

THE EFFICACY OF A PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S LITERACY-RELATED
SOCIAL SKILLS INTERVENTIONS IN THE ACQUISITION OF READING
COMPREHENSION BY EMERGENT READERS

A Dissertation

by

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This dissertation meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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ABSTRACT

The current study used a mixed design ANOVA to compare the I-Ready reading comprehension scores of 76 students enrolled in an elementary school in South Texas. A previously untested intervention, a literacy-related social skills group, derived from the constructs of emotional intelligence, was compared to the more orthodox interventions of a social book club and a traditional classroom setting over three assessment windows throughout the academic school year. Participants included 40 girls and 36 boys. All groups had an equal division of girls and boys, and an equal division of students from third through fifth grade. Each group met for 50 minutes per week, and groups contained no more than 5 participants. Therefore, each treatment condition was given to multiple groups. The participants were 86.8% Latino ($n = 66$), 7.9% White ($n = 6$), 3.9% African American ($n = 3$), and 1.3% Asian ($n = 1$). Many of the participants, 76.3% ($n = 58$), were from homes of low socioeconomic status. More than one in ten of the students, 11.8% ($n = 9$), were also in the process of learning English as a second language. The demographic attributes of the participants in the current study mirror the overall demographics of the school. After treatments, the end of year (EOY) scores indicated a significant difference between groups with $F = 10.05, p \leq .001$. **The effect size of η^2 was .216** indicating a large effect. The results of the study demonstrate a statistically significant improvement in reading comprehension I-Ready scores in the interaction effect of participants in the literacy-related social skills group at the end of the school year while no statistically significant gains were made in the other two groups ($F(4,146) = 12.57, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .256$).

Keywords: Literacy-related Social Skills, Social Book Club, Reading Comprehension, Self-Regulation, Standardized Assessment, I-Ready Reading Assessment

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION STUDY

Overview of Prospectus

The following dissertation prospectus examined a group comparison conducted to evaluate the efficacy of a professional school counselor's literacy-related social skills intervention (LRSS). This LRSS intervention was designed to improve reading comprehension scores for students who do not respond well to traditional phonics based instructional programs. I included the problem statement, purpose and significance of the current study, and define terms in Chapter 1. In Chapter 2, I provided an overview of the literature concerning the evolution of reading pedagogy ultimately intersecting objectives traditionally presented to students under the instruction provided by professional school counselors. In Chapter 3, I provided a detailed account of the methods used to conduct the current study and a discussion of inherent limitations. The Appendix included the approval of the Instructional Review Board and other associated materials.

Introduction

Public schools are faced with the challenge of improving literacy scores and producing graduates with the appropriate skill sets needed to meet the demands of the modern workplace. An overemphasis on assessment for accountability purposes has created a rigid instructional model not suitable for all learners. While reading comprehension is a fundamental component to all learning, not all students learn to read in the same way. Educators seek interventions outside of the confines of an inflexible model to improve early reading outcomes. Early reading skills are critical to later life academic, economic, and socio-emotional success (Stockard & Englemann, 2010). Professional school counselors are working with educators to search for interventions designed to meet the needs of students who do not respond to traditional programs. The

collaboration of professional school counselors and early literacy educators is an important factor in student success, with 75% of students struggling with reading comprehension lacking school appropriate social skills (Lysaker & Tonge, 2013; Wanzek, Vaughn, Kim & Cavanaugh, 2006). In the current study, I examined how small group instruction of literacy-related social skills might improve reading comprehension outcomes for students in a predominantly low socioeconomic and Latino serving elementary school in south Texas. The problem observed in this study was the need for authentic, evidence-based interventions to improve reading comprehension outcomes for emergent readers who do not respond to traditional reading instruction.

Per Texas Education Code (TEC) 28.0258, the preparation of a portfolio of work samples in a course subject area, including work samples demonstrating proficiency, may qualify a student to graduate (Texas Education Agency, 2015). Rather than requiring students to achieve traditional passing standards for graduation, Texas schools offer reduced value diplomas after completion of computer-generated packets. Many students lack the basic literacy skills required to finish traditional high school programs and struggle equally with the social skills necessary to perform competently in the modern workplace. While graduation rates seem to have improved, literacy and socio-emotional competencies have suffered; leaving 20% of students who achieve high school graduation in the lowest category of basic literacy per a 2017 National Education Agency (NEA) executive report (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 2017). Further, Arnold (2009) published a National Education Association (NEA) report showing the critical relationship between early literacy, socio-emotional competence, and high school graduation. Professional school counselors have traditionally been responsible for creating developmental guidance programs to effectively address social comprehension objectives with the goal of

improving social relationships and graduation rates. As such, professional school counselors might be a critical link as providers of an early intervention addressing both reading and social comprehension at the elementary school level. The interventions might improve learning outcomes for students who do not respond well to traditional reading programs while building social comprehension skills.

McClelland and Morrison (2003) discussed the academic trajectory of students with low learning related social skills over the first six years of school. They found a direct relationship between poor academic achievement in 5th grade and the lack of school readiness skills in pre-kindergarten. Due to the federal Student Success Initiative (SSI) mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), schools are forced to retain students who do not meet literacy standards in the 5th and 8th grades. The risk of leaving school before completion of necessary coursework increases by 50 percent when a child is retained (NEA, 2013). If literacy-related social skills improve early reading outcomes, instruction based in these skills may be an authentic intervention school personnel can utilize to improve academic success.

Traditionally, the role of social skill education has been a peripheral curriculum (Jensen, 2009) rather than a core subject area. However, it might be time to review the priority of social skill instruction delivered by professional school counselors. Directly teaching literacy-related social skills such as encoding information, making inferences about the information, perspective taking, and self-regulation provide the building blocks of needed social constructs such as cooperation, collaboration, empathy, and compassion (Goleman, 1995; Jensen, 2009). Students with these social constructs in place have an improved social experience at school (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Zimbardo, 2000). Additionally, McKown, Russo-Ponsaran, Allen,

Johnson, and Warren-Khot (2016) have described these literacy-related social skills as direct precursors to reading comprehension. If literacy-related social skill instruction improves early reading comprehension, it might be a valuable intervention designed to improve both academic and community environments.

For the past 13 years, I have provided a developmental guidance program in diverse elementary school settings, and this experience has given me the opportunity to directly observe the educational dilemma Lysaker and Tonge (2013) describe. My office has traditionally been located in the student services area of a public school building. School administrators, interested in reducing the amount of time a student spends away from classroom instruction, aggregate professionals who provide intervention services into one area of the school. Interventions designed to improve social interactions, reading outcomes, and health services are often found together. Within this proximity, an easily observable phenomenon occurs. The same students who access the social-emotional learning services provided by professional school counselors often require the services of reading intervention specialists. These observations provided the impetus for this dissertation study.

Researchers have demonstrated better learning outcomes for students with appropriate social skills (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Specifically, they have described how the innately social environment of a school setting logically produced better learning outcomes to students with higher-level social competencies. In a similar study, researchers found students displaying higher levels of social comprehension received more teacher attention, had better and more inclusive peer relations, and more opportunities to develop the vocabulary and prior knowledge necessary for reading comprehension (Capara et al., 2000). School settings designed to facilitate opportunities for appropriate social interaction might improve a student's academic

progress through improved early literacy outcomes (Jensen, 2009). McClelland and Morrison (2003) discussed a significant positive relationship between the social skill of sustained attention through self-regulation and early literacy. Social skill instruction to achieve social-emotional comprehension and better learning outcomes is valuable, but the current literature does not describe how literacy-related social skills might directly affect reading comprehension. Social-emotional comprehension including encoding, inferring, perspective taking, and self-regulation in a social context might predict the acquisition of these skills in a literary context (Garcia-Winner, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

School personnel are working to improve literacy outcomes for emergent readers. Traditional interventions being used in classrooms today are not meeting the needs of all learners. Many students experience significant learning gaps in reading comprehension during elementary school. These gaps might undermine the learning experience, and ultimately produce graduates with limited skill sets or students who leave school before graduating. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2006) delineated the responsibility educators have in meeting the individual academic and socio-emotional needs of all students through Response to Intervention (RtI). Professional school counselors often lead the RtI process as they are an important advocate for students. The problem discussed in the following group comparison is the socio-educational dilemma faced by public school systems attempting to meet disparate student needs. Through responsive intervention, professional school counselors might help educators meet these academic and emotional goals.

Purpose of the Study

Schools are striving to solve the socio-educational dilemma of learning gaps created by diminished early literacy outcomes. The use of a positivistic, quantitative, mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) design in this study might provide evidence with which researchers could better understand the efficacy of literacy-related social skills group instruction with a focus on encoding, inference making, perspective taking, and self-regulation. While these skills have customarily been instructed in developmental guidance programs, researchers have called attention to the parallel skill set required for reading comprehension (McKown et al., 2016). Greater collaboration among professional school counselors and reading instructors might ameliorate these early learning gaps. Professional school counselors have an ethical mandate to work toward improving academic outcomes for the student clients they serve. Their expertise in the instruction of social skills might create improved literacy outcomes for early readers who do not respond to traditional reading programs.

