An Evaluation of the Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater Instructional Strategy

by
Jill Craddock

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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Jill Craddock under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

James David Ferguson, EdD Committee Chair	Date
Sandra Duncan, EdD Committee Member	Date
Ronald J. Chenail, PhD Interim Dean	Date

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Abstract

An Evaluation of the Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater Instructional Strategy. Jill Craddock, 2014: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler School of Education. ERIC Descriptors: Reader's Theater, Rhyme, Literacy, Common Core State Standards, Short Stories, High Schools, Middle Schools

An expertise-oriented model of educational connoisseurship was used to evaluate the instructional strategy of Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater. The strategy was designed to assist teachers in addressing the problem of low reading achievement. Reading achievement is recognized as a problem for students in Secondary Grades 7-12. Limited reading achievement may negatively impact students' ability to succeed in postsecondary training and the workforce.

The Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater scripts and strategies consisted of classic short stories adapted into rhyme, related informational text, and graphic assessments that adhered to Common Core State Standards. For evaluation, a survey was sent to 500 secondary English language arts teachers who had used or purchased the materials for classroom use. A sample of 39 teachers meeting the criteria to serve as connoisseur evaluators for the strategy were identified. These teachers were the study's participants and provided the data for the study. Five research questions were posed to evaluate the evaluation's objective in the areas of student literacy, student engagement, and Common Core State Standards.

An analysis of survey data revealed that teachers perceived greater student engagement in reading activities by using the Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater materials. The impact on literacy was less evident. Teachers reported that the materials could help students achieve Common Core State Standards.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Reading achievement has been identified as a problem in education (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011; Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010; Hanushek, Peterson, & Woessman, 2012). A Harvard University Kennedy School of Government report (Hanushek et al., 2012) identified that the United States has fallen behind in reading achievement relative to other countries from excellent to middle rated during the years 1995 to 2009. The progress of the United States in reading achievement is not fast enough to allow for competition with other industrialized nations. Between 1973 and 2008, jobs requiring postsecondary education increased from 28% to 59% (Carnevale et al., 2010), and approximately 40% of students entering postsecondary training in 2011 were required to take remedial reading courses (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).

The topic. The study examined the efficacy of the reading instructional strategy named Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater, known as CCRRT and created by the researcher. This study utilized teacher perception data to evaluate the effectiveness of the CCRRT in the areas of secondary student literacy, secondary student engagement, and Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In addition, the study compared the perceptions of middle school teachers to the perceptions of high school teachers in the three focus areas. During the 1960s, reader's theater became popular in college theater departments. The practice migrated to secondary classrooms as theater graduates became English teachers and used reader's theater as an instructional strategy (Coger & White, 1982). Reader's theater is a technique that integrates repeated reading wherein students rehearse roles with scripts, allowing for increased understanding of vocabulary and complex concepts (Clementi, 2010). Memorization is not required, and the reading leads

to an in-class performance. Literacy researcher Braun (2005) first published an adaptation using rhyming reader's theater for classroom use in 1995 to highlight the most memorable genre of verse and aid fledgling readers. Rhyming reader's theater ends each line of text with a word that rhymes with the previous or alternate line of text and may also have internal rhyme. Reader's theater and rhyming reader's theater, as instructional strategies, have theoretical foundations in the multiple-intelligences theory (Gardner, 1983) and social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978). The CCRRT involves utilizing rhyming reader's theater techniques in a cross-curricular format as a tool for instruction of classic short stories and informational text. The CCRRT program includes assessments that are aligned with the CCSS. This study examined feedback from secondary school teachers regarding the efficacy of the CCRRT.

The research problem. The problem addressed by this research study was low student reading achievement in the secondary grades. In 2011, 68% of eighth-grade students ranked below proficient on the Nation's Report Card Reading Assessment (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011). In 2012, 48% of Florida's ninth and 10th graders did not achieve a reading standardized test score required to graduate high school (Florida Department of Education, 2012). The United States government has indicated that seeking innovative approaches to literacy efforts to motivate older children to read is a funding priority and is integral to academic improvement and teacher quality (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The CCRRT was developed to provide secondary language arts teachers with a product to use in addressing the problem of low reading achievement and other literacy related issues. However, until this study, no formal evaluation had been conducted to examine the effectiveness of the CCRRT based on teacher perceptions. Therefore, based on the problem of low student reading

achievement, the United States government priority of innovative approaches to literacy efforts to motivate older children to read, and the need to conduct a formal evaluation of the CCRRT based on teacher perceptions, this study was conducted.

Audience/stakeholders. Primary stakeholders and individuals who may benefit from the results of the study include the CCRRT creator, educational publishers and vendors, teachers of secondary language arts, and other educators charged with providing reading instruction to secondary students. Ancillary parties who may take interest in the evaluation results include professionals in the community of both reader's theater and theater for young audiences. A third segment of beneficiaries who could gain insight from the CCRRT evaluation are teachers in disciplines outside of language arts.

The creator of CCRRT will benefit from understanding the extent to which the instructional strategy impacts students and teachers. This information may be useful in improving and marketing the CCRRT product by understanding how to position the body of work. The study could provide data for teachers, publishers, and other stakeholders to use in determining the value of CCRRT as it applies to literacy and student engagement.

Program

The CCRRT program is composed of three elements designed to work together. These elements include rhyming reader's theater scripts; informational text articles, excerpts, or documents; and CCSS graphic assessments. The scripts, informational text, and assessments should be used together in a unit of study. Each rhyming script is joined by related informational text from another discipline. Table 1 depicts the relationship of the components of the CCRRT program. The central concept of the program is grounded in multiple intelligence and social development theories to drive instructional design and strategy.

Table 1

Informational Text and Cross-Curricular Connections

Script	Informational Text	Cross-Curricular Connection
The Bet	"The Effect of Information Overload" from LexisNexis, "Effects of Solitary Confinement" from NPR	Science, Social Studies
To Build a Fire	"Gold Mania in the Yukon" from The New York Times, "Skookum Jim Mason" from Travel Yukon	Social Studies
The Cask of Amontillado	"The History of Carnival" from American Catholic "Types of Spanish Sherry" from The World of Spanish Wine	Science, Social Studies
The Minister's Black Veil	"People & Ideas: The Puritans" from PBS, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" by Jonathan Edwards	Social Studies
The Monkey's Paw	"Can Money Buy Happiness" from Scientific American, "Amulets and Talismans from the Islamic World" from Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History	Science, Social Studies
The Most Dangerous Game	"Florida Shipwrecks: 300 Years of Maritime History" from the National Park Service, "$33 Million in Grants to Support Land Acquisition and Conservation Planning for Endangered Species" from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Science, Social Studies
The Necklace	"Advance-Fee Loan Scams" from Federal Trade Commission, "The Rise of the Victorian Middle Class" from the British Broadcasting Corporation	Science, Social Studies, Math, Economics
The Ransom of Red Chief	"The Lindbergh Kidnapping" from the FBI, "America at Work: Topics for School" from The Library of Congress	Social Studies
Rip Van Winkle	"Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" by Patrick Henry, Sleep Disorders from the Centers for Disease Control	Science, Social Studies
The Tell Tale Heart	"Insanity and Creative Genius" from The Independent, "Four Types of Sound Sensitivity" from Hyperacusis	Science

Ten 1-page graphically organized assessments provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate understanding of both literary and informational text. The 10 assessments are aligned with the 10 CCSS associated with reading literary and informational text. The

first 3 assessments address the Common Core State Standard of reading for key ideas and details. Students write inferences from evidence or facts in the text, determine theme and supporting details, and identify support for character-analysis study. Three additional assessments related to craft and structure allow students to identify literary devices in text, demonstrate knowledge of text organization, and identify support for the author's point of view. Further assessments related to integration of knowledge allow students to compare and contrast media with text, evaluate the validity of an argument, and compare and contrast related themes and events in a text. The final assessment is a complete evaluation of text knowledge and complexity that covers setting, theme, character development, author's purpose, and point of view. Each assessment requires the student to explain how the literary or informational material is connected to another topic or class.

Professional evaluation standards. The program evaluation approach was expertise oriented and followed a model of educational connoisseurship. Educational connoisseurship uses "critics with direct and efficient application of expertise to that which is judged" (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 2010, p. 128). Experienced experts bring their skill and knowledge to the process of evaluating the quality of a program. The approach requires connoisseurship and criticism. Connoisseurship is the art of appreciation and awareness of complexities that arise from knowledge and relevant experience. "Criticism is the art of disclosing the qualities of events or objects that connoisseurship perceives" (Eisner, 1976, p. 146). Connoisseurship enables criticism. Criticism is composed of description, interpretation, and evaluation. The training, experience, and credentials of the program evaluator are critical for validity and depend on the evaluator's perception. Varying judgments from critics are tolerable and desirable

to expand perceptions. Teachers using the CCRRT program served as the educational connoisseurs and offer their experience and expertise in evaluating the efficacy of the program. The methodology of the program evaluation is expertise evaluation.

Educational connoisseurship evolved from the idea of connoisseurship in artistic disciplines such as art and theater. Because teaching requires artistic skills (Yuksel, 2010), the educational connoisseurship model supports the teaching process as being different from one environment and one context to another. The purpose of the program evaluation and connoisseurship model in education is to review and evaluate programs and activities as well as increase the skill of teachers (Eisner, 1985). The program evaluation model of educational connoisseurship is a precursor to Gardner's multiple-intelligences theory in that the model recognizes and allows for artistic and creative expression in curriculum and cognition (Eisner, 1976).

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation study was to utilize teacher perception data to evaluate the effectiveness of CCRRT in the areas of secondary student literacy, secondary student engagement, and CCSS. An additional purpose was to compare the perceptions of middle school teachers with the perceptions of high school teachers in these three focus areas. The purpose of this comparison was to determine whether there was any difference in the product's perceived level of effectiveness between these two school levels. To achieve the study's purpose, the researcher implemented a model of educational connoisseurship that used teachers as evaluators. The teachers who participated in the study were located across the United States and did not know one another or the researcher personally. Evaluation data were collected from teachers familiar with the CCRRT product by way of an online survey.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions may be applied to terms used throughout this document:

Classic short story applies to a work of art or literature that has "enriched the human mind, increased its treasure, and caused it to advance a step" (Saint-Beuve, n.d.). A short story is "an invented prose narrative shorter than a novel usually dealing with a few characters and aiming at unity of effect" ("Short Story," 2013).

CCSS set a definition for readiness to enter postsecondary training as being stringent in the expectation that students possess a deep knowledge and capacity (National Governors Association Center [NGA] and Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010a).

CCRRT is a program of study that combines the study of a classic short story, a rhyming reader's theater script, related informational text, and CCSS assessments.

Educational connoisseur is an individual with an expert awareness of educational quality and interpretation of data from a holistic approach (Eisner, 1976, 2009).

Informational text is nonfiction writing that conveys information about the social or natural world with features that may include headings and technical vocabulary (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2013).

Literacy is the capacity to construct meaning and utilize a variety of texts required by society and valued by the individual for purposes of learning, community participation, and enjoyment (International Reading Association, 2013).

Literary text is writing that is reflective of literature and may include stories, poems, plays, or books (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a).

Reader's theater is a technique that integrates repeated reading wherein students rehearse roles with scripts, allowing for increased understanding of vocabulary and

complex concepts (Clementi, 2010). Memorization is not required, and the reading may lead to an in-class performance.

Rhyming reader's theater ends each line of text with a word that rhymes with the previous or alternate line of text and may also have internal rhyme. Rhythm and rhyme mobilize language with verse that is more memorable than text in prose form (Braun, 2005).

Secondary students are those between elementary school and college who are enrolled in coursework for general education, vocational training, technical training, or college preparation ("Secondary Students," 2009).

Student engagement is the extent to which students are involved, interested, and connected to courses, school, and one another (Axelson & Flick, 2011).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this evaluation study was to utilize teacher perception data to evaluate the effectiveness of CCRRT in the areas of secondary student literacy, secondary student engagement, and CCSS. An additional purpose was to compare the perceptions of middle school teachers with the perceptions of high school teachers in these three focus areas. Key topic areas discussed in this review of the literature include theoretical framework, the importance of reading, literacy achievement, CCSS, the parallel curriculum, reader's theater, and rhyme. These topic areas have been selected for discussion because of their critical influence on development of the CCRRT program. The literature related to these topics informs the study and interpretation of resulting data collected during the evaluation.

Evaluation Framework

The CCSS, introduced in 2010 by the NGA and adopted by 46 states, assert that students who meet the standards for literacy are not only able to perform close and attentive complex reading but also can demonstrate reasoning and use of evidence in data. These standards also require that students demonstrate an ability to creatively and purposely express language through reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. To meet these broad and diverse requirements, a curriculum guided by the theory of multiple intelligences provides a basis and foundation that address the needs of the greatest possible group of students (Heibeck, 2013).

Multiple intelligences evolution. Developmental psychologist Gardner introduced the theory of multiple intelligences with the book *Frames of Mind* in 1983 to confront and broaden the idea of the traditional measure of the intelligence quotient test

introduced by psychologist Binet in 1904 (Armstrong, 2009). Binet's intelligence tests were originally developed for the purpose of separating students who may need special education services because of observably poor performance in school (Binet & Simon, 1916). The problem was that the measurement was targeted only toward identifying students who struggled in an academic setting and did not address the developmental, behavioral, or cognitive strengths individuals possessed. The multiple intelligences theory holds that every individual is endowed with at least seven intelligences that can be measured through the capacity to both solve problems and acquire knowledge (Gardner, 2011). This theory is founded on cognitive science (the study of the mind) and neuroscience (the study of the brain).

Multiple intelligences theory evolved from the work of not only Binet but also biologist and cognitive psychologist Piaget during the 1950s and 1960s. Piaget held that each child develops and constructs a variety of forms of knowledge over time using a number of cognitive disciplines. Piaget identified and named a series of developmental stages from infancy to formal operational at adolescence that shaped ways of knowing (Piaget, 1950).

