WHAT PRACTICES MATTER IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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WHAT PRACTICES MATTER IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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WHAT PRACTICES MATTER IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine elementary school library practices to determine if particular practices affected student learning. This study described the circulation practices, collection leveling practices, scheduling practices and collaborative practices between school librarians and classroom teachers in high performing and non-high performing elementary schools in Missouri school districts with an enrollment of 750-1,500. Data was collected via an online survey and analyzed using ANOVA and the constant comparative analysis method. Results of the study showed only one statistically significant difference between the high performing and non-high performing schools: High performing schools are more likely to allow students to visit the library to check out books during the school day than non-high performing schools.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

At the moment that we persuade a child… to cross…that magic threshold into a library, we change their lives forever, for the better. It's an enormous force for good.
Barak Obama

The researcher and a selection committee of elementary staff members visited a high performing school in the area as part of the process of selecting new reading materials for their elementary school. The high performing school was using one of the reading series the researcher's staff was considering. After visiting classrooms at the school and speaking with individual teachers it was apparent to the committee the reading program was not implemented with fidelity or consistency in every classroom. During this visit the researcher and selection committee members observed the library had many large stacks of books on the circulation desk. The librarian explained, "The kids are reading so many books that we don't have time to get them shelved when they are returned." At the end of the visit the committee determined this district's English language arts scores were not so much a result of the materials used for reading instruction, but likely the result of the volume of reading their students were doing. The researcher wondered if the number of books read in this school was related to their high achievement in communication arts on the statewide assessment. The researcher is conducting a study to determine if particular practices in the operation of an elementary library may increase the achievement in communication arts on the statewide assessment of elementary students.

Elementary school libraries have been part of the American education system for more than half a century. In 1963, Gaver testified before congress about her research linking student achievement to the presence of an elementary school library and full-time certified librarian (Loertscher, 2014). Congress voted in favor of funding to encourage the development of elementary libraries across the nation through the Education Improvement Act of 1963. In 2015, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the first federal education legislation in more than 50 years to provide federal revenue to enhance school library services and increase resources (Vercelletto, 2016). This bipartisan law is considered a victory by librarians because in addition to providing a source of funding, the law recognizes school librarians as specialized instructional support personnel. Another provision of the ESSA, the Supporting Effective School Library Programs Act, authorizes the development of effective library programs through professional development and support for current library resources. Congress has recognized the importance of effective school libraries by enacting this legislation (Vercelletto, 2016).

The State of Missouri has also recognized the importance of school libraries through the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) publication of the Growth Guide for School Librarians. Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) standards and indicators outline the following expectations for school library media centers (LMC):

- The Library Media Center (LMC) and its resources support, enhance and enrich the school's curriculum.

- Library Media Center (LMC) staff collaborate with instructional staff to integrate resources and services into the instructional program
- Students have access to a full range of information, resources, digital access, and reading resources and services in the Library Media Center (LMC).
- The Library Media Center (LMC) is evaluated annually. (Missouri DESE, 2013)

In April, 2017, Missouri development teams began revising the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) Cycle 6 resource and process standards and indicators. Although the MSIP Cycle 6 standards are in draft form and will not take effect before the 2019-2020 academic year, meeting notes and drafts of resource and process standards indicate school libraries will remain a vital part of elementary schools in Missouri. MSIP Cycle 6 standards include subtle changes from MSIP Cycle 5. For example, regarding LMC staff the MSIP Cycle 6 draft document reads, "The LMC staff, *if applicable* [emphasis added], collaborates with instructional staff to integrate library media services (LMS) into the instructional program."

The Missouri Growth Guide for School Librarians (Missouri DESE, 2017a) outlines the standards and quality indicators identifying emerging, developing, proficient, and distinguished librarians through the professional frames of evidence of commitment, evidence of practice, and evidence of impact. The Growth Guide for School Librarians also provides possible sources of evidence to those responsible for evaluating school librarians and rating them on a scale of 0-7 for each of 24 different indicators across the following standards: teaching for learning, reading and literacy, information and

knowledge, leadership and advocacy, program management and administration, technology integration, and professional development (Missouri DESE 2017a).

The MSIP Cycle 5 and Cycle 6 draft standards and indicators and the Growth Guide For School Librarians clearly show library practices are expected to support not only reading instruction, but instruction in all content areas in order to make sure students have every opportunity to learn and achieve academic success; however, Missouri educators may be receiving mixed messages about the importance of school libraries. Starting with the 2015-16 school year, school libraries in Missouri will be reviewed through the MSIP process when districts fail to meet accreditation standards on the Annual Performance Report (R. Wilken, Area supervisor for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, personal communication, January 30, 2018).

Although Missouri was second only to Massachusetts in setting high expectations for reading proficiency, 64% of Missouri public school fourth grade students scored below the proficient reading level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The number of Missouri public school fourth grade students scoring below the proficient level on the NAEP has decreased from 66% in 2011, to 63.7% in 2015 (DESE, 2018). While these NAEP scores indicate Missouri fourth grade reading achievement is improving slightly, over 60% of fourth grade students in Missouri perform below the proficient level (DESE 2018). As school leaders and educators examine standardized reading test results is important to consider the impact school library programs may have on student achievement.

School libraries have a narrowly defined purpose: to support educational programs. Bishop (2013) notes a high priority of library programs has been the promotion

of reading. “With the current emphasis on standardized reading test scores, this priority has become even more a focus and has served to closely link classrooms and the school library” (p. 30). Kane (2008) agreed, “Obviously, literacy is a primary focus of school libraries, and information literacy, the ability to derive, make, and share meaning from information, is often an integral part of each school’s curriculum” (p. 46). Bishop (2013) notes the school library program provides a setting where students develop essential skills and access traditional and nontraditional print and non-print resources. Krashen, Lee, and McQuillan (2012) reported access to limited libraries containing as few as 500 books can positively impact students’ reading scores. Krashen (2011) states, “We must invest in libraries” (p. 29). “If there are no books it is certain that no reading will take place” (p. 28).

Educators generally acknowledge school library programs are the collective result of many program decisions: staffing, collection, and scheduling. Each decision can impact the benefit of the program. School leaders must consider whether to hire a part-time or full-time librarian and whether to provide support personnel such as a library assistant or aide. Consideration must be given to the qualifications of the personnel hired to fill those positions. Schools must also consider the make-up of the collection: books, e-books, periodicals, and technology. While many decisions regarding school libraries are made at the district level, this study will focus on decisions made at the building level by school librarians and building administrators.

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Position Statement on the Role of the School Library Program (2016) states:

> For students, the school library represents one of America's most cherished freedoms: the freedom to speak and hear what others have to say. Students have the right to choose what they will read, view, or hear and are expected to develop the ability to think clearly, critically, and creatively about their choices, rather than allowing others to do this for them. (p. 1)

Since becoming a division of the American Library Association (ALA) in 1951, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has published position statements regarding practices such as flexible scheduling, labeling books with reading levels, and the instructional role of the school librarian. These research-based position statements set a standard for school libraries practicing librarians and aspiring librarians are encouraged to attain; however, this cannot happen in isolation as decisions regarding the elementary library are rarely made without the cooperation of the school administrator(s) and consideration of the big school picture. Factors such as the school schedule and budget often determine how the elementary library program looks and functions. School libraries were once considered important in Missouri; however, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education no longer collects information regarding public school libraries in Missouri and leaves the design of school library programs in the hands of individual districts and schools. This leads to the researcher's problem statement.

Problem Statement

Research linking elementary school libraries and student achievement as determined by the Missouri Achievement Program (MAP) communication arts scores is limited. Educators generally agree reading proficiency by the end of grade three is

important; however library programs supporting reading instruction can look very different from school to school (R. Wilken, Area supervisor for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, personal communication, January 30, 2018). This may present a problem, as school libraries may be a contributing factor to student achievement. Educators and school librarians in Missouri receive mixed messages regarding the importance of school libraries. While more than 90% of public elementary schools currently have a school library (Rosa, 2014), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education stopped requiring schools to report data on public school libraries prior to 2014- 2015. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) takes a strong position regarding the role and importance of the school library and the role of the school librarian in 21st century learning, yet it is possible policy makers in Missouri may no longer see value of school libraries.

At the building level, school leaders and librarians make decisions, for example, to offer a fixed schedule, one in which the librarian is often used to provide release time for classroom teachers; an open schedule, one in which teachers can schedule the use of the library on an as-needed basis; or a mixed schedule, which is a combination of both the fixed and open schedules (Bishop, 2013). Schools must also make decisions regarding the collection such as the number and ratio of print to digital resources to provide. The type of schedule and the make up of the collection often drive decisions such as the number of visits students make to the library and the number of books they check out per week (Haycock, 2011). Access to a school library can be especially important to at-risk students, especially those who may enter school with a vocabulary deficit and need extra vocabulary exposure and practice (Adams, 2013).

Just as literacy is a very fluid concept, the attainment of literacy by students today is also a very fluid process as students learn to seamlessly access both printed text and digital media (Barone, 2015). School librarians can offer specialized training in skills such as the use of technology, the identification of reliable sources, and research methods that, when utilized, can add to the classroom teachers' knowledge base and therefore strengthen instruction. Collaborative practices between school librarians and classroom teachers within a school can range from simple technology assistance to deep planning, teaching, and evaluating instructional units; however, the most effective collaborative practice is the co-planning of instructional units (Hattie, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

This study seeks insight into the design and practices of elementary library programs to determine if certain practices have an impact on student achievement. The study is important because practices recommended by entities such as the AASL are no longer mandated or routinely evaluated in the state of Missouri. School district leaders have the decision making power to determine whether or how certain library programs are implemented (R. Wilken, Area supervisor for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, personal communication, January 30, 2018). Because of this, practices can look very different from school to school. What remains to be discovered is whether certain school library practices impact reading achievement in Missouri elementary schools.

The theoretical framework regarding effective libraries for this study is based on the work of Haycock (2011). Haycock (2011) researched the relationship between and among literacy, student achievement, and the school library. The goal of the study was to

determine the impact, if any, of the school library on student achievement in British Columbia, Canada. Haycock (2011) formed research questions to discover the characteristics of school libraries in high performing schools and the extent school and district decision-making to utilize school library resources impacted student achievement. Haycock (2011) found high performing schools in British Columbia have better-supported school libraries. School librarians in the high performing schools collaborated more with classroom teachers, taught more students more often on flexible schedules, supported teachers by identifying resources, invested time in reading promotion, and made greater use of volunteer assistance. The study, which confirmed the findings of over 40 years of research, correlated effective libraries with increased student achievement; however, school size was not an isolated variable in Haycock's study. The research questions and the conclusions drawn from the study led the researcher to examine library program decisions and practices within local control to see if there is a difference in those practices between high performing schools and non-high performing schools in Missouri.

Another important framework for the study is the work of Hattie (2015), who claims the greatest barrier to student learning is within-school variability. Within-school variability, or differences from classroom to classroom or teacher to teacher, is much larger than variability between schools in most Western countries (Hattie, 2015). While there can be wide variation from classroom to classroom within a school, there is also wide expertise within the school that can be identified, nurtured, esteemed, and brought together to reduce this variance (Hattie, 2015). Hattie (2015) also noted this most important factor, within-school variability, is one school leaders and stakeholders have

some influence to reduce. Hattie (2015) suggests one way to lessen the variability of the quality of instruction from classroom to classroom is to encourage the practice of collaborative expertise. Rather than allowing teachers to continue to work behind closed doors in isolation, Hattie (2015) suggests a shift is needed toward a culture that values and emphasizes collaboration and encourages all teachers to have the same impact as the best teachers. "The greatest influence on student learning is having highly expert, inspired and passionate teachers and school leaders working together to maximize the effect of their teaching on all students in their care" (Hattie, 2015, p. 19). When educators, including school librarians and classroom teachers, stop working in isolation and begin working together to share knowledge, plan units of instruction and teaching interventions, and evaluate student learning they build what Hattie (2015) refers to as "a coalition of the successful" (p. 23). In a school community based on shared teacher expertise where teachers share and learn from one another, equity is enhanced, within-school variability is reduced, and schools become inviting places to learn for all (Hattie, 2015).

Purpose of Study

Increased accountability for high student achievement requires school administrators and stakeholders to examine educational practices closely. Legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and more recent statewide initiatives such as Top 10 by 20 (2014) have placed increased importance on student achievement. Parents, patrons, community members, and business leaders are aware of the importance of developing proficient academic skills. Administrators and those responsible for making decisions regarding elementary library program practices will gain knowledge

from the results of this study. The purpose of this study was to examine the practices of elementary libraries in both high and non-high performing schools and describe key practices that may lead to increased student achievement. This study is presented to expand the body of knowledge regarding elementary library programs and the potential impact programs may have on student achievement.

Main Research Question

What are the differences, if any, in the presence of particular practices of elementary libraries in high performing elementary schools and the presence of particular practices in non-high performing elementary schools?

Subset Research Questions

1. What are the differences, if any, in the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in high performing schools and the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in non-high performing schools?
2. What are the differences, if any, in the number of books checked out per week by third grade students in high performing schools and the number of books checked out per week by third grade students in non-high performing schools?
3. What are the differences, if any, in the schedule of the elementary library in high performing schools and the schedule of the elementary library in non-high performing schools?
4. What are the differences, if any, in the school library labeling practices of high performing schools and non-high performing schools?

5. What are the differences, if any, in the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in high performing schools and the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in non-high performing schools?

Main Null Hypotheses

There is no difference in the presence of particular practices of elementary libraries in high performing elementary schools and the presence of particular practices in non-high performing elementary schools.

Subset Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in high performing schools and the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in non-high performing schools.
2. There is no significant difference in the number of books checked out per week during scheduled visits by third grade students in high performing schools and the number of books checked out per week during scheduled visits by third grade students in non-high performing schools.
3. There is no significant difference in the schedule of the elementary library in high performing schools and the schedule of the elementary library in non-high performing schools.
4. There is no significant difference in the school library labeling practices of high performing schools and non-high performing schools.
5. There is no significant difference in the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in high performing schools and the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in non-high performing schools.

Design Controls

Surveys will be returned to an administrative assistant in order to decrease bias on the part of the researcher. The administrative assistant will collect survey data and remove any identifying information. Protecting participants' confidentiality and assuring anonymity in responding will increase truthfulness of respondents.

Limitations of Study

1. Though several factors contribute to students' attainment of reading skills this study is limited to the school library's influence on the attainment of reading skills.
2. The data used in this study was obtained through a survey presented to elementary librarians. The researcher acknowledges the perceptual nature of the qualitative data and the honesty of the respondents. Each school predetermined library schedules, circulation policies, and labeling practices prior to this study. The responses offer a snapshot of library practices as perceived by the school librarians in each school.
3. The accuracy of the data was dependent on the willingness of school personnel to respond to the survey.

Delimitations of Study

1. The study focused on Missouri public elementary schools serving grade 3 in school districts with an enrollment of 750 to 1,500.
2. The schools meeting the criteria for the study will be classified by the researcher as high performing or non-high performing based on the 3rd grade Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) English Language Arts scores

published by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

3. The researcher acknowledges the importance of the elementary librarian and the quality of instruction or guidance provided by the librarian; however, this study will focus on students' access to library resources, including the collective expertise of the librarian and classroom teachers as demonstrated through collaboration.
4. Labeling practices within the library collection were discussed and examined with regard to aiding or preventing student access to materials; however, the researcher did not review or discuss the merits of computerized programs such as Accelerated Reader in this study.
5. The researcher recognizes the importance of all academic areas; however, for the purpose of this study emphasis was placed on the school library's influence on the attainment of skills leading to 3rd grade reading proficiency as all academic pursuits are impacted by the ability to read proficiently.

Definition of Terms

Collaborative Activities. Collaborative activities include those in which classroom teachers and school librarians share knowledge or resources for the purpose of instruction. Collaborative activities may be initiated by classroom teachers or school librarians and may occur when students are present and when they are not (Gavigan & Lance, 2015).

Collaboration. Collaboration is the process of individuals taking what they know how to do (personal knowledge) and working together to create value or new sources of value

(Senge, 2006). In a school setting, this process may include activities such as posing questions, exploring ideas, capitalizing on individual strengths, combining perspectives, and sharing expertise (Copeland & Jacobs, 2017).

Operational definition of collaboration. The researcher acknowledges the definitions for collaboration and collaborative activities; however, for the purpose of this study collaboration will describe a joint effort between classroom teachers and librarians to plan, carry out, and evaluate units of study by sharing students, resources, and expertise.