Limitations of the Study

A priori limitations of this quantitative analysis include the researcher's limit of exposure to different curricula designed to enhance literacy-related social skills. I used programs I found helpful over many years of experience as a professional school counselor, but I have not had opportunities to use all available programs. Additionally, error could be created by extraneous variables such as home support, life circumstances, mood, parenting strategies, or even diet of the participants. The study was limited in time span to one grading period. Six weeks is an accepted amount of time to monitor the efficacy of an intervention in elementary school, but it might not be enough time to create significant gains in reading comprehension. The study was conducted during the final grading period, which may not have been the optimal time to

capitalize on student effort. The school where the study was conducted follows a year-round learning calendar, with the summer break lasting only three weeks. The school district uses the break to review data regarding learning outcomes and determine the correct grade placement for all students. The study was conducted at one intermediate school in Texas with a predominantly Latino population, and must be repeated with different populations to determine how generalizable the data might be.

Significance of the Study

Taking into account the limitations noted in the previous section, the current study still aligns with the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2014) in which beneficence is described as a core value of the counseling profession. Furthermore, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2010) notes that professional school counselors have an obligation to advocate for evidence-based practices found to improve learning outcomes for student clients. The role of the professional school counselor provides a unique forum for studying educational practices to determine which practices are most beneficial to students. Although professional school counselors are not mandated to deliver content measured by standardized testing, they must ensure the practices they use are of utility to the student client in improving both academic and socio-emotional learning outcomes. Professional school counselors collect data, track interventions for efficacy, and share the findings with collaborative Response to Intervention (RtI) teams. This study will help professional school counselors and educators better understand the relationship between literacy-related social skills such as encoding, inference making, perspective taking, and self-regulation and reading comprehension outcomes to potentially provide an evidence-based intervention designed to improve literacy and socio-emotional learner outcomes.

Reading comprehension is the cornerstone and goal of reading (Asberg, Kopp, Berg-Kelly, & Gillberg, 2010). The acquisition of reading comprehension skills is affected by a student's level of social comprehension (McKown, Russo-Ponsaran, Allen, Johnson, & Warren-Khot, 2016). *The American School Counselor Association's Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (ASCA, 2010) describes a professional school counselor as having "unique qualifications and skills to address all student's academic, personal/social, and career development needs" (p.1). Professional school counselors could benefit student clients by using their unmatched ability to combine academic and socio-emotional instruction. Further, they might model the integration of literacy-related social skills education into the curriculum creating a more positive learning environment and perhaps improved literacy comprehension outcomes.

In terms of professional development, counselor educators are responsible for teaching professional school counselors-in-training how to successfully integrate evidence-based practices into developmental counseling programs. It is important to understand and create educational programs through counseling services, and these programs should improve learner outcomes (ASCA, 2010). Additional research is needed to understand whether the instruction of literacy-related social skills improves literacy levels and the overall quality of the education a student receives. To address this need, this quantitative, mixed design ANOVA, group comparison may shed light on the efficacy of a literacy-related social skills intervention compared to a social book club intervention, or a traditional classroom based intervention by comparing I-Ready reading comprehension scores. The current study describes the degree to which students responded to literacy-related social skill intervention, and might also provide a generalizable set of objectives to improve early literacy programs in diverse school settings.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question and hypothesis answered in the current study are:

Research Question

Are there differences in I-Ready reading comprehension scores across intervention groups (literacy-related social skills group, social book club, or traditional classroom group) and over time of assessment window (beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year)?

Hypothesis

H₀: There are not differences in the I-Ready reading comprehension scores across intervention groups (literacy-related social skills vs. social book club vs. traditional classroom) and time of assessment window (beginning of the year, middle of the year, end of the year).

H₁: There are differences in the I-Ready reading comprehension scores across intervention groups (literacy-related social skills vs. social book club vs. traditional classroom) and time of assessment window (beginning of the year, middle of the year, end of the year).

Definition of Terms

Literacy-related social skills – are a set of social skills including encoding information in both social and literary contexts, making inferences about the information, perspective taking, and self-regulation. These specific social skills might be precursors of reading comprehension (McKown et al., 2016).

Social book club - is a group setting facilitated by the school counselor in which students are invited to read together and discuss the content of a book (Polleck, 2010).

Reading comprehension - a student's ability to use prior information, to make inferences, to understand implicit information, and take a character's perspective by making meaning from text through sustained attention (Cromley & Azevedo, 2007).

Response to Intervention (RtI) – is a set of interventions designed to meet a student's individualized educational needs determined by a multidisciplinary team of educators who observe student achievement on standardized assessments (IDEA, 2006).

Social comprehension - a student's ability to encode social information, make inferences from the information, and take another person's perspective through self-regulation (Lipton & Nowicki, 2009).

Self-regulation - sustained attention, working memory, task switching, and effortful control (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006).

Standardized assessment – state mandated, school accountability, assessment measures (NCLB, 2001).

I-Ready Reading Inventory - A computer based standardized assessment used to measure reading comprehension in elementary age students (EdSurge, 2011).

SECTION II: Review of the Literature

The purpose of section two is to give information regarding the intersection of professional school counseling objectives and early reading instruction based in the history and development of reading pedagogy. The review of the literature will conclude with an examination of professional school counselors' involvement in the Response to Intervention (RTI) process as an advocate for struggling readers.

The Intersection of Counseling and Early Literacy

A paradigm shift has occurred in public education. In the past, educators were focused on improving high school graduation rates, but the current Common Core Student Standards require educators to refocus their efforts and address college and career readiness. Carnevale, Smith, and Strohl (2010) forecast a future dearth of career ready employees in the United States. Their study described a projected 31 million potential employment opportunities unfilled due to a lack of career ready graduates. In the early 1900s, professional school counseling was founded to help students find meaningful work. Following the tradition Frank Parsons set by providing individualized career intervention for special populations, professional school counselors seek interventions for early readers who do not respond well to early literacy programs (O'Brien, 2011). It is the ultimate task of the professional school counselor to meet the academic and socio-emotional needs of students in order to produce a competent and fulfilled workforce, and the foundations of this success begin with competent reading.

Professional school counselors often help RtI teams determine the most appropriate intervention for students who are not meeting grade level expectations, and developmental guidance programs often focus on social skill acquisition found to help students navigate the social and academic environment simultaneously. It therefore becomes important for

professional school counselors to instruct social objectives most critical to early reading acquisition. These social objectives might include encoding information, making inferences about the information, perspective taking, and self-regulation to provide the building blocks of needed social constructs such as cooperation, collaboration, empathy, and compassion (Goleman, 1995; Jensen, 2009) and reading comprehension (McKown et al., 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). Reading instruction has evolved and begun to intersect with the objectives of developmental guidance programs delivered by professional school counselors in several ways. The following discussion illuminates how reading instruction has evolved over a decade to include the work of professional school counselors. It also reveals the direction professional school counselors are taking as student advocates on RtI teams.

The Evolving Pedagogy of Reading Instruction

Edward Burke Huey (1908) wrote *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*. His work was the first scientific study of reading acquisition. It became the foundation of more than a century long discussion regarding the most effective methodology for instructing reading, a debate that continues today (Walczyk, Tcholakian, Igou & Dixon, 2014). In the following review of the literature, I describe the current state of literacy instruction in the United States, elucidate important whole language reading strategies which are not currently at the forefront of educational practice, introduce literacy-related social skill instruction, and describe how the direct instruction of these literacy-related social skills might improve literacy outcomes for readers who do not respond well to traditional literacy programs creating an intersection of traditional practices of the professional school counselor and reading instructors.

Reading Programs Based in Decoding

Currently, the most widely used and largely accepted literacy pedagogy is the instruction of a single word decoding system (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013). Foundations of this system begin with letter sound correspondence. Students build decoding skills by blending letter sounds into syllables and then into words. Students simultaneously practice the recognition of sight words, a set of short words found frequently in children's literature. Gough (1986) define decoding as the ability to, "read isolated words quickly, accurately, and silently" (p.7). Most public schools use phonics based decoding programs to instruct early readers. These programs are based in the evidence provided by researchers who consider decoding as the central part of reading acquisition. In fact, these researchers have identified decoding as being commensurate to reading itself (Fries, 1962; Gough, 1986; Rozin & Gleitman, 1977). Their research shows how highly important decoding is to reading comprehension. Unfortunately, an ever-growing group of students is not responding to traditional phonics based literacy instruction (Teale, Paciga, & Hoffman, 2007). Consequently, Response to Intervention (RtI) teams continually search for alternative strategies to meet the needs of these learners.

Whole Language Reading Instruction

Huey (1908) was a visionary experimental psychologist who wrote about whole language reading instruction almost one hundred years before it became accepted practice in early literacy curriculum. He proposed reading comprehension required an emotional and physiological experience larger than decoding isolated words (Huey, 1908; Walczyk et al., 2014). Fifty years later, Noam Chomsky (1957) wrote his seminal description of transformational grammar, *Syntactic Structures*. His work rebuked the behavioristic idea of students as empty vessels whose

language development required the instruction of syntax and rules. Chomsky wrote about language development, as an innate and meaning building process based in the experiences of the student. Chomsky's research found reading comprehension was a developmental stage of whole language acquisition.

Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist and educator, said the development of whole language reading comprehension occurred naturally and organically through social interaction and play (Vygotsky, 1978). He believed in the innate knowledge of the student, and he thought instruction should include social context. Vygotsky also believed social interaction and play accelerated the natural development of language and emergent reading. He thought educators should serve students in the role of nurturers and facilitators of meaningful play. Students could develop their innate knowledge of language and reading through this meaningful and mediated play. For Vygotsky (1978), programs with a singular focus on formulaic mechanisms to decode words out of context did not achieve the goal of teaching reading. This whole language conceptualization of reading instruction grew through the end of the 20th century. The debate over best practice literacy instruction became political when Frank Smith (1986) described prescriptive, decoding, literacy instruction as a bureaucratic invasion of the classroom.