Criticism from the community of scientists and psychologists, including Gardner (1991), concluded that developmental stages are connected rather than isolated sequentially and that Piaget's work focused more heavily on the ability of a child to identify quantitative concepts. Gardner's (1991) unique criticism that bridged Piaget's stages of development theory to the multiple intelligence theory was that Piaget made a "fundamental error" (p. 29) by suggesting that one stage of learning or way of knowing eradicated the child's previous view and conception of the world. Gardner (1983) believed earlier ways of knowing are established and called upon throughout the

development of the child in concert as the child is placed in different situations.

Linguist and philosopher Chomsky (2006) also supported and contributed to the formation of the theory of multiple intelligences. Chomsky's theory of linguistics asserted in part that language stands separate in the brain from other forms of intelligence and cognition and that separate neuronal circuits exist to support speech, sentence construction, and speech comprehension. This theory is supported by the existence of Broca's area and Wernicke's area in separate parts of the brain, both related to speech. Cognitive scientist and philosopher Fodor (1983) also contributed to the theory of multiple intelligences with the Modularity of Mind hypothesis, which suggested that the mind contains separate modules that are used for perceptual and language processing. Contributing to the theory of multiple intelligences, the Modularity of Mind theory claimed that a variety of distinctly different types of psychological components should be examined for an explanation and understanding of mental life (Fodor, 1983).

The multiple intelligences. Of the multiple intelligences identified in Gardner's theory, the primary intelligences traditionally measured and valued in the classroom setting are linguistic and logical-mathematical (Mullican, 2012). Linguistic intelligence is defined as the "capacity to use words effectively, whether orally (e.g., as a storyteller, orator, or politician) or in writing (e.g., as a poet, playwright, editor, or journalist)" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 15). Linguistic intelligence also includes a thorough grasp of language structure, phonology, and semantics. With an ability to create a fresh combination of words and new worlds, Gardner (2006) held that the poet exemplifies the pinnacle of linguistic intelligence. In addition to the ability of poetic expression, language and linguistic skill is valuable in rhetoric to persuade and convince others of a particular viewpoint, mnemonics in remembering information, explanation for conveying

information, and reflection to deepen understanding.

The second highly measured and valued intelligence is logical-mathematical intelligence. Armstrong (2009) described logical-mathematical intelligence as a marked aptitude and strength in using numbers effectively and reasoning well. Professions that require strong skill sets in this area include accountants, scientists, and computer programmers. Abstractions, patterns, and causal relationships are easily detectable by individuals with a high ability in the logical-mathematical intelligence. Activities associated with logical-mathematical intelligence include data analysis, calculation, classification, and testing hypotheses. Mathematician Adler (1972) believed that this form of intelligence is related to discipline, rigor, and skepticism as well as a love of dealing with abstraction and exploration. The motivation for individuals with aptitude in this area is the possibility of generating a new way to view mathematical order and patterns of permanence. Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2004) cited Gardner, who pointed out that schools traditionally restrict the measurement of intelligence to focus primarily on the verbal/linguistic intelligence and the logical/mathematical intelligence without consideration for other learning styles or forms of intelligence. As a result, “Six areas of intelligences are consciously depressed by schooling [because of the] localized focus on verbal and mathematical tasks in U.S. classrooms” (Orlich et al., 2004, p. 180).

The theories of intelligence often associated with arts and athletics are visual-spatial intelligence, musical-rhythmic intelligence, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Visual-spatial intelligence is a capacity to think three dimensionally and carefully consider relationships among shapes, form, space, and color (Jing, 2013). The capacity for visualization is powerful, and this style of intelligence is dominant in architects,

artists, interior designers, and engineers. Alternative pedagogical methods for visual-spatial intelligence include creating a slide show, chart, map, or piece of art (Campbell, 1997). Graphic organizers allow teachers and students to visually demonstrate the relationship and organization of information. Little research is established about this form and style of intelligence, possibly because of the difficulty in testing relative to the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences (Gardner, 1991). Piaget offered a very early measurement of a toddler's ability to form and manipulate static mental images, measuring the capacity for spatial intelligence (Inhelder & Piaget, 2000). Prior to language development, children organize reality by perceiving space and movement.

Musical-rhythmic intelligence allows individuals to understand, interpret meaning, and communicate through sound. A strong capacity for composition and musical patterns or rhythms is prominent. Instructional activities can include writing or analyzing songs and song lyrics or performing music. Sensitivity to pitch and tone is also present in musicians, composers, conductors, and individuals with high levels of musical-rhythmic intelligence (Mullican, 2012). Of all these intelligences, musical-rhythmic intelligence is the earliest to emerge (Gardner, 2006). In addition to the central tenets of pitch and rhythm, sensitivity to timbre and rhythmic organization comprise important facets of musical-rhythmic intelligence. Musical master Suzuki (1969) demonstrated that great numbers of individuals could be taught to play musical instruments very well at an early age even if a demonstrable capacity in the musical-rhythmic intelligence is not identified or pursued.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is identifiable by an individual's capability in the areas of balance, coordination, dexterity, speed, and strength. Dancers, athletes, actors, and highly skilled craftspeople possess an increased ability to use the body to solve

problems, create products, or otherwise express meaning. Tasks that are interpreted as useful for the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence include creating a sequence of movements, building or constructing an object, or using hands-on materials for a demonstration (Campbell, 1997). In reflecting on the stereotype of the so-called "dumb jock," educational behaviorist Kagan declared of the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, "Those students who are the best coordinated and athletically talented, on the average do the best academically. When we set the stereotypes aside and honestly examine our reactions, we discover the link between movement and intelligence" (Kagan & Kagan, 1998, p. 4.33).

Interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence relate to understanding others and understanding oneself respectively. A high level of interpersonal intelligence has the most profound impact on success because of a high aptitude for communication, collaboration, and relating to others (Gardner, 2011). The ability to respond effectively to others leads to accomplishments often in a position of leadership or influence that utilizes the skill of determining others' motivations, feelings, and goals. Alternately, intrapersonal intelligence places a high degree of emphasis on the trait of introspection. Understanding the self with an ability to reflect, monitor, and assess lends strength to occupations including theologians, novelists, and psychologists. The core of intrapersonal intelligence allows one to access and differentiate complicated feelings and inner experiences (Gardner, 2006). It is during adolescence that the individual begins to define the sense of self and identity within the construct of roles both interpersonally and intrapersonally in coming to terms with individual feelings and motivations while facing considerable pressure around peer groups (Erikson, 1968).

Multiple intelligences criticism. Although much research and analysis stands behind the idea of multiple intelligences, the theory is not without critics. According to

Peariso (2008), for example, the multiple-intelligences theory is not substantiated by empirical tests that support data patterns relating to intellectual tasks and test results associated with traditional measures of intelligence. Philosophy more than data supports the theory (Ferguson, 2009). Psychologists more often find empirical evidence to support the idea of a single, general intelligence that influences cognitive abilities, acts as a predictor for academic and workplace success, and is genetic. The score represented by *g* is the intelligence entity that is a notable predictor of success in academic and job performance that requires a high degree of technical and decision-making skills (Ferguson, 2009). Some critics suggested that Gardner himself recognized that the multiple intelligences can also be identified as talents and that the difference may lie in semantics. Peariso (2008) reported that Gardner chose the word *intelligences* over *gifts* or *abilities* for the title of his book to gain further attention to his work. The educational application of the multiple-intelligences theory is not delineated by Gardner or anyone endorsed by him. The claim that all of the intelligences sustain equal priority makes it difficult for educators to assess learning in content curriculum (Peariso, 2008). A final criticism of the multiple-intelligences theory is in its potential overemphasis on any one of the learning styles and teaching approaches (Armstrong, 2009).

Each criticism of the multiple-intelligences theory may have a degree of merit. The CCRRT accepts the premise that multiple-intelligences theory reaches and engages the greatest number of students (Heibeck, 2013) and must not be passed over as a top-tier curriculum theory. Many of the objections to multiple-intelligences theory stem from its lack of built-in testing methods, unlike the work of traditional educational and psychology testing and psychometric communities (Armstrong, 2009). As an additional response to the criticism about lack of analysis on the effectiveness of the theory's

practical application in the classroom, it is clear from a cursory search of multiple intelligences that a significant number of studies exist in a wide variety of applications across grade levels, content, and instruction in each of the intelligences.

Implementing a standardized methodology to validate a broad application of the multiple intelligences would be cumbersome and problematic (Armstrong, 2009). To activate the greatest number of intelligences and engage students in reading, the CCRRT program addresses five of the seven multiple intelligences. Reading and speaking activities address the linguistic intelligence. Group work addresses the interpersonal intelligence. Sounding out the rhyme of the theater addresses the musical intelligence, and performing the reader's theater addresses the spatial and kinesthetic intelligences. Reader's theater appeals to the entire range of senses (Coger & White, 1982). Activating a substantial number of the multiple intelligences may increase the value for the reader and the relationship to the text.

The Importance of Reading

Reading and literacy continue to be areas of national concern. Reading levels in the adult population have decreased from 1992 to 2003, according to the most recent National Assessment of Adult Literacy (2003) report. The proportion of individuals unable to perform moderately challenging literacy activities is 43% of the population (National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003). Possessing an ability to read and comprehend difficult text independently is crucial not only for achievement in college and career programs but also for many workplace tasks (Ho & Guthrie, 2013).

Students must read to gain information and capture the span and scope of ideas available in complex text. Reading and educational policy researcher Adams (2009) stated, "To grow, our students must read lots, and more specifically they must read lots of

‘complex’ texts—texts that offer them new language, new knowledge, and new modes of thought” (p. 182). Avoidance of complex or difficult text will lead to a dearth of general knowledge and decline in comprehension of text for the future. The ability to understand complex text requires the skill of deep reading. Deep reading suggests a diversity of neurological processes working together for comprehension that include the ability to make inferences and reason deductively, apply analogical thinking and critical analysis, and exercise reflection and perception in demanding text. All readers can develop these processes with differing rates of study and practice (Wolf & Barzillai, 2009). The goal of deep reading and complex text comprehension is that students use acquired knowledge to begin new questions and acquire further knowledge.

The necessity to interpret complex reading material manifests in common activities of daily life. In a sample of urban and low-income persons who received healthcare intervention during 2012, the average reading comprehension was at a beginning ninth-grade level. Many experienced difficulty understanding healthcare handouts and instructions (Delgado & Weitzel, 2013). The former governor of West Virginia and current president of the Alliance for Excellent Education has shared that most secondary students in the United States read below grade level and have difficulty comprehending complex text (Wise, 2009). Difficulty with text comprehension not only contributes to problems in school but can also present impediments in everyday living (Wolf & Barzillai, 2009).

Reading for postsecondary training. The importance of reading extends beyond commonplace activities. In order to complete high school, a passing score on a comprehensive examination is required for graduation in 24 states with three additional states working to legislate a compulsory passing score as a graduation requirement

(NCES, 2011). Scoring at or above a proficient level on the state assessment test for high school reading comprehension indicates that a student is on a pathway to career and college readiness and postsecondary training. Individuals without any postsecondary training are two to three times as likely to be unemployed past the age of 25 as those with 1 year or more of higher education or postsecondary training (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013a). A postsecondary or higher education degree credential is a requirement for over two thirds of the fastest growing occupations in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013b). The effect of lower reading comprehension is a reduced ability to compete for jobs that require college and career readiness ability.

Students who are unable to compete for jobs that require college training are at a disadvantage for long-term earning power. Completing education beyond high school helps workers find, keep, and excel in a choice of jobs and careers. A postsecondary certificate or degree is necessary to earn wages above the median in the United States (Carnevale et al., 2010). Without postsecondary credentials, employers find that high school graduates are not prepared for work as productive employees because of a lack of literacy skills (Kelley & Decker, 2009). Meanwhile, the number of jobs with increased literacy demands is expected to increase over the next 20 years (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013b). Whether students decide to enter workforce training programs or college, the literacy skills are comparable in both environments (ACT, 2006). Workforce training programs for jobs such as electrician, construction worker, upholsterer, and plumber offer a wage to support a family of four and the opportunity for advancement; each of the programs also requires academic skills similar to those needed for success during the 1st year of college.

Motivation and text diversity. Maintaining student motivation to read from

primary through secondary grades is critical, as motivation is shown to decrease during these years as indicated by the Motivation to Read Profile (Pitcher et al., 2007). If students decide reading is too difficult, irrelevant to their interests, or unrewarding, this can result in nonreaders who devalue text-based literacy. Matching reading assignments with personal interest and allowing for student choice is recommended to preserve the emphasis with students on the importance of reading.

In addition to reading print text, developing the skills and constitution to comprehend complex text online is vital as new technologies continue to evolve. Much reading for workplace and research tasks is completed online. Besides the exercise of comprehending electronic text, students must be able to critically question material found on the Internet for accuracy and significance. In addition to the tasks assigned to literacy associated with print material, online material asks that individuals recognize whether source material is appropriate, reliable, and accessible and how the material may be organized and used effectively (Street, 2005). Because of the multiple skills required to process text online, reading online can shape effective research, analysis, evaluation, and response in print and in multiple forms of digital media (Wolf & Barzillai, 2009).

Reading in the workplace is centered on research and informational text. The CCSS have placed an emphasis on both informational text and text complexity. "Students need sustained exposure to expository text to develop important reading strategies, and that expository text makes up the vast majority of the required reading in college and the workplace" (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b, p. 3). School librarian Young (2013) contended that using high-quality and high-interest nonfiction articles to support lessons in all areas of the curriculum is preferable to teaching an arbitrary novel that may take too much time. Scaffolding, or connecting reading concepts with students' prior knowledge, is also

a useful tool to maintain interest and motivation in teaching material that incorporates informational text.

Reading produces knowledge of simple, complex, concrete, and abstract concepts. Reading also produces knowledge of words located in the text and words not found in text. It is through reading that not only communication and words transpire but also thought itself. Reading provides the rich network of content knowledge that allows for students' ability to comprehend complex textual material using reading skills (Adams, 2009).