Fixed Schedule. A fixed schedule is a scheduling arrangement in which all grades have prescribed class visits to the library media center at fixed times (Bishop, 2007.)

Flexible Schedule. A flexible library schedule allows for variation in library use, rather than having each class assigned to a fixed period. This schedule allows classroom teachers to bring students to the library when there is a need to conduct research or access resources (McGregor, 2006).

High Performing Schools. Elementary schools were classified as high performing based on the percentage of 3rd grade students scoring in the proficient or advanced categories on the 2015, 2016, and 2017 English Language Arts assessment. For the purpose of this study, the researcher defines high performing elementary schools as those whose combined proficient and advanced percentages on the 3rd grade ELA assessment are more than one standard deviation above the mean combined proficient and advanced percentages of all schools included in the sample for the 2015, 2016, and 2017 school years. Non-high elementary schools are those whose combined proficient and advanced percentages are below one standard deviation above the mean combined proficient and

advanced percentages on the 3rd grade ELA assessment for the 2015, 2016, and 2017 school years.

Librarian. The term librarian will be used interchangeably with school librarian or library media specialist by the researcher throughout this paper.

Library media center (LMC). The term school library will be used interchangeably with Library Media Center (LMC) throughout this paper.

Mixed schedule. A mixed library schedule is a combination approach to scheduling in which part of the library time is fixed and part of the time is flexible. For example, each classroom has an assigned or fixed time to visit the library during the week and the remainder of the schedule is flexible or available for students or classes to visit for collaborative projects or when a need arises (McGregor, 2006).

Non-high performing elementary schools. For the purpose of this study, non-high elementary schools are defined by the researcher as those whose combined proficient and advanced percentages are below one standard deviation above the mean combined proficient and advanced percentages on the 3rd grade ELA assessment for the 2015, 2016, and 2017 school years.

Summary

Chapter one presents the researcher's problem statement and rationale for the problem statement. The purpose of this study was articulated and the researcher's theoretical framework for conducting the study was presented in detail. Limitations and delimitations were stated and the definitions of terms for this study were explained. In chapter two the researcher will review relevant literature pertaining to the purpose of the study and the supporting theoretical framework.

Chapter two presents a review of relevant literature. The literature review is organized thematically, noting the influence of libraries in the development of reading proficiency, library practices impacting student access to library resources, and collaboration and inquiry based learning. Chapter three will outline the methodology used in this study including the participants, sampling procedures, research setting, instrumentation, research design, and data treatment. Chapter four will include the data presentation and analysis of the data. Chapter five will present the findings and conclusions of this study as well as recommendations and implications for future study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The National Research Council (1998) asserted academic success as determined by graduation from high school could be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing a person's reading skill at the end of third grade. Low reading proficiency in third grade has lasting consequences, often negatively impacting the earning capacity of individuals (Fiester, 2010). The results of a longitudinal study of nearly 4,000 students born between 1979 and 1989 showed one in six children who do not read proficiently in third grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than children who read proficiently (Hernandez, 2011). In this study researchers divided the students into three groups roughly corresponding to the proficiency levels established by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): proficient, basic, and below basic. Dropout rates (or failure to finish high school on time) were highest, 23%, for students reading at the lowest level compared to 9% for students with basic reading skills and 4% for proficient readers (Hernandez, 2011). Hernandez (2011) noted children with the lowest reading scores represented a third of total students but more than 63% of those who did not graduate from high school. Hernandez (2011) explained achieving proficiency by the end of third grade is important, as a pivotal shift occurs from learning to read in the primary grades to reading to learn beyond third grade. Hernandez (2011) also noted interventions implemented with struggling readers beyond third grade are rarely as effective as interventions presented in earlier years. Reading proficiency by the end of third grade matters because it enables children to use reading skills to gain information in

other content areas such as math, science, and social studies; to think critically and solve problems; and to share what they have learned with others (Feister, 2010).

School libraries in elementary, middle, and high schools have a narrowly defined purpose: to support educational programs. Kane (2008) explained, "Obviously, literacy is a primary focus of school libraries, and information literacy, the ability to derive, make, and share meaning from information, is often an integral part of each school's curriculum" (p. 46). Bishop (2013) concurred:

> Traditionally, a high priority of library programs has been the promotion of reading. With the current emphasis on standardized reading test scores, this priority has become even more a focus and has served to closely link classrooms and the school library. (p. 30)

The establishment of elementary school libraries began in 1958, when state supervisors began to see the possibilities for research into the effectiveness of elementary school libraries and their impact on student achievement (Gaver, n.d.). Gaver (n.d.) noted the impetus for this research surfaced when state supervisors found it increasingly difficult to convince local and county school superintendents that libraries in elementary schools were a necessity. Although university and high school libraries existed in nearly all institutions, elementary libraries existed in only a small percentage of schools. For example, in New Jersey, school libraries served only 16% of elementary classrooms (Gaver, n.d.). In 1963, Gaver testified before Congress and shared research linking student achievement to the existence of an elementary school library staffed by a full-time certified librarian. In The Education Improvement Act of 1963, Congress voted in favor of funding the development of such libraries across the nation (Loertscher, 2014).

Wiegand (2007) noted the number of public schools with libraries increased from 50% in 1958, to 93% in 1985.

Very little substantive historical literature, published or unpublished, has been written on the American public school library since 1965 (Wiegand, 2007). Wiegan explained:

> That was when most graduate programs in library and information studies (LIS) accredited by the American Library Association (ALA) dropped requirements to write master's theses. In addition, dissertations on American public school library history also diminished after 1985, when LIS doctoral programs began to focus much more attention on libraries as information institutions (with "information" almost always linked to and defined by newer information technologies). (Wiegand, 2007, p. 57-58)

A report from the National Center for Education Statistics confirms today more than 90% of public schools have a school library while only 49% of public charter schools have a school library (Rosa, 2014).

Reading proficiency became a focus of the George W. Bush administration's No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which required annual testing and reporting of students' reading proficiency scores. The goal of NCLB was for all children to meet grade-level proficiency scores by 2014. This legislation required states to disaggregate scores according to socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, gender, disability, and English proficiency. A report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) asserted that, in the absence of a "consistent, commonly accepted and applied understanding of what reading proficiency means or how to measure it," each state set its own standard and uses a

unique test to measure reading proficiency (p. 12). In Missouri, third grade reading proficiency standards for both literature and informational text are outlined in the Missouri Learning Standards and measured by the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) third grade English Language Arts (ELA) assessment.

Role of the Library in Developing Proficient Readers

Although goals for the attainment of literacy skills have been established, it is difficult to find a widely agreed-upon definition of literacy. Keefe and Copeland (2011) explained, "The literature discusses research, conceptual frameworks, and approaches to teaching literacy (often characterized as reading and/or writing) without explicitly defining what is meant by these terms" (p. 92).

The report of the National Reading Panel (2000), one having significant impact on reading instruction over the last decade, did not define the terms literacy or reading (Keefe & Copeland, 2011). Instead, the report focused on five areas related to reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies, skills necessary for students to develop in order to become proficient readers.

Barone (2015) refers to the nature of literacy as "fluid" and suggests, "There is no fixed definition of literacy; rather, literacy is redefined every day" (p.7). The traditional ways children acquire literacy skills are shifting along with the development of new technology (Barone, 2015). Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts (2010) conducted a study determining students were more likely to spend as much time reading a screen as reading printed material. Fredrick (2014) refers to these readers as "ambidextrous," or "comfortable and open to reading both print and eBooks" (p. 22).

Today, literacy instruction requires providing support to students as they come to understand the modes of image, film, music, and digital social interaction (Barone, 2015), while making seamless transitions from page to screen and screen to page (Fredrick (2014). Twenty-first century learners must become skilled at determining the authority and accuracy of information and gain the ability to analyze and evaluate information in order to synthesize new learning from multiple sources. Barone (2015) notes, "Multimodal literacy includes interpretation of visual, written, and performative aspects of text" (p. 7). Barone continues, "Just knowing how to help students read print is no longer sufficient" (p. 7).

Digital citizenship, the appropriate, safe, effective, and ethical use of technology tools and resources, is especially critical for students who are provided and expected to use a digital device at school or at home (Kompar, 2016). School librarians model and teach these skills for teachers and students as books and text morph into new formats just as other media such as music and videos have (Frederick, 2014). Literacy is embedded within digital media practices supported by school Internet access. For example, instead of writing traditional book reports, students can write comments about their everyday reading on Twitter (Barone, 2015). This social connectivity often results in high levels of engagement for students. Kompar (2016) refers to the teaching of digital citizenship skills as the "Driver's Ed to using their devices at home and at school" (p. 62).

Advancements in technology have expanded the school library beyond its physical walls, often allowing students to access resources 24/7 from their classrooms and homes (Barone, 2015). Rheingold (2012) notes essential digital literacy skills include the literacies of attention, participation, collaboration, network know-how, and the ability

to deal with the "massive floods of inaccurate information, misinformation, disinformation—to say nothing of spam, porn, and political incentive" (p. 54). Mardis (2017) noted the American Association of School Librarians editorial board affirmed, "Reading is at the core of personal and academic mastery" (p. 50), and continued, "The school library program is centered on engaging with relevant information resources and digital learning opportunities in a culture of reading" p. 50. In addition to preparing students to examine the authority of authors and the bias of sponsors, school library programs afford students the opportunity to become efficient, effective, creative users of information. Deloza, summarized:

> The development of strong critical thinking skills is not only important in the digital age, it's essential. You can Google just about anything, but if you don't have the ability to interpret, analyze, evaluate, and process the information you find, then what good does it do you? (as cited in Barone, 2015, p. 8)

Martin and Panter (2015) asked, "Now that students have all of this access to technology, why are school librarians still important?" and asserted, "We give them the tools to assess resources and find truth in a haze of information" (p. 58).

School library programs also provide students the opportunity open their hearts and minds and to read for enjoyment (Martin & Panter, 2015). Beard and Antim (2010) note reading is like any other human proficiency: practice matters. When students are matched with just right books, ones matching their needs, interests and level of ability, students will likely read more, experience engagement, and comprehend what they have read (Beard & Antim, 2010). Wide reading, also known as leisure reading, recreational reading, pleasure reading, or free voluntary reading, is independent, self-selected reading

of a continuous text for a wide range of social purposes. This type of reading can take place in and outside of school, at any time (International Reading Association, 2014). One of the best techniques for motivating young readers is to increase their access to books of all types (McElMeel, 2015). Krashen (2003, 2005, 2011) found student choice and access to books has the most impact on reading improvement, as compared to other elements of reading instruction. Phonics instruction, checking for understanding and other strategies are important; however, time to read and access to books are the most important, yet most ignored factor (McElMeel, 2015). Allington and Gabriel (2012) stated, "Students are more likely to read more, understand more, and are more likely to continue reading when they have the opportunity to choose what they read" (p. 10).

To become lifelong readers students must have access to current, quality, high interest and extensive collections of books and other print materials in their school libraries, classrooms, and public libraries. Referring to a group of reluctant readers, McElMeel (2015) related the reluctant readers understood phonics:

> …but that wasn't enough to put those students into the category of reader. Choice is what put them over the edge, and discussions about good books that they chose helped them understand and share what they were reading. (2015, p. 31)

Hudson and Williams (2015) related a goal for students, authentic reading, "…that which mirrors the reading activities that occur in the daily lives of people outside of a school setting" is encouraged when students are given real books, time to enjoy reading without the distraction of questions or tasks, choice of what to read, and time to converse about their reading (p. 532). Hudson and Williams (2015) related student surveys revealed having choice and access to a wide selection of books led students to, "view reading as a

purposeful activity rather than just a task for school" (p. 535). Hudson and Williams (2015) noted forcing students to read books they do not like may result not only in students' failure to engage with the books, but may also cause students to dislike reading altogether. The power of choice can have a great impact on readers (Hudson & Williams, 2015).

A survey by Scholastic (2016) reported 91% of children ages 6-17 say they are more likely to read books when they are able to make their own book choices. Research suggests reading fluency increases with the amount of time reading voluntarily. Unfortunately, independent reading is often a casualty in our fast paced, media-focused society. Today's students know how to read but have little interest in doing so. They have failed to catch the love of reading; therefore, they choose not to read (Scholastic, 2016).

Beginning Readers should have many opportunities to read books at their independent levels. When beginning readers read a wide variety of texts independently their background knowledge and vocabulary increase (Dorn & Jones, 2012). Increasing children's access to books had been shown to have dramatically positive effects on reading growth and achievement (Lindsay, 2013).

Sanden (2014), in a study designed to examine highly effective teachers' understandings and perspectives regarding independent reading and classroom practices observed, "One consistent finding was a desire among teachers to empower students' choices while monitoring their decision making" (p. 167). Each of the teachers participating in the study agreed student autonomy was a cornerstone of independent reading (Sanden, 2014); however, they also noted the importance of matching students to just right books and teaching students to independently determine text appropriateness by

using strategies such as the five-finger rule, a strategy in which students read one page of text and use their fingers to count unknown words, determining the text is too difficult if five unknown words are counted on one page (Sanden, 2014).

School libraries have an important role in helping at-risk students gain literacy skills. At risk students often enter kindergarten lacking basic skills (Adams, 2013). Adams notes these young learners may experience "word poverty," a vocabulary deficit (2013, p. 6). Young at-risk students often lack not only basic vocabulary skills, but also the words needed to ask questions or comprehend stories. Regarding at risk students, Adams (2013), continues:

> Many have never owned books, experienced story time, home libraries, or technology. They face abuse, broken homes, homelessness, community violence, and are at risk of dropping out. Some come from other countries and are learning English for the first time. All face challenges we cannot begin to fathom. (p. 28)

Allington and Gabriel (2012) noted voluminous reading has been proven to be a successful intervention strategy for struggling readers as well as the most effective form of test preparation for all students.

Beard and Antim (2010), conducted a study noting below-grade-level readers benefitted when they consulted with the teacher-librarian about just-right books. Struggling readers were observed making appropriate book selections after working with the teacher-librarian for just two weeks, suggesting the students were motivated to read through this intervention (Beard & Antim, 2010). Pinnell & Fountas (2009) recognized the need for struggling readers to read and talk about a large number of texts including those read to them and those they read independently every day. These students need to

read texts that interest and engage them. Struggling readers need to read texts from a variety of genres and ones they can read fluently and comprehend (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). Pinnell and Fountas conclude:

> Even more than children who learn easily, children who have reading difficulties need to process continuous text (meaningful books). They need to read texts that are interesting and engaging. They need to expand their reading abilities by reading "just right" text with your support; they also need to read many texts on their own. Fill our classroom library with many texts your students can read independently. Quantity matters. (2009, p. 6)

When classroom libraries cannot meet the demand for books due to lack of space or funding, students and teachers look to the school library for assistance with finding books meeting their interests and needs (Beard & Antim, 2010). Catapano, Fleming and Elias (2009) note, while well stocked, high-quality classroom libraries generate interest and motivation for reading, support differentiation by matching students with texts and provide the means to practice reading skills, the establishment a classroom library, especially for new teachers, comes second to establishing classroom rules and implementing curriculum. The acquisition, organization, and dissemination of resources through the school library allow school districts to support classroom reading instruction in a cost effective way (Beard & Antim, 2010).

Today, school library media centers function as sanctuaries and places of hope for all students, including those at-risk, when staffed by empathetic school librarians who are aware of their needs (Adams, 2013). Books provide a comforting haven from a world that is not always fair. School libraries provide a place where relationships can be established

and, when the collection represents the population of the school, students can read and learn about others like themselves (Adams, 2013). At-risk students often benefit from resources such as audiobooks, which aid the development of vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and familiarity with the proper pronunciation of words (Adams, 2013). Extensions of school library programs such as book clubs provide a sense of belonging while encouraging the development of literacy skills. Assistive technology, when available, can also positively impact at-risk students' learning (Adams, 2013).

Miller and Moss (2013) note struggling readers typically read less during and outside of the school day. Regarding struggling readers, Allington (2014), concurs:

> Thus, reading volume deficits are largely overlooked when explanations of reading difficulties (or fluency problems) are offered and overlooked in designing intervention lessons to remediate the reading difficulty. Reading volume is typically not addressed in Individual Education Plans (IEP) developed for pupils with disabilities even though some 80 percent of these students exhibit reading difficulties. (p. 17)

When struggling readers engage in leisure reading outside of school (Allington, 2009), receive support for selecting books (Reutzel, Fawsom, & Smith, 2008), and talk about the books they have read (Kamil, 2008), they make gains in reading achievement. Struggling readers are often given the least choice and check out fewer books than their peers. Honoring and inquiring about students' selections, even when the selections are short, engaging texts, empowers students and provides insight into their lives as readers (Ward, 2017). When teachers provide a selection of choices to guide students toward successful reading experiences and develop students' ability to self-select appropriate

texts, the likelihood students will read outside school improves dramatically (Allington, 2012).