The whole language instructional process was widely used in schools until high stakes accountability measures standardized the objectives measured in each grade level (Smithey, 1995). When schools are responsible for teaching specific skills by designated grade levels, waiting for naturally developing language components became unacceptable. Every child does not develop at the same rate, and may not organically acquire the skill set being tested at the specific age the accountability system says it is required (Colenbrander, Kohnen, Smith-Lock, & Nickels, 2016). Whole language reading instruction failed to meet accountability standards, and

prescriptive decoding programs allowed schools to teach fractured skill sets more applicable to the standardized test. Students might not acquire rich and complete language, but they could decode enough information to pass the test. Reaching accountability standards is of paramount importance because funding, and in some states, merit pay for educators, is attached to student achievement (McKenzie & Kress, 2015). School administrators continue to search for methods of instruction to improve learner outcomes while meeting the accountability standards set by NCLB and ESSA. McKown et al.'s (2016) research regarding the best methodology for early literacy instruction has resurrected Vygotsky's (1978) whole language acquisition through social interaction. McKown et al. (2016) found specific literacy-related social skills were the precursors to reading comprehension. These revelations have created the intersection of services provided by the professional school counselor and early literacy instructors.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Perhaps the most forward thinking concept in Edmund Huey's work, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, was his idea regarding diversity in students' educational needs. He contended not all readers respond equally to any specific literary pedagogy, and instructors must diversify instruction to meet the needs of all learners (Huey, 1908). Almost a century later, a federal mandate called Response to Intervention (RtI) became part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2006). Students not responding to traditional phonics based decoding programs were often incorrectly designated as students with reading disabilities. The RtI mandate required teachers to find specific interventions to meet the needs of learners, and to document the efficacy of these interventions (IDEA, 2006). This mandate allows teachers to use reading strategies most effective for each learner. It became critically important to look at the group of students who do not respond to traditional decoding instruction individually, and use

evidence based instructive programs to ameliorate gaps in their reading comprehension skills before designating the student as learning disabled. This RtI mandate has ignited new efforts to better understand the mechanisms of reading comprehension, and offered educators more evidence based strategies designed to meet the instructional needs of each learner in the classroom.

The Role of Social Comprehension in Reading Comprehension

Several new strategic methods have developed from research conducted since the RtI mandate. This research addresses the relationship between social comprehension and reading comprehension. Lysaker and Tonge (2013) found many students struggling with reading comprehension could decode words in isolation, but did not have school appropriate social skills. A student could reproduce the words in a reading passage, but lacked the ability to analyze the passage for a character's mood or intent. Lysaker and Tonge (2013) found a large number of these students equally lacked the ability to take a peer's perspective in a social situation. Reading comprehension has an indispensable social and developmental component for many emergent readers (Lysaker & Tonge, 2013; Weaver, 1990).

Duckworth and Seligman (2006) found self-regulation to be directly related to student success. Self-regulation is considered a highly important component of both socio-emotional comprehension and reading comprehension (Arrington, Kulesz, Francis, Fletcher, & Barnes, 2014; Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; Kuhn, Willoughby, Wilbourn, Vernon-Feagans, & Blair 2014; McClelland et al., 2007; Tollison, Synatschk, & Logan, 2011). Self-regulation skills of effortful control and focused concentration are directly linked to better reading comprehension outcomes (Arrington et al., 2014). These skills are most successfully developed when initially

practiced in a social context to develop a reader's ability to use them when decoding text for meaning (Lysaker & Tonge, 2013).

A meta-analysis of reading comprehension outcomes in populations diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) revealed that a diagnosis of ASD alone could not predict low reading comprehension scores (Brown, Oram-Cardy, & Johnson, 2013; Klin, 2000). The authors found people with ASD and low social comprehension, or low ability to understand the mental states of characters and the implicit content of text had lower reading comprehension than people with ASD and higher social comprehension (Brown et al., 2013). These researchers found that social comprehension skills of encoding contextual information, making inferences, and perspective taking are the same three skills required to create a mental model of text (Brown et al., 2013; Klin, 2000). Social comprehension, rather than ASD, was found to be a significant predictor of reading comprehension. The researchers call for more studies, inclusive of all students, to determine the relationship between social comprehension and reading comprehension (Brown et al., 2013).

Social Skills as Prerequisites of Early Literacy

Zins et al. (2004) demonstrated better learning outcomes for students with appropriate social skills. The researchers described how the innately social environment of a school logically produced better learning outcomes for students with higher-level social competence. Capara et al. (2000) found students who displayed more skilled social comprehension receive more teacher attention, have better and more inclusive peer relations, and more opportunities to develop the vocabulary and prior knowledge necessary for reading comprehension.

Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, De La Paz, and Peterson (2006) demonstrated the neurological similarity with which the human brain interprets real social relationships and those social

relationships found in a literary work. Mar et al. (2006) may have physiologically demonstrated the relationship between literary comprehension and social comprehension when they found the same areas of the brain are used for the development of both. McKown et al. (2016) said " It may be that the mental processes underlying in reading the social world and engaging in socially skilled behavior also underlie the ability to read and understand narrative" (p. 131). The observations of McKown and colleagues found social comprehension to be more directly related to academic improvements in reading than mathematics. If social comprehension skills were only related to better social relationships with teachers and peers, there should be equal gains in both reading and mathematics skills. McKown et al. (2016) call for more studies to examine which social competencies might be directly related to reading acquisition.

Literacy-Related Social Skills

The term, literacy-related social skills, is not currently used in the field, but was adopted in this research to designate a specific group of social skills which might be necessary in building both social-emotional comprehension and reading comprehension. Cromley and Azevedo (2007) describe reading comprehension as a student's ability to maintain focus and concentration long enough to encode information based on prior experience, make inferences using this information, understanding implicit information, and take a character's perspective. The social skills of self-regulation, encoding information, making inferences about the information, and perspective taking are the foundations of social-emotional comprehension and social imagination (Lipton & Nowicki, 2009; Lysaker & Tonge, 2013). These skills might also be the precursors of reading comprehension (McKown et al., 2016). Additional research is required to better understand the relationship between literacy-related social skills and reading comprehension. In the current study, students were given three different treatment conditions. The first treatment condition was

a control group who received the traditional phonics based classroom reading instruction. The second treatment condition included a social aspect while reading by using a small group book club design. The third treatment condition was a small group with targeted instruction of literacy-related social skills. I studied the student's reading comprehension scores before and after intervention and studied the efficacy of each treatment when compared to the other treatment conditions. This group comparison might provide a small step in better understanding the value of social components in the development of reading comprehension. The following section describes the specific processes used in the current study of literacy-related social skills.

SECTION III: Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this section was to examine the research design and methods use when comparing reading comprehension scores achieved by students in a literacy-related social skills group, a social book club, and a control group of readers, who received only traditional phonics-based decoding instruction in their mainstream classroom setting. The study was designed to determine the efficacy of each treatment and compare students' reading comprehension growth in the semester they received intervention as compared to their reading comprehension growth in the semester they received only the traditional classroom instruction. The control group received only traditional instruction over both semesters. Students who were selected for literacy-related social skills or book clubs received a small group intervention once per week for six weeks delivered by the professional school counselor while the control group received classroom interventions from their teacher of record. All groups had an equal division of girls and boys, and an equal division of students from third through fifth grade. Each group met for 50 minutes per week, and groups contained no more than five participants. Therefore, each treatment condition was given to multiple groups. The professional school counselor conducted all group meetings during the final six-week grading period. Measures taken at the beginning of year (BOY) give a baseline reading comprehension score for each student in the study. Middle of year (MOY) measures reflected growth over a semester with only typical classroom based intervention. While end of year (EOY) measures defined results after intervention groups. Six-week intervals are considered sufficient time periods to assess student performance and are equivalent to one grading period in elementary school. School districts use this time to determine growth measures for students. I compared beginning of year, middle of year and end of year I-Ready reading scores. A mixed methods ANOVA design allowed the researcher to compare the efficacy of the

treatment compared to the same student's score without the treatment over time, and compare the efficacy of each treatment condition when compared to the other treatment conditions. This section includes the research design, the research question, a description of the sample, and the curriculum used in the literacy-related social skills groups and book clubs.

Sample selection

The sample included 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students enrolled in an intermediate school in south Texas. The school has an enrollment of 889 students in grades 3-5. The overall population of the school includes 59% of students from low socioeconomic homes and 83.4% of students are Hispanic. The researcher used a G-power analysis (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buckner, 2007) to determine the minimum number of participants needed to conduct the study. The results of the analysis recommended at least 60 students participate in the study. The families of students who attended the school often moved during the final grading period so I selected more than the minimum number of students for the study. In order to account for attrition and maintain an acceptable level of power in the study, I studied 76 participants rather than only incorporating 60 participants into the study.

Each school year all students are assigned to a tiered reading group based on I-Ready reading scores. I-Ready is a standardized reading test approved by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Using the reading scores on the I-Ready inventory, students are placed in groups based on nationally normed percentage scores. Students who fall below the 25th percentile in reading comprehension are grouped into tier three classes and given instruction from a reading specialist. Additionally, students with a diagnosis of dyslexia or a learning disability in reading comprehension are placed into dyslexia instruction or special education reading classes. These students receive daily instruction from these specialists in small groups. Students, who have

scores above the 25th percentile, are all grouped into the mainstream classroom with individually designed instructional plans generated by the I-ready reading instruction program. Classroom teachers do not introduce new information during the one-hour tiered instruction time, and are expected to meet the individualized needs of every student who falls between the 26th and 99th percentile. These students have different needs, and often teachers are not able to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all these learners simultaneously. Therefore, teachers usually instruct small groups of students during this time leaving some students to learn on their own several days of the week.