Although the CCSS emphasize informational text, a 2008 study published in the *Creativity Research Journal* declared that reading fiction correlates with an increased emotional intelligence. Subjects who read a short story by Anton Chekhov were compared to subjects who read a version of the story in nonfiction format. The people who read the short story demonstrated observable differences in personality traits relative to empathy (Oatley, 2008). With the emphasis on the importance of interpersonal intelligence as a predictor of success (Gardner, 2006), it is clear that reading either informational or literary text is also a strong indicator of success. It is of great importance that students become engaged in reading because of the relationship and positive correlation of reading with personal and workplace success.

Literacy Achievement

Literacy is considered an ability to read new material, understand, and synthesize new information (Kalman, 2008). Sixty-eight percent of students preparing to enter high school are at or below a basic reading level (NCES, 2011). Over the last 20 years, the percentage of American adolescents who report never reading for pleasure has more than doubled from 9% to 19% with two thirds of high school seniors reporting reading for

pleasure less than once a week (Ho & Guthrie, 2013). These trends may be part of a decrease in overall literacy achievement according to the Nation's Report Card (NCES, 2011). NCES (2009) also substantiated that reading for pleasure decreases as students get older and has decreased consistently since 1984. From ages 9 to 17, students report a decrease in reading more than once per week for fun. At age 9, reading for fun decreased from 81% to 71% from 1984 to 2008. By age 17, students reported reading more than once per week for fun at 64% in 1984 down to 42% in 2008. Reading for pleasure within and beyond the classroom correlates positively to academic success and reading achievement (Manuel, 2012). Researchers have found in urban areas of the country that reading for leisure supports literacy development of middle school students (Hughes-Hassell & Cox, 2008).

Many researchers and policy makers have identified literacy as the key starting point of a person's development with the institution of the school holding the responsibility to educate and provide individuals with skills for literacy to enter the workforce (Kalman, 2008). In addition to being prepared for the workforce, achievement in literacy contributes to personal development with a positive overall effect on civilization. The economist Subramanian (2004) noted this phenomenon: "Households are seen as conferring a beneficial externality on its illiterate members. As a consequence, 'effective' literacy is larger than would be yielded by a straightforward headcount of those who are literate" (p. 1).

In addition to the general reading assessment reported by NCES (2011) in the Nation's Report Card, SAT scores have declined steadily since 1986. During 2006, the headline in the *Washington Post* proclaimed "SAT Scores Report Biggest Score Dip in 31 Years" (Adams, 2009, p. 165). Although SAT content may not be a verifiable measure

of relevant literacy, other indicators persist to indicate that literacy in the United States is below average relative to other developed countries.

The two most recent international literacy assessments showed the United States to be lacking in comparison to many other developed countries (NCES, 2009). As the economy is more competitive on a global scale, it is important to increase literacy scores within the United States and relative to other developed countries to promote economic growth. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), most recently administered in 2009, and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), most recently administered in 2006, indicated that the United States has substantial room for improvement in literacy achievement. Both tests measure educational competencies in countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation or partner countries that are all considered developed countries (NCES, 2009).

In the 2006 PIRLS study, the United States ranked narrowly above average with 14 of 34 countries measuring equal or higher literacy scores (NCES, 2009) in both literary and informational text relative to other developed countries. With a larger sample of participating countries, the 2009 PISA study showed the United States measured higher than 51 of 73 countries. Students ranked average in the informational text portion of the PISA study (NCES, 2009). The top 10% of United States high school students scored comparably to the top 10% in other developed countries, but a greater proportion of students tested at the lowest reading level (Adams, 2009).

It is clear that as the PISA and PIRLS measurements addressed only those students in developed countries, access to literature and text is not universal (NCES, 2009). With the introduction of new technologies and means of producing literature, a growing number of people have access to literacy tools over the course of history, from

paper and ink to the printing press to computer-assisted and digital technology (Tiedemann, 2011). Literacy has been transformed from a scholarly pursuit to form a basis for cultural and social foundational relationships with the advent of written news and editorials. As an example of differing levels of access to literacy and resulting levels of achievement, from 1960-1990, the central tenet of providing access to literacy for students in Mexico was to provide a seat in the classroom for 6 years of primary education. In 1993, 9 years of basic education became mandatory (Kalman, 2008). Definitions of access to literacy beyond providing a seat in the classroom include closing the digital divide by ensuring that all students have access to computer technology and providing equal opportunities for constructing formal knowledge through literacy practices (Tiedemann, 2011).

The inability to read critically, an increased focus on standardized testing, linguistic and cultural differences, and inadequate teacher training have all been identified as causes that contribute to low levels of literacy achievement in the United States. To increase literacy achievement, students should be taught reading skills and strategies across the curriculum (Stevens, 2012). Content area reading increases as students progress through grade levels, and informational text material provides opportunities to challenge students with dense vocabulary and subject matter detail for higher levels of literacy achievement (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2009).

Common Core State Standards

The discipline of reading and how to provide instruction is the most contentious portion of the curriculum (Ediger, 2012). Students must have strong reading skills for activities in every subject area, including the ability to read instructions for science experiments and interpreting word problems in mathematics. The CCSS Initiative is an

enterprise introduced in 2010 by the NGA and CCSSO to implement a single set of high educational standards for kindergarten through 12th-grade students in mathematics and English language arts. To date, 46 states have adopted the CCSS. The purpose of the standards is to establish that all students are prepared for the workforce or entry into postsecondary education. The CCSS provide benchmarks for a variety of skills and knowledge with the intention that teachers will assess the standards and guide teaching strategies as needed to allow students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the standards (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a). The CCSS related to reading were developed to address the results and recommendations of the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Framework so that more students would graduate ready for the rigor of the workplace, postsecondary training, and global competitiveness (Peery, 2013). The CCSS assessments will replace the Nation's Report Card examination that is administered by the NAEP each year to a random sample of students in Grades 4, 8, and 12. The CCSS assessment is expected to be more reliable because it will be mandatory, whereas the NAEP is voluntary (Ediger, 2012).

English language arts standards. The CCSS for the English language arts for Grades 6-12 are research and evidence based, aligned with college and work expectations, rigorous, and internationally benchmarked (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b). A set of 10 reading standards provides instructional focus for foundational reading skills in informational and literature content. Text complexity increases as students progress through grade levels.

The first set of CCSS for reading in Grades 6-12 relates to key ideas and details within a text. Students must cite evidence from text and draw inferences from the text. In secondary grades, students must also determine where the text leaves information

uncertain. Students are required to determine central ideas and themes with students in secondary grades demonstrating a developmental theme analysis. The last standard relating directly to key ideas and details requires that students describe events of plot and character development with students in secondary grades also showing how the author's choice and setting relate to these elements (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b).

The next set of reading standards in the CCSS relates to craft and structure of text. Students must determine and analyze the meaning of a word, with those students in the secondary grades also identifying and analyzing words with multiple meanings. Students are required to examine how parts of a text fit into the overall structure and how each parts contributes to the complete development of the text. Students in the secondary grades also must analyze how the structure contributes to the aesthetic impact of the text. The final standard related to craft and structure mandates that students explain the author's point of view, with students in the secondary grades demonstrating an ability to distinguish point of view from direct statement (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b).

The final set of reading standards in the CCSS addresses the integration of knowledge and ideas within and across text and media. Students will compare and contrast text to media and, in the secondary grades, will do the same for three or more sources. Students will assess arguments for evidence in the text, and students in the secondary grades will also assess whether the arguments are clear and engaging. The last standard in the category of integration of knowledge and ideas requires students to compare and contrast two authors' work on the same subject, whereas students in the secondary grades focus on thematic and rhetorical analysis of United States foundational documents (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b). Each grade level is assessed by the standard associated with text complexity, the final standard addressed in the reading literature and

informational text collection of standards in the CCSS. Students must read and comprehend both literature and informational text at the appropriate grade-level text complexity band proficiently and independently (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a).

Informational text and text complexity. In addition to incorporating skills, the CCSS lays a foundation for content coverage in both mathematics and English language arts. The English language arts portion of the CCSS requires that students have a critical understanding of classic myths and stories from around the world, America's founding documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare (NGA & CCSSO, 2010b). The CCSS also requires that students in English language arts courses read informational text, including argumentative, informational, and explanatory text. Many teachers across the country are concerned that this requirement will take precedence over the literature curriculum they currently teach (Lucas, 2013).

A heavier influence on informational text could be a response to a movement of the 1980s and 1990s to build literature in classrooms. Maloch and Bomer (2013) indicated that limiting student access to in-class text to fiction could be problematic and could incite a demand for nonfiction and informational text. Because of the increased emphasis on informational text, teachers should have professional development related to structure, form, and instructional practice (Martin & Duke, 2010).

In addition to an emphasis on informational text, the CCSS emphasize using a wide range of both text materials and multimedia sources to teach critical content and skills (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a). Students must draw meaning from multiple sources and build background knowledge for maximum understanding of required skills and content. To build and embrace multiple text and media connections, teachers have recently increased time spent teaching reading comprehension and how to read with depth and

focus for meaning (Keene & Zimmerman, 2013). Reading comprehension is seen as genre specific, and readers use a variety of comprehension strategies for different types of texts. Adding media and informational texts to works of fiction can lead to both content knowledge and deeper comprehension processes (Maloch & Bomer, 2013).

The CCSS also highlight the importance of text complexity to ensure that students are prepared for the rigor of workplace and postsecondary educational requirements. Although the CCSS maintains the expectation that students read based on objective criteria such as Lexile scores, the idea of teaching a novel with a low Lexile score such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* to a fourth- or fifth-grade class is clearly inappropriate, and teachers must use subjective judgment in text complexity and text selection. Text selection should be based on the 10 CCSS related to reading literature and informational text (Peery, 2013).

Instruction using prereading material and building background knowledge can prepare students for complicated text (Peery, 2013). The CCSS recommend instructional strategies of rereading and revisiting complex text, ideally in cooperative learning groups, as an alternative to excessive prereading instruction (Shanahan, 2012).

To meet the rigor introduced by the CCSS, additional changes in instruction are needed (Witherell & McMackin, 2013). Requirements to compare multiple pieces of text and media suggest that introducing a wide variety of material to illustrate skills and content will be the rule rather than the exception in classrooms (Wendt, 2013). Learning goals will be derived from the standards, and text will be selected based on the learning goal and associated standard or standards rather than the reverse process of selecting the text first, which has often been the pattern in English language arts instructional practice (Peery, 2013). A focus on content-area literacy will require that classrooms pair literature

with interdisciplinary materials (Wendt, 2013), and the science, social studies, and history disciplines will share in the initiative of building reading comprehension skills and strategies and literacy achievement. To build literacy across content areas, it is important that students have a broad vocabulary, and researchers suggest that broadening vocabulary practices will allow students to better comprehend text (Witherell & McMackin, 2013).

CCSS criticism. Those who criticize the introduction and application of the CCSS note that distinctions among grade levels for demonstrating knowledge of literary devices are too slight, and students are expected to carry out processes requiring a strong literary background without enough time to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge (Yatvin, 2013). Others note that although CCSS are voluntarily led by individual states, the standards are introduced and controlled by a national organization. State and district educational governing bodies may see the effort as a loss of local control (Offutt, 2013). Ten states have legislation against Common Core, and the implementation of new standards while the old are still in place could be a hindrance to the objectives of the CCSS.

Despite the criticisms and fears based around the standards, The CCRRT program noted that the alignment of effective classroom instruction and multiple authentic, cross-disciplinary text and media are of a higher quality than that to which many teachers have been accustomed relative to assessments and reading passages (Peery, 2013). The CCRRT addresses the CCSS content and skill requirements with a pairing of literary and informational text material. Each assessment is tailored to individual CCSS requirements for English language arts in reading informational and literary text, and the materials are

content based in the required classic stories as well as America's founding documents and literature.

Parallel Curriculum Model

"A curriculum model is a format for curriculum design developed to meet unique needs, contexts, goals, and purposes" (Purcell & Leppien, 2009, p. 3). Based on the CCSS' emphasis of incorporating informational text across disciplines into reading strategy, the CCRRT program draws most heavily from the Parallel Curriculum model, first introduced by Tomlinson et al. (2006a, 2006b). The Parallel Curriculum model focuses on four parallel components known as the Core Curriculum, Curriculum of Connections, Curriculum of Practice, and Curriculum of Identity. A singular macro concept or theme operates a content centerpiece in the curriculum for students to connect and build bridges between understandings of separate events (Purcell & Leppien, 2009). The Parallel Curriculum Model was designed for multiple learning populations and diversity across contexts, not to replace other curricular models but to coexist with implementation of other curricula (Kaplan, Guzman, & Tomlinson, 2009).

The four parallel components may be used singly or in succession. The Core Curriculum introduces students to the key nature of a discipline and is associated with basic facts, skills, and core principles that are fundamental to the discipline. The Curriculum of Connections helps students understand overarching principles and theories as they connect across and within curricular disciplines. Connections can include building relationships among disciplines, topics, themes, and perspectives. The Curriculum of Practice allows students to transfer skills and understanding to function as practitioner in a field by creating, producing, researching, and solving problems. The Curriculum of Identity requires that the students reflect upon complex concepts within a discipline and

how the ideas relate to their own interests, goals, and personal strengths for the present and future (Tomlinson et al., 2006a).

Parallel curriculum foundations. One of two models that the Parallel Curriculum derives from is the 1986 work by Van Tassel-Baska, the Integrated Curriculum Model. Interdisciplinary concepts and themes lie at the center of the Integrated Curriculum Model with related features connecting science, social studies, and English language arts. A longitudinal study of student achievement in language arts, critical reading and writing, and science research and design skills demonstrated a strong increase in achievement for those students with repeated exposure to the Integrated Curriculum Model (Feng, Van Tassel-Baska, Quek, Bai, & O'Neill, 2005).