Library Practices Impacting Student Access to Library Resources

The American Association of School Librarians states, "Effective school libraries are dynamic learning environments that bridge the gap between access and opportunity for all K-12 learners (AASL, 2016). School librarians spend time and money developing a collection of resources to meet the needs of students and teachers, yet collections are not always used to the fullest (Bishop, 2013). Bishop (2013) states, **"**To encourage the use of library materials, school librarians should develop workable circulation policies that are positive, rather than punitive" (p. 136). School library policies generally vary according to the library's schedule and the needs of the students (Bishop, 2013). School librarians should encourage the use of library materials and collaborate with classroom teachers to promote both reading and the library collection (Bishop, 2013). Williams (2013) noted unfortunately, library rules and regulations sometimes keep students away from books. Williams (2013) explained, "If reading is to be the window to the world, then we, as teacher librarians need to punch more windows through our own library walls in order to provide a steady accessible, inviting stream of books to our students" (p. 15). Krashen (2011) agrees, "The obvious practical implication is that if we are serious about encouraging literacy development, we need to be serious about providing access to reading material" (p. 29). To prepare students for lifelong learning, 21st century librarians must position their work at the center of their school's reading programs, develop policies and practices supporting students' academic and personal needs, and eliminate restrictions on students' choice of and access to resources (Moreillon, 2009).

Circulation practices. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) position statement on the librarian's role in reading states school libraries must provide "open, non-restricted access to a varied high quality collection of reading materials in multiple formats that reflect academic needs and personal interests" (2016b, p.1). In a study that compared student achievement at higher and lower performing schools with similar funding in British Columbia, Haycock (2011) found the library collections at high performing schools held an average of 15,000 items, while the library collections at low performing schools held an average of 12,000 items. The holdings at high performing schools, on the average, were nearly four years newer. Haycock (2011) also found school library usage was greater in public schools with high student achievement. High performing schools had an average of 1,001.7 individual visits to the library while lower performing schools had an average of 416.5 individual visits. Similarly, high performing schools had an average of 18.8 group visits to the library per week while low performing schools had an average of 14.1 group visits. A study conducted by Francis, Lance, and Lietzau (2010) provided evidence that elementary schools with more individual library visits each week tended to have a higher percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in reading at third and fifth grade. Students performed better when library visits and the number of resources borrowed indicated heavier use of the library (Francis, Lance, & Lietzau, 2010).

School library circulation policies can impact student access to books and resources. Policies regarding the number of visits per week, (often driven by the master schedule), the number of books students can check out per visit, and whether students can continue to check out if they have overdue books can impact student achievement

(Haycock, 2011). School librarians who use restrictive circulation policies, such as allowing young students to check out only one book at a time, inhibit students' access to books, potentially negatively impacting students' reading growth (Downes, Krueger, & Taylor, 2017).

School library circulation policies are especially important for students living in poverty as these students have access to fewer libraries or libraries that are under resourced. A study conducted by Pribesh, Gavigan, and Dickinson (2011) showed "consistent, statistically significant differences between libraries housed in schools with high and low concentrations of students living in poverty" (p. 155). Pribesh, Gavigan, and Dickinson (2011) concluded school libraries have the potential to help bridge the poverty achievement gap with access to books and resources.

The American Library Association's Policy on Confidentiality of Library records states the circulation records and other records identifying the names of library users are confidential and should not be made available to any local, state or federal governmental agency without a subpoena (ALA, 1986). Following suit, the American Association of School Librarians Position Statement on the Confidentiality of Library Records acknowledges the library community recognizes children and youth have the same right to privacy as adults (AASL, 2012). Today some school librarians do not keep students' checkout records past one previous user in an effort to protect confidentiality. Lansford (2017) shares several ways circulation data void of student names can be used to improve student access to books. First, when considering changes to improve circulation Lansford (2017) suggests starting small and looking at one or two data points to interpret. For example, Lansford (2017) recommends starting with a section of the library such as

biographies or graphic novels. Comparing circulation data on biographies and anecdotal notes about which biographies students were choosing led to the purchase of more popular biographies to pair with existing ones (Lansford, 2017). Similarly, circulation data regarding graphic novels showed these books were in high demand; however, while graphic novels represented a high percentage of the overall collection circulated, they represented a low percentage of the overall collection, showing this genre needed to be expanded (Lansford, 2017). In addition to uncovering discrepancies between the collection and circulation, Lansford (2017) notes circulation data can be used to increase access to books and resources by creating "visiting library" programs through which teachers check out bins of books relating to the curriculum to enhance their classroom collections," and to make changes to circulation policies such as promoting flexible checkout times (p. 75).

School librarians can help instill a joy of reading or extinguish it. Limiting the number of books students may check out based on a need to teach responsibility may thwart a learner's natural desire for self-direction and personal choice. Requiring students to select only books they can read or stipulating books may not be abandoned, even if they are too difficult or boring, can kill the joy of reading (Beckham, 2011). Beckham (2011) also noted, "Who knows whether they read or do not read the books? However, it is clear they will not read what they do not have access to, either in their hands or in their book bags" (p. 53).

Conversely, removing limits on the number of books students may check out and allowing self-checkout increases circulation and empowers students (Beckham, 2011). A study conducted in one school noted the number of books checked out during the two

years prior to and the two years following a policy change that allowed students to increase the number of books checked out from one book every six day cycle to four books each visit (Downes, Steege, & Taylor, 2017). Changing to a less restrictive circulation policy resulted in students checking out over 80% more books in the two years following the change (Downes, Steege, & Taylor, 2017). Downes, Steege, and Taylor noted the Kindergarten students entering school following the policy change year learned to be responsible for books from their first week of school. Based on the findings of the study Downes, Steege and Taylor (2017) recommended younger students be allowed to check out the same number of books as upper elementary students and that librarians provide opportunities for students to exchange books between scheduled library classes.

Labeling practices. School library labeling practices can create interest in books or discourage or even prohibit wide reading (Martin, 2015.) Hunt and Wachsmann (2012) describe labels as "stickers and dots that indicate which books are considered—by one rubric or another—appropriate for a particular reading level or lexile level" (p 90). Labels are sometimes used to note reading levels or to identify award-winning books. School librarians using this type of labels argue the labels enhance access and improve convenience for readers. Other librarians argue the same labeling practices can cause readers to judge books by their labels rather than content, resulting in readers avoiding entire groups of books because teachers or parents deem them off limits (Hunt & Wachsmann, 2012).

The library media specialist is usually identified as the children's literature expert in the elementary school whose role is to provide expertise and a collection that meets

curricular needs (Hunt & Wachsmann, 2012; Martin, 2015). When students are allowed to pursue their interests and can confidently find books they can read proficiently they are encouraged to read more and, as a result, sometimes become subject experts. Labels can help match readers to books on the topics of interest. Within the context of self-selection and choice, labels can help students choose books, not prevent them from choosing (Hunt & Wachsmann, 2012).

Motivations for labeling come in several forms. Sometimes the collection is labeled in an effort to help students find materials quickly and efficiently. Other times it is an attempt to restrict access to materials deemed offensive or as a result of mandates from administrators (Martin, 2015). Labels may give the impression the library or librarian endorses or favors certain resources over others. Rating systems such as Common Sense Media or Focus on the Family provide content ratings may influence a reader's opinion for or against the material (Martin, 2015). Unlike viewpoint-neutral directional labels, which do not suggest moral or doctrinal endorsement, these systems assume individuals or groups have the authority to determine what is appropriate or inappropriate for others (Martin, 2015). Viewpoint or prejudicial labeling exists to warn, discourage or prohibit students from accessing resources based on a value judgment of content, language, theme, etc. Viewpoint labeling may be prejudicial and conflict with the Library Bill of Rights (Martin, 2015). Doyle (2015) notes barriers to access prevent students from browsing books on sensitive or controversial topics as students feel less comfortable requesting access to those materials at the circulation desk as they would browsing through them on regular library shelves.

Hunt and Wachsmann (2012) explain labels also help students choose books efficiently from hundreds or thousands of books in the school library. Hunt (2012) notes browsing efficiency must be taught as a strategy because students' browsing time is limited during the school day. Labels may help students use limited library time within any type of library schedule more efficiently (Hunt & Wachsmann, 2012). Emergent readers may find the task of choosing books in the library overwhelming, especially in schools where budget cuts have resulted in a reduction of the library staff. Wachsmann (2012) notes labels may become an expedient substitute for busy or unavailable library staff.

Labels are sometimes used to simply indicate quizzes are available for particular books. While this type label can also indicate reading level or point value, Hunt (2012) prefers to put this type of information on the inside of the book so a student browser must open the book and, by doing so, may get a better idea of whether it is a good fit. Hunt (2012) states labels can be used to inform rather than censor student book choice.

While labels may seem advantageous to some, Wachsmann (2012) argues a labeled collection creates opportunity for censorship, especially when students are told they can choose books only within certain parameters such as reading levels. Wachsmann (2012) asks, "What about that student who wants to revisit an old favorite or share it with a younger brother or sister? (p. 91). Martin (2015) expressed concern that labels indicating reading levels or readability may cause embarrassment for students reading at higher or lower levels than their classmates. Martin (2015) suggests these labels pose a bullying risk when students, including those identified as gifted, carry books identifying their reading levels.

Labels used in elementary libraries are sometimes viewed as helpful. Labels identifying award-winning books or books with certain topics can generate interest and promote efficient browsing while those same labels can discourage wide reading (Hunt & Wachsmann, 2012). Books labeled to note an electronic quiz is available for a program such as Renaissance Learning's Accelerated Reader (AR) program may also send a message that books without quiz labels are not worth reading because they are not worth points (Cregor, 2011).

School libraries play a unique role in maintaining intellectual freedom by providing students with opportunities to read materials they might not otherwise be able to access or afford. A core belief of intellectual freedom is a student's right to privacy and confidentiality (Martin & Panter, 2015). Library program practices should not prevent students from feeling safe and free to access information, explore issues of concern to them, and learn (Martin & Panter, 2015).

Scheduling practices. Another feature of the school library program impacting student access to resources is the organization of the library schedule. Library schedules are commonly described as fixed, flexible or mixed. Each type of schedule has unique benefits and limitations. Scheduling can be one of the most important considerations for school libraries. Beyond reflecting the physical constraints of the library, scheduling reflects the school's teaching and learning philosophy (Moreillon, 2014b).

Fixed schedules. The fixed schedule is one in which elementary classrooms have a regularly scheduled library time that rotates, often on a weekly basis. For many schools, fixed schedules are still the practice of the day and will not change soon (Rowe, 2007). The scheduling of library instructional time is often a weekly special (Stubeck, 2015),

through which students rotate to provide classroom teachers with planning time (Moreillon, 2014b). Unlike elementary libraries, high school libraries remain open during the school day while teachers are provided a planning or conference time each day (Moreillon, 2014b). Moreillon (2014b) suggests using scheduled library time to provide planning time for elementary classroom teachers is commonly practiced in elementary schools where administrators have not found workable alternatives to providing adequate planning time during contact hours.

Librarians who work within a fixed schedule have noted the benefits of this type of schedule. For example, students are seen in the library on a regular, often weekly, basis. This allows the librarians to follow the students from year to year. Smith (2017) notes, "Although some research has shown that this might not be the most effective way to provide library skills instruction, it does allow for a captive audience" (p. 28). Rowe (2007) notes fixed schedules also give librarians the opportunity to develop a very good knowledge of students' interests and capabilities. The predictable schedule gives children, especially younger ones, a comfortable familiarity with the library (Rowe, 2007). Smith (2017) agrees regularly scheduled library time can be used to advocate for the importance of the library by sharing stories with even the youngest readers in which favorite characters visit the library and learn to use library resources.

Perceived drawbacks to fixed scheduling also exist. School librarians who see students once a week at their regularly scheduled time and then do not see those students until the next week may find their teaching is less effective and deep learning is not secured (Moreillon, 2014b). Ahlfeld (2014) explained, "Although there was great learning happening in the library, it was sometimes like Las Vegas—what happened in

the library stayed in the library" (2014, p.33). Fixed scheduling often results in stand-alone lessons rather than inquiry or resource-based learning (Stubeck, 2015). This type of scheduling can inhibit collaborative teaching due to the absence of common planning time which allows the librarian and classroom teacher to plan units, assemble resources, teach information literacy within the context of the unit, provide support, conduct assessments, grade collaboratively, and evaluate the unit in order to improve it for future learning (Stubeck 2015).

Opportunities for collaboration with teachers and authentic information literacy are often perceived as limited within the fixed schedule; however, with ingenuity, approachability, and persistence, collaboration is achievable (Rowe, 2007). The librarian's challenge within a fixed schedule is figuring out how to make meaningful connections with students about finding, evaluating and synthesizing information as well as encouraging lifelong reading habits in a short amount of time (Ahlfeld, 2014). Rowe (2007) suggests fixed schedules make collaboration difficult, but not impossible. Cooperation and constant communication with classroom teachers create inroads through which collaborative ventures such as English language arts poetry units, and Native American social studies units are established (Rowe, 2007).

Stubeck (2015) noted fixed library schedules result in more stand-alone lessons than inquiry or resource-based instruction. The absence of common planning time with classroom teachers makes it difficult for the school librarian to meet with teachers to identify teaching goals, plan inquiry units, gather resources to support units of instruction, and teach information literacy within the context of the units (Stubeck, 2015). Stubeck (2015) noted skills taught in stand-along lessons apart from the content of the

curriculum are not as relevant to students as those taught in the context of the students' prior knowledge related to the content. In an effort to enable inquiry learning with a fixed library schedule Stubeck (2015), a school librarian, and classroom teachers willing to collaborate on unit planning utilized digital technology to implement the Information Search Process (ISP), a staged, predictable model for guided inquiry. Stages of the ISP model include task initiation, exploration, topic selection, focus formulation, information collection, and presentation (Stubeck 2015). Each stage of the ISP model presented an opportunity for the school librarian or classroom teachers to prescribe interventions for individual students or entire classes from either location, the school library or the classroom. The use of digital resources made it possible for the school librarian and classroom teachers to use the ISP as a tool for collaboration within a fixed library schedule and to replicate this process across the district with future collaborative units (Stubeck, 2015).

Fixed library schedules may make it more difficult to help students develop genuine reading behaviors. Lambert (2017) noted a drawback to fixed library schedules is the fact that students sometimes get so caught up in the routine of scheduled visits they may return the books whether they are finished with them or not. Lambert (2017), concerned about this practice, explained the students were not behaving like genuine readers. Genuine readers, carefully select books based on interest, peer recommendations, and excitement about the next selection. Genuine readers, as Lambert (2017) noted, do not pull bookmarks from the middle of their books and check in their books "just because it's library day" (p. 34). Instead, genuine readers return books because they finish or choose to abandon them (Lambert, 2017).

Fixed schedules afford all students the opportunity to visit the library at least once a week. During these visits, librarians can teach information literacy skills to all students in the school. Unfortunately, students may view the library as a subject rather than a source of resources and learning. Because the library time is scheduled, students are not able to visit the library at the point of need. In larger schools, fixed schedules consume 80-90% of the librarian's time, leaving little time for other management responsibilities such as cataloging or collaboration (Bishop, 2013).

Flexible schedules. A flexible school library schedule allows for variation of use, as classes are not regularly scheduled on a rotating basis. Flexible schedules allow for "just in time" instruction (when needed) vs. the "just in case" instruction (might be needed someday) found in the lessons presented to students who go to the library on a fixed schedule (McGregor, 2006). Moreillon (2014b), describes flexibly scheduled library programs as those which embrace a model of library access "at the point of need," providing students and teachers opportunities to use the library when resources are needed. During the 2007-08 school year, flexible scheduling was available in 61% of school libraries (Rosa, 2014, p. 364). More recently, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) sponsored School Libraries Count, a national longitudinal study of school library programs across the United States. The School Libraries Count study (2012) reported the mean total hours per week available for flexible scheduling was 21.1 with a range from 20 hours per week to 44 hours per week.