The participants included in this sample were students falling below the 50th percentile yet above the 25th percentile on the I-ready reading comprehension inventory. The groups met during the school day within the tiered instruction time. The researcher planned the group meetings to occur on a day when the student would be learning on his or her own. Students were selected through non-probability random sampling from the target population to participate in literacy-related social skills groups, book clubs, or the control group.

Research Question

The following question was the basis of investigation for the current study:

Are there differences in I-Ready reading comprehension scores across intervention groups (literacy-related social skills group, social book club, or traditional classroom group) and over time of assessment window (beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year)?

Procedures

The principal of the school, with the support of the superintendent, gave permission for the study to be conducted during the final six-week grading period of the academic school year.

After receiving Instructional Review Board permission to conduct the study, the researcher collected parental consent, and student assent forms before beginning the group interventions.

Literacy-Related Social Skills Curriculum

Each school year the Texas Library Association releases a list of 20 Texas Bluebonnet Award winning books. These books are selected based on their literary quality, student interest, and relevant content. Students are encouraged to read these books through reading incentive programs set up by the school, but are not graded based on reading these texts. The books are considered highest quality children's literature and are available as reading materials for all students. The book used in the literacy-related social skill program was *Ghetto Cowboy*, a 2014 Bluebonnet Award winning book, by Greg Neri (2011).

Ghetto Cowboy was chosen because it is a true story. The events and circumstances in the book are authentic experiences of a young urban boy who is struggling with emotions fueled by his parent's divorce, his behavioral problems at school, and his self-concept. The depth of content in the story allows students to access encoding of emotional expressions, inference making from familiar events, perspective taking from parallel personal experiences, and assists with self-regulation by promoting reflection.

Each participant's demographic information and I-ready reading comprehension scores were recorded before the group meetings began. The principal researcher used the following curriculum to emphasize each of the four essential literacy-related social skills. The lesson plans and learning objectives for the literacy related social skills group were:

Session One:

Learning Objectives (Self-regulation, Encoding, and Inference Making):

- 1) Each student will describe three classroom expectations requiring self-regulation. These are speaking one at a time indicated by holding the speaking stick, using only affirmative language with other members of the group and the instructor, and maintaining a respectful personal space boundary from other members of the group and the instructor.
- 2) Each student will demonstrate at least one example of encoded information about the novel by watching a short introductory video.
- 3) Each pair of students will make an inference about Cole based on information found in the introductory video.
- 4) Each student will create an illustrated composition book using the inferences made from watching the introductory video.

As each student entered the room the instructor provided a snack and area to be seated. At each seat, the student received a copy of the novel, a composition book, colored pencils, and a pencil in a clear plastic bag. Before the class began, an emotional check to encourage self-awareness and emotional language development occurred. The class discussed the expectations for social behavior in the group, and the self-regulation challenges the students might experience while accomplishing these expectations. The instructor called the class attention to the novel and showed the introductory video.

A class discussion might help each student understand the meaning of encoded information as compared to obvious information. Each student will find one bit of encoded information from the video. The instructor will explain the use of inference questions (Marzano, 2010). These questions include: What is my inference? What encoded information did I use? How good was my thinking? Do I need to change my thinking?

Student pairs made inferences using the encoded information and recorded their inferences in the composition books. The students placed their names on the composition books, and decorated them with encoded inferences from the novel.

Session Two:

Learning Objectives (Self-regulation and Perspective taking)

1) Each student reminded the group about one of the self-regulation expectations, and evaluated the success of the group's demonstration of this expectation based on group performance last week. Each group member gave the whole group stars based on a 5-point scale with a score of 5 representing the highest rating.

2) The students determined which emotions Cole experienced in the first chapters of the book. The students explained how Cole felt and which words helped them understand how he was feeling. The students answered why he might feel this way. The students shared times when they felt like Cole. The students listed the emotions in their composition books. The students found synonyms for the words they listed.

The students were seated with snacks and supply bags. The instructor conducted an emotional check in and expectation review. Star levels were recorded. The instructor and students read chapters 1-5 of *Ghetto Cowboy*. The instructor encouraged the students to list emotions as they hear them in the story. The group reviewed the emotions and found synonyms for the emotions from the instructor's classroom poster of emotions. Results were recorded in the composition books. The instructor asked the students to review the inferences they made about Cole in the first session. The instructor asked if the student's inferences were still true or did the students need to change their thinking. If the inferences changed after perspective taking, the

group discussed how our emotional awareness might influence the inferences we make in social settings.

Session Three:

Learning Objectives (Self-regulation, Encoding, and Inference Making)

1. Each student reminded the group about one of the self-regulation expectations, and evaluated the success of the groups' demonstration of this expectation based on group performance last week. Each group member gave the whole group stars based on a 5-point scale with a score of 5 representing the highest rating.

2. The students formed pairs with a student they had not worked with before, and made an inference about Boo based on encoded information and emotional language in chapters 6-11.

The students sat with snacks and supply bag. The instructor conducted an emotional check in and expectation review. Star levels were recorded. The instructor and students read chapters 6-15 of *Ghetto Cowboy*. Each team made an inference about Boo using Marzano's (2010) inference related questions and recorded the information in the composition book.

Session 4:

Learning Objectives (Self-regulation, Encoding, Inference Making, and Perspective Taking)

1) Each student reminded the group about one of the self-regulation expectations, and evaluated the success of the groups' demonstration of this expectation based on group performance last week. Each group member gave the whole group stars based on a 5-point scale with a score of 5 representing the highest rating.

2) The students determined which emotions Boo experienced. The students explained how Boo felt and which words helped them understand his feelings. The students described why he might

feel this way. The students shared times when they felt like Boo. The students listed the emotions in their composition books. The students found synonyms for the words they listed.

The students were seated with snacks and supply bags. The instructor conducted an emotional check in and expectation review. Star levels were recorded, and students participated in a discussion regarding the emotional state of the group as it related to the number of stars the group attained each session. The instructor and students read chapters 12-20 of *Ghetto Cowboy*. The instructor encouraged the students to list emotions as they hear them in the story. The group reviewed the emotions they found. The students were asked to remember a time when they may have experienced the same emotions. Results were recorded in the composition books. The instructor asked the students to review the inferences they made about Boo in the previous session. The instructor asked if the student's inferences were still true or did the students need to change their thinking. If the inferences changed after perspective taking, the group would discuss how our emotional awareness might influence the inferences we make in social settings.

Session 5:

Learning Objectives (Self-regulation, Encoding, Inference Making, and Perspective Taking)

- 1) Each student reminded the group about one of the self-regulation expectations, and evaluated the success of the groups' demonstration of this expectation based on group performance last week. Each group member gave the whole group stars based on a 5-point scale with a score of 5 representing the highest rating.
- 2) The students determined which emotions Harper experienced. The students explained how Harper felt and which words help them understand how he was feeling. The students described why he might feel this way. The students shared times when they felt like Harper. The students listed the emotions in their composition books.

The students were seated with snacks and supply bags. The instructor conducted an emotional check in and expectation review. Star levels were recorded, and students participated in a discussion regarding the emotional state of the group as it related to the number of stars the group attained each session. The instructor and students read chapters 20-28 of *Ghetto Cowboy*. The instructor encouraged the students to list emotions as they heard them in the story. The group reviewed the emotions. The students were asked to remember a time when they may have experienced the same emotions. Results will be recorded in the composition books. The instructor asked the students to review the inferences they made about Harper. The instructor asked if the student's inferences are still true after perspective taking, or did the students need to change their thinking. If the inferences change after perspective taking, the group discussed how our emotional awareness might influence the inferences we make in social settings. The instructor informed the group members that the following session would be the last formal group meeting, and invited students to discuss ways they might continue to support each other.

Session 6:

Learning Objectives (Self-regulation, Encoding, Inference Making, Perspective Taking, and Review of Skills)

- 1) Each student reminded the group about one of the self-regulation expectations, and evaluated the success of the groups' demonstration of this expectation based on group performance last week. Each group member gave the whole group stars based on a 5-point scale with a score of 5 representing the 5=highest rating.
- 2) The students determined which emotions the characters in the book most often experienced. The students explained how each character changed and which words helped them understand how the character changed. The students will describe why the characters might have changed

their feelings. The students shared times when they felt one way and then changed, listing the experiences in their composition books.

The students were seated with snacks and supply bags. The instructor conducted an emotional check in and expectation review. Star levels were recorded, and students participated in a discussion regarding the emotional state of the students as it related to the number of stars the group attained each session. The instructor and students read chapters 29-35 of *Ghetto Cowboy*. The instructor encouraged the students to list emotions as they hear them in the story. The group reviewed the emotional changes they heard in the story. The students were asked to remember a time when they may have experienced changing emotions. Results were recorded in the composition books. The instructor asked the students to review the inferences they made about the characters. The instructor asked if the student's inferences were still true after perspective taking, or did the students need to change their thinking. If the inferences change after perspective taking, the group discussed how our emotional awareness might influence the inferences we make in social settings. The group reviewed the strategies they used to regulate focus and emotional well-being, and then review each literacy-related skill the group will learn. The group will end with each member sharing an inference they made about the group at the beginning and if the inference they made was true or if they changed their thinking.