A second model that the Parallel Curriculum draws from is the 1987 Renzulli Enrichment Triad model (Renzulli, Leppien, & Hays, 2000). The Renzulli Enrichment Model offers three types of enrichment that work in tandem. Type I activities provide the opportunity to learn background information by exploring a variety of print and nonprint materials. The purpose of Type I activities is to inspire interest in a topic. Type II activities offer group training activities for students to think and work collaboratively. Problem solving, critical thinking skills, and well-developed communication tools are required to accomplish activities in the Type II portion of the Enrichment Triad model. The final level of enrichment experiences is labeled Type III, characterized by the student becoming involved in the topic firsthand. Activities can include student-led academic investigations or artistic productions. The goal of Type III activities is to apply knowledge, creativity, and task commitment to new understanding for an authentic product.

Theoretical underpinnings for the Parallel Curriculum Model descend from early

educational theorists who favored a constructivist approach to education, including Dewey, Vygotsky, and Piaget (Murphy, 1997). Drawing content from multiple resources increases relevance and applicability to the learner. An educational theorist and reformer, Dewey (1938) stated that learning to think and solve problems cuts across disciplines and should be experiential with a context for problem solving. Vygotsky's (1978) theories on education related to the model of the Parallel Curriculum by way of the importance of peer-group interpersonal connections offering the opportunity for intellectual development with the idea of learning as a social process that emphasizes dialogue and language.

Cross-curricular connections. Curricular approaches that include interdisciplinary study can increase student engagement and be more reflective of problems in the real world. A drawback to interdisciplinary curricular approach is the potential for one subject area to dominate instruction at the expense of others (Applebee, Adler, & Flihan, 2007). Across a sample of 11 secondary teams that implemented interdisciplinary instruction, the greater degree of subject matter integration revealed a pattern of teachers themselves becoming learners exploring new ideas and involving students in related conversations.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics advocates connecting literature and mathematics to ignite student imagination in solving complex math problems (Christy, Payson, & Carnevale, 2013). As an example, students who are reading the novel *The Hunger Games* by Collins that depicts a scene of the main characters hiding in a tree could use skills learned in algebra to solve a word problem related to this plot point and the idea of balance. It is not necessary to read the book to complete the math activity, but connecting the mathematical problems to what students are reading in English language

arts class can increase motivation and pique interest.

When knowledge is integrated and contextualized, the transfer and application of knowledge is conveyed with an in-depth understanding of concepts (Kemperl, 2013). To help build background knowledge, teachers can provide related texts on a topic. This allows students to see how information is connected, experience information from a variety of perspectives, experience different genres, and build academic vocabulary (Moss, 2013). Connecting literacy instruction with content-area material both improves literacy achievement and builds curriculum knowledge (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2009). Teachers can also pair more challenging texts with easier texts to help stimulate interest and curiosity (Moss, 2013).

Pairing science and language arts to increase literacy can be a natural fit (Roberts, 2013) because of the opportunities to investigate and apply critical thinking skills. Sciences are continually changing and provide circumstances to discover new ways to examine the world and its relationships. The effects of global warming, natural resource depletion, and the ecological impact of progress and development are all topics ripe for discussion and analysis in literary and informational text.

The success of the Parallel Curriculum model and its predecessors has contributed to the curriculum model of CCRRT. Two to three separate works of informational text based in the sciences or history accompany each short story. Teachers can judge student mastery of CCSS using individual graphically organized assessments that correlate with the standards. Students gain a deeper understanding of literary text from performance and reader's theater (Clementi, 2010).

Reader's Theater

The study of the written word becomes fun when it prepares readers for sharing

> literary material with an audience. And reading literature aloud deepens the readers' understanding of the text, for in giving it voice they experience the writing more completely that in silent reading. Not only must they discern and understand the attitude of the writer, they must express it with their voices and bodies. (Coger & White, 1982, p. 14)

Reader's theater is a technique that integrates repeated reading wherein students rehearse roles with scripts, allowing for increased understanding of vocabulary and complex concepts (Clementi, 2010). Reader's theater relies on the vocal and facial expressions of the readers, and the presentation does not require props, costumes, or memorization. The reading leads to an in-class performance. Reader's theater takes place largely in the mind and imagination of both the performers and audience. Preparing reader's theater and its presentation requires careful study and analysis of literature, but visualizing and vitalizing the literature demands imagination (Coger & White, 1982). The preparation and presentation of the script provides students with the opportunity to engage with characters in a text by interpreting, connecting, and stepping into the shoes of the character. The preparation process requires the practice of rereading, a well documented intervention that increases fluency and comprehension (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008).

Benefits of reader's theater abound. Reader's theater offers students an opportunity for meaningful and repeated readings to increase fluency and reading achievement (Johnson, 2011). Other merits of reader's theater include the promotion of critical thinking, improvement in oral and listening skills, and personal and social growth (Sloyer, 2003). Using reader's theater can also improve students' awareness of punctuation, expression, and gestures while reading (Sovitsky, 2009). Additionally, reader's theater is positively correlated with writing skills through examination and discussion of literary devices (Kabilan & Kamaruddin, 2010). Motivation to read as well

as understanding of character motivation deepens (Jago, 2011) when students participate in dramatic reading and adapt personas of the characters. Reader's theater is likely to lead the class into discussion of text (Jago, 2011) with active participation in the text allowing students to influence and shift the scene with varied interpretation and meaning. Speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills are additional benefits of reader's theater (Sloyer, 1982).

The value of the reader's theater format can do much to vitalize the literature, social science, or history class in relating concepts from a variety of subject areas (Kuykendall, 1970). Using the instructional strategy to illuminate history, science, sociology, and other subjects is not uncommon in the classroom study of traditional plays to study events that touch culture. *The Crucible*, *Inherit the Wind,* and *Galileo* are examples of traditional plays that are often used in a reader's theater educational context to teach about the Salem witch trials, the Scopes trial, and scientific investigation (Coger & White, 1982). Incorporating reader's theater into curriculum content areas leads to further understanding of difficult concepts and vocabulary (Clementi, 2010). Additionally, when students adapt their own scripts from prose or informational text, reader's theater helps them learn advanced writing skills (Sloyer, 2003), as they must pay close attention to grammatical conventions and dialogue.

When provided with the opportunity to present for lower grades, performers experience personal, social, and intellectual gains by reading for younger audiences (Poe, 2010). Dewey (1938) asserted that the deepest learning occurs when students are part of the learning experience. It follows that the improved literary appreciation, reading fluency, and speaking skills are the fruits of the activity widely praised as an effective means of increasing academic complexity, deepening understanding of literature and

appreciation of language, and furthering content knowledge (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2009).

Additional benefits of reader's theater. Although the practice of reader's theater has been traditionally used to increase motivation and engagement in literacy skills, unexpected segments have benefited from the practice. Reader's theater proved to be effective at holding the attention of middle school boys diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in New Hampshire (Doherty & Coggeshall, 2005). The boys made a noticeable gain in reading and asked for parts each time the teacher offered a script.

The instructional practice is also used to inform health-care practice of medical professionals in secondary education. When reader's theater was used as a teaching modality in a baccalaureate nursing degree program in Ohio in 2010 to address disruptive behaviors, students reported an increased awareness and ability to handle such behaviors (Hutcheson & Lux, 2011). After the training was complete, 93% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they would be able to recognize disruptive behavior and apply what they had learned in the reader's theater-based training and 89% said they would be less likely to engage in disruptive behavior as a result of the training. Pardue (2004) integrated reader's theater into nursing courses to expose students to caring and holistic health-care practices.

The goal of reader's theater is to motivate thinking about the stories to engage in worthwhile discussion and reflection, but a real-life tragedy provided the content for reader's theater that aided a family in healing. Grief counselors used the intervention of reader's theater successfully in helping a family face the sudden and accidental death of a 17-year-old son by using therapeutic script. The family reported increased identity,

reflection, and affirmations. In the setting of mourning a great loss, reader's theater became "a powerful intervention that illustrated the healing power of unconditional presence" (Levac, McLean, Wright, & Bell, 1998, p. 5).

Another use of reader's theater outside the traditional educational scope is to benefit English language learners. Students lament that they are unable to make connections between complex deeper meanings found in text and their own lives, and multifaceted required reading is often arduous, unpleasant, and difficult to understand in a second language (Kabilan & Kamaruddin, 2010). Using reader's theater, adult English-language learners are able to use language and meaningful content to engage with peers and teachers to promote and enliven learning, the observable benefits of which far exceed the time and effort of teacher preparation (Tindall, 2012). More precisely, incorporating drama into instruction is purported to improve students' performance in use of language and transfer of skills across activities and the curriculum. Using drama as an instructional tool also shows an increase in self-confidence and community and cultural understanding (Chizhik, 2009).

A group of Malaysian 14-year-old students who used reader's theater found significantly enhanced, by both quantitative and qualitative measures, understanding and motivation around literature study. The summary report of the study showed that students found literature lessons to be enjoyable, they were motivated to learn literature, and they became stimulated creatively by the literature (Kabilan & Kamaruddin, 2010). Kabilan and Kamaruddin (2010) described reports from teachers participating in the study:

> Somehow, the word spread that morning and students from other classes wanted to watch the presentation! They pleaded with their teachers to be allowed to watch . . . and the teachers agreed that it was a good idea to combine all the other Form Two classes and let them watch the theatre presentation by this particular Form Two group. To accommodate everyone, the presentation was held at the hall! A

> small classroom project has turned into a major school performance. . . . Not one group presented their narration/script the same way. Each group made an effort to be creative and different. Yes, I constantly encouraged them to be unique in their work, but they surprised me when they themselves wanted to produce something that could capture other people's interest. (p. 143)

Keehn et al. (2008) found that eighth-grade students who read below grade level showed statistically significant improvements in fluidity, expressiveness, and reading level with reader's theater. Compared to more traditional methods of literacy instruction, students who learned using reader's theater nearly doubled vocabulary acquisition and were more motivated in the lessons. The study revealed that "Ten students noted aspects of performance that they enjoyed. Jackie said, 'It's fun 'cuz you get to do it in front of people.' Brandi responded, 'I liked doing the accents . . . and yelling as loud as I want'" (p. 19).

Sloyer (2003), a notable expert in reader's theater who has published two textbooks on the instructional practice, is a professor on the topic at Hofstra University outside of New York City. She also lectures to other schools about the connection between reader's theater and reading motivation. As founder of the Hofstra University Reader's Theatre, Sloyer and her readers appeared on CBS and NBC television (Hofstra University, 2013).

Reader's theater criticism. A criticism of reader's theater is that the variables most influenced in instruction are fluency, confidence, and motivation. Reading comprehension is impacted inconsistently in several studies (Clark, Morrison, & Wilcox, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Keehn et al., 2008). It is important to emphasize instructional practices that impact reading comprehension because of the stringent expectations and rigor of the CCSS. Despite the demands placed on students and teachers by high-stakes testing, the CCRRT program makes use of reader's theater as a foundation instructional

practice because of the many benefits of the practice in literacy education, particularly, the link between increased reading comprehension and repeated reading. When students read for presentation, as in reader's theater, the success lies in a push to the ability to generate creativity in readers and the imaginations in the audience similar to the push invoked by perceptive silent reading (Coger & White, 1982). Adding the element of rhyme and prosody also aids student engagement and is considered as both a motivational and educational feature of the CCRRT program.

Rhyme

Mother Goose and Dr. Seuss have long intrigued young children through the vehicles of nursery rhymes and poetic picture books. Silverstein and Dahl wrote poems to delight older children and adults (Rogak, 2003; Sturrock, 2010). The tempo and flow of words demonstrated in rhyme patterns are appealing to the ear and hold the attention of children longer than prose, as rhyme is the most memorable genre of verse because of its ability to mobilize verse through rhythm and prosody (Braun, 2005).

Rhyme and literacy. A causal connection exists among rhyme, phoneme awareness, and reading achievement (Melby-Lervag, 2012). Rhyme is adopted as a fundamental part of the National Literacy Strategy in the United Kingdom based on evidence that rhyme awareness is related to reading ability and reading achievement (MacMillan, 2002) and facilitates the recognition of words sharing final phonological features (Rapp & Samuel, 2002). Connecting words interactively also leads to students completing and producing words and sentences faster when word features are shared or rhyme is present in text (Rapp & Samuel, 2002). Expressive vocabulary abilities are strongly correlated with rhyming ability (Stadler, Watson, & Skahan, 2007), and rhyme awareness in early years is linked to later reading ability (Brunswick, Martin, & Rippon,

2012).

Teaching students word relationships extends beyond the early elementary years as academic vocabulary increases. Rhyme is an effective tool in decoding phonics, promoting fluency, and recognizing spelling patterns present in the several hundred word families of the English language. A study known as Fast Start compared students who used rhyming poetry as a supplement to literacy lessons to students with no such specific instructions. After working with rhyming poetry, students gained 54 points on a test of word recognition compared to the control group gain of 32 points. In addition, reading accuracy scores increased 26 words per minute for students who used rhyming poetry compared to 12 words per minute for the control group. Fluency for the group who practiced literacy with rhyming poetry nearly doubled (Rasinski, Rupley, & Dee Nichols, 2008).

Rhyme as instruction. Spoken word clubs and groups utilize rhyme to engage high school students in reading, writing, and spoken word poetry. According to the *Curriculum Review* article "Scheming to Increase Literacy Through Rhyme" (2005), the spoken word clubs at Chicago's Oak Park and River Forest High Schools are motivating and have helped close the literacy gap between Black and White students. The club members write and analyze hip-hop rhyme schemes to express themselves creatively in verse in a reader's theater style competitive atmosphere.

Across the curriculum, rhyme is used to teach mathematics and memory dating back to the 13th century up to today's modern classrooms. The study of numbers, space, and measurement in mathematics finds commonalities in studying the pattern, structure, counting, and numeracy in rhyme scheme. Incorporating rhyme into lessons makes learning math more enjoyable for students (Clarkson, 2006). Teachers may use rhyme to integrate historical and cultural analysis into lessons by examining the original counting

songs of the Middle Ages that offer opportunities to convert units of money, analyze cardinal directions, and understand alternative calendars.