Flexible scheduling allows students to have learning experiences that are driven by needs, rather than a fixed time to visit the library. It allows students, teachers, and librarians to become partners in learning and for inquiry skills to be taught within the

context of the curriculum, rather than in isolation so students can develop the skills to analyze, evaluate, interpret and communicate information and ideas (AASL, 2014). Flexible scheduling allows librarians and teachers to take advantage of teachable moments and provide support for learning at the time of need vs. pre-planned library lessons taught in isolation (McGregor, 2006). These brief moments extend learning opportunities to access prior knowledge, use context, and connect information patterns through meaningful assignments that are open-ended, allow for choice and personal interest, and expression of personal opinion. Students take ownership and get excited about this kind of learning (McGregor, 2006).

Inquiry learning has been described as a relationship between thinking skills and content (McGregor, 2006). Flexibly scheduled school libraries can provide students conducting inquiry, whether scientific, historical, social, or other types of inquiry, the ready access to information that waiting a week for the next regularly scheduled library time cannot provide (McGregor, 2006). Because students are seen in the library at the point of need or interest, the teaching of information literacy skills is closely related to classroom assignments. Flexible scheduling allows librarians and teachers to collaborate, improving communication and familiarity with the curriculum (McGregor, 2006). Flexible schedules encourage students to become independent users of resources who gain lifelong skills. One school noted more teachers integrated educational technology into their instruction within a modified flexible schedule (Moreillon, 2014b).

One drawback to flexible scheduling is the possibility students may infrequently or never visit the library to check out resources for research or to read for pleasure (Bishop, 2013). Bishop (2013) offered additional concerns including the possibility

problem students may be sent to the library frequently to get them out of the classroom and having students and teachers in the library constantly may leave the librarian little time for other responsibilities such as ordering or cataloging resources

Although the AASL promotes flexible scheduling as best practice, practicing librarians sometimes question the effectiveness of a flexible schedule. Johnson (2017), in a blog post revisiting his presentation to the AASL 12th National Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, stated he has offered his last apology regarding fixed library schedules and raised several additional concerns with flexible schedules.

1) You can't teach kids you don't see.

   Johnson noted he has never met a media specialist in a flexible library program who meets with every teacher on staff, let alone for an equal amount of time. Cooperative teachers will make sure their students have a superior learning experience while those who are isolationists may not.

2) We are teaching teachers to derive from the curriculum.

   Johnson (2017) noted unless flexible scheduling is required for every class, it encourages a rogue-teacher mentality. He suggests we should ask whether a flexible or fixed schedule works better with the assigned curriculum?

3) It's not just research, but reading.

   Johnson (2017) asks, "Do we sacrifice our role in promoting life-long readers that can be best done with regular LMC visits to our role in

teaching technology and information literacy skills in flexibly scheduled programs?" (n.p.)

4) Inquiry should be a daily activity.

Studies have demonstrated that distributed practice or spaced learning sessions over time leads to better retention of information than massed practice or cramming learning sessions together in immediate succession (Goossens, Camp, Verkoeijen, Tabbers, Boumeester & Zwaan, 2016). Johnson (2017) poses the possibility that this type of distributed practice may apply to information literacy skills by asking, "Can smaller but continuous opportunities for practicing information literacy skills be as or more beneficial than a few, isolated larger projects?" (n.p.)

5) We are neglecting our part in the containment agreement.

Johnson (2017) states, "Let's just get bottom-line pragmatic—it's hard to fire prep-time providers" and asks, "Do we want to work with a fixed schedule and have job security or with a flex schedule and be vulnerable to cuts?" (n.p.)

Johnson (2017) recognized the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) through its position statements, standards, and editorial policies leads educators to conclude flexibly scheduled programs are beneficial and fixed library schedules are detrimental, and acknowledged that there is some research about the benefits of flexibly scheduled programs. Johnson (2017) raised questions about whether there is room in the AASL tent for both the flexible and the fixed schedules and expressed concern regarding

marked downsides to flexible scheduling and strengths to fixed scheduling he was unable to find addressed in the literature. Several practitioners agreed with Johnson and wrote letters of support published in subsequent issues of School Library Journal (Gavigan, Pribesh & Dickinson, 2010). Fontichiaro and Hamilton (2014) echoed Johnson's concern, by stating they have heard "good librarians" convince their faculty and principals to adopt flexible scheduling and convert dull worksheets to rich inquiry projects (p. 57). Fontichiaro & Hamilton (2014) added this concern:

> Flexible scheduling works, but wouldn't be doable if every teacher bought in. What makes a flexible schedule successful is…gulp…having some teachers who opt out, making room in the schedule for those who volunteer. Wait. That wasn't what we intended (p. 58).

Mixed schedules. Mixed school library schedules are a combination of fixed and flexible schedules. There are many possible combinations of mixed schedules such as fixed schedules for primary classrooms and flexible schedules for upper elementary classes (Bishop, 2013). When a full-time aide is available, the librarian might teach scheduled classes within a mixed schedule while the aide assists small groups or individual students who visit the library from other classes (Bishop, 2013). In schools where this type of scheduling is possible, the school library may have scheduled classes in the mornings and be open, or flexibly scheduled, in the afternoons. Bishop (2013) noted both flexible and mixed library schedules allow more use of the school library for personal reading and research activities.

Ahlfeld (2014) noted one mixed schedule structure was designed to provide each primary classrooms with a 30 minute fixed library time allowing for teacher planning

periods, followed by a literacy hour in which the librarian assisted the students with high-quality book selections while classroom teachers taught guided reading lessons (Ahlfeld, 2014). In this model, students were able to browse, read in comfortable spaces, choose books, and discover the pleasure of spending time in the school library (Ahlfeld, 2014). This model allowed the school librarian to learn more about the readers and hold important conversations with students about reading and the library (Ahlfeld, 2014). In grades three through six, the model provided opportunities for in-depth research or for projects integrating technology. Ahlfeld (2014) noted in addition to important student conversations about books and resources, this mixed schedule model brought increased collaboration between the librarian and classroom teachers. As the dialogue deepened, trust increased, and the librarian and classroom teachers were able to work in either the library media center or classroom environment in which the students felt most comfortable (Ahlfeld, 2014).

Some elementary school librarians consider the mixed schedule to be the ideal (Bishop, 2013). Moreillon (2014b) states:

> In some schools with small student populations, mixed schedules including both fixed and flexible times can be effective for teaching and learning as long as there is sufficient time over consecutive days for sustained engagement with resources and the expertise of the school librarian. (p. 26)

Collaboration and Inquiry Based Learning

Collaboration is generally described in conversational terms as people working together to reach a common goal. Senge (2006) dedicates his third discipline to collaborating, or team learning. Senge refers to this as “alignment” (p. 217) and describes

it as a group working together to function as a whole. Using a jazz band as an example of alignment, Senge (2006) notes while each member plays an important individual part, beautiful music is created when members combine their parts and "play as one" (p. 218).

School librarians have been consistently defined throughout the years as an instructional consultant and instructional partner (Martin & Panter, 2015). In an effective school library program, the school librarian serves as an instructional leader, program administrator, teacher, information specialist, and collaborative partner (AASL, 2016). Working with classroom teachers, the school librarian develops information literacy and digital literacy instruction for all students (AASL, 2016). Rowe (2007) writes, "One cannot dispute the value of collaboration. It brings concreteness to concepts for the children and provides a seamless transition to teaching information literacy" (p. 46). Teachers and school librarians work together to select materials and plan activities offering students an integrated approach to learning. Together they share responsibility for reading and information literacy instruction, planning and teaching collaboratively based on the needs of the student (AASL, 2010a).

Collaborative teaching allows the school librarian and classroom teacher to provide immediate feedback and to have deeper conversations with students during work time than either would have when working in isolation (Ainsworth, 2016). Kowalski (2016) suggests librarians must initiate the collaborative conversations with classroom teachers rather than simply offering to help if needed. Librarians become active partners in the learning exchange by understanding content standards, attending team meetings, communicating with teachers, and making time to co-create meaningful and empowering lessons that deepen critical thinking (Akingbola, 2017).

Steck (2012), an elementary principal in a school where collaborative conferences allow stakeholders to plan units of instruction offers this perspective: “In today’s world it is so important that our students have the opportunity to develop research strategies to effectively use the wealth of information that is instantly available to them” (Steck & Padget, 2012, p. 36). Steck and Padget (2012) noted their collaborative conference model began as a shared vision and grew into the primary vehicle for vertical and horizontal planning among teachers in their school.

Gavigan and Lance (2015) presented the results of a study in which participating administrators and teachers consistently endorsed collaborative instruction between school librarians and teachers. Both librarians and teachers mentioned the value of collaborative activities. School librarians were recognized as model teachers when students were present and when they were not. Collaboration between school librarians and classroom teachers puts the librarian at the center of instruction and helps with the perception the librarian’s work is essential for student success (Moreillon, 2014a). Gavigan (2012) maintains learning partnerships that foster a love of lifelong learning and positively impact student achievement are built through collaboration between school librarians and classroom teachers. A study of high performing schools in British Columbia by Haycock (2011) determined school librarians in higher performing schools collaborate more with classroom teachers, support teachers by identifying resources, and teach more students, often during flexibly scheduled library time.

A meta-analysis conducted by Hattie (2012) of more than 800 studies on what works best for student learning in classrooms identified collaboration as an important influence on student learning. Hattie (2012) noted, “The co-planning of lessons is the task

that has one of the highest likelihoods of making a marked positive difference on student learning" (p. 74). After co-planning, co-teaching, and co-assessing a unit designed to teach students how to use nonfiction sources to research a topic, practitioners Copeland, a school librarian, and Jacobs, a fourth grade teacher (2017), noted their students showed growth in every area assessed. Students' content knowledge increased from 0% to 84% proficiency on the performance task pre- and post-assessment rubric. Data collected indicated students' perceptions of their own collaboration and communication skills increased along with note taking skills and website evaluation (Copeland & Jacobs, 2017, p. 25). In addition to the growth shown by students impacted by this collaborative effort, Copeland and Jacobs (2017) noted as collaborative partners they learned the importance of effectively using soft skills such as maintaining trust and respect, sharing expertise and accepting each other's ideas, and showing understanding when mistakes were made. Jacobs (2017) noted, "The best part of this collaboration was the ripple effect at our school" (p. 26).

One benefit of collaborative teaching is it pushes the role of the school librarian closer and closer to the center of teaching and learning (Loertscher, 2014). Fontichiaro and Hamilton (2014) expressed concern the world is increasingly satisfied with "good enough" practices in the absence of better research practices. Kompar (2016) refers to this as "the false perception that searching on Google is equivalent to research" (p. 61). Kompar (2016) expressed concern that the ease, convenience, and ubiquitous nature of information and anywhere/anytime access obscures the need for important lessons on intellectual freedom, privacy, copyright, and the effective, responsible, safe, and ethical use of information in a variety of formats. Kompar (20160 believes these lessons are

"critical, urgent, and imperative lessons to be learned" (p. 60). School librarians are accustomed to providing instruction in inquiry and research and the use of technology for educational purposes in addition to encourage students to read for enjoyment (Kompar 2016). Fontichiaro and Hamilton (2014) explained, "We know that very few teachers receive pedagogical training or guidance on research skills and strategies in their teacher education programs (p. 59)." Fontichiaro and Hamilton (2014) note research remains the librarians' invisible skill overshadowed by anytime, anywhere Internet access; however, teachers' perspectives about what librarians and their students can do change in collaborative teaching environments.

Another benefit of collaborative teaching is the embedded professional development that takes place as school librarians and classroom teachers share expertise such as the use of a particular reading strategy or the use of technology, while trying on new perspectives and modeling risk-taking for students (Moreillon, 2009). Dotson and Clark (2015) note, "Student learning is dependent on teacher learning; therefore, reform often begins with teacher education and/or professional development" (p. 10). School librarians who have ongoing training can help schools meet the teachers' needs for information about the effective use of developing technologies through librarian-led professional development (Dotson & Clark, 2015). Dotson and Clark note school librarians are "well positioned to enhance and support the academic success of students by moving beyond the library and toward teaching the teachers" (p. 15). Kompar (2016) notes school librarians can support teachers through professional learning opportunities, tutoring sessions, creating online tutorials or screencasts and working directly with grade levels or whole faculty groups. Kompar (2016) noted school librarians can embed

professional learning with individual teachers through modeling. Ahlfeld (2014), concurred, "It seemed that if a teacher had to borrow technology outside his/her classroom, it would get little authentic use and innovation would be minimal" (p. 33). By creating open lines of communication about topics such as the effective use of technology, school librarians can provide ongoing professional development (Dotson & Clark, 2015). Through collaboration, professional learning can and should take place anytime, anywhere; in any format the learner needs it (Kompar, 2016). The ultimate beneficiaries of embedded professional development will be the students (Dotson & Clark, 201).

A study commissioned by the South Carolina Association of School Librarians (2013) was designed to assess the extent to which school libraries transform schools by contributing to student success. Phase two of this study examined the perceptions of administrators' and teachers' perceptions of the school librarian's role in collaborative teaching and leadership activities. Respondents included 273 administrators and 917 teachers across South Carolina. Of the administrators responding to the survey, 36.4% considered "Librarian & teacher design/teach together" highly desirable while 55% considered it essential (p. 6).

Schrack (2015) noted collaboration has become a necessity in 21st Century education. One way school librarians establish and build collaborative relationships is to connect with new teachers in the school building. Schrack (2015) initiated relationships with new teachers by conducting a brief overview of the resources available in the library media center during the new teacher workdays at the beginning of the school year. Recognizing this overview just skimmed the surface of what the library media center was

all about, Schrack (2015) evaluated this approach and asked the following key questions: "How much are the teachers actually gaining from this experience? Is this truly beneficial? Will this help to create a culture for collaboration?" (p. 35). Acknowledging new teachers are often overwhelmed at the beginning of the school year and bombarded with information overload, Schrack (2015) determined what new teachers needed most and made the school information system the focus of her initial contact with the new teachers in her building. Schrack (2015) reached out to new teachers with a personal email welcoming them to the building, introducing herself as the library media specialist, and offering to meet with them to review the information system and share helpful resources available for the new school year. This established the school librarian as a go-to person who could assist with setting up classes and provide information about helpful resources. To stay connected Schrack set up a group within the school information system for the new teachers to share questions and receive written instructions for procedures such as setting up voicemail and checking out equipment. As a result, a bond was quickly established between the school librarian and classroom teachers, setting the stage for the most effective collaboration the school had experienced (Schrack, 2015). Morris (2015) also noted the importance of connecting with new teachers and encouraged school librarians to offer to present at teacher induction programs and to prepare a collection for resources including items such as a recorded video welcome, frequently asked questions, passwords for databases, lists of professional resources and a document listing the schedule, policies, and hours of the library media center.

Kowalski (2012) recognized a gap exists between the resources the library media center has and what the teachers can use. To bridge the gap, Kowalski (2012) noted

school librarians must reach out to other teachers and go beyond simply informing teachers about available resources. Lansford (2017) noted the importance of school librarians sharing library data with the larger school community as classroom teachers and other stakeholders may notice items the librarian overlooked or offer a perspective or solution the librarian can apply to improve the school library program. Conversely, school librarians are encouraged to become familiar with grade level curricula and form ongoing connections resulting in deeper collaborative practices such as setting up a series of video conferences with local artists, museum staff, and other experts to support the school's art curriculum (Kowalski, 2012). Kowalski (2012) encourages school librarians to create new partnerships by "pushing into classrooms, attending planning meetings, offering demonstrations, modeling, offering professional development or even issuing a personal invitation" (p. 30). Bishop (2013) noted it is helpful for school librarians desiring to collaborate with classroom teachers to become familiar with the school's curriculum, identify possible research topics, and establish the time of year resources are needed for special units of instruction.

Kowalski (2012) notes one benefit resulting from this type of collaborative effort is, "word spreads quickly, so when one teacher or team or grade level experiences satisfaction with the school library program, others will share the benefit for you" (p. 30). Sharing the benefits of satisfactory experiences results in increased collaboration between the school librarian and other classroom teachers throughout the school. Kowalski (2012) acknowledges that while the school librarian works at varying degrees of collaboration with teachers across grade levels and content areas it is important to stay in "hot pursuit of these invaluable connections, even when they don't come easily" (p. 30). "When the

school librarian is only the gatherer of resources, other educators will not realize what the librarian can do" (Kowalski, 2012, p. 31). Morris (2015) encourages school librarians to introduce new teachers to the library media center over time, to build on small interactions, to stay positive even if teachers are not receptive at the start, and to continue modeling professional collaboration with new and veteran teachers.