Social Book Club Curriculum

The same Bluebonnet Reader, *Ghetto Cowboy*, will be used during the social book club gatherings. Each participant's demographic information and I-ready reading comprehension scores will be recorded. The lesson plans for the book club are as follows:

Session 1:

Lesson Plans and Learning Objectives:

1. Each student will learn expected behavior during book club. Expected behaviors will include respecting personal space and property of others, using only affirmative language, and participating in the discussion.
2. Each student will watch the introductory video.

The instructor will give the students a healthy snack, and show them the introductory video. The students will have an opportunity to describe what they saw in the introduction.

Session 2:

The instructor will give the students a healthy snack, review classroom expectations, and read chapters 1-5. The students will have the opportunity to answer the following content-related question. Why does Cole's mother say she needs to take Cole to live with his father?

Session 3:

The instructor will give the students a healthy snack, review classroom expectations, and read chapters 6-11. The students will have the opportunity to answer the following content-related question. Why does Cole take twenty dollars out of the envelope?

Session 4:

The instructor will give the students a healthy snack, review classroom expectations, and read chapters 12-20. The students will have the opportunity to answer the following content-related question. What does Cole use to give Boo some bling?

Session 5:

The instructor will give the students a healthy snack, review classroom expectations, and read chapters 21-27. The students will have the opportunity to answer the following content-related question. Why does Cole go up on the roof?

The instructor will tell the group that the following session would be the final group meeting and the students will have an opportunity to finish the book and discuss anything they want to say to the group.

Session 6:

The instructor will give the students a healthy snack, review classroom expectations, and read chapters 28-35. The students will have the opportunity to answer the following content-related question. Why does Cole get a nickname?

After the discussion, the instructor allowed each group member to share any final thoughts about the book or the book club with the other members of the group. The instructor encouraged the students to read more by participating in student driven book clubs in the future.

Data Collection

The demographic data used in this study was collected with parent and school stakeholder permission through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) database. The reading comprehension I-Ready scores were collected with parent and school stakeholder permission from the licensed I-Ready reading program database. The three data measures that were used in this study are the beginning of year I-Ready reading comprehension score, the middle of year I-Ready reading comprehension score, and the end of year I-Ready reading comprehension score. The researcher will ensure that all collected information remains confidential. All students in the school will be tested with the three I-Ready measures, but data will be collected only from students who participated in the study. All students were encouraged to perform to the best of their ability on the instrument, and were given one hour to complete the assessment. The school RtI specialists, including the professional school counselor, administered

all I-Ready reading assessments. All students were given an opportunity to ask questions before completing the tests.

Instrumentation

To assess the level of reading comprehension for each participant, the I-Ready reading inventory was used. The I-Ready diagnostic reading inventory is an evidence-based instrument listed on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Commissioner's List of acceptable accountability measures. The Educational Research Institute of America (ERIA) is an independent educational research and development company. ERIA conducted a validity study of the I-Ready diagnostic reading inventory compared to the New York State English Language Arts (NYS ELA) assessment for grade levels 3-8. The English Language Arts (ELA) standards expected in New York mirror the standards expected in Texas and across the nation. It is therefore reasonable to accept the results of the reading comprehension correlation analyses from the ERIA study conducted in New York as applicable to the current study. The ERIA concluded the I-Ready reading assessment when compared to the NYS ELA indicated high correlations ranging from .79 to .85 across all measured grade levels. All correlations were statistically significant at the .05 level of significance.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using a mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) design. This statistical design will allow for the simultaneous analyzing of reading comprehension scores between groups, and reading comprehension scores within the same group over time. Demographic and reading comprehension data will be entered into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) spreadsheet. Each row in the data editor will represent the data collected from one participant. All participants completed in the I-Ready reading analysis. The repeated-

measure variable levels were defined by the terms BOY (beginning of year), MOY (middle of year), and EOY (end of year). The between-groups variable conditions were defined as LRSS (literacy-related social skills), SBC (social book club), and CON (control). I checked to make sure the model assumptions of homogeneity of variance, normality, sphericity, and linearity were met before analyzing the collected data.

Overall Summary

Students who participated in counseling groups and students who received traditional classroom instruction needed literacy intervention and access to a developmental guidance program. Students who attain basic literacy and pro-social behavior in early educational settings have a better chance of learning the skills they need to succeed academically, economically, and socially in the future. Professional school counselors have ethical mandates to optimize learning opportunities for all students. Because of the inherently social nature of attending school, and the relationship between social comprehension and reading comprehension, is imperative for professional school counselors to optimize developmental guidance program objectives to enhance both literacy and socio-emotional outcomes for all students. Collaboration between multidisciplinary educators, to produce the best learning outcomes for all students, is a federal mandate. Students who do not achieve early literacy are likely to struggle academically and socially, and have a greater chance of leaving school before completing a degree. In the current study, I demonstrated how a sample of students responded to literacy-related social skill instruction as compared to a social book club or a traditional literacy acquisition program. The current study might potentially give professional school counselors a new intervention for students who are not responding to traditional reading programs.

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Preface for Summary Manuscript

The study described in the following manuscript, "The Efficacy of a Professional School Counselor's Literacy-Related Social Skills Interventions in the Acquisition of Reading Comprehension by Emergent Readers", was conducted to examine the efficacy of a counseling intervention designed to help students who were not responding to traditional reading instruction. The dependent variable was the student's I-Ready reading comprehension score. The independent variables were both time of assessment window, beginning of year (BOY), middle of year (MOY), and end of year (EOY), and intervention group literacy-related social skills group (LRSS), a social book club (SBC), or a continuation of traditional classroom instruction (TC). All groups had an equal division of girls and boys, and an equal division of students from third through fifth grade. Each group met for 50 minutes per week, and groups contained no more than 5 participants. Therefore, each treatment condition was given to multiple groups. Data collected from the first semester indicated a student's reading comprehension level before intervention, and was used as a baseline to delineate which students might not be responding to traditional classroom instruction. Second semester data provided information I could use to compare the efficacy of each intervention and describe students' progress over time. To analyze students' scores across the different interventions and over time, I used a mixed design ANOVA. The results of the statistical analysis revealed a statistically significant improvement in reading comprehension scores after participation in a literacy-related social skills intervention when compared to a social book club or traditional classroom instruction.

The Efficacy of a Professional School Counselor's Literacy-Related Social Skills Interventions
in the Acquisition of Reading Comprehension by Emergent Readers

Abstract

The current study used a mixed design ANOVA to compare the efficacy of three distinct reading comprehension interventions delivered to 76 elementary students in South Texas. A professional school counselor's literacy-related social skills intervention was compared to a social book club and a traditional classroom setting. Participants included 40 girls and 36 boys between 3rd – 5th grades. The participants were 86.8% Latino ($n = 66$), 7.9% White ($n = 6$), and 3.9% African American ($n = 3$), and 1.3% Asian ($n = 1$). Most participants, 76.3% ($n = 58$), were from homes of low socioeconomic status. More than one in ten students, 11.8% ($n = 9$), were English language learners. I-Ready reading scores indicated a significant difference between groups with $F = 10.05, p \leq .001$. **The effect size of η^2 was .216.** According to Cohen (1992), this indicated a large effect. Students participating in the literacy related social skills group showed a statistically significant improvement ($F(4,146) = 12.57, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .256$). No statistically significant gains were made in the other two groups.

Keywords: Literacy-related Social Skills, Social Book Club, Reading Comprehension, Self-Regulation, Standardized Assessment, I-Ready Reading Assessment

The Efficacy of a Professional School Counselor's Literacy-Related Social Skills Groups in the Acquisition of Reading Comprehension by Emergent Readers

Early literacy skills improve student outcomes by increasing graduation rates while producing graduates with the appropriate skill sets to meet the demands of the modern workplace. These skills are critical to later life academic, economic, and socio-emotional success (Stockard & Englemann, 2010). Professional school counselors have an ethical mandate to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all student clients (ASCA, 2010). Traditional early literacy programs are not meeting the needs of all learners leaving 20 percent of students who achieve high school graduation in the lowest level of adult basic literacy (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 2017). Professional school counselors might improve student outcomes by delivering developmental guidance programs with greater focus on the acquisition of literacy-related social skills based in the tenants of emotional intelligence. Literacy-related social skills include encoding, perspective taking, inference making, and self-regulation. These skills provide the building blocks of cooperation, collaboration, empathy and compassion (Goleman, 1995; Jensen, 2009) as well as reading comprehension (McKown, Russo-Ponsaran, Allen Johnson, & Warren-Khot, 2016).

Although traditional literacy programs leave social skill education as a peripheral program provided by professional school counselors (Jensen, 2009), this research might give cause for educators to reconsider the importance of targeted social skill instruction. Educators know 75% of students who lack school appropriate social skills struggle with early literacy (Lysaker & Tonge, 2013; Wanzek, Vaughn, Kim & Cavanaugh, 2006). Consequently, they currently are searching for instructional methods designed to meet student needs in both areas.

The current study was a group comparison of three interventions intended to improve reading comprehension in emergent readers. The comparison was conducted using a mixed ANOVA design to analyze a student's reading growth over time and between groups. The groups included traditional reading instruction, social book clubs, and literacy-related social skills groups. All groups had an equal division of girls and boys, and an equal division of students from third through fifth grade. Each group met for 50 minutes per week, and groups contained no more than 5 participants. Therefore, each treatment condition was given to multiple groups.

I-Ready measures of reading comprehension were taken at the beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year. The objective of the current study was to discover which intervention produced the greatest improvement in reading comprehension scores for students in the third quartile of reading comprehension when compared to same age peers across the nation.