To increase reading comprehension, educators should utilize interventions that allow struggling readers to practice fluency and decoding (Johnson, 2011). Rhyme illuminates the music of spoken language that can contribute to expressive reading of text through variations in pitch, syllabic patterns, tone, and rhythm. Based on the wide appeal, measurable literacy impact, and cross-curricular application of rhyme, the CCRRT program utilizes rhyme as a fundamental piece of the curriculum model to engage students in literature and improve reading achievement. The evaluation of CCRRT formed the basis of the chapters to follow. The evaluation was expected to add to current research in the areas of reader's theater, rhyme, and integrated curriculum. Literature that addresses both rhyme and reader's theater is limited or nonexistent, and this study was intended to address this deficit.

Research Questions

This program evaluation study was designed to answer five research questions related to three evaluation focus areas. The evaluation focus areas included literacy, student engagement in reading, and CCSS:

1. To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to impact secondary student literacy?
2. To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to impact secondary student engagement in reading?
3. To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to be an effective tool in helping secondary students achieve the CCSS?
4. To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to be aligned with the CCSS?

5. How do middle school teachers' perceptions of the product's effectiveness compare to the perceptions of high school teachers?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Low reading and overall literacy achievement is recognized as a problem. Students who enter college or other postsecondary training are required to take remedial reading courses at a rate of approximately 40% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). To address literacy demands in the United States, the NGA and CCSSO (2010a) introduced the CCSS for readiness to enter postsecondary training. The definition set by CCSS is stringent in the expectation that students possess a deep knowledge and capacity. The object of this evaluation was the CCRRT. This product was aligned with the CCSS and was designed to assist teachers in providing instruction that leads to student literacy, student engagement in the learning process, and achievement of the CCSS.

Program evaluation requires a judgment of the strengths and weaknesses of a particular intervention to improve its effectiveness (American Evaluation Association, 2013). The evaluation of the CCRRT utilized a survey style of program evaluation. The survey design allowed for examination and analysis of data from a sample of the population (Creswell, 2009) relative to the perceived level of effectiveness of the CCRRT program. Survey data were analyzed to quantitatively assess responses and evaluate the program. Quantitative methodology consists of an analysis of numerical figures representing data that guide the research questions of the program evaluation (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). The survey questionnaire for the CCRRT program evaluation was adapted from an assessment in the textbook *Reader's Theatre: Story Dramatization in the Classroom* (Sloyer, 1982). The survey gathered demographic information and the data necessary to answer the study's research questions.

This study utilized teacher perception data to evaluate the effectiveness of

CCRRT in the areas of secondary student literacy, secondary student engagement, and CCSS. In addition, the study compared the perceptions of middle school teachers versus high school teachers in these three focus areas. The purpose of this comparison was to determine whether there was any difference in the product's perceived level of effectiveness between these two school levels. The information gained from the evaluation study was summative by determining the extent to which CCRRT was an effective instructional strategy to improve literacy achievement in secondary grades. This study was also designed to determine the extent to which the program affected secondary student engagement in reading. Finally, the study determined the extent to which the CCRRT was aligned with and enhanced achievement of the CCSS. The evaluation also served a formative purpose. The researcher used the study results to adapt and adjust elements of the CCRRT program with the goal of maximizing the product's effectiveness in the areas evaluated.

Participants

The target population for this study was secondary English language arts teachers. The population from which the sample was drawn consisted of approximately 500 secondary English language arts teachers working in public, private, and charter schools around the United States. The approximately 500 teachers making up the population were those who requested information and materials on the CCRRT program by visiting the website and entering their email address. No additional demographic data on the population was available, but demographic information was obtained during the data-collection process of implementing the survey. Demographic data collected included the number of years of teaching experience, urban or rural school setting, grades and levels of English language arts taught, and whether the school has implemented the CCSS.

These data were used to identify a sample of 39 teachers meeting the participation criteria for serving as a connoisseur evaluator for the CCRRT. As an incentive to participate, the researcher provided participants with all scripts and accompanying materials included with the CCRRT program free of charge, which was a $70 value.

A nonprobability convenience sample of the target population was utilized for this study. The sample of convenience for this study was teachers who had used the CCRRT materials at least once with secondary English language arts students and who chose to complete and submit the survey. When limitations such as size of the population and participant availability are a concern, a convenience sample is most appropriate (Creswell, 2009) and one of the most commonly used forms of sampling techniques (University of California, Davis, 2013). A convenience sample can be a limitation for a study by potentially being a threat to a study's validity (The Pell Institute, 2013).

Evaluation Model

Expertise-oriented evaluation. The evaluation model used in this study was under the framework of the expertise-oriented evaluation approach. Evaluators are experts in the subject matter and uniquely qualified to provide feedback on a program (Eisner, 1985). Expertise-oriented evaluation dates back to the American Revolutionary era when founding fathers James Madison and Alexander Hamilton debated advantages and disadvantages of the Constitution (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). The two were uniquely qualified experts because of their close involvement in the development and drafting of the document. Today, expertise-oriented evaluation is used commonly in the accreditation of schools and colleges as education professionals are active evaluators in assessing the quality and standards of education programs (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011).

Applicable Joint Committee Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) will

be followed in conducting this evaluation. This will include standards in the areas of utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Karuthers, 2011). The JCSEE was founded in 1975 as an alliance of multiple professional organizations focused on the quality of evaluation; the committee recommends that evaluators be credible for the benefit of stakeholders (JCSEE, 2013). Evaluators who are subject-matter experts with background in both education theory and practical knowledge offered credibility in the evaluation of CCRRT. Each evaluator in this program evaluation was certified by the state department of education to teach English language arts.

Educational connoisseurship. The educational connoisseurship approach to evaluation falls within the area of expertise-oriented evaluation. Eisner (1976) cultivated the theory of educational connoisseurship based largely on the idea that "teaching is an activity that requires artistry . . .; education is a process whose features differ from individual to individual. . . . What we need to do with education is to enhance whatever artistry the teacher can achieve" (p. 7). Educational connoisseurship is particularly well suited to programs with an artistic nature. The researcher selected this evaluation model because the foundation of CCRRT is inherently artistic because of its foundation in dramatic interpretation and poetic rhyme.

In an article titled "What Education Can Learn From the Arts," Eisner (2009) posited that form and content exist simultaneously. He also suggested that all content exists and interacts together based upon context, and this character and interaction may be applied to teaching and learning. For example, a fast learner or teacher who speaks slowly may be evaluated only as such in the context of perspective, nuance, perception, and categorization.

Eisner (1976) also discussed connoisseurship in the context of appreciation. A critic may not particularly like or enjoy the content in which he or she is an expert but nonetheless can appreciate the quality. For example, an art critic may not personally like impressionistic art, but he or she may recognize a painting of high caliber that is in the impressionistic style (Eisner, 2009). In this manner, the teachers who volunteer to evaluate the CCRRT program used personal teaching and artistic expertise to determine the effectiveness of the program.

Paired with the idea of connoisseurship is the practice of criticism from the experience of the teachers who evaluated the CCRRT program. The information led to a determination of the impact of CCRRT on literacy and student engagement. This information allowed the researcher to proceed with the program and relevant adjustments based on the expertise and feedback of the educational connoisseurs. Program adjustments can be made to materials and assessments based on recommendations and response of the population sample.

The English language arts teachers who volunteered as evaluators are considered experts and educational connoisseurs qualified to make judgments about the results and quality of the CCRRT program. English language arts teachers are required to have at least a bachelor's degree (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013b), subject-matter expertise determined by state certification, and annual professional development courses required to maintain licensure. Teachers without state certification will not be considered as participants for the CCRRT program evaluation. The evaluators, serving as educational connoisseurs, reported on their perceptions of the CCRRT program as expert classroom teachers using their observations of students related to the study's three evaluation focus areas.

Evaluation focus areas. The areas of focus for the CCRRT program evaluation were secondary student literacy, secondary student engagement, and CCSS. Literacy is the capacity to construct meaning and utilize a variety of texts required by society and valued by the individual for purposes of learning, community participation, and enjoyment (International Reading Association, 2013). Student engagement is the extent that students are involved, interested, and connected to courses, school, and one another (Axelson & Flick, 2011). The CCSS are a single set of high educational benchmarks for kindergarten through 12th grade in mathematics and English language arts to demonstrate readiness for entry into the workforce or postsecondary education (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a). Study participants were expertise-oriented educational connoisseurs equipped to determine the impact of CCRRT in all three of these areas. Forty-six states, four territories, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the CCSS Resources for nationwide training and implementation have been readily available since the standards were adopted in 2010. Individual states, territories, and other regional areas using the CCSS may also utilize customized and complementary training materials in addition to materials offered by the nationwide initiative (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a).

Instrument

To evaluate the CCRRT program, the *Rating Scale of Changes Resulting From the Reader's Theater Project* (Sloyer, 1982) was used with some modifications as a quantitative data-collection instrument. The *Rating Scale of Changes Resulting From the Reader's Theater Project* is shown in Appendix A. National Council of Teachers of English (1983) published this survey and granted permission for use of the survey for this evaluation. The Rating Scale of Changes Resulting From the Reader's Theater Project

survey instrument is found in the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) textbook, *Reader's Theater: Story Dramatization in the Classroom,* and was written by Sloyer (1982). A professor of rhetoric and reader's theater at Hofstra University, Sloyer is considered an expert in the area of reader's theater and a well-established professor at Hofstra University who has published two textbooks on the instructional strategy of reader's theater. There is no formal validity and reliability information for the survey instrument. The lack of formal statistical validity and reliability data for the instrument is acknowledged as a limitation for this study. However, because of the reputability of Sloyer and the specificity of the instrument to the object of the evaluation, the survey is believed to be appropriate. The survey responses are designed with a 3-point Likert scale. The instrument contains eight items that address the evaluation focus area of student engagement and two items that address the area of literacy achievement. The original instrument was modified to collect additional information related to demographics, literacy achievement, and CCSS.

Instrument Modifications

The Rating Scale of Changes Resulting From the Reader's Theater Project was modified to include additional items related to demographics, literacy achievement, and CCSS. The original instrument was also modified from a three-choice response instrument to a five-choice response instrument. Three-point Likert style surveys were more common based on early research that did not determine a significant difference in validity or reliability between a multistepped, dichotomous, or trichotomous questionnaire format (Jacoby & Matell, 1971). Revising options from three to five increases variability, and it is not recommended to expand Likert scales beyond seven points (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). This was a quantitative study. Therefore, the

comments section of the original survey was omitted. The items added to the original survey collected information regarding whether teachers worked in a public, private, or charter school. The modified survey was also designed to collect data about subject-area certifications, years of teaching experience, issues relative to CCSS, grade levels and students' ability levels, and how many iterations of CCRRT teachers have implemented with students. Items related to literacy achievement were also added. The modified instrument, *The Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater Survey*, is shown in Appendix B.

Of the 27 items in this study's survey, five corresponded to literacy achievement and 10 corresponded to student engagement. Two items corresponded to CCSS alignment and achievement. Question 4 on the NCTE survey was omitted because the question related to a writing activity that was not germane to CCRRT. Another original survey question was split into two questions to measure variables separately. The researcher changed the word "children" to "students" to acknowledge learners in secondary grades. Items were written as 5-point Likert-scale responses to elicit teachers' perceptions of CCRRT. The remaining 10 survey items collected demographic data about the survey participants to allow for more detailed analysis of responses.

Procedures

General procedures. The first step in the program evaluation was to obtain approval from the university to ensure that all procedures pertaining to studies involving human subjects were in compliance with university and federal regulations. Informed consent was included as the first step of the program evaluation survey. Participants electronically acknowledged pertinent information about the study and consent to participate in the study.

All information was kept secure during the study. The survey tool was anonymous, and survey questions did not lead to identifying elements that might allow a reader to guess participants' identity. Examples of possible identifying elements would have been email or physical addresses, school names, or school locations. Therefore, email addresses were not retained by the researcher or used to associate with organizing the study's data. To make the survey data anonymous, the survey was configured not to collect IP addresses or save email addresses during the data-collection process. Geographic subdivisions smaller than a state were not included in data reporting in order to most appropriately protect participant privacy (Liu, 2008). The U.S. Department of Education's (2012) Privacy Technical Assistance Center indicated that only student-level data should be deidentified, masked, suppressed, or otherwise made anonymous..

The survey data were cross-tabulated and analyzed with questions related to the evaluation of the CCRRT program to glean maximum inferential data from the evaluation. A cross-tabulation is a two- or more dimensional table that catalogs the number, frequency, and percentage of respondents possessing specific traits noted in the cells of the table in order to demonstrate relationships between variables (Qualtrics, 2013).

The researcher provided all CCRRT tools and materials to participants electronically. Participants were informed regarding the study and acknowledged their consent to participate prior to completing the survey. Participants used the materials for at least one complete unit, including rhyming reader's theater scripts, original classic short stories, related informational text, and Common Core Standards assessments. Upon completion of the unit, participants responded to the survey anonymously using the online Survey Monkey website. When all surveys were complete, data were cross-

tabulated and analyzed. Descriptive statistical procedures addressed teacher perceptions of the CCRRT program relative to the research questions. The research questions focused on secondary student literacy achievement, engagement, CCSS, and a comparison of the perceptions between middle and high school teachers.

Design. The design of the program evaluation was nonexperimental with a survey design approach. Specifically, a single-source cross-sectional survey design was utilized. The cross-sectional survey design was conducive to collecting data from participants at the same point in time (Lewis-Beck, Bryman ,& Liao, 2004). This data-collection method allowed the researcher to gather information directly from teachers to understand and explain knowledge and attitudes (Fink, 2003) with the goal of making inferences about teacher perceptions of the CCRRT program. The approach offers minimal sampling errors because of the absence of direct contact (Glasow, 2005). A survey design is also economic and efficient (Creswell, 2009). The nonprobability convenience sample is commonly used (University of California, Davis, 2013) and allows the researcher to examine available data.