It is important to acknowledge collaboration is not valued by every classroom teacher and not every elementary school has a collaborative culture. Fontichiaro and Hamilton (2014) consider one reason classroom teachers may not be willing to participate in collaborative activities and explain, "The threat of evaluations tied to standardized test scores looms large on many teachers' radar at all times, and some educators don't feel comfortable sharing ownership of their classroom with anyone else" (p. 58). Loertscher (2014) concurs, "It seems that in this time of test-driven assessment, the contributions of the librarian are getting lost" (p. 8). Loertscher (2014) noted while historically school librarians have been taught the principles of collaboration and co-teaching during their pre-service courses many have noted the difficulty in creating collaborative partnerships. Loertscher (2014) noted possible reasons for this difficulty include unmatched schedules, preferences of teachers to have total control of their classrooms and the pressure of standardized testing which pushed inquiry and collaboration aside. Cox (2015) explains too often, classroom teachers and technology specialists do not have a clear understanding of school librarians and how librarians can collaborate with them. Cox (2015) noted school librarians are positioned to work with the entire faculty and stressed the importance of school librarians sharing their point of view and communicating how they can support and collaborate with other educators. Fontichiaro and Hamilton (2014)

raised the following questions: “Can a school librarian be truly great without excellent faculty who want to work with you? Does being a good librarian mean working within existing culture? Or are you expected to change it?” (p. 58).

The Idaho Impact Study (2009) undertaken by the Idaho Commission for Libraries and endorsed by the Idaho State Department of Education surveyed 176 principals and administrators, 668 classroom teachers, and 146 library media specialists regarding collaboration (Lance, Rodney, & Schwarz, 2010). This study determined 89.1% of the administrators surveyed identified collaboration between school librarians and classroom teachers as essential or desirable; however, almost half of the classroom teachers surveyed report neither they (45.1%) nor their school librarians (48.1%) initiate collaboration with one another (Lance, Rodney, & Schwarz, 2010). The results of this study show advanced scores on the state reading and language arts tests are more likely when collaboration is more highly valued by school administrators and when school librarians report more frequent collaborative interactions with classroom teachers, especially when initiated by the latter (Lance, Rodney, & Schwarz, 2010).

Loertscher (2014) conducted a study in which teachers who taught alone in their classrooms were asked to think of a recent unit or learning experience and provide the number of students who met or exceeded the teacher’s highest expectations. The same question was asked of teachers who co-teach with the school librarian. The isolated teachers responded on average 48% of the students who participated in the learning experience met or exceeded their highest expectations while the teachers who taught collaboratively reported 71-100% of the students who participated met or exceeded their

highest expectations (Loertscher, 2014). Teachers in the collaborative group responded with comments such as:

- "We each have expertise and can help students with different types of questions."
- "I felt we were able to get to more students."
- "Students see how the library is at the center of their learning" (Loertscher, 2014, p. 11).

Moreillon (2014a) notes collaborative practices can position inquiry learning as an integral part of the curriculum, not just an add-on for which time may never be available. Missouri's Growth Guide for School Librarians (2016) defines a proficient school librarian as one who ensures students assume responsibility for pursuing their own learning through inquiry (Missouri DESE, 2017a). Inquiry-based instruction is a student-based strategy in which students learn by asking and investigating meaningful questions. After identifying what they already know, students analyze what they need to know, determine how to find the information needed, and evaluate their own learning (McGregor, 2006). In a collaborative setting, the school librarian and classroom teacher can work with small groups of students, gaining more time to focus more on students who need more assistance. Deeper learning occurs when collaborating teachers are able to produce artifacts, art prints, and interesting picture books to enhance lessons and grow students' schema (Ainsworth, 2016). "Rather than presenting inquiry learning as something totally new or separate from classroom curricula, school librarians can emphasize the alignment of inquiry learning and reading comprehension instruction to demonstrate how inquiry can help students improve their reading proficiency"

(Moreillon, 2014a, p. E4). Classroom teachers and school librarians collaborate to design, implement, and evaluate inquiry units resulting in high level learning experiences for students. Classroom teachers bring knowledge of the content and their students' needs while librarians bring a broad knowledge of resources and technology. Together teachers and librarians create differentiated and adaptable experiences for students of all abilities and interests (AASL, 2014). When school librarians and classroom teachers collaborate on inquiry-based units students consider the school library as a source of information and use it naturally to find answers to their questions (McGregor, 2006). The availability of library resources and professional staff at the point of need develops intellectual behaviors that transfer to future academic pursuits and lifelong academic and public library use (AASL, 2010b).

Collaborating to provide inquiry-based instruction within the context of a fixed library schedule is challenging, but not impossible (Ahlfeld, 2014). One solution is the embedded librarian concept, in which librarians embed themselves in classrooms, providing support for teachers and students ranging from helping students select just right books or assisting teachers and students with the use of technology such as a document camera (Ahlfeld, 2014). The embedded librarian concept provides increased opportunities for conversations between the school librarian and the classroom teacher and helps students view the librarian as a regular part of the learning routine and culture rather than a guest in the classroom. The embedded librarian concept allows the school librarian to know students at a deeper level and gain an understanding of the classroom teacher's goals and teaching style. Conversely, the embedded librarian concept makes time spent in the school library seem less like a "special" and more like an extension of

the classroom (Ahlfeld, 2014). Rowe (2007) ascertains, “For many of us, fixed schedules are still the practice of the day and will not change soon. With ingenuity, approachability, and persistence, collaboration is achievable” (p. 46).

Summary

The literature review presented in this chapter synthesizes research related to the school library’s role in helping students acquire literacy skills and describes how library program practices such as scheduling, circulation policies, labeling, and collaboration between the school librarian and classroom teachers can impact student access to resources. The results of this study will be used to identify school library practices that will likely result in improved student achievement.

Chapter three will present the methodology, participants, and survey instrument involved in this quantitative study. Chapter four will include the data presentation and analysis of the data. Chapter five will present the findings and conclusions of this study as well as recommendations and implications for future study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the practices of elementary libraries in both high performing and non-high performing schools and describe key practices that may lead to increased student achievement. Of particular interest were the practices related to library schedules, the number and duration of weekly visits to the library by third grade students in, the number of books checked out per week by third grade students, the collection labeling practices, and the collaborative practices between the school librarians and teachers in high-performing schools. Because improved student achievement has become a focus for all public school administrators across Missouri it is vital all programs, including elementary library programs, be reviewed for effectiveness. The ultimate goal of this study was to identify school library practices that may lead to increased student achievement. This study was conducted to expand existing research on the school library practices of public elementary schools across Missouri.

Participants

Participants of this study consisted of 95 elementary school librarians who serve grade three in Missouri public school districts with an enrollment of 750-1,500, and the students who participated in the Missouri Assessment Program in the spring of 2015, 2016, and 2017. Of the 95 school librarians invited to participate in the study 46 returned the surveys, for an overall return rate of 48.4%. In the 2015-2016 school year 918,483 students attended public schools in Missouri. Median district enrollment was 582 students and districts ranged in size from 23 students to 25,670 students. Thirteen percent of these

students were identified as special education students and 52% qualified for free or reduced lunches. Of the students attending public schools in Missouri, 89.7% were in attendance at least 90% of the time (Missouri DESE, 2018). The 2010-2014 American Community Survey available on the State of Missouri Website noted 6.1% of Missouri students ages 5 and older spoke a language other than English at home. The average household income in the state of Missouri is $50,200 and 14.8% of Missouri residents live in poverty.

Sampling Procedure

The researcher utilized a purposive sample selection process. To be included in the researcher's sample, participants must meet the following criteria: the elementary school must be part of a Missouri public school district with a total student enrollment of 750-1,500; the elementary schools had to serve grade three; the elementary school had to have third grade English Language Arts data available from 2015, 2016, and 2017; and the school must not be a charter school. The district enrollment range of 750-1,500 was selected in order to control for district size and equitable state funding, which is based on student enrollment. The researcher consulted with practicing superintendents regarding district comparisons in order to establish this range.

The researcher started with the 2017 list of elementary schools retrieved from the Missouri DESE school directory available on the DESE website. The researcher eliminated charter schools, as they are independent public schools free from some rules and regulations that apply to traditional public school districts as specifically identified in charter school law. The researcher eliminated schools from districts with a total enrollment of fewer than 750 and greater than 1,500 students to attempt to maintain a

similarity in services offered. By doing so, the researcher attempted to compare homogeneous programs. Studies (Haycock, 2011) linking school library programs to student achievement have been conducted; however, not all have controlled for school size. Schools from districts with an enrollment of fewer than 750 are less likely to have a full-time librarian or a schedule resembling those with a greater student population. Schools from districts larger than 1,500 are likely to have more professional and material resources available to their school library programs. Ninety-six schools met the enrollment criteria; however, one school was eliminated because it had only one year of Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) English language arts (ELA) scores. Ninety-six elementary schools in Missouri met the criteria established by the researcher for inclusion in this purposive sample. One school was eliminated because it had only one year of 3rd grade ELA MAP data. Thirteen of the schools were classified as high performing schools. The remaining 82 schools were classified as non-high performing schools.

Research Setting

The setting for this study is Missouri public K-5 elementary schools from districts with an enrollment of 750-1,500, across the state of Missouri. The schools included in the survey represent every quadrant in the state.

Missouri's school districts range in size from 2.0821 square miles to 507.04469 square miles. The state of Missouri encompasses 69,704 square miles and is located in the central or Midwest area of the United States (Learn about Missouri, n.d.). In 2016, manufacturing industries made a significant contribution to Missouri's economy, representing 12.8% of the Gross State Product (GSP). The top three manufacturing industries in Missouri are transportation equipment manufacturing, food manufacturing,

and fabricated metal product manufacturing. Real estate, rental, and leasing provided 11.8% of Missouri's GSP.

Missouri agriculture has an economic impact of $9.1 billion per year. The top five agricultural products sold include meat animals, oil crops, food crops, cattle and cows, and corn. Crops and livestock are equally important in Missouri, with nearly equal production values of 52% and 48%, respectively. Family farms comprise 91.24% of the 97,233 farms in Missouri, which have an average size of 285 acres. In 2014, Missouri produced 260 million bushels of soybeans, ranking 6th in the nation in soybean production (Missouri Department of Agriculture, 2016).

Research Design.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reviews and accredits schools through the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) and publishes an Annual Performance Report (APR) for each school and school district. The school's achievement data, as determined by student scores on the MAP contribute to the overall APR points. For the purpose of this study, high performing elementary schools were those whose three-year (2015-2017) average percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level were one standard deviation above the mean scores of all schools included in the sample. Schools with percentages of combined proficient and advanced students below one standard deviation above the mean were classified as non-high performing.

The researcher retrieved the list of Missouri school districts from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Directory (DESE), available on the Missouri DESE website. The directory list included the name of each school district,

buildings within the school district, the name of the principal of each building, mailing address of the school, and the email address of the principal, and enrollment information. The Missouri Annual Performance Reports (APR) for years 2015, 2016, and 2017 for each building meeting the criteria for the study were available to the public on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website.

Participants gave consent by completing the online or phone survey. The submitted forms describe participant confidentiality, the ability to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, lack of unforeseen harm to respondents and a brief overview of the purpose of the study: to examine library practices in elementary schools to determine which practices, if any, affect student achievement. The researcher used quantitative and qualitative research in this study to gather data on elementary library practices in small elementary schools and to determine if certain library practices impact student achievement. The research began with a review of relevant literature focused on the following areas: the development of proficient reading skills, the library labeling practices, circulation policies, library schedules, and collaboration between school librarians and classroom teachers.

The research questions in this study sought to gather information to describe the current practices of elementary libraries in public school districts across Missouri with an enrollment of 750 to 1,500. The researcher chose to control for size in this study in an effort to find out how schools with similar enrollment and number of classrooms served by the school libraries designed their programs and the impact, if any, those choices had on student achievement. The researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data to gain a better understanding of library practices in public elementary schools. The combination

of quantitative and qualitative research should provide a fuller understanding of the impact school library practices may have on student learning than either isolated approach (Cresswell, 2014; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

Data was collected through the completion of a Google Forms survey sent to elementary principals in the schools meeting the criteria for the study. Each school principal was asked to forward the survey to the school's elementary librarian. The researcher followed up with phone calls to the elementary principals and librarians in the high performing group due to the small sample size. Five school librarians expressed a desire to answer the questions over the phone. Librarians participating in the phone survey waived their right to anonymity, but were assured their answers would remain confidential and be reported only in aggregate form. The researcher used a printed copy of the Google Forms survey to mark the responses of the librarians' answers during the phone surveys. When the online surveys were completed, Google Forms removed all identifying information and returned the survey to the researcher. Survey results were only identified as high performing or non-high performing schools, as determined by the percentage of 3rd grade students scoring in the proficient and advanced categories on the English Language Arts assessment required by the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP).

Instrumentation

The survey (Appendix A) used for this study was developed by the researcher based on the review of literature surrounding the practices of school libraries. The survey consisted of eleven questions and began with a demographic question about whether the librarian's elementary school has a dedicated library or shares a library with another

building or level. Quantitative data was collected regarding the number of visits per week by third grade students; the number of books checked out by third grade students per visit; student access to the library outside of their scheduled times; the type of library schedules; labeling practices; and collaborative practices between school librarians and classroom teachers. Qualitative data was collected by an open-ended question asking librarians to describe a collaborative practice they believed had he greatest impact on student learning in their schools.

To answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses stated in chapter one the researcher developed a survey to collect information about public school libraries in elementary schools with an enrollment of from districts with an enrollment of 750-1,500. The survey was based on a review of literature surrounding particular library practices impacting student access to resources that may ultimately impact learning. Face validity of the survey was determined by a panel of professional educators familiar with the development of surveys and the subject of school library practices, including school administrators, school librarians, college professors and fellow educators with doctoral degrees. The researcher asked panel members to provide feedback to assure congruence with the research questions stated in chapter one. Panel members' comments were reviewed and changes to the survey were made as recommended. Panel members reviewed the survey after the changes were made.

The second instrument used in this study was the annual third grade English Language Arts (ELA) assessment required by the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). The ELA assessment is given to third graders in Missouri, along with a mathematics assessment. A three year average of 3rd grade ELA proficient and advanced scores was

calculated and used to determine whether the schools participating in this study qualified as high performing or non-high performing. The MAP is designed to measure how well students acquire the skills and knowledge described in the Missouri Learning Standards. The assessments yield information on academic achievement at the student, class, school, district, and state levels. MAP results are used to gauge the overall quality of education throughout Missouri.

The origin of the MAP is traced to the 1993 Outstanding Schools Act, which required Missouri to create a statewide assessment system to measure challenging academic standards. This act inspired the creation of grade-span assessments over Missouri's Show-Me Standards. Originally, the English Language Arts grade-span assessments were given in grades 3, 7, and 11. This changed when the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation was enacted in 2001. This act required states to develop grade level assessments in both reading and mathematics. As a result of NCLB, student performance is reported by the following proficiency categories: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. Student performance at each level is used to calculate the adequate yearly progress (AYP) at the school, district, and state levels. MAP grade level assessments were administered fully online for the first time in 2015. All Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and schools are required to assess at least 95% of their students and subgroups on the assessments required by the MAP. Zero Annual Performance Report (APR) points are awarded to schools testing fewer than 90% of enrolled students. The instrument utilized by the state of Missouri to collect this data has been determined to be both valid and reliable by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary

Education. A detailed description of their validation and reliability is available on the DESE website (Missouri DESE, 2018).

The treatment of the combination of data collected with two instruments is explained along with a rationale for the selection of the statistical treatment in the following data treatment section.

Data Treatment

This survey provides two types of data, quantitative and qualitative. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data provided a fuller understanding of the impact school library practices may have on student learning than either research method used in isolation (Cresswell, 2014; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). The survey instrument answered the following questions:

Main Research Question

What are the differences, if any, in the presence of particular practices of elementary libraries in high performing elementary schools and the presence of particular practices in non-high performing elementary schools?

Subset Research Questions

1. What are the differences, if any, in the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in high performing schools and the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in non-high performing schools?
2. What are the differences, if any, in the number of books checked out per week by third grade students in high performing schools and the number of books checked out per week by third grade students in non-high performing schools?

3. What are the differences, if any, in the schedule of the elementary library in high performing schools and the schedule of the elementary library in non-high performing schools?
4. What are the differences, if any, in the school library labeling practices of high performing schools and non-high performing schools?
5. What are the differences, if any, in the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in high performing schools and the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in non-high performing schools?

Main Null Hypotheses

There is no difference in the presence of particular practices of elementary libraries in high performing elementary schools and the presence of particular practices in non-high performing elementary schools.