Results of the current study might be used to examine the constructs currently delivered in a developmental guidance program in an elementary school setting. Perhaps the trends revealed in the current study might encourage professional school counselors to provide social skill intervention directly related to reading acquisition for learners who do not respond to traditional classroom literacy instruction. In this way, a professional school counselor might synthesize an educational environment designed to meet the social and academic needs of student clients simultaneously.

Literature Review

A paradigm shift has occurred in public education. In the past, educators were focused on improving high school graduation rates, but the current Common Core Student Standards require educators to refocus their efforts and address college and career readiness. Carnevale, Smith, and Strohl (2010) describe a future dearth of career ready employees in the United States. Their study

described a projected 31 million potential employment opportunities unfilled due to a lack of career ready graduates. In the early 1900s, professional school counseling was founded to help students find meaningful work. Following the tradition Frank Parsons set by providing individualized career intervention for special populations, professional school counselors seek interventions for early readers who do not respond well to traditional literacy programs (O'Brien, 2011). It is the ultimate task of the professional school counselor to meet the academic and socio-emotional needs of students in order to produce a competent and fulfilled workforce, and the foundations of this success begin with competent reading.

While all students need to read competently, not all students learn to read with the same instructional methodology. A federal mandate called Response to Intervention (RtI) became part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2006). Students not responding to traditional phonics based decoding programs were often incorrectly designated as students with reading disabilities. The RtI mandate requires teachers to find specific interventions to meet the needs of learners, and to document the efficacy of these interventions (IDEA, 2006). This mandate allows teachers to use reading strategies most effective for each learner. It became critically important to look at the group of students who do not respond to traditional decoding instruction individually, and use evidence based intervention programs to ameliorate gaps in their reading comprehension skills. This RtI mandate has ignited new efforts to better understand the mechanisms of reading comprehension, and offered educators more evidence based strategies designed to meet the instructional needs of each learner in the classroom.

Several new strategic interventions have developed from research conducted since the RtI mandate, and these interventions have intersected with the traditional role of the professional school counselor. Lysaker and Tonge (2013) found many students struggling with reading

comprehension could decode words in isolation, but did not have school appropriate social skills. For example, a student might be able to reproduce the words in a reading passage, but lacked the ability to analyze the passage for a character's mood or intent. Lysaker and Tonge (2013) found a large number of these students also lacked the ability to take a peer's perspective in a social situation. They concluded reading comprehension has an indispensable social and developmental component for many emergent readers (Lysaker & Tonge, 2013; Weaver, 1990).

Duckworth and Seligman (2006) found self-regulation to be directly related to student success. Self-regulation is considered a highly important component of both socio-emotional comprehension and reading comprehension (Arrington, Kulesz, Francis, Fletcher, & Barnes, 2014; Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; Kuhn, Willoughby, Wilbourn, Vernon-Feagans, & Blair 2014; McClelland et al., 2007; Tollison, Synatschk, & Logan, 2011). Self-regulation skills of effortful control and focused concentration are directly linked to better reading and socioemotional outcomes (Arrington et al., 2014). These skills are most successfully developed when initially practiced in a social context to develop a reader's ability to use them when decoding text for meaning (Lysaker & Tonge, 2013).

Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, De la Paz, and Peterson (2006) demonstrated the neurological similarity with which the human brain interprets real social relationships and those social relationships found in a literary work. Mar et al. (2006) may have physiologically demonstrated the relationship between literary comprehension and social comprehension when they found the same areas of the brain are used for the development of both. McKown et al. (2016) said " It may be that the mental processes underlying in reading the social world and engaging in socially skilled behavior also underlie the ability to read and understand narrative" (p. 131). This

revelation creates a need for further inquiry, and McKown et al. (2016) call for more studies to examine which social competencies might be directly related to reading acquisition.

The term, literacy-related social skills, is not currently used in the field, but was adopted in this research to designate a specific group of social skills found to be necessary in building both social-emotional comprehension and reading comprehension. Cromley and Azevedo (2007) describe reading comprehension as a student's ability to maintain focus and concentration long enough to encode information based on prior experience, make inferences using this information, understanding implicit information, and take a character's perspective. The social skills of self-regulation, encoding information, making inferences about the information, and perspective taking are the foundations of social-emotional comprehension and social imagination (Lipton & Nowicki, 2009; Lysaker & Tonge, 2013). These skills might also be the precursors of reading comprehension (McKown et al., 2016). Additional research is required to better understand the relationship between literacy-related social skills and reading comprehension, and provided the impetus for the following study.

Purpose of the Study

Educators are striving to solve the socio-educational dilemma of learning gaps created by diminished early literacy outcomes. The current study might provide some evidence regarding the efficacy of a professional school counselor's literacy-related social skills groups in the acquisition of early literacy. Literacy-related social skill groups focus on encoding, inference making, perspective taking, and self-regulation. Professional school counselors have an expertise in the instruction of these skills as developmental guidance programs with a focus in social comprehension use these constructs (Lipton & Nowicki, 2009). Recently, researchers have called attention to the parallel skill set required for reading comprehension (McKown et al., 2016).

Professional school counselors have traditionally delivered instruction in social comprehension with the intention of creating positive social environments at school. The current study shows how their expertise might prove valuable to positive academic and socioemotional student outcomes. The current study might encourage greater collaboration among professional school counselors and reading instructors to help ameliorate early learning gaps created by limited early reading and poor social competence.

The general purpose of the current study was to examine how literacy related social skills intervention, delivered by a professional school counselor, might improve early literacy outcomes for a group of learners who were not responding optimally to traditional early literacy instruction. The specific study was conducted in an elementary school in South Texas and targeted students who had reading comprehension scores below the 50th percentile and above the 25th percentile on a nationally normed reading instrument, I-Ready (EdSurg, 2011). The students within this category had reading scores below the expected grade level requirements.

Research Question

The research question examined in the current study was:

Research Question

Are there differences in I-Ready reading comprehension scores across intervention groups (literacy-related social skills group, social book club, or traditional classroom group) and over time of assessment window (beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year)?

Method

Participants

The study participants were 76 students enrolled in an elementary school in South Texas serving students in grades 3-5. The participants were randomly selected from the group of

students within the third lowest quartile in their I-Ready reading performance. They included 40 girls and 36 boys. All groups had an equal division of girls and boys from third through fifth grade levels. The participants were 86.8% Latino ($n = 66$), 7.9% White ($n = 6$), and 3.9% African American ($n = 3$), and 1.3% Asian ($n = 1$). Many of the participants, 76.3% ($n = 58$), were from homes of low socioeconomic status. More than one in ten of the students, 11.8% ($n = 9$), were in the process of learning English as a second language. The demographic attributes of the participants in the current study mirror the overall demographics of the school.

Measures

To assess the level of reading comprehension for each participant, the I-Ready reading inventory was used. The I-Ready diagnostic reading inventory is an evidence-based instrument listed on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Commissioner's List of acceptable accountability measures. The Educational Research Institute of America (ERIA) is an independent educational research and development company. ERIA conducted a validity study of the I-Ready diagnostic reading inventory compared to the New York State English Language Arts (NYS ELA) assessment for grade levels 3-8. The English Language Arts (ELA) standards expected in New York mirror the standards expected in Texas and across the nation. It is therefore reasonable to accept the results of the correlation analyses and regression analyses from the ERIA study conducted in New York as applicable to the current study. The ERIA concluded the I-Ready reading assessment when compared to the NYS ELA indicated high correlations ranging from .79 to .85 across all measured grade levels. All correlations were statistically significant at the .05 level of significance.

Procedure

The principal of the school, with the support of the superintendent, gave permission for the study to be conducted during the final six-week grading period of the academic school year. The group participants were all in the third lowest quartile in reading comprehension based on grade level expectations measured by I-Ready reading comprehension scores. These students were randomly selected for group participation based on the student's availability for out of classroom intervention at a time when the student's classroom instructor was not introducing new content. All groups were created with an equal distribution of 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students.

The participants in the current study were randomly assigned to a literacy related social skills intervention, a social book club, or a traditional classroom setting. I compared the results of an I-Ready reading inventory given at the beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year. The treatments were provided during the period of time from the middle to the end of the year. In this way, I could compare the participant's reading scores over time and across treatments.

Literacy related social skills groups and social book clubs used *Ghetto Cowboy*, a 2014 Bluebonnet Award winning book, by Greg Neri (2011). Students in the traditional classroom setting were also encouraged to read the same book, but were not given direct instruction using the book. *Ghetto Cowboy* was chosen because it is a true story. The events and circumstances in the book are authentic experiences of a young urban boy who is struggling with emotions fueled by his parent's divorce, his behavioral problems at school, and his self-concept. The depth of content in the story allows students to access encoding of emotional expressions, inference making from familiar events, perspective taking from parallel personal experiences, and assists with self-regulation by promoting reflection.

After receiving Instructional Review Board permission to conduct the study, the researcher collected parental consent forms, student assent forms, and began the study using the following procedures.

Literacy-Related Social Skills Group

Each participant in the literacy-related social skills groups received six lessons. Each lesson contained a self-regulatory experience. These experiences included a mindful emotional check in and review of social norms established by the group. Additionally, observing past experiences and relating them to the established social normative behavior enhanced self-regulation. Each group was encouraged to self-assess their success at attaining this expected social behavior.

Literacy-related social skills including encoding emotional information, inference making, and perspective taking were introduced during the group meetings, and all lessons used spiraling practice of the skills to enhance understanding of the selected text. The participants were encouraged to use these skills interpersonally. After practicing the skill with the group, group members related their own life experiences of the skill to the content of the story.

