2010 11:16 PM
123	Professional development is provided quite often and many opportunities exist to enhance my effectiveness as a language and literacy practitioner.	May 31, 2010 5:27 PM
124	More lesson ideas	Jun 1, 2010 2:00 AM
125	less mandatory paperwork and more money for literature in my budget.	Jun 1, 2010 2:57 AM
126	Probably more ideas in ways to implement language and literacy in the preschool classroom.	Jun 1, 2010 3:42 PM
127	More phonics training	Jun 1, 2010 3:51 PM
128	I feel that it is important to continue to have workshops and trainings on best practices in teaching language and literacy to our youngest.	Jun 1, 2010 5:01 PM
129	Professional development that focuses on pre-k. Trainings are for more for upper grades.	Jun 1, 2010 6:16 PM
130	more PD & Workshops & Free books for classrooms	Jun 4, 2010 12:48 PM
131	More web based tools for 21st century learners (start them earlier...PreK kids are amazing with learning new technology).	Jun 4, 2010 12:56 PM
132	We just went through a great LEEP Program. I are provided with very effective staff development.	Jun 4, 2010 6:00 PM
133	Suggestions from other teachers	Jun 4, 2010 6:49 PM
134	Don't know right now	Jun 4, 2010 7:02 PM
135	More resources. Money is sometimes an issue when wanting to provide new materials or technology to preschool classrooms.	Jun 4, 2010 7:22 PM
136	?	Jun 7, 2010 12:39 PM
137	More literacy training and ideas- more available literacy resources	Jun 7, 2010 12:57 PM
138	Access to the library on a regular basis.	Jun 7, 2010 3:52 PM
139	Perhaps some training on developmentally appropriate strategies to implement writing in my classroom.	Jun 7, 2010 5:04 PM
140	I enjoy authors and special literacy related staff development. I participate in Title I optional staff development classes.	Jun 7, 2010 10:45 PM
141	Session on early intervention and and time management so that more one on one time with children can be spent.	Jun 9, 2010 12:20 PM

APPENDIX G: CURRICULUM VITAE FOR LESLIE D. PAPELIER

CONTACT INFORMATION

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CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

2007-present Kanawha County Schools, Charleston, West Virginia, Teacher, Kindergarten

EDUCATION

Marshall University Graduate College
Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, Early Childhood Education, Expected December 2010
Dissertation: Implementation of Language and Literacy Practices by Prekindergarten Teachers in the West Virginia Universal Pre-K System
Advisor: Dr. Samuel Securro, Jr.
Marshall University Graduate College
Master of Arts in Special Education, K-12, 1999
Honors: Summa Cum Laude
West Virginia State University
Bachelor of Science in Education, Multi-Subjects K-8, 1996
Honors: Magna Cum Laude

CERTIFICATION

State of West Virginia, Multi-Subjects, K-8, Professional
Specializations: Mentally Impaired, K-12 and
Specific Learning Disabilities, K-12

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1996-1997	Kanawha County Schools, Charleston, West Virginia, Teacher
1999-2000	Sylvan Learning Center, Alpharetta, Georgia, Director of Education/Teacher
2000-2005	Fulton County Schools, Atlanta, Georgia, Teacher, Kindergarten
2005-2007	Education Development Center, Inc., Newton, Massachusetts, Data Collector/Trainer/Evaluator, Pre-K

HONORS AND RECOGNITION

1994-1996	Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society
1995-1996	Underwood-Smith Teaching Scholarship
2005	Ocee Elementary Teacher of the Year Award

RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

Securro, S., Mayo, J., & Rinehart, L. (2009). Assessment of Teacher Beliefs and Perceptions of the Effects of Computer-Based Technology on Reading and Language Arts Achievement. *i-manager's Journal on School Educational Technology, 5(*1), June-August.

PRESENTATIONS

2008	TRLD National Conference Presenter, San Francisco, California