Subset Null Hypotheses

1. There is no difference in the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in high performing schools and the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in non-high performing schools.
2. There is no difference in the number of books checked out per week by third grade students in high performing schools and the number of books checked out per week by third grade students in non-high performing schools.
3. There is no difference in the schedule of the elementary library in high performing schools and the schedule of the elementary library in non-high performing schools.

4. There is no difference in the school library labeling practices of high performing schools and non-high performing schools.
5. There is no difference in the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in high performing schools and the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in non-high performing schools.

The quantitative data compared the independent variables of high performing to non-high performing schools with the dependent variables of the number of weekly third grade visits to the library allowed and the number of books checked out by third graders per week. An ANOVA was calculated to determine if the number of third grade visits to the library per week and the number of books checked out by third graders per week were significantly different between high performing and non-high performing schools. The ANOVA was used instead of individual *t*-tests for each dependent variable. The utilization of the ANOVA reduced the possibility of a type one error (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

The qualitative data was organized by the use of the constant comparative analysis method (Fram, 2013). The researcher coded the qualitative data to determine the schedules used, labeling practices, and collaborative practices of the high performing and non-high performing schools. The researcher compared the findings to determine if particular practices from the dependent variables of schedules used, labeling practices, overdue policies, and collaborative practices are different between high performing and non-high performing school

Summary

Chapter three outlined the methodology used in this study including the participants, sampling procedures, research setting, instrumentation, research design, and data treatment. Chapter four will include the data presentation and analysis of the data. Chapter five will present the findings and conclusions of this study as well as recommendations and implications for future study.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the practices of elementary libraries in both high and non-high performing schools and describe key practices that may lead to increased student achievement. In this chapter the data collected is organized and presented. Survey results were analyzed to determine whether significant differences between high performing and non-high performing schools existed. Survey participants were asked to describe the following library practices impacting student access to resources: 1) circulation practices, 2) scheduling practices, 3) labeling practices, and 4) collaborative practices between the librarian and classroom teachers.

Analysis of Data

Surveys were distributed to school librarians in 13 high performing schools and 82 non- high performing schools serving third grade students in Missouri public school districts with an enrollment of 750 to 1,500. Of the 13 high performing schools, 12 participated in the study. Of the 82 non-high performing schools, 34 participated in the study. Of the 95 school librarians invited to participate, 46 responded to the surveys. The survey asked librarians to identify or describe library practices that encourage or restrict student access to library resources.

The survey included one question about the library demographics, asking if the school had a dedicated elementary library or if the library was shared with another building or level. One question asked respondents to identify the type of library schedule implemented. Four questions about circulation practices asked the respondents about the

number of weekly visits and number of books checked out by third grade students as well as whether students could check out books before, during or after school or continue to check out books if they had books that were overdue. One question asked the participants to identify each system used to level the library collection. Two questions asked participants to note changes in practices over the last three years. Two questions asked the participants to identify collaborative practices taking place between the librarian and classroom teachers, one of which was a qualitative question asking the elementary school librarians to identify a collaborative practice they believed had the greatest impact on student learning in their schools. Data from the survey was used to describe and compare the library practices of high performing and non-high performing schools.

Data Presentation

Inferential Statistics

The researcher calculated a one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for all of the ten survey questions comparing means of the high performing elementary schools and the non-high performing elementary schools. The results of the one way ANOVA indicate there were no significant differences between the two groups for the following independent variables: dedicated elementary library or shared library; type of library schedule (flexible, fixed, or mixed); number of weekly visits by third grade students; number of books checked out during scheduled weekly visits; and students' ability to continue to check out books when they have overdue books. Other independent variables indicating no significant differences between the high performing elementary schools and non-high performing elementary schools were the labeling system(s) utilized; and library

availability for student visits to check out books before, during, and after school. ANOVA results for each independent variable are discussed below.

The first question on the survey asked school librarians to indicate whether the elementary school had a dedicated library or shared a library with another building or level. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the differences in the responses between high and non-high performing schools. The researcher established $p < .05$ as the significance level. The F was .491, and no significant difference was found between the high performing and non-high performing groups, as the p was .487. Question two asked survey participants to indicate the type of library schedule utilized in their schools. The researcher established $p < .05$ as the significance level. The F was 1.246, and no significant difference was found between the high performing and non-high performing groups, as the p was .271.

Several questions on the survey focused on school library circulation practices. School librarians responding to the survey were asked to answer a question regarding the number of weekly scheduled visits third grade students made to the library. The researcher established $p < .05$ as the significance level. The F was .379, and no significant difference was found between groups, as the p was .541. The librarians were also asked to report the number of books third grade students checked out per week during scheduled visits. The researcher established $p < .05$ as the significance level. The F was .680, and no significant difference was found between groups, as the p was .414.

On question seven, school librarians were asked to indicate the times outside of scheduled class visits students were allowed to visit the library to check out books. The results of question 7 are listed in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: *ANOVA for Visits to the Library Outside of Scheduled Class Times*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Before School	Between groups	21.177	1	21.177	2.980	.092
	Within Groups	305.623	43	7.108		
	Total	326.800	44			
During School	Between groups	36.057	1	36.057	5.532	.023*
	Within Groups	280.254	43	6.518		
	Total	316.311	44			
After School	Between groups	24.414	1	24.414	3.424	.071
	Within Groups	306.564	43	7.129		
	Total	330.978	44			
Other	Between groups	21.748	1	21.748	2.959	.093
	Within Groups	316.029	43	7.350		
	Total	337.778	44			

* $p < .05$

For the choice, "before school," the F was 2.980, and the *p* was .092. For the choice, "during school with a library pass or teacher's permission," the F was 5.532, and the *p* was .023, showing a statistically significant difference between high performing and non-high performing schools. For the choice, "after school," the F was 3.424, and the *p* was .071. For the choice, "other," the F was 2.959, and the *p* was .093. There were no statistically significant differences between the high performing and non-high performing schools with regard to students visiting the library to check out books before or after school. There was a statistically significant difference between high performing and non-high performing schools with regard to students visiting the library during the school day

with a library pass or permission from the teacher. Question eight on the survey asked the school librarians to indicate whether students were allowed to continue to check out books from the library, even when they had overdue books. The researcher established $p < .05$ as the significance level. The F was .251, and no significant difference was found between the high performing and non-high performing groups, as the p was .619.

Question nine on the survey asked librarians to select each system used to label their school libraries. The F for the choice "not labeled" was .319, and the p was .575. For the choice, "viewpoint neutral directional aids," the F was .108 and the p was .744. For the choice, "labeled to identify books for programs such as Accelerated Reader or Reading Counts," the F was .143, and the p was .707. For the choice, "labeled to identify reading levels or Lexiles" the F was .414, and the p was .524. For the choice, "labeled to protect students from content deemed inappropriate," the F was .512, and the p was .478. For the choice, "other," the F was .018 and the p was .895. Because the researcher established $p < .05$ as the significance level, there were no statistically significant differences on any of the leveling system choices on question nine between the high performing and non-high performing schools.

Question ten asked the school librarians to identify each of the collaborative practices in which they participate with classroom teachers. The researcher established $p < .05$ as the significance level. For the collaborative choice, "assists teachers with the use of technology," the F was 1.672 and the p was .203. For the choice, "shares information about resources available in the library," the F was .319 and the p was .575. For the choice, "consults with teachers about the reading preferences of individual students," the F was .231 and the p was .633. For the choice, "consults with teachers about the reading

abilities of individual students the F was 1.097, and the *p* was .301. For the collaborative choice, "spends time in classrooms co-teaching with classroom teachers," the F was .001, and the *p* was .979. For the collaborative choice, "provides professional development for the elementary staff," the F was .003 and the *p* was .959. Because the researcher established $p < .05$ as the significance level there were no statistically significant differences between the high performing and non-high performing groups on any of the collaborative practices listed on question nine.

The researcher continued to investigate where possible differences may exist between the high performing and non-high performing groups by producing a frequency count for each question. The results are presented beginning with Table 1. Tables comparing the means and standard deviations in the responses of the high performing and non-high performing groups follow the frequency counts. Later in the chapter the researcher will also compare the open-ended question responses using the constant comparative analysis (Fram, 2013) to identify common themes. The results of the constant comparative analysis will be discussed after the presentation of the comparisons of the means and standard deviations.

The researcher continued to investigate where possible differences may exist between the high performing and non-high performing groups by producing a frequency count for each question. The results are presented beginning with Table 1. Tables comparing the means and standard deviations in the responses of the high performing and non-high performing groups follow the frequency counts. Later in the chapter the researcher will also compare the open-ended question responses using the constant comparative analysis (Fram, 2013) to identify common themes. The results of the

constant comparative analysis will be discussed after the presentation of the comparisons of the means and standard deviations.

Descriptive Statistics

The survey presented to school librarians was designed to find out how particular practices have been implemented in their school libraries. The survey included eleven total questions (See Appendix A). Question one asked the school librarians to identify whether the elementary school had its own library or shared a library with another building or level. Questions 2-10 asked the participants to particular practices related to circulation, scheduling, labeling, and collaborative activities present in their schools. Two of those questions asked if certain practices had changed in the last three years, as three years of MAP data was used to determine whether schools in the sample were high performing or non-high performing. Question 11 was an open-ended question asking school librarians to describe a collaborative practice they believe has had the greatest impact on student learning in their schools.

Scheduling Practices.

All of the survey participants responded to question two, regarding the type of schedule implemented in the participants' school libraries. School librarians representing high performing elementary schools accounted for 26.1% of the total responses. School librarians representing non-high performing elementary schools accounted for 73.9% of the total responses. The frequency counts of high performing elementary schools, non-high performing elementary schools, and total schools choosing flexible, fixed, and mixed schedules are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 *Type of Schedule Frequency Counts and Percentage of Responses of high performing schools (N=12) compared to non-high performing schools (N=34)*

Q2 Type of Schedule	Flexible		Fixed		Mixed	
	n	% of N	n	% of N	n	% of N
High performing	0	0	8	66.7	4	33.3
Non-high performing	0	0	15	44.1	19	55.9
Total schools	0	0	23	50	23	50

High performing schools (N=12), Non-high performing schools (N=34)

Of the high performing schools, 66.7% reported having fixed schedules while 44.1% of non-high performing schools have fixed schedules. Conversely, 44.1% of the participating high performing schools reported having a mixed schedule while 55.9% of the non-high performing schools have mixed schedules. Fifty percent of the total schools represented have fixed schedules while 50% have mixed schedules.

Circulation Practices.

Question three asked survey participants to identify the number of weekly scheduled visits made to the library by third grade students. Participants selected 0-1 weekly visits, 2 weekly visits, or 3 or more weekly visits. All survey participants responded to question three. The frequency counts of the number of visits selected are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 *Weekly Visits Frequency Counts and percentage of responses by high performing schools (N=12) compared to non-high performing schools (N=34).*

Q3 Number of weekly visits	0-1 visits		2 visits		More than 2 visits	
	n	% of N	n	% of N	n	% of N
High performing	7	58.3	5	41.7	0	0
Non-high performing	25	73.5	5	14.7	4	11.8
Total schools	32	69.6	10	21.7	4	8.7

Librarians representing high performing schools reported students have more scheduled library visits throughout the week than the number of visits reported by librarians representing non-high performing schools.

Question five asked survey participants to identify the number of books checked out during weekly scheduled visits made to the library by third grade students. Participants selected 0-2 books, 3-5 books or more than 5 books. All survey participants responded to question five. The frequency counts of the number of books selected are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 *Number of Books Frequency Counts and percentage of responses by high performing schools (N=12) compared to non-high performing schools (N=34).*

Q5 Number of books	0-2 books		3-5 books		More than 5 books	
	n	% of N	n	% of N	n	% of N
High performing schools	7	58.3	5	41.7	0	0
Non-high performing	26	76.5	8	23.5	0	0
Total schools	33	71.7	13	28.3	0	0

A greater percentage of school librarians representing high performing schools reported third grade students, 41.7%, check out 3-5 books during weekly visits while a greater percentage of school librarians representing non-high performing schools reported 76.5% of third grade students check out 0-1 books during weekly visits. Of the total number of school librarians participating in the survey, 71.7% reported their third grade students check out 0-1 books during weekly visits to the elementary school library.

Question seven asked school librarians participating in the survey to mark times their students were allowed to visit the library to check out books outside of their

scheduled library class times. Participants selected all that applied from the following choices: before school, during school with a library pass or teacher's permission, after school, and other. The frequency counts for the times students could visit the library are listed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 *Visits During School Frequency Counts and percentage of responses by high performing schools* (N=12*) compared to non-high performing schools (*N=34*).*

Q2 Visit during school	Yes		No	
	n	% of N	n	% of N
High performing schools	10	83.3	2	16.7
Non-high performing	14	41.2	20	58.8
Total schools	24	55.8	19	44.2

When asked if students could visit the library during the school day with a library pass or permission from the teacher, 83.3% of librarians representing high performing schools marked yes, compared to 41.2% of the librarians representing non-high performing schools.

Question eight asked survey participants whether students are allowed to continue to check out library books if they have books that are overdue. Participants were to mark "yes," "no," or "other." The frequency counts for question eight are listed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 *Overdue Book Policy Frequency Counts and percentage of responses by high performing schools (N=12) compared to non-high performing schools (N=34).*

Q8 Overdue	Yes		No		Other	
	n	% of N	n	% of N	n	% of N
High performing	5	41.7	5	41.7	2	16.7
Non-high performing	9	26.5	18	52.9	7	20.6
Total	14	30.4	23	50	9	19.6

When participating school librarians were asked if students were allowed to continue to check out books even if they had overdue books, 41.7% of the librarians in high performing schools marked "yes" while 26.5% of the librarians in non-high performing schools marked "yes." Research suggests it is difficult for school librarians to balance being good stewards of the library collection while making every effort to get books and resources into students' hands (Haycock, 2011). One respondent who chose "other" indicated students must go for two weeks without checking out books as a consequence for losing the book(s) and to provide time for the book to reappear. If the student has not returned the book(s) after two weeks he may resume checking out books from the library, but must keep the books at school. Another participant noted she keeps discarded books on hand for students with overdue books to read. These practices suggest the participating school librarians who chose "other" may provide an alternate ways for students to continue to access library resources.

To further analyze the data, the researcher calculated means and standard deviations for survey questions 1-10. The means and standard deviations for questions 1-6 and 8 are listed in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 *Group Statistics for Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8.*

	High vs Non-high	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Q1 Own lib	H	12	1.17	.577	.167
	Nh	34	1.09	.288	.049
Q2 Schedule	H	12	2.33	.492	.142
	Nh	34	2.56	.504	.086
Q3 Visits	H	12	1.58	.669	.193
	Nh	34	1.32	.638	.109
Q4 Chg Vis	H	12	1.92	.289	.083
	Nh	34	1.94	.343	.059
Q5 Books	H	12	1.42	.515	.149
	Nh	34	1.24	.431	.074
Q6 Chg. Bks	H	12	2.00	.000	.000
	Nh	34	1.97	.H71	.029
Q8 Overdue	H	12	1.75	.754	.218
	Nh	34	1.94	.694	.119

Although the responses to questions 1-6 and 8 are not statistically significant the researcher noted a difference exists in the responses to question 8, which focused on practices regarding students continuing to check out books when they already have overdue books. If survey participants marked yes, the responses were coded "1." If the response was no, the response was coded "2." The high performing schools' mean score was 1.75, indicating students in high-performing schools are more likely to be able to continue to check out books, even if they have overdue books, than students in non-high performing schools.

Survey question 7 asked participants to check all times students could visit the elementary school library to check out books. Answer choices included: before school,

during school with a library pass or teacher's permission, after school, and other. Survey results for question 7 are listed in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 *Group Statistics for Question 7*

	High v Non high	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Q7 Ck Before	H	10	1.70	.483	.153
	Nh	34	1.32	1.886	.324
Q7 Ck During	H	10	1.00	.000	.000
	Nh	34	1.26	1.880	.322
Q7 Ck After	H	10	1.70	.483	.153
	Nh	34	1.44	1.894	.325
Q7 Other	H	10	2.00	.000	.000
	Nh	34	1.62	1.891	.324

While the differences between the means of high performing and non-high performing schools are not statistically significant, the researcher noted differences in the means of practices listed under question seven. If respondents indicated students were able to check out before school, during school with a library pass or teacher's permission, or after school, the responses were coded with a "1." If a choice was not marked, it was coded with a "2;" thus, the closer the mean is to "1," the more likely that particular practice is implemented. Non-high performing schools had lower means on both choices indicating the library is available before school and after school while the libraries in high performing schools were more likely to be available for students to check out books during the school day.