Social Book Club

The Social Book Clubs were also provided in six consecutive group meetings on a weekly basis. Social normative behavior was established by the group and reviewed by the instructor during each meeting. The participants read the selected book aloud together. Each participant had a copy of the book to encourage participation. The participants were given a healthy snack and a comfortable seat at a round table to encourage appropriate social interaction. After the selected chapters were read, the students and the instructor asked questions about the content of the story to ensure understanding of the text.

Traditional Classroom

Students in these groups were given the traditional phonics based reading instruction and encouraged to read *Ghetto Cowboy* (Neri, 2011), the selected school wide Bluebonnet Reader of the final six week grading period. No direct instruction using the content of the book was delivered. Students used their classroom teacher's intervention plan to address reading comprehension deficits. All students were evaluated at designated standardized assessment windows.

Data Analyses

Statistical power analysis. The researcher used a G*Power 3.1.9.2 statistical power analysis program (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) to determine the minimum number of participants required to successfully conduct a mixed ANOVA research design at the .80 level given $\alpha = .05$. The a priori analysis revealed a required sample size of 60 students to discern a medium effect ($\eta^2 = .09$) in the independent variables' ability to predict change in the dependent variable. Using this result, the researcher determined the sample of 76 students was acceptable to describe relationships between the levels of independent variables and the dependent variable.

Preliminary analyses. Before interpreting the results of the primary analysis, the assumptions of mixed model ANOVA were examined. The Shapiro Wilk test for normality was used for each level of the between-subjects and within-subjects factor levels. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested using Levene's Test of Equality of Error. The sphericity assumption was evaluated using Mauchly's Test of Sphericity.

Primary analysis. To address the stated research question, I conducted a mixed design ANOVA comparing three discrete groups on a continuous dependent variable measured at more than one point in time. This analysis included an assessment of the main effect of the between-

subjects variable (instructional groups), the main effect of time at the beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year (BOY, MOY, EOY), and the interaction of these two variables.

Results

Results of preliminary analysis

Model assumption testing revealed mixed results. The Shapiro Wilk test for normality was used. Only the middle of year statistics showed significance. Per Field (2013), skewness and kurtosis values between 2 and -2 are acceptable to prove normal univariate distribution. Using this criterion, I concluded that the assumption of normality was met. Levene's Test of Equality of Error showed no significant results indicating the scores evidenced homogeneity of variance for the sample. The result of the Mauchly's Test of Sphericity to test the sphericity assumption was significant, resulting in this assumption not being met. However, given the reported p -value (.049) I decided to round the result to .05 and assume sphericity based on the recommendation of Pallant (2010) whose contention is that multivariate statistics from SPSS output do not require sphericity.

Results of primary analysis

The results of the mixed ANOVA showed no significant difference for the between-subjects main effect, $F(2,73) = 1.724, p = .186$. Participants' scores were similar for the LRSS group ($M = 511.92, SD = 29.930$), the SBC group ($M = 501.14, SD = 30.57$), and the TC group ($M = 508.64, SD = 35.59$).

Results for the within-subjects main effect, time of assessment window, revealed a significant result ($F(2, 146) = 27.93, p \leq .001$, with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = .28$). A post hoc pairwise comparison revealed a significant difference in scores at the EOY measure compared to both the BOY and the MOY ($p \leq .001$).

There was also a significant interaction effect between group and time, $F(4,146) = 12.57$, $p \leq .001$, $\eta^2 = .26$. A post hoc Tukey HSD analysis was chosen, as the test is robust to mixed results in model assumptions. Each interaction showed no significant interaction results at BOY or MOY, but the EOY results were significantly different from the others. There was a significant difference in reading comprehension scores for participants of group 1 (LRSS) when compared to scores for participants of group 2 (SBC), $p = .006$. When comparing scores for participants of group 1 (LRSS) compared to group 3 (TC) there were significant differences, $p \leq .001$. The $\eta^2 = .26$. According to Cohen (1992), this shows a large effect size in the differences in EOY scores for students in LRSS groups.

Discussion

Professional school counselors are working with educators to search for interventions designed to improve academic and socio-emotional outcomes for students. Arnold (2009) published a National Education Association (NEA) report showing the critical relationship between early literacy, social skills instruction, and high school completion. As such, an early intervention addressing both reading and social comprehension at the elementary school level might improve learning outcomes for students who do not respond well to traditional programs. The current study examined how the instruction of literacy-related social skills improved reading comprehension outcomes for students in a predominantly low socioeconomic and Latino serving elementary school in South Texas. The study provided evidence of a statistically significant improvement in reading comprehension outcomes for emergent readers in the study.

Context of Results

The students who were participants in the literacy related social skills group in the second semester showed statistically significant reading improvement compared to their own

scores during the first semester when they only received traditional classroom instruction. In light of Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg's (2004) study in which researchers indicated social skills were critical to student development merely because of the inherently social nature of a school environment, it became important to add social book clubs to the study. These book clubs were designed to add a social element to reading, but did not target specific literacy-related social skills. There was some improvement in the scores of students who participated in the book club, but the difference in scoring was not significant. All participants' reading comprehension scores showed no statistical difference in the beginning of the year (BOY) or middle of year (MOY) assessment windows when no treatments were underway. Only end of year (EOY) groups showed a significant difference. While all study participants struggled equally in reading comprehension before interventions were introduced, those who participated in the social book club, or continued with traditional classroom interventions, did not make statistically significant gains in reading comprehension. The only significantly different reading comprehension gains were attained at the end of year (EOY) by students who participated in literacy related social skills groups. These results are illustrated in Figure 1.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Previous Research

Previous studies have emphasized the need for social skill instruction by demonstrating better learning outcomes for students with appropriate social skills. Zins et al. (2004) described how the innately social environment of a school setting logically produced better learning outcomes to students with higher-level social competencies. McKown et al. (2016) showed a specific set of social skills were precursors to reading comprehension. These were encoding, inference making, perspective taking, and self-regulation. Lysaker and Tonge (2013) concluded

reading comprehension has an indispensable social and developmental component, but none of the studies were designed to formulate specific interventions for emergent readers who could decode but lack the social understanding necessary for reading comprehension.

In the current study, the literature supported an examination of specific literacy-related social skills in order to formulate an intervention designed to help emergent readers who can decode but lack the social comprehension to successfully analyze text for meaning. A literacy-related social skills group delivered by the professional school counselor, an expert in the instruction of socio-emotional objectives, significantly improved reading comprehension scores for students falling below grade level expectations.

Limitations

Limitations of the current study included limited exposure to curricula designed to enhance literacy-related social skills. I used strategies I found helpful over many years of experience as a professional school counselor, but I have not had exposure to all available instructional strategies designed to improve encoding, inference making, perspective taking, and self-regulation. Additionally, error could have been created by extraneous variables such as the participants' home support, life circumstances, mood, parenting strategies, or dietary choices. The study was limited in time span to one grading period. Six weeks is an accepted amount of time to monitor the efficacy of an intervention in elementary school, but it might not have been enough time to create significant gains in reading comprehension. The study was conducted during the final grading period, which may not have been the optimal time to capitalize on student effort. The study was only conducted at one elementary school in South Texas predominantly low income and Latino participants. To enhance generalizability, the study might be repeated in a variety of diverse settings.

Implications for School Counseling Practice

The results of the current study identify literacy-related social skills groups as valuable interventions worthy of consideration for inclusion in a professional school counselor's service delivery plan. Asberg, Kopp, Berg-Kelly, and Gillberg (2010) identify reading comprehension as the cornerstone and goal of reading, and development of reading comprehension has an indispensable social and emotional component (Lysaker & Tonge, 2013). Therefore, it is important for professional school counselors to intervene for students by delivering instruction in the specific skills determined to improve reading and social comprehension.

When students read well and are socially accepted in school, they are more likely to have academic self-efficacy, achieve a degree, and find meaningful work after high school completion (Stockard & Englemann, 2010). Additionally, considering the over-identification of learning disabilities in students from homes of low socioeconomic status, the current study provides an evidence based intervention choice for all students who struggle with reading comprehension. Professional school counselors who understand the relationship between reading and social comprehension can create more inclusive and academically sound educational environments. The current study reinforces the idea that reading intervention services have intersected the traditional objectives covered in a professional school counselor's developmental guidance program.

Interventions using literacy-related social skills curriculum have proven to be an effective method of improving reading comprehension for emergent readers in this study. Students are better able to achieve academically and socially when they have strong reading comprehension (Stockard & Englemann, 2010). Professional school counselors might conduct a needs assessment to determine the best way to deliver literacy-related social skills curriculum to

children who are not responding well to traditional reading instruction. It may be that in some schools, literacy related social skills could become an interwoven part of the school curriculum. Other campuses might meet these academic and socio-emotional deficits in small group interventions as were used in the current study.

The American School Counselor Association's Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2010) describes a professional school counselor as having "unique qualifications and skills to address all student's academic, personal/social, and career development needs" (p.1). Counselors could benefit student clients by using their unmatched ability to combine academic and socio-emotional instruction. Professional school counselors might use the current study and research of this kind to determine which specific skills should be the focus of developmental guidance programs and RtI groups.

Many of the constructs important to literacy-related social skills are already a part of developmental guidance programs. It is important for professional school counselors to use data driven evaluations to determine which constructs are most valuable to the emergent readers they serve and how best to deliver these services on their campuses.

Implications for Future Research

More studies are needed to determine which social skills are most critical to reading comprehension, whether or not the results derived in the current study remain constant when conducted with participants from different demographic groups, the most effective time interval for intervention, and which school professional would be the best person to deliver the professional school counselor supervised interventions.