Additionally, the survey was administered anonymously using Survey Monkey's software and questionnaire tool to collect and manage data quickly. The survey was a single-stage, cross-sectional, self-administered questionnaire distributed and completed after the population sample implemented the CCRRT program. A single-stage, cross-sectional, self-administered survey is a questionnaire that is conducted one time only, at a singular point in time, and without an interviewer in the room or near vicinity (Creswell, 2009). This research approach also was selected because of access to the population. A convenience sample was used based on individual availability and willingness to participate in the CCRRT program evaluation and survey.

Data-collection procedures. The program evaluation lasted 12 weeks. During Week 1, the researcher sent an email to the 500 CCRRT subscribers to determine the usage level of the materials and to begin the process of identifying participants to serve as evaluators for the study. During Week 2, the researcher encouraged use of the materials to subscribers not currently using the materials and determined, based on email response, which teachers were already educational connoisseurs related to the CCRRT materials. During Week 3, the researcher sent a notification about the program evaluation and sent out all CCRRT materials, including rhyming reader's theater scripts, classic short stories, related informational text, and common core assessments to subscribers who were interested in participating in the program evaluation. During Weeks 4 through 7, the CCRRT program evaluators implemented the CCRRT materials in class. During Week 7, the researcher sent an advance notice of the survey. During Week 8, the researcher distributed the survey instrument to participants for data collection. During Week 9, a follow-up, personalized email was sent to encourage completion of the survey by those who did not respond. During Weeks 10 through 12, the researcher analyzed the data for presentation of results.

Data analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis. Quantitative research studies use descriptive statistical analysis to report and reflect different perspectives that promote understanding of population sample perceptions (Creswell, 2009). Descriptive statistics are used to report data related to measures of central tendency (Fink, 2003) and have been used to organize and describe data in a wide range of studies. A recent Pepperdine University study utilized descriptive statistical analysis to examine the effect of cooperative learning in algebra classes (Brandy, 2013). To learn about the varying reasons for giving across generations of alumni, the University

of Hartford employed an electronic questionnaire using descriptive statistical analysis (Galligan, 2013). At the University of Virginia, data from a checklist survey were analyzed and presented using descriptive statistical analysis to examine educational accountability in standardized testing (Cai, 2012).

Beginning in Week 10 of the study, data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel spreadsheet tools to format and arrange multiple variations of information from the survey. Ordinal 5-point Likert scale responses of *strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree*, and *strongly agree* were quantified from 1-5 and analyzed for frequency and measures of central tendency. Nominal demographic data underwent an analysis for frequency and percentage of respondents.

Descriptive statistical analysis indicates means, percentiles, and range of scores (Creswell, 2009) from the questionnaire responses. The descriptive statistics consist of measures of central tendency, including mean, median, mode, and proportion. Measures of dispersion were also analyzed and presented using percentile tabulation comparisons. Percentile comparisons are the appropriate measure of dispersion to display ordinal data (Fink, 2003).

Data analysis according to variables pertaining to research questions and demographic information provided a comprehensive picture of program evaluation results and allowed the researcher to identify patterns. Frequency distributions are presented. Histograms organize and illustrate the frequency of responses and distribution of responses from evaluators. Histograms are nonparametric estimates of a probability distribution (Pearson, 1895). A percentage distribution demonstrates the ratio of respondents represented in each category.

After data analysis, the data were disaggregated. Separating the data according to

subcategories and variables allowed for further exploration and an examination of possible connections between variables. Examples of subcategories included grades and levels of English language arts the evaluator taught while using the CCRRT program.

Research Question 1 data analysis. To determine the extent to which teachers perceived the CCRRT program to impact secondary student literacy, mean response scores for Items 18 through 22 were calculated. After determining the mean response scores for all participants for individual Items 18 through 22, a composite mean score for these five items was determined. This composite mean score was used as the finding for the extent to which teachers perceived the CCRRT program to impact secondary student literacy.

Research Question 2 data analysis. To determine the extent to which teachers perceived the CCRRT program to impact secondary student engagement in reading, mean response scores for Items 11 through 17 were calculated. After determining the mean response scores for all participants for individual items 11 through 17, a composite mean score for these five items was determined. This composite mean score was used as the finding for the extent to which teachers perceived the CCRRT program to impact secondary student engagement in reading.

Research Question 3 data analysis. To determine the extent to which secondary English language arts teachers perceived the CCRRT program to be an effective tool in helping students achieve the CCSS, the composite mean response score based on the responses of all the participants for Survey Item 24 was calculated. This composite mean score was used as the finding for the extent to which teachers perceived the CCRRT program to help students achieve the CCSS.

Research Question 4 data analysis. To determine the extent that secondary

English language arts teachers perceived the CCRRT program to be aligned with CCSS, the mean response score based on the responses of all participants for Item 23 was calculated. This composite mean score was used as the finding for the extent to which participants perceived the CCRRT program to be aligned with the CCSS.

Research Question 5 data analysis. To determine a comparison of the perceptions of middle versus high school English language arts teachers regarding the effectiveness of the CCRRT program, respondents were divided into two groups based on responses to Survey Item 6. The two groups consisted of those who primarily taught Grades 6, 7, or 8, the middle school group, and those who primarily taught Grades 9, 10, 11, or 12, the high school group. After establishing these two groups, the researcher analyzed the results for each of the groups for each research question. The mean response score for the two groups was compared for each research question to identify any differences and similarities. In addition, a comparison of the overall composite mean score based on responses to Survey Items 11-24 for the two groups was conducted.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of the evaluation study was to utilize teacher perception data to evaluate the effectiveness of CCRRT in the areas of secondary student literacy, secondary student engagement, and CCSS. An additional purpose was to compare the perceptions of middle school teachers with the perceptions of high school teachers in these three focus areas. Thirty-nine state- certified English language arts teachers completed the program evaluation survey. These 39 teachers comprised the convenience sample for the study. The perceptions of this sample were used in data analysis and for purposes of answering the research questions. The criteria for participant selection was that the teacher chose to complete and submit the survey and that the teacher must have used the CCRRT materials at least once with secondary English language arts students to qualify as a program evaluator for purposes of the research.

Participant Data Results

Prior to implementation of the study, key information about the participants was not available. Therefore, survey items unrelated to the research questions were included to gather information about the participants. The gender results for the participants, those teachers meeting the participant criteria who responded to the survey, were 15% males and 85% females. These gender results were aligned with information from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) that women make up the majority of teachers in the United States. All respondents were state certified to teach either middle-grades English language arts or secondary-grades English language arts.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents used the CCRRT materials one time, 37% of

respondents used the materials two times, and 26% of respondents used the materials three or more times, so 64% of respondents had used CCRRT more than one time. Years of teaching experience varied among participants: 27% of respondents reported 21 years or more, 21% reported 16 and 20 years, 13% reported between 11 and 15 years, 21% reported between 4 and 10 years, and 18% reported between 1 and 3 years of teaching experience.

A focus area for the study included the CCSS. Therefore, participants were asked if their school placed an emphasis on the CCSS. Eighty-two percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their school places a strong emphasis on CCSS. Many states are training teachers to learn details of the CCSS. In addition, new standardized tests are being developed to evaluate the CCSS (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a).

Respondents used the CCRRT materials with middle school students more frequently than high school students. Sixty-two percent of respondents used CCRRT materials with middle school students compared to 38% in the high school setting. Twenty-seven respondents had at least one additional endorsement in gifted education, reading, or English for speakers of other languages, with reading as the most common endorsement. Fifty-four percent of respondents were located in a suburban area, 36% were located in a rural area, and 10% were located in an urban area. The respondents most often used CCRRT materials with students who read below grade level, followed by students varying greatly between reading levels in the same class.

Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was, To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to impact secondary student literacy? A composite mean score was computed based on answers to Survey Questions 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22 of the CCRRT Evaluation

Survey. The response choices on the 5-point Likert scale survey were given the following values in statistical analysis: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). The result for Research Question 1 was a composite mean score of 3.82 with a standard deviation of .462. The mean score most closely aligned with the response of *agree* on the survey. On average, the teacher evaluators as indicated by survey responses "agreed" that the CCRRT had a positive impact on literacy.

In addition to calculating the composite mean score for Research Question 1, the researcher analyzed survey item responses to identify specific literacy areas perceived to be impacted the most and least by the CCRRT. Participants indicated that the CCRRT materials had the greatest impact on improved oral reading skills after multiple readings of the CCRRT project materials ($M = 4.21$, $SD = .622$). The lowest perceived impact was related to delivery of presentations associated with appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .822$).

Results for Research Question 2

To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to impact secondary student engagement in reading? The overall engagement was assessed as a composite mean score of Survey Items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 of the CCRRT Evaluation Survey. The response choices on the 5-point Likert scale survey were given the following values in statistical analysis: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). The result for Research Question 2 was a composite mean score of 3.89 with a standard deviation of .487. The mean score most closely aligned with the response of *agree* on the survey. On average, the teacher evaluators as indicated by survey responses "agreed" that the CCRRT program had a positive impact on secondary student engagement in reading.

An examination of responses to specific survey items revealed that responses to two survey items stood out as having a greater degree of impact in the area of engagement in connection with the CCRRT materials. The two highest rated responses relative to engagement identified by participants included "students are noticeably more motivated to read material connected with CCRRT than other available reading" and "students are more willing to engage in oral reading exercises relating to the performance of CCRRT than in usual drills or activities." Responses were comparatively neutral for impacting areas of respect, motivation to produce creative ideas, and greater interest in doing another CCRRT project.

Results for Research Question 3

To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to be an effective tool in helping secondary students achieve the CCSS? Eighty-eight percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the CCCRT materials help students achieve the CCSS. The response choices on the 5-point Likert scale survey were given the following values in statistical analysis: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). The result for Research Question 3 was a composite mean score of 4.08 with a standard deviation of .532. The mean score most closely aligned with the response of *agree* on the survey. On average, the teacher evaluators as indicated by survey responses "agreed" that the CCRRT was an effective tool in helping students achieve the CCSS.

Results for Research Question 4

To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to be aligned with CCSS? Ninety-five percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that CCRRT is aligned with CCSS. The response choices on the five-point Likert scale survey were

given the following values in statistical analysis: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). The result for Research Question 4 was a composite mean score of 4.26 with a standard deviation of .549. The mean score most closely aligned with the response of *agree* on the survey. On average, the teacher evaluators as indicated by survey responses "agreed" that the CCRRT program was aligned with the CCSS.

Results for Research Question 5

Research Question 5 was, How do middle school teachers' perceptions of the product's effectiveness compare to the perceptions of high school teachers? To answer this question, the survey response composite mean score for middle school teachers for each research question was compared with the high school teachers' composite mean score for each research question. In addition, the overall composite mean for middle school teachers, based on responses to survey items 11-24, was compared to that of high school teachers.

For Research Question 1, the middle school teachers' mean score was 3.82 compared with 3.70 for high school teachers. The difference in these mean scores was only 0.12. When the means for both groups were rounded to the nearest whole number, the value for both groups was 4.0, which aligned with the survey response choice of *agree*. This finding indicated that relatively, there was no difference between the perceptions of the product's effectiveness for middle school teachers compared to high school teachers.

For Research Question 2, the middle school teachers' mean score was 3.94 compared with 3.64 for high school teachers. The difference in these mean scores was only 0.30. When the means for both groups were rounded to the nearest whole number,

the value for both groups was 4.0, which aligned with the survey response choice of *agree*. This finding indicates that relatively, there was no difference between the perceptions of the product's effectiveness for middle school teachers compared to high school teachers.

For Research Question 3, the middle school teachers' mean score was 5.0 compared with 5.0 for high school teachers. The difference in these mean scores was zero, so the value for both groups was 5.0, which aligned with the survey response choice of *strongly agree* and indicated no difference between the perceptions of the product's effectiveness for middle school teachers compared to high school teachers.

For Research Question 4, the middle school teachers' mean score was 4.38 compared with 4.07 for high school teachers. The difference in these mean scores was only 0.21. When the means for both groups were rounded to the nearest whole number, the value for both groups was 4.0, which aligned with the survey response choice of *agree*. This finding indicated that relatively, there was no difference between the perceptions of the product's effectiveness for middle school teachers compared to high school teachers.

Overall, the middle school teachers' mean score was 3.93 compared with 3.75 for high school teachers. The difference in these mean scores was only 0.18. When the means for both groups were rounded to the nearest whole number, the value for both groups was 4.0, which aligned with the survey response choice of *agree*. This finding indicates that, relatively, there was no difference between the perceptions of the product's effectiveness for middle school teachers compared to high school teachers. Table 2illustrates the comparison of middle school teachers' perceptions compared to those of high school teachers about the CCRRT.

Table 2

Comparison of Middle School and High School Teachers' Perceptions of Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater Effectiveness

	Middle school		High school	
Research question	*N*	Mean	*N*	Mean
1 (Student literacy)	21	3.82	15	3.70
2 (Student engagement)	21	3.94	15	3.64
3 (Common core achievement)	5	5.0	2	5.0
4 (Common core alignment)	21	4.38	15	4.07
Overall	21	3.93	15	3.75

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this evaluation study was to utilize teacher perception data to evaluate the effectiveness of CCRRT in the areas of secondary student literacy, secondary student engagement, and CCSS. An additional purpose was to compare the perceptions of middle school teachers with the perceptions of high school teachers in these three focus areas. Low reading achievement in the United States is considered a problem (Hanushek et al., 2012). The CCSS were developed in part to address the reading achievement gap between the United States and other developed countries (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a). The CCRRT materials incorporate lyric rhyme in reader's theater format adapted from 10 classic short stories, related informational text, and CCSS assessments. During the investigation of the problem of low reading achievement, a detailed literature review was conducted to examine educational and evaluation theories as well as best practices in reading instruction. Research topics in the literature review included multiple intelligences theory, social development theory, the importance of reading, literacy achievement, CCSS, parallel curriculum model, reader's theater, and rhyme.