Labeling Practices.

Question 9 asked participants to check the labeling systems used in their elementary libraries. Answer choices included: not labeled; labels that are viewpoint-neutral directional; labels identifying books for programs such as Accelerated Reader or Reading Counts; labeled to identify reading levels or Lexiles; labeled to protect students from inappropriate content; and other. The means and standard deviations for the responses to question 9 are listed in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 *Group Statistics for Question 9*

	High v Non-high	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Not labeled	H	12	2.00	.000	.000
	Nh	33	1.68	1.886	.324
Viewpt. Neutral	H	12	1.50	.522	.151
	Nh	33	1.58	.502	.087
AR or RC	H	12	1.33	.492	.142
	Nh	33	1.36	.489	.085
Rdg. Levels	H	12	1.58	.515	.149
	Nh	33	1.48	.508	.088
Inapp. Con.	H	12	2.00	.000	.000
	Nh	33	1.91	.292	.051
Other	H	12	1.58	.515	.149
	Nh	33	1.88	.331	.058

Question 9 asked school librarians to mark the systems used to label their elementary school libraries. If a choice was marked, the response was coded with a "1." If a choice was not marked, it was coded with a "2." While the results of Question 9 indicated no statistically significant differences, the researcher noted non-high

performing school librarians responding to the survey indicated their libraries were more likely labeled by reading levels or Lexiles than the libraries in high-performing schools.

Question 10 asked survey participants to mark the collaborative practices that take place between the school librarian and classroom teachers in their elementary schools. Answer choices included: librarian helps with technology; librarian shares information about resources available in the library; librarian consults with classroom teachers about the reading preferences of individual students; librarian consults with classroom teachers about the reading abilities of individual students; librarian spends time in classrooms co-teaching with classroom teachers; and librarian provides professional development for the elementary staff. The means and standard deviations for the responses to question 10 are listed below in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 *Group Statistics for Question 10, Collaborative Practices*

	High v Non-high	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Asst. Tech.	H	12	1.58	.515	.149
	Nh	34	1.41	.500	.086
Resources	H	12	1.00	.000	.000
	Nh	34	1.03	.171	.029
Rdg. Pref.	H	12	1.33	.492	.142
	Nh	34	1.35	.485	.083
Rdg. Abilities	H	12	1.42	.515	.149
	Nh	34	1.21	.410	.070
Co-teach	H	12	1.92	.289	.083
	Nh	34	1.91	.288	.049
Prof. Dev.	H	12	1.75	.452	.131
	Nh	34	1.74	.448	.077

Table 4.10 provides a snapshot of the collaborative practices carried out by the elementary school librarians in high performing and non-high performing schools participating in this study. If participating librarians marked a collaborative practice, choice, the choice was coded "1." If the choice was mot marked, it was coded "2." A mean closer to "1" indicates it is more likely the school librarian implements the collaborative practice. A close look at the differences between the means of the high performing and non-high performing schools and standard deviations indicate that while collaborative practices including sharing information about resources available in the library, consulting with classroom teachers about the reading preferences of students, co-teaching with classroom teachers are very similar, there are differences to consider. First, the means of high performing school librarians who assist teachers with technology are higher than the means of the librarians who assist with technology in non-high performing schools. The percentage of librarians assisting teachers with technology in non-high performing schools is greater than the librarians assisting teachers with technology in high performing schools. A difference between the means of high performing and non-high performing librarians who consult with teachers about the reading abilities of individual students also exists. Librarians from non-high performing schools are more likely to consult with classroom teachers about the reading abilities of individual students as suggested by the mean closer to "1." Though the differences between the collaborative practices of assisting teachers with technology and consulting with teachers about the reading abilities of individual students are not statistically significant, it is noted that there is a greater difference between the means of these practices than the other collaborative practices examined

Qualitative Data

A constant comparative analysis was conducted to ascertain common themes in the responses to question eleven. Question eleven was open-ended, and asked participants to describe a collaborative practice the participants believed had the greatest impact on student learning in their schools. Of the 46 survey participants, 23 participants chose to answer this question. Although the researcher has no way of knowing if the 23 participants who did not respond to this question could have named an effective collaborative practice and simply chose not to, the researcher acknowledges the fact that none of the participating librarians reported having a flexible schedule. The fact that all 46 librarians participating in the study reported having fixed or mixed schedules may have impacted the level of collaboration between the librarian and classroom teachers. Library schedules can inhibit collaborative teaching due to the absence of common planning time which allows the librarian and classroom teacher to plan units, assemble resources, teach information literacy within the context of the unit, provide support, conduct assessments, grade collaboratively, and evaluate the unit in order to improve it for future learning (Stubeck 2015). To illustrate this point, one participant responded, "I cover the teachers' plan times and have classes for 55 minutes each week for 26 classes. There is little time to collaborate." Responses to question eleven fell into the following categories: Teaches research skills or research projects; Supports classroom instruction; Communicates with classroom teachers; Collaborates with classroom teachers during Professional Learning Community (PLC) time or vertical English language arts (ELA) team meetings; Co-teaches with classroom teachers; Provides professional Development; and Other. The responses were placed under the appropriate categories in an Excel

spreadsheet. If participants' responses fit more than one of the aforementioned categories the responses were assigned to each appropriate category.

Of the 23 elementary school librarians who responded to question eleven, five responses fell within the "Teaches research skills or research projects" category. Elementary school librarians' responses included: the librarian helps with research and writing preparation, the librarian teaches digital literacy skills, the librarian assists students with research projects on the topic of famous women in history, and the librarian teaches research skills such as finding reliable sources to assist students with research projects.

Of the 23 elementary school librarians who responded to question eleven regarding collaborative practices having the greatest impact on student learning, eleven responses fell within the "Supports classroom instruction" category. The responses represented a wide range of collaborative practices. One librarian stated, "Knowing the reading abilities of individual students has helped me assist the students in picking just right books from the library." Another participant noted, "I make an extra effort in providing a large variety of books that correlate with the curriculum taught in the classroom." One respondent noted an impactful collaborative practice involved "Providing books to fourth grade students to help in researching their topics such as Presidents, Olympic events, and famous Missourians, etc." One librarian who teaches keyboarding in the library shared a typing competition is held for students in her school. When students reach the target level of proficiency the librarian takes the students' photos and displays the photos in the hallway. At first the researcher questioned the collaborative nature of this response regarding the typing competition; however, the

librarian noted this practice encourages the students to practice keyboarding skills, meeting the need of increased productivity in the classroom. One survey respondent noted the librarian collaborates with the science specialist and uses the library Makerspace to support projects matching the students' science units. For example, students were challenged to work on heat transfer projects by using the Makerspace to build penguin houses to keep eggs warm. This comment supports Bishop (2013), who noted it is helpful for school librarians desiring to collaborate with classroom teachers to become familiar with the school's curriculum, identify possible research topics, and establish the time of year resources are needed for special units of instruction. The respondent continued, "We have worked together on several projects. She's an old friend," highlighting the importance of building trust and respect in a collaborative relationship as noted by Copeland and Jacobs (2017). Another librarian responded:

> I collaborate with classroom teachers with units that are to be covered in a particular grade level. In first grade, I have literature circles to introduce the students to chapter books, complete a science requirement for second grade (plants), and throughout the year have conducted lessons for third grades on figurative language and poetry [*sic*].

Other responses in the category "Supports classroom instruction" included: collaborating with kindergarten teachers and providing books and projects matching the letter of the alphabet being studied, working with staff to share resources, and working with classroom teachers to provide resources to complete projects or units of study. Of the 23 elementary school librarians who responded to question eleven, six responses were

categorized as “Collaboration through meetings.” The responses ranged from one noting one-on-one conversations held with classroom teachers to one stating:

> Our school meets monthly as an ELA [English language arts] team during our PLC [Professional Learning Community] times. This is a great opportunity to touch base with a member from every grade level as well as SPED [special education teachers] and Title [Title 1 teachers]. We meet regularly discuss [*sic*] ways to improve our practices with ELA.

Two other respondents mentioned meeting with classroom teachers during PLC time and a third respondent mentioned meeting with teachers during ELA vertical team meetings “to discuss how the library can support the curriculum.” One respondent noted librarians and classroom teachers share information learned through attending conferences informally after school or during monthly staff meetings.

One librarian’s response to question eleven indicated the collaborative practice of co-teaching positively impacted student learning. This participant noted the elementary librarian is in charge of mentoring the new teachers in the school. The librarian stated, “I observe them quarterly, meet with them monthly, and help the new teachers in any way possible with lessons, pacing guides, materials, etc.” The librarian continued, “We revamped the new teacher program over 3 years ago and it has been very beneficial for our new teachers.”

Of the survey participants representing the high performing schools in this study 100% of the school librarians answered question eleven regarding collaborative practices they believed had the greatest impact on student learning, though one participant responded, “None.” Conversely, eleven of the 34 participants (32.4%) representing the

non-high schools provided an example of a collaborative practice they felt had the greatest impact on student learning.

Summary of Findings

This section summarizes findings related to the study. Findings are discussed within the context of each research question. Null hypotheses results follow the research questions.

Main Research Question

What are the differences, if any, in the presence of particular practices of elementary libraries in high performing elementary schools and the presence of particular practices in non-high performing elementary schools?

After analyzing the inferential, descriptive, and qualitative data generated by the surveys completed by school librarians participating in the study the researcher determined there were no statistically significant differences in the library practices of the high performing and non-high performing elementary schools participating in this study.

Subset Research Question 1

What are the differences, if any, in the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in high performing schools and the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in non-high performing schools?

After analyzing the one way ANOVA results along with the means and standard deviations of the survey responses, the researcher determined there were no statistically significant differences in the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in the high performing and non-high performing elementary schools participating in this study. The ANOVA conducted by the researcher indicated no statistically significant

differences between the responses from librarians representing the high performing schools and the librarians representing non-high performing schools.

Subset Research Question 2

What are the differences, if any, in the number of books checked out per week by third grade students in high performing schools and the number of books checked out per week by third grade students in non-high performing schools?

After analyzing the results of the one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) along with the means and standard deviations of survey responses, the researcher determined there were no statistically significant differences in the number of books checked out per week by third grade students in the high performing and non-high performing elementary schools participating in this study.

Subset Research Question 3

What are the differences, if any, in the schedule of the elementary library in high performing schools and the schedule of the elementary library in non-high performing schools?

After analyzing the one way ANOVA results along with the means and standard deviations of survey responses, the researcher determined there were no statistically significant differences in the schedule of the libraries in the high performing and non-high performing elementary schools participating in this study. The researcher notes that 50% of the total survey respondents indicated their school library has a fixed schedule while 50% indicated their school library has a mixed schedule. None of the participating school librarians reported having a flexible library.

Subset Research Question 4

What are the differences, if any, in the school library labeling practices of high performing schools and non-high performing schools?

After analyzing the survey results, the researcher determined there were no statistically significant differences in the school library labeling practices of the high performing and non-high performing elementary schools participating in this study.

Subset Research Question 5

What are the differences, if any, in the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in high performing schools and the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in non-high performing schools?

After analyzing the survey results, the researcher determined there were no statistically significant differences in the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in the high performing and non-high performing elementary schools participating in this study.

Main Null Hypotheses

There is no difference in the presence of particular practices of elementary libraries in high performing elementary schools and the presence of particular practices in non-high performing elementary schools. The researcher fails to reject the main null hypothesis.

Subset Null Hypotheses 1

There is no significant difference in the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in high performing schools and the number of third grade students' weekly

visits to the library in non-high performing schools. The researcher fails to reject null hypothesis 1.

Subset Null Hypotheses 2

There is no significant difference in the number of books checked out per week during scheduled visits by third grade students in high performing schools and the number of books checked out per week during scheduled visits by third grade students in non-high performing schools. The researcher fails to reject null hypothesis 2.

Subset Null Hypotheses 3

There is no significant difference in the schedule of the elementary library in high performing schools and the schedule of the elementary library in non-high performing schools. The researcher fails to reject null hypothesis 3.

Subset Null Hypotheses 4

There is no significant difference in the school library labeling practices of high performing schools and non-high performing schools. The researcher fails to reject null hypothesis 4.

Subset Null Hypotheses 5

There is no significant difference in the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in high performing schools and the collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in non-high performing schools. The researcher fails to reject null hypothesis 5.

Summary

Chapter four included the analysis of data and data presentation for this study. Data regarding the differences of library practices in high performing and non-high performing

elementary schools included inferential statistics, descriptive statistics, and qualitative data. Chapter five will present the researcher's conclusions and recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATONS

Introduction

This study examined library practices in elementary schools serving grade three in districts with an enrollment of 750 to 1,500 and compared the practices of high performing schools to non-high performing schools. The researcher collected data for this study from elementary school librarians in the state of Missouri. After receiving approval from the Research Review Board (RRB) in March of 2018 for this study, an email with a link to the Google Forms Survey was sent to 95 elementary principals of elementary schools meeting the criteria for the study. Principals were asked to forward the email containing the link to the survey to the elementary librarians in their buildings. Follow-up emails were sent one week after the initial survey containing the survey link. Due to the small number of high performing schools in the sample, the researcher contacted several elementary principals and school librarians by phone.

The researcher developed the survey after conducting a thorough review of the literature surrounding library programs. Four themes regarding library practices emerged from the review of literature: circulation practices, scheduling practices, labeling practices, and collaborative practices between the school librarian and classroom teachers. The researcher developed the survey questions to explore current library practices surrounding these themes in the participating elementary schools. A panel of experts reviewed the survey and provided feedback. The survey was reviewed after revisions were made to ensure face validity. The survey asked eleven questions regarding

library practices and one open-ended question about a collaborative practice participants believe had a positive impact on student learning in their school.

Several limitations may have affected the results of this study. The first factor beyond the researcher's control was the number of participants who responded to the online survey. With a total of 12 librarians representing high performing schools and 34 librarians representing non-high performing schools (*N=46)* participating in the study, the sample size was smaller than anticipated. Other limitations include the perceptual nature of the librarians' responses to the open-ended qualitative question and the honesty of the responses.

The researcher took steps to minimize the effects of the limitations of the study. Design controls accounted for the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study. It was assumed the librarians would respond truthfully to the survey questions. Participants were assured confidentiality, as results would be presented in aggregate form that would not identify individual participants or schools. A letter of consent attached to the email containing the link to the online survey indicated surveys returned online would not contain the respondents email address. Ten of the survey questions asked the school librarians to identify library practices and one open-ended question asked participants to describe a collaborative practice they believed had the greatest impact on student learning in their schools. In an attempt to control for size, thus comparing schools serving a similar number of students and having access to similar funding and resources, the researcher limited the study to elementary schools serving grade 3 in Missouri districts with an enrollment of 750 to 1,500 students. Of the 95 schools meeting the criteria for inclusion in the study, 46 school librarians responded for a return rate of 48.4%. Of the

82 non-high performing schools invited to participate, 34 school librarians responded for a return rate of 41.5%. Of the 13 high-performing schools invited to participate in the study, 12 librarians responded for a return rate of 92.3%. Results are generalizable to the school districts serving 750 to 1,500 students across the state of Missouri.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the practices of elementary libraries in both high and non-high performing schools and describe key practices that may lead to increased student achievement. The researcher desired to learn about the schools' library practices and to discover if particular practices were implemented more frequently in high performing elementary schools in order to share the library practices most likely to positively impact student learning.

High performing schools were identified as those performing one standard deviation above the mean of all schools' 3-year average of the percentage of students performing at the proficient or advanced level on the 3rd grade Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) English language arts (ELA) test. The 3-year averaged proficiency percentages ranged from 26.5% to 89.9%, indicating a wide range of proficiency among the schools included in this study. This led the researcher to believe factors other than the practices examined in this study may positively impact student performance in high performing schools.

The researcher sought to determine the differences in the circulation practices of high performing and non-high performing elementary schools. Questions about circulation practices sought to determine the number of scheduled third grade library visits, the number of books checked out per visit by third grade students, the number of

third grade students' weekly visits to the library, the availability of the library for students to check out books before school, during school, and after school, and the policy regarding the students' ability to continue to check out books if students have overdue books. As reported in chapter 4, the results of this study indicated there are no significant differences between the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library in high performing and non-high performing schools. One point of interest is high performing schools are more likely to implement practices that encourage the frequent exchange of library books. The only statistically significant finding in this study is high performing schools are more likely to allow students to visit the library during the school day with a library pass or teacher's permission.