Additionally, further studies might help specify which interventions are most aligned with reading comprehension improvements. After seeing the results, I wanted to better

understand if the mindfulness activities, the emotional check in, the personalization of the discussion, or a specific literacy-related social skill made the most impact on the scores. Each of these variables could be isolated and tested in future studies.

Conclusion

Students who attain basic literacy in early educational settings have a better chance of learning the skills they need to succeed academically, economically, and socially in the future. Students who do not achieve early literacy are likely to have struggles in school, and have a greater chance of leaving school before completing a degree. The participants in the current study responded well to literacy-related social skill instruction by improving reading comprehension scores. The kind of social comprehension instructed in literacy related social skills groups improves reading outcomes for students who are not responding to traditional reading programs. Considering the indispensable need for improved reading outcomes for all learners, the current study gives evidence of an intervention benefitting learners who, without the intervention, might be vulnerable to diminished reading outcomes or attrition.

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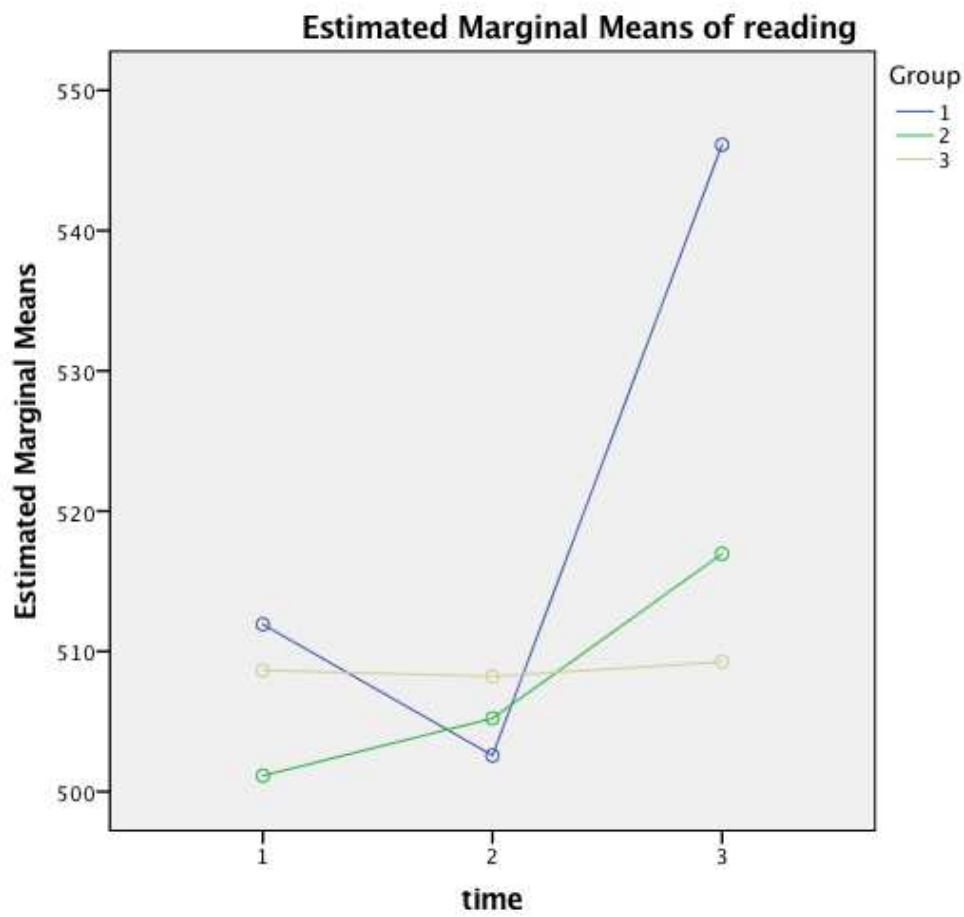
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Figure 1

Trends in I-Ready Reading Comprehension Scores In 3 Different Settings, Over 3 Distinct Assessment Windows



Times: BOY = 1, MOY = 2, EOY = 3

Groups: LRSS = 1, SBC = 2, TC = 3

APPENDIX A

Appendix A contains the Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi Institutional Review Board Approval Letter. The study was conducted after appropriate permission was granted from the Institutional Review Board in accordance with all ethical mandates for research on human subjects.



OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
Division of Research, Commercialization and Outreach

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Human Subjects Protection Program Institutional Review Board

APPROVAL DATE: April 10, 2017
TO: Paula Freeman
CC: Dr. Joshua Watson, Dr. Marvarene Oliver, Dr. Michelle Hollenbaugh
FROM: Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
SUBJECT: Initial Approval

Protocol Number: HSRP #66-17
Title: The Efficacy of a Literacy Related Social Skills Group
Review Category: Expedited 7
Expiration Date: April 10, 2018

Approval determination was based on the following Code of Federal Regulations:

Eligible for Expedited Approval (45 CFR 46.110): Identification of the subjects or their responses (or the remaining procedures involving identification of subjects or their responses) will NOT reasonably place them at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the their financial standing, employability, insurability, reputation, or be stigmatizing, unless reasonable and appropriate protections will be implemented so that risks related to invasion of privacy and breach of confidentiality are no greater than minimal.

Criteria for Approval has been met (45 CFR 46.111) - The criteria for approval listed in 45 CFR 46.111 have been met (or if previously met, have not changed).

- (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Provisions:

Comments: The TAMUCC Human Subjects Protections Program has implemented a post-approval monitoring program. All protocols are subject to selection for post-approval monitoring.

This research project has been approved. As principal investigator, you assume the following responsibilities:

1. Informed Consent: Information must be presented to enable persons to voluntarily decide whether

APPENDIX B:

Appendix B contains forms used to attain parental consent and student assent. These forms were made available in Spanish, and all parents and participants were encouraged to complete the forms in the language they were best able to understand. All parents and participants chose the English language versions of the forms, and therefore these were the forms included in Appendix B.

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

The Efficacy of Literacy-Related Social Skills for Early Readers

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as the parent of a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to let your child participate in this research study. This form will also be used to record your consent if you decide to let your child be involved in this study.

If you agree, your child will be asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to determine whether social skills intervention, including social prediction, social context, and social inference, improve reading comprehension scores for students who fall below the 50th percentile on a nationally normed reading skills inventory. The purpose of this study is to better understand how children acquire reading comprehension skills and determine whether a literacy-related social skills group could potentially help students become better readers. Your child was chosen for potential participation in this study because his or her reading comprehension scores were below the 50th percentile in a nationally normed I-Ready reading test.

What will my child be asked to do?

If you allow your child to participate in this study, he/she will be asked to participate in TIER instruction and a brief, weekly, reading assessment designed to track his or her reading progress. Some TIER instruction may take place in his or her classroom and some may take place in a small group in the counselor's office. All assessment will take place in the counselor's office. This study will be conducted over 4-6 weeks in the classroom or small group setting. Weekly assessments will take less than 20 minutes and occur in the counselor's office.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated with this study are a breach in the student's confidentiality. Other students might know that your child participates in small group instruction. The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks your child ordinarily encounters in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

The possible benefits of participation are improved reading comprehension scores and a close monitoring of your child's reading comprehension progress.

Does my child have to participate?

No, your child doesn't have to be in this research study. You can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

What if my child does not want to participate?

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study. If your child does not want to participate he/she will not be included in the study without penalty. If your child initially agrees to be in the study he/she can withdraw at any point during the study without penalty.

Who will know about my child's participation in this research study?

This study is confidential and all your child's information will be accessible through a password coded system. Only you, your child, and school personnel with an educational "need to know" will have access to the password protected information. Any use of your child's scores or data will be attached from their confidential local identification number to a pseudonym. No identifiers linking you or your child to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Paula Freeman, professional school counselor, and you will have access to the records.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Paula Freeman, professional school counselor, at 361-903-6557, pfreeman@tmisd.us, or 361-903-6550.

Whom do I contact about my child's rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and/or the Office of Research Compliance at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. To report a problem or for questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance at (361) 825-2497, or send email to IRB@tamucc.edu"

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to allow your child to participate in this study.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ **Date:**

Printed Name:

Printed Name of Child:

Student Assent Form

ASSENT FORM

The Efficacy of a Literacy-Related Social Skills Group

Introduction

My name is Paula Freeman and I am a student at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. I am doing a research project about how students learn to read. Research is a way to test new ideas. Research helps us learn new things.

I would like you to help with my study because I think we could work together to track and improve your reading.

What will I be asked to do?

If you want to help with my study, I will ask you to work in your classroom with your teacher or with me in small group on your reading and show how much you have learned each week by using the computer. This study will take 4-6 weeks.

What are the risks to me?

The risks to you are that other students might know you are participating in the groups. The risks to you are no bigger than the risks you have each day.

What good can happen?

The good things that could happen to you are that your reading might improve.

Do I have to be part of the study?

No. You do not have to be part of the study. Your parents said you can be in the study, and you do not have to because they said you can. You should only be part of this study because you want to.

Who will know I am part of the study?

Your name will be kept secret from everyone except your teacher and your parents. You can stop being part of the study whenever you want to. You can tell your parents, your teacher, me, or any adult that you would like to stop, and it is OK.

Signature

You have been told about the research study. You had a chance to ask questions. You can ask questions at any time. You can stop being in the study at any time.

If you sign your name below, it means that you agree to be part of this research study.

Your Name (Printed)

Age

Date

Your Signature