The program evaluation model of educational connoisseurship was used to conduct this study. The purpose of educational connoisseurship is to disclose a critical and professional expertise and awareness of teaching or materials used by students and teachers (Eisner, 1998). This form of evaluation is appreciative and active in determining what students learn in classrooms (Eisner, 2002).

The data source for the final report was survey data collected from 39 state

certified secondary grades English language arts teacher participants who used the CCRRT materials with students. The participants were considered educational connoisseurs by way of subject matter state certification and application of CCRRT materials in the classroom setting. Participants responded to a quantitative survey that addressed demographic information and the study's research questions.

The response rate for this study was approximately 8%. The open rate for research emails is 15% in the education field (Lapides, 2013). Response rate in the educational setting is often low, with the two largest reasons stated by participants as being too busy and forgetting (Guder & Malliaris, 2013). The healthcare field has also experienced declining response rates in surveys during the last half century (Cho, Johnson, & VanGeest, 2013). Results of over 48 studies within the healthcare field showed that response rates were highest with a paper survey and monetary incentives (Cho, Johnson, & VanGeest, 2013). Response rates in education increase when email reminders are sent and surveys are fewer than 20 questions (Guder & Malliaris, 2013).

Evaluations within the construct of educational connoisseurship may have a lower sample size and response rate than a traditional online survey evaluation, since the evaluator must have a rich background with the ability to interpret subject matter, educational value, and classroom practicality (Eisner, 1976). As an example, a model to prepare educational leaders for the instructional strategy of problem-based learning was created and evaluated based on the input of only four eminent educational scholars (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). In a study to assist struggling students and avoid negative behavioral consequences in literacy classrooms, only two educational connoisseurs examined inquiry projects for the English language arts curriculum (Simon, 2012). Based on these examples, the use of 39 evaluators to judge the value and merit of the CCRRT

may have been adequate. In addition, although an 8% response rate for this study was low, it should be noted that in all likelihood, many of the 500 recipients of the survey did not meet the criteria for participant selection and, therefore, did not return the survey. Many of the population of 500 survey recipients may not have returned the survey because they had not used the CCRRT materials or in some other way did not meet the criteria for participant selection. This assumption could help explain the low response rate and allow the 8% rate to be viewed in a slightly more positive light.

Summary of Results

Results were determined for five research questions. Research Question 1 was, To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to impact secondary student literacy? Literacy is the ability to construct meaning and utilize a variety of texts required by society and valued by the individual for purposes of learning, community participation, and enjoyment (International Reading Association, 2013). Nearly 75% of teachers surveyed reported a positive impact on literacy by either responding *agree* or *strongly agree* to statements related to literacy. The mean Likert scale response value for Research Question 1 dealing with student literacy was 3.82. Many scholars and policy makers have identified literacy as the critical beginning of development with the institution of the school assigned the duties to educate and prepare individuals with skills for literacy to access the workforce (Kalman, 2008). A lack of proficiency in critical reading, an increased focus on standardized testing, linguistic and cultural differences, and insufficient teacher training have all been identified as causes that lead to low levels of literacy in the United States. To increase literacy achievement, students should be taught reading skills and strategies across the content areas (Stevens, 2012). The survey

response rate for this study was low and is acknowledged as a limitation for this study. However, the evaluators' positive rating of the product in terms of secondary student literacy could be considered cautiously as an indication of the product's effectiveness in this area.

Research Question 2 was, To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to impact secondary student engagement in reading? Engaged readers construct meaning from text, are positively motivated to read, socially interactive while reading, and approach reading strategically (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012). Nearly 80% of teachers surveyed reported a positive impact on student engagement by either responding *agree* or *strongly agree* to statements related to student engagement. The mean Likert scale response value for Research Question 1 dealing with student engagement was 3.89. A multilevel data analysis from the Program for International Student Assessment analyzing 3,268 fifteen-year-old students from 121 U.S. schools revealed that engagement significantly predicted reading performance (Lee, 2014). The survey response rate for this study was low and is acknowledged as a limitation for this study. However, the number of evaluators is considerably higher in comparison to a sampling of other educational connoisseurship studies. The evaluators' positive rating of the product in terms of secondary student engagement could be considered cautiously as an indication of the product's effectiveness in this area.

Research Questions 3 and 4 related to CCSS. Research Question 3 was, To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to be an effective tool in helping secondary students achieve the CCSS? The survey item analysis related to CCSS achievement revealed that 100% of teachers surveyed strongly agreed that CCRRT could help students achieve CCSS. Of 39 survey respondents, only seven respondents answered

this question. It is possible that because there is not a nationwide CCSS assessment that respondents may not perceive themselves as prepared to answer whether the materials can help students achieve the CCSS measurements. Research Question 4 was, To what extent do teachers perceive the CCRRT program to be aligned with CCSS? The survey item analysis related to CCSS alignment revealed that 92.3% of teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that CCRRT was aligned with the CCSS. Teachers who used the CCRRT materials agreed that the materials were aligned with the CCSS. The CCRRT materials are composed of informational text that is related to both the classic short story and is cross-curricular in nature. The CCSS requires that students in English language arts courses read informational text, including argumentative, informational, and explanatory text (NGA & CCSSO, 2010). The CCSS promotes cross-curricular learning and relating fiction to informational text (NEA, 2014). Each CCRRT assessment is labeled with the reading informational and literary standards that CCSS addresses. The survey response rate for this study and the question related to CCSS achievement was low and is acknowledged as a limitation for this study. However, the evaluators' positive rating of the product in terms of CCSS could be considered cautiously as an indication of the product's effectiveness in this area.

Research Question 5 was, How do middle school teachers' perceptions of the product's effectiveness compare to the perceptions of high school teachers? In the areas of literacy, engagement, and CCSS alignment, the perceptions of CCRRT when comparing middle and high school teachers demonstrated relatively no difference. Mean survey responses were most closely aligned with the survey response choice of *agree* in the areas of literacy, engagement, and CCSS alignment. Middle and high school teachers perceptions of the CCRRT were both aligned with the survey response choice of *strongly*

agree in the area of CCSS achievement.

Discussion of the Findings

Evaluation of educational products requires expertise in the field of both evaluation and subject matter and the number of evaluators may vary (Eisner, 1990). Two field experts alone acted as evaluators and selected a web-based discovery tool for a library database by analyzing 14 similar tools with 16 criteria within each tool (Chickering and Yang, 2014). Another study utilized 86 third year pharmaceutical students to evaluate a new self-care product to educate patients (Frenzel, Skoy, & Yukel, 2013). The study utilized responses from 39 teachers meeting the criteria for participation in the study to evaluate the CCRRT.

In the CCRRT evaluation, nearly 75% of teachers surveyed in the study reported the CCRRT materials had a positive impact on literacy. One possible reason for this finding was that use of the CCRRT materials involved multiple oral readings. Multiple oral readings of text increase literacy (Ardoin, Morena, Binder, & Foster, 2013). Further supporting this idea and the finding related to literacy for this study is that the practice of rereading increases fluency and motivation (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). Rereading is an activity in the CCRRT. Reading comprehension, one facet of literacy, is impacted inconsistently in several studies (Clark et al., 2009; Johnson, 2011; Keehn et al., 2008), whereas fluency, confidence, and motivation are the variables most influenced in instruction. Reading comprehension is defined as the skills combination of information retrieval, inference, and evaluation (Maybin, 2013). Alternatively, literacy is the capacity to construct meaning and utilize a variety of texts required by society and valued by the individual for purposes of learning, community participation, and enjoyment (International Reading Association, 2013). The CCRRT impacts literacy to a greater

degree than reading comprehension by utilizing materials and a variety of texts from across the curriculum. The CCRRT also requires that students participate in groups, which contributes to participation required by literate members of the community (International Reading Association, 2013). Utilization of a variety of texts and participation in groups may be considered as reasons that nearly 75% of teachers surveyed reported that CCRRT had a positive impact on literacy.

An additional possible reason for the finding that nearly 75% of teachers surveyed in the study reported that CCRRT had a positive impact on literacy is the foundation of the program in rhyme. Rhyme increases literacy (Johnson, 2011). Rhyme showcases a musical quality of spoken language that can contribute to expressive reading of text through variations in pitch, syllabic patterns, tone, rhythm, as well as prosody and oral fluency. The National Endowment for the Humanities (2010) included a rhyme-based reading activity as a model lesson.

A third possible reason that nearly 75% of teachers surveyed in the study reported the CCRRT materials had a positive impact on literacy is the cross-curricular connections of the program. In addition to rhyme as a basis for the National Endowment for the Humanities lesson, objectives for the lesson related to literacy included vocabulary acquisition, language usage, listening, and building auditory memory across subject areas of literature, language arts, history, and social studies (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2010). Recently, an eighth-grade English language arts teacher and a math teacher in Maryland increased writing and visual literacy along with demonstration of geometry knowledge by using elements of rhyme and poetic devices to create original lyrics explaining the properties of isosceles triangles (Counihan & Silcox, 2014). Cross-curricular concepts and themes are a foundation of the CCRRT with informational text

and CCSS assessments that connect science, mathematics, social studies, and English language arts. A long-term study of student achievement in language arts, critical reading and writing, and science research and design skills demonstrated a strong increase in achievement for those students with repeated exposure to the Integrated Curriculum Model, which is a theoretical model for the CCRRT (Feng et al., 2005). The CCRRT model utilizes multiple oral readings, rhyme, and cross-curricular connections for increased literacy across content areas.

Nearly 80% of teachers surveyed in the study reported the CCRRT materials had a positive impact on student engagement. One possible reason for this finding is that the use of CCRRT involves group presentation. The CCSS recommend instructional strategies of revisiting and rereading complex text in cooperative learning groups as an alternative to excessive prereading instruction (Shanahan, 2012). Kelly (2001) described that boys in particular repeatedly read, discuss, and understand the text in order to present a unique and creative approach. In comparing 10th-grade classes' reactions to reader's theater, Kelly noted that boys often took risks with performance and interpretation that allowed for a different classroom atmosphere from whole-class discussions. Students who preferred and thrived in a whole-class discussion and traditional setting considered the text in a more conventional manner than the boys' experimental and interpretive demonstration (Kelly, 2001). The presentation-based reader's theater instructional practice also worked to hold the attention of middle school boys diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in New Hampshire (Doherty & Coggeshall, 2005). The boys made a distinct gain in reading and asked for parts each time the teacher provided a script. When students read for presentation, the success lies in a push to the ability to generate creativity in readers and the imaginations in the audience similar to the push

invoked by perceptive silent reading (Coger & White, 1982).

An additional possible reason for the finding that nearly 80% of teachers surveyed in the study reported that CCRRT had a positive impact on engagement was the program's use of the multiple intelligences. Consideration of multiple intelligences fosters engagement (Gardner, 2006). CCRRT employs five of the multiple intelligences by incorporating verbal and musical intelligence in rhymed oral reading, spatial and kinesthetic intelligence in performance, and interpersonal intelligence in collaborative learning. Throughout middle and high schools, there is a positive correlation between engagement and reading capability (Lee, 2014). The Motivation to Read Profile (Pitcher et al., 2007) demonstrated that as students progress into secondary grades, motivation to read decreases, which decreases reading engagement.

Although the quotes and responses to the program were not a specific focus of this study or related to the research questions, they are from English language arts teachers who have used CCRRT materials with either middle or high school students. The feedback is in response to the same materials that CCRRT respondents evaluated for this study. "Required Rhyming" is the name that CCRRT is known by to users of the program materials. One teacher reported, "This is a very worthwhile direction for curriculum. I work with kids who are taught separately due to the severity of their intellectual disability, and they enjoy the rhythm. There are other advantages too."

> The positive motivation and willingness to engage in classroom activities goes through the roof with reader's theater activities. It is so good that you include older students in your scripts. Often these activities end at 6th grade, yet in the older grades is where we have more trouble with motivation.
>
> I teach in a school specifically designed for students with learning differences. Our ninth graders are included in middle school; however, they are taught ninth grade literature as they would be in upper school. Some of our students have significant social/emotional/behavior challenges, as well, and those students

> seemed to enjoy listening to their classmates reading the parts in each Required Rhyming script but chose not to participate in it themselves. I do believe that the Required Rhyming Materials helped them all with comprehension of some difficult stories. We used the scripts from "The Most Dangerous Game" and "The Cask of Amontillado." The additional expository articles were helpful in building background knowledge and enhancing class discussions. Thank you for your hard work!

Over 92% of teachers surveyed in the study reported that the CCRRT materials were aligned with the CCSS. One possible reason for this finding was that the creation and layout of the materials was developed in partnership with a professional graphic designer to clearly detail the names and goals of the 10 reading CCSS related to understanding informational and literary text. This allows teachers to measure standards separately and interchangeably for both literary and informational text, which may be perceived as helpful in CCSS achievement. The CCRRT creator employed a graphic designer to draft an assortment of graphically based assessments used in a variety of classroom settings. The CCRRT assessment materials included clearly labeled, separated standards; allocated space for title and author of text(s); simple directions; overall visual appeal; ample space with straight lines to promote legible handwriting; and clear, consistent use of space for student name, date, and class period. Content-area reading increases as students progress through grade levels, and informational text material provides opportunities to challenge students with dense vocabulary and subject-matter detail for higher levels of literacy achievement (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2009). The CCRRT materials are organized by individual standards to allow for teachers and student groups to achieve and assess each standard in the areas of reading informational and literary text as content-area reading levels increase. The separate and clearly labeled assessments that offer a distinct design are a possible reason that over 92% of teachers surveyed in the study reported that CCRRT materials are aligned with the CCSS.