Four participating schools (one high performing and four non-high performing) indicated schedule changes in the past 3 years that increased the number of visits third graders could make to the library. One participating school librarian indicated the library schedule changed to a mixed schedule. Three librarians noted the library schedule now includes an extra library time every few weeks and one librarian noted an extra weekly visit was added to the existing weekly class to allow students to check out books. Only one librarian out of the 46 who responded to the survey indicated the number of visits "changed due to budget cuts, indicating the number of visits may have been reduced;" however, the librarian did not explain the change. This information tells the researcher that overall, school leaders and librarians in the 46 reporting schools kept the number of visits constant or altered the schedules to make time for students to visit the library more often, even if that meant one extra visit to the library in the rotation with other "specials" each month.

This study also examined the number of books checked out per week during scheduled visits by third grade students in high performing schools and the number of books checked out per week during scheduled visits by third grade students in non-high performing schools? The differences in the number of books checked out per week by third grade students during scheduled visits to the library in high performing schools and non-high performing schools were measured by analyzing the results of the surveys completed by the school librarians in participating schools. Results indicated there were no significant differences between the number of books checked out during scheduled weekly visits to the library over the last 3 years in high performing elementary schools and non-high performing elementary schools participating in the study.

Of the 46 participants in this study only one librarian responded to question 6, indicating a change in the number of books third graders were allowed to check out during scheduled weekly visits in the last 3 years. This librarian from a non-high performing school stated, "Students are [*sic*] allowed to check out two hardback books and one e-book [electronic book] starting last year. Before that time we did not have e-books so they could only check out hardback books." The remaining 45 survey participants indicated no change regarding the number of books checked out by third graders during scheduled weekly visits over the last 3 years has remained constant.

Differences in the schedule of the elementary library implemented in high performing schools and non-high performing schools were measured by analyzing the results of the surveys completed by the school librarians in participating schools. Results indicated there were no significant differences in the library schedules of high performing elementary schools and non-high performing elementary schools participating in the

study. Although there was no significant difference in the type of library schedule among the 46 reporting schools, it is important to note that none of the schools reported having a flexible schedule. The researcher found this interesting, as the flexible schedule is the one recommended by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). The 3-year averages of students' scores on the third grade English language arts (ELA) Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test were at or above 69.4% proficient or advanced in participating high performing schools, indicating it is possible for students to reach proficiency on the ELA MAP, even in the absence of the AASL recommended flexible library schedule.

While there was no statistically significant difference between the types of library schedules in high performing and non-high performing schools the researcher believes the fact that all 46 schools reported having fixed or mixed schedules did impact that quality of collaboration present in participating schools. Of the 46 school librarians responding to the survey, 97.1% indicated they collaborate by sharing information about resources available in the library yet only 8.8% indicated they collaborate by spending time in the classroom co-teaching with classroom teachers. Fixed schedules, especially for librarians who provide release time for classroom teachers' planning periods, often prevent deeper collaboration such as co-teaching because the time to do so is just not available within the school day, especially considering the fact that 58.8% of the participating librarians indicate they assist teachers with the use of technology, another collaborative activity that would require the librarian's time throughout the school day or week. While assisting teachers with technology may be considered a lower level of collaboration, the benefit of embedded professional development may be present when

librarians are willing to share their knowledge and teachers are willing to learn about technology and model risk taking in the future to help themselves (Moreillon, 2009).

The study examined the differences in the school library labeling practices of high performing schools and non-high performing schools by asking respondents to identify the practices implemented in their schools. The differences in the labeling practices of high performing schools and non-high performing schools were measured by analyzing the results of the surveys completed by the school librarians. All of the librarians who responded to this question indicated their school library is labeled using at least one system. While there were no significant differences in the overall labeling practices, it is important to note that 64.4% of the libraries represented in the survey were labeled to identify books for programs such as Accelerated Reader (AR) or Reading Counts. Additionally, 73.3% of the librarians responded their libraries are labeled to identify reading levels or Lexiles. Both of the aforementioned labeling practices are discouraged by the American Association of School Librarians in the association's Position Statement on Labeling Books with Reading Levels. (AASL, 2011) and the association's Questions and Answers on Labeling and Rating Systems (AASL, 2010c).

Of the librarians representing high performing schools, 41.7% indicated their libraries are leveled by reading levels or Lexiles and 66.7% indicated their libraries are leveled to identify books for a program such as Accelerated Reader (AR) or Reading Counts. This leads the researcher to conclude the school leaders and educators in these high performing schools see a value in these labeling practices, even though the practices are not supported by the AASL.

Collaborative practices between librarians and classroom teachers in high performing schools and non-high performing schools were also examined in this study. Results indicated there were no significant differences in the collaborative practices of high performing elementary schools and non-high performing elementary schools participating in the study. Survey question 10 asked the participants identify collaborative practices between the school librarian and classroom teachers in their schools. It is interesting to note 97.1% of the librarians participating in the study indicated they collaborate by sharing information about resources available in the library while only 8.3% spend time in classrooms co-teaching with classroom teachers. The survey results indicate only one of the 13 librarians representing high performing schools collaborated by co-teaching and only three of the 34 librarians representing non-high performing schools participated in co-teaching. This leads the researcher to believe most of the students' interactions with the librarian occur in the library and that while collaborative practices were identified, most of the practices revolved around the librarian sharing resources with the classroom teachers. The results of question 11, the open-ended question that asked librarians to identify an impactful collaborative practice, supported the researcher's conclusion as the greatest number of responses were categorized as "supporting classroom instruction." The researcher concludes the librarian's role is perhaps seen as separate from or supporting the classroom teacher's role in instruction rather than close to the center of teaching and learning as described by Loertscher (2014).

Conclusions and Recommendations

One result of this study is the number of questions the researcher had at its conclusion. The results of the study did not support previous research on the relationship

between school library programs and student achievement because the differences between the practices of the high performing schools and the non-high performing elementary schools were not statistically significant. The third grade students in the high performing schools included in the study excelled on the Missouri Assessment Program ELA assessment despite the fact that many of the library practices in high performing schools were similar to the practices of non-high performing schools.

The results of this study led the researcher to question if the results would have been the same if practices in other grade levels had been examined. The 3rd grade MAP is generally viewed by educators as a grade span test, meaning students' cumulative knowledge is assessed in the spring of the 3rd grade year. The researcher recommends expanding the study to examine the library practices in grades K-2. Dorn and Jones (2012) state beginning readers should have many opportunities to read books at their independent levels. When beginning readers read a wide variety of texts independently their background knowledge and vocabulary increase. The researcher recommends expanding the survey to include grades K-2 library practices as the practices that encourage or restrict young learners' access to books may impact their literacy development and level of proficiency on the 3rd grade English language arts tests.

The researcher concludes significant differences between high performing and non-high performing may be more evident if the study had included many more or even all of the public elementary schools serving 3rd grade across Missouri. For the purpose of this study, the researcher attempted to control for size in an effort to examine library practices in schools with a similar number of classes served by the elementary library, a similar library staff, and similar access to financial resources. The review of literature

caused the researcher to question the library practices in her elementary school, and created a desire to know how similar schools across the state designed their library programs. Though the overall return rate was 48.4%, the researcher acknowledges the size of the sample, (*N*=95), was small. The researcher noticed the addition of one survey changed the significance of the results, eliminating a statistically significant difference between a library practice of the high performing and non-high performing groups. The researcher concludes it is possible the small sample size may have skewed the results of the study. The researcher is curious to know if the results of the study would remain consistent if elementary schools in districts smaller and larger than 750 to 1,500 were included in the study. The results of this study provide an important starting point; however, the researcher recommends expanding the study to include all public elementary schools in the state of Missouri.

Perhaps the researcher's biggest question centers on the possibility that the library practices examined in this study do not matter as much as the librarian. The researcher concludes it is possible the school librarian can make a significant difference between effective libraries and less effective ones. To answer these questions, the researcher recommends future study that includes librarians self-perceptions regarding effective qualities or practices, the perceptions of the librarians' effectiveness as determined by other school staff including classroom teachers and administrators, and—importantly—the students' perceptions of what makes their librarian effective. Librarians in high performing schools may excel at certain skills such as forming positive relationships with students, forming collaborative relationships with classroom teachers, and matching students with just right books. While this study focused on practices related to students'

access to resources, Sanden (2014) noted the importance of matching students to just right books and teaching students to implement strategies to independently determine text appropriateness. The researcher recommends a study focused on the characteristics and pedagogical strengths of librarians in high performing schools as determined by English language arts scores across the state of Missouri.

The researcher also questions how conducting the study at a different time of year would have impacted the results. The initial surveys were sent to elementary principals on March 8, 2018. Follow-up emails were sent one week later, on March 15. At this time the researcher, concerned with the low return rate, began making phone calls in an attempt to touch base with the elementary principals to whom the surveys were emailed. This proved to be quite difficult as several of the schools were on spring break either during the first week the surveys were sent, or the follow-up week. Because of this difficulty, the researcher recommends conducting research during the school year at a time that is void of common breaks or vacations.

Another question the researcher developed after conducting a few phone surveys with participating school librarians focused on the detailed responses provided during phone interviews as compared to the less-detailed responses to the online survey. The researcher contacted several of the high performing school librarians directly in an effort to encourage completion of the online surveys or make a phone survey available if that was more convenient to the librarian. The librarians were generally pleasant and very willing to answer questions about their library practices; however, it was often difficult for the researcher to make connections with them. This difficulty was the result of several factors: the librarians often had classes throughout the day; the librarians' planning time

sometimes changed on a daily basis due to the schedule; not all librarians had access to a phone in the library, and some school secretaries are very good at deflecting callers who mention surveys. The researcher recommends requesting permission from the elementary principals to contact school librarians rather than relying on busy school principals to read and forward the emails containing links to the surveys.

The researcher questioned the decision to email the surveys from the start due to being familiar with the number of emails elementary principals receive each day. While online surveys are efficient and convenient, reading or forwarding an email that contains "survey" in the subject line may not be a top priority of a busy elementary principal. Although it is more time consuming, the researcher recommends conducting a phone survey with at least a portion of elementary librarians included in the study regarding library practices in order to collect more complete information. For example, when asked to note and explain if the number of 3rd grade visits to the library had changed in the last three years, one online survey participant said, "Changed in the 2017-18 year due to budget cuts." This answer did not identify the number of visits students previously made to the library or the reason for the change other than the generally stated, "budget cuts." A phone interview would have allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions that would have provided more complete data for analysis.

The researcher acknowledges factors other than library practices may determine or contribute to student success on the 3rd grade ELA assessment. The researcher questions whether high performing schools have reading incentive programs that encourage students to read a high volume of books. The researcher is curious to know if incentives such as summer reading calendars and activities such as "blind date with a

book" in which students are matched with a book without viewing the cover make a difference in the number of books read by students. As mentioned in the introduction of the study, the researcher visited a high performing school with a team of teachers to review the reading materials used by teachers. Students in this school were reading a high volume of books--so many the school librarian had trouble keeping up with reshelving the books. It is important to note the students at this school were able to take a computerized test and receive one soda each day they passed a test. Though this type of incentive is controversial, the researcher questions if there benefits to extrinsic rewards that encourage students to read and recommends library program reading incentives as a potential topic for future study. Perhaps there are other practices, materials, programs, or characteristics of classroom teachers that help students become proficient readers. The researcher acknowledges each of these topics could be studied to determine their impact on the development of proficient readers as determined by proficiency on the English language arts test of the Missouri Assessment Program.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the practices of elementary libraries in both high and non-high performing schools and describe key practices that may lead to increased student achievement. In chapter five the findings for each of the research questions in the study were presented. Through analysis of the study it was determined there were no significant differences in the library practices in high performing and non-high performing elementary schools. The aggregate data revealed that all schools participating in the study had fixed or mixed schedules while none of the schools had flexible schedules as recommended by the American Association of School Librarians.

Aggregate data also revealed that while most librarians participating in the study participate in collaborative activities, few participate in deep collaboration with classroom teachers such as co-teaching units of study. This suggests school leaders may need to explore ways to bring classroom teachers and school librarians together through increased participation by the librarian on vertical curriculum teams or during Professional Learning Community (PLC) time and posing guiding questions that provide a focus on how these groups can collaborate to develop the shared expertise Hattie (2015) encouraged. The school librarian and classroom teachers bring unique knowledge, expertise, and passion to the most important work of helping students develop both proficient reading skills as well as a love for reading by the end of 3rd grade. The significance of this research is that it offers a starting point for further research and determines that factors other than the particular practices examined within this study may contribute to students' proficiency on the English Language Arts assessment in Missouri.

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Appendix A

School Library Practices Survey

1. Which best describes your elementary library?

    a. The elementary school has its own school library.
    b. The elementary school shares a library with another building level or school.
    c. Other. _____

2. Describe your school's library schedule.

    a. Flexible, or open. Students and classes schedule visits to the library as needed.
    b. Fixed. Classes are regularly scheduled to visit the library.
    c. Mixed. Classes are regularly scheduled, but the library is open during a significant amount of the schedule

3. Identify the number of scheduled library visits per week by your third grade students during the 2016-17 school year (last year).

    a. 0-1 weekly visits
    b. 2 weekly visits
    c. More than 2 weekly visits

4. If the number of third grade students' weekly visits to the library has changed in the past 3 years, please describe:

    _____
    _____

5. Identify the number of **books third grade** students were allowed to check out per week during the 2016-17 school year (last year).

    a. 0-2 books
    b. 3-5 books
    c. More than 5 books

6. If the number of books checked out per week by third grade students has changed in the past 3 years, please explain:

    _____
    _____

7. Are students able to visit the library to check out books other than during scheduled class times? Please mark all that apply:
    a. Before school
    b. During school, with teacher's permission or a library pass
    c. After school
    d. Other _____

8. Are students able to continue to check out library books if they have not returned overdue books?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Other_____

9. How is your school library collection labeled? Please mark all that apply:

    a. The school library collection is not labeled.
    b. The school library is labeled according to the Dewey Decimal System.
    c. The school library collection is labeled by viewpoint-neutral directional aids such as fiction genre labels such as "mystery."
    d. The collection is labeled to identify books for programs such as Accelerated Reader (AR) or Reading Counts.
    e. The collection is labeled to identify reading levels or Lexiles.
    f. The library is labeled to protect students from content deemed inappropriate.
    g. Other. Please describe_____

10. Select the choices describing collaborative practices between the school librarian and classroom teachers in your school. Please mark all that apply.

    a. The librarian assists teachers with the use of technology.
    b. The librarian shares information about resources available in the library.
    c. The librarian consults with teachers about the reading preferences of individual students.
    d. The librarian consults with teachers about the reading abilities of individual students.
    e. The librarian spends time in classrooms co-teaching with classroom teachers.
    f. The librarian provides professional development for the elementary staff.

11. Please describe a collaborative practice you feel has had the greatest impact on student learning in your school.
    _____
    _____

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Greetings, colleagues. My name is Tracy Lanser and I am a doctoral student at Southwest Baptist University. I am conducting a research study to gather information from school librarians regarding school library program practices. I am surveying librarians in 95 elementary schools across 84 Missouri school districts with an enrollment of 750-1,500 students. Because the sample size is small, your input is important to this study.

I realize you are very busy; the survey should take no more than 5-10 minutes of your time to complete. The survey is completely anonymous. It will ask you to describe library practices related to student visits, the library schedule, check out policies, labeling practices, and collaboration between the school librarian and classroom teachers. It will ask you to describe one collaborative practice you feel has had the most impact on student learning.

Your privacy is important. Your answers will be combined with other participants' answers and reported in aggregate form. Information reported will not identify individual participants, schools, or school districts. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate or to answer all of the questions. Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission to use the information you have provided in my study.

Before you make a final decision about participation, please read the following statements about how responses will be used and how your rights as a participant will be protected:

- Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any point without penalty.
- You need not answer all of the questions.
- Your answers will be kept confidential. Results will be presented to others in summary form only, without names or identifying information.
- Your participation will take approximately 5-10 minutes. During this time your will answer questions regarding library program practices in your school.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the RRB Committee at Southwest Baptist University (417-328-1992). Martaun Stockstill MS, LPC is the Chair of the RRB Committee. The committee believes the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties and rights.

You may contact me at 417-876-3112 if you have questions or concerns about your participation. If you would like a copy of the results of this study, you may contact

me via email at tlanser@mail.eldo.k12.mo.us. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Tracy Lanser

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE SOUTHWEST BAPTIST UNIVERSITY RESEARCH REVIEW BOARD FOR RESEARCH AND RESEARCH-RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS (417)326-1659