The finding for Research Question 5 showed very little difference in the perceptions of middle school teachers about the CCRRT compared to high school teachers. However, middle school teachers did rate the product slightly higher in the areas of literacy, engagement, and the CCSS. This slight difference may be related to the fact that reader's theater is an activity commonly associated with younger students. The large online bookseller, Amazon, offered 151 choices under the search term *readers theater elementary*. Under the search term *readers theater middle school*, the number of titles decreased to 50 choices. The search term *readers theater high school* displayed 62 titles, but 42 of the titles were related to theater instruction for drama classes or scripts for use in seasonal theatrical performance. The remaining 20 titles pertained to reader's theater in a nonelective curricular setting (Amazon, 2014). The research database ProQuest offered similar results in over 900 educational publications. A search for *readers theater elementary* yielded 31 titles in research, whereas the search for *readers theater secondary* offered only 11 titles (ProQuest, 2014). Teachers and students may be reluctant to participate in performance-based instruction. However, an examination of lesson plans under the search term *drama* indicated that teachers on the popular Teachers Pay Teachers website have uploaded 8,076 lesson plans for Grades 6-12 compared to 6,906 lesson plans for kindergarten through Grade 5 (Teachers Pay Teachers, 2014). This indicated that reader's theater has a more childish connotation but that lesson plans incorporating drama are of interest to teachers in the upper grades. This information provides support for why the CCRRT may have been rated slightly higher by middle school teachers than by high school teachers. Educating secondary grade-level teachers on the use of drama across content areas in upper grades may be helpful in the use of CCRRT instead of the use of reader's theater.

Implications of the Findings

Because nearly 80% of teachers reported that CCRRT increased secondary student engagement, the program can be used for students who are disengaged and falling behind in more traditional reading instruction. Maintaining student engagement and motivation to read from primary through secondary grades is critical, as motivation is shown to decrease during these years (Pitcher et al., 2007). The CCRRT story selections are targeted for transition years between primary and secondary grades and can be used as a tool to foster engagement specifically targeted toward students who demonstrate disengagement in reading.

English language arts teachers can consider use of the CCRRT materials when planning lessons based on classic short stories. English language arts teachers can also incorporate other subject areas connected to the short stories with the use of CCRRT materials, which may help students achieve the CCSS. Because educational connoisseurs believe the CCRRT program to positively impact literacy, student engagement, and alignment with CCSS, persons in charge of budgeting and purchasing instructional materials should also consider use and adoption of the CCRRT program.

As noted in chapter 1, educational connoisseurship is a model of evaluation that uses "critics with direct and efficient application of expertise to that which is judged" (Worthen et al., 2010, p. 128). As teachers who were certified in English language arts and with experience as educational connoisseurs, their collective skill and knowledge allowed the researcher to evaluate the CCRRT program with respect to secondary student literacy, engagement, and CCSS. A final implication of the findings is that teachers who used a program are uniquely and expertly qualified to evaluate the program.

Limitations

This program evaluation was limited by a small sample relative to the population. Approximately 500 potential participants received the CCRRT materials and survey, and the response rate was approximately 8%. The open rate for research emails is 15% in the education field (Lapides, 2013). In order to participate in the survey, each potential participant was required to have already implemented the CCRRT materials, thereby limiting the sample size further. Further decreasing the sample size was that only seven of the 39 participants answered the research question related to CCSS achievement. The percentage of the population who used the CCRRT materials prior to receiving the survey was not known and could have contributed to some recipients not returning the survey.

An additional limitation to this program evaluation was that the population had different levels of exposure to the CCRRT materials. Each participant received one script per month over a period of 8 months, and some participants may have purchased additional materials. Because of anonymity, it is not known how many people had access to differing levels of exposure of CCRRT materials.

In addition, the population sample was limited to middle and upper grades state-certified English language arts teachers. This eliminated the possibility of gleaning insight from reading teachers, drama teachers, and English for speakers of other languages. Feedback from upper elementary teachers introducing the classic short stories was also eliminated, presenting another limitation.

The validity and reliability of the research instrument has previously been acknowledged as a limitation because of a lack of formal statistical procedures to establish the instrument's validity and reliability. However, the author of the instrument is well known and respected in the area of literacy. In addition, the instrument has been

widely used to measure information relative to reader's theater. The researcher has been in direct contact with reader's theater expert and survey author Sloyer. Dr. Sloyer granted that a formal statistical analysis for validity and reliability was never performed, but she does have many letters and feedback from reader's theater projects indicating acceptance of the instrument as an appropriate measure for reader's theater (personal communication, July 10, 2013). The survey was reprinted in a later textbook.

An additional limitation is that inferential analysis was not used to determine the difference between the means of the responses between middle school teachers and high school teachers. Inferential analysis is the only statistical method to be certain about mean differences (Fink, 2003). This program evaluation relied on descriptive statistics that describe data such as mean and standard deviation. Inferential analysis would allow for an accurate comparison of means to reliably apply to general conditions if the population sample size accurately represented the population (Fink, 2003). This should be a consideration for similar future studies on this topic.

These findings are not transferable to the general population of teachers because of a sample size from the population that is too small to generalize results. The population sample size for a population of 500 requires between 81 and 217 participants for generalizability (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). This program evaluation is a reflection of cross-sectional data analysis during a specific point in time gathered from a sample of convenience. Therefore, the results should be used only with caution for groups with similar demographics.

Recommendations

Future research may require a broader sample that includes reading teachers, specialists, and coaches. This population is required to have 18 to 24 semester hours of

reading instruction for specialized endorsement or a master's degree in reading. Reading coaches and specialists must also pass a reading specialist test. The nationally administered test required candidates to demonstrate knowledge of more than 100 standards (American Board of Certification for Teacher Excellence, 2014). Because CCRRT is a program that addresses reading, it is wise to include this group of professionals in addition to English language arts teachers.

An additional recommendation for future research is to include a larger sample size, which could increase credibility for some audiences (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). To minimize error for a population sample size of 500, 81 participants are required to respond for 90% precision and 277 participants are required to respond for 95% precision (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). Internet surveys have a lower response rate than other surveys (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006), so decreasing the sample size and using a smaller population is another way to achieve greater precision.

Another recommendation for further research is to measure the impact of CCRRT using a population sample that has equal access for an equal period of time to the materials. During this program evaluation, teachers were given materials over a period of time dependent on joining an email subscription list. For this reason, some teachers had the opportunity to use CCRRT materials over a longer period of time or more often. Future studies could compare a cross-section of teachers that had access to the same CCRRT materials during the same length of time.

Because the CCRRT materials are written and created by the researcher, it is recommended that research by an outside independent party be implemented to eliminate possible bias on the part of the researcher. As the playwright and developer, the researcher is invested in the responses of participants. The responses are quantitative in

nature from educational connoisseurs unknown to the researcher, but the responses from the participants and results of the program evaluation affect the researcher more than they would a researcher who did not develop the program. Additional research is essential because of a lack of rhyming reader's theater programs that correspond with required reading material for secondary grades. CCRRT is the only known educational program to use reader's theater, rhyme, informational text, and CCSS assessments for secondary students.

Another recommendation is to administer a pretest and posttest using the curriculum to more carefully, objectively, and quantitatively measure research questions about student literacy and CCSS. In this case, a smaller population and sample size is recommended for manageability, precision, and accuracy. Utilizing pretest and posttest data would allow stakeholders to analyze specific information about which of the CCSS are impacted by use of the CCRRT materials.

A final recommendation would be to use inferential statistical analysis in future studies on this topic. These analyses could be helpful in comparing the means of groups. For example, group means for middle school teachers could be compared to those of high school teachers. Similarly, inferential statistics could be used to compare pretest and posttest means.

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Appendix A

Rating Scale of Changes Resulting From the Reader's Theater Project

Rating Scale of Changes Resulting From the Reader's Theater Project

Directions: Place an "X" in the appropriate space below each question. In the space for comments, include anything that helps clarify your rating.

1. Did those children who usually react negatively to a learning situation respond more readily to Reader's Theatre activity?

No change _____ Some Change _____ Substantial Change _____

Comment:

2. Were shy and withdrawn children more willing to participate in the Reader's Theatre experience than in other performance-oriented activities?

No change _____ Some Change _____ Substantial Change _____

Comment:

3. Were children noticeably more motivated to read material connected with Reader's Theatre activity than with other available reading?

No change _____ Some Change _____ Substantial Change _____

Comment:

4. Were children more willing to write script materials than other writing assignments?

No change _____ Some Change _____ Substantial Change _____

Comment:

5. Were children more respectful of each other's opinions in the decision making process connected with the Reader's Theatre performance than at other times?

No change _____ Some Change _____ Substantial Change _____

Comment:

6. Were children more willing to engage in oral reading exercises relating to the performance of Reader's Theatre that in the usual drills?

No change _____ Some Change _____ Substantial Change _____

Comment:

7. Were children more motivated to produce creative ideas for the Readers Theatre project than on other occasions?

No change _____ Some Change _____ Substantial Change _____

Comment:

8. Did the children show greater comprehension and appreciation for the literature selected for the Reader's Theatre project than in other reading situations?

No change _____ Some Change _____ Substantial Change _____

Comment:

9. Did the children enjoy working on the Reader's Theatre project more than other projects in the language arts curriculum?

No change _____ Some Change _____ Substantial Change _____

Comment:

10. Did the children show greater interest in doing another Reader's Theatre production than they usually exhibit for other projects?

No change _____ Some Change _____ Substantial Change _____

Comment:

Rating Scale of Pupil Response to the Reader's Theatre Project

Directions: Rate each item on the basis of 4 points for outstanding quality or performance, 3 points for better than average, 2 points for average, 1 point for inferior, and 0 for unsatisfactory. Encircle the appropriate number to indicate your rating, and enter the total of these numbers at the bottom of the sheet.

11. How would you rate this pupil's enthusiasm for the project?
0 1 2 3 4

12. To what extent did this pupil seem eager to seek out and read material for possible use in the project? 1 2 3 4

13. To what extent did this pupil seem eager to read a part in the group script?
0 1 2 3 4

14. To what extent did this pupil contribute ideas for creation

and staging of the script? 0 1 2 3 4

15. How would you rate this pupil's receptiveness to ideas generated by his or her classmates? 0 1 2 3 4

16. How would you judge this pupil's interest in listening to the readings delivered by his or her fellow classmates? 0 1 2 3 4

17. How would you evaluate this pupil's comprehension of the literature used in the project? 1 2 3 4

18. To what extent did this pupil appreciate the literature used in the project?
0 1 2 3 4

19. To what extent did this pupil respond to the voice, diction, and interpretive reading exercises? 1 2 3 4

20. To what extend did this pupil exhibit improvement in his or her oral reading skills?
0 1 2 3 4

Note. From S. Sloyer, *Reader's Theater: Story Dramatization in the Classroom,* 1982, Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English. Copyright 1982 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Adapted with permission.

Appendix B

Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater Evaluation Survey

My name is Jill Craddock, and I am a doctoral student at NOVA Southeastern University located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. As part of my degree completion, I am requesting your professional assistance in evaluating the Cross Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater (CCRRT) Program, also known as "Required Rhyming," by completing this survey.

This survey was developed to collect data from teachers who have implemented the CCRRT program in the classroom setting. The results of this survey will measure teacher perceptions of the program's effectiveness relative to literacy achievement, student engagement in reading, and alignment and achievement related to the Common Core State Standards. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Participation is voluntary and may be discontinued at any time. Results may be requested by contacting me via email. This survey is restricted to online access and will be removed after data collection is complete.

Thank you very much for your help and participation in this study.

I am participating in this study voluntarily and may choose NOT to participate or to end participation at any time. By answering Yes below, I agree to participate in this study.

☐ Yes
☐ No

Demographic Information

1. Gender:

☐ Male
☐ Female

2. My school operates under the following education system:

☐ Public
☐ Private
☐ Charter

3. By the end of the current school year, how many total years experience will you have teaching English language arts or reading?

☐1-3 years
☐4-10 years
☐11-15 years
☐16-20 years
☐21 years or more

4. My education and professional certification is:

☐State Certified, Middle Grades English
☐State Certified, Secondary Grades English
☐State Certified, Middle Grades Integrated Curriculum
☐Other

5. My school places an emphasis on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐No Opinion
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

6. The students with whom I primarily used the Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater materials are:

☐Middle school students (grades 6, 7, or 8)
☐High school students (grades, 9, 10, 11, or 12)

7. I have additional endorsement in the areas of (check all that apply):

☐Gifted Education
☐Reading
☐ESOL

8. My school is located in an area most people would describe as:

☐Urban
☐Suburban
☐Rural

9. The reading level of students with whom I most used the Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater (Required Rhyming) is:

☐Above grade level
☐On grade level
☐Below grade level
☐Varies greatly within the same class
☐Varies greatly between separate classes

10. I used the Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater (Required Rhyming) Materials:

☐One time
☐Two times
☐Three or more times

Place a check in the box next to the choice that best represents your opinion. Check only one box for each item.

11. Students who usually react negatively to a learning situation respond more positively to the Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater activity.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

12. Shy and withdrawn students are more willing to participate in the Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater experience than in other performance-oriented activities.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

13. Students are noticeably more motivated to read material connected with Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater than other available reading.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

14. Students are willing to engage in oral reading exercises relating to the performance of Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater than in usual drills or activities.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

15. Students are more respectful of each other's opinion in the decision-making process connected with the Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater process than at other times.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

16. Students are more motivated to produce creative ideas for the Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater project than on other occasions.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

17. Students show greater interest in doing another Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater production than they usually exhibit for other projects.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

18. Students show greater comprehension for the literature selected for the Cross- Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater project than in other reading situations as measured by classroom assessments.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

19. Students show greater comprehension for the informational text selected for the Cross- Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater project than in other reading situations as measured by classroom assessments.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

20. The Cross- Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater project helps prepare students for State tests, End of Course exams, or other high stakes assessments.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

21. Students use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation in presentation of Cross- Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater project materials.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

22. Students improve oral reading skills after multiple readings of the Cross- Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater project materials.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

23. The Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater materials are aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree

24. The Cross-Curricular Rhyming Reader's Theater materials help students achieve the Common Core State Standards.

☐Strongly Agree
☐Agree
☐Neither Agree nor Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Strongly Disagree