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Master's Program

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Certification of Authorship: I certify that I am the author of this paper and that any assistance I received in its preparation is fully acknowledged and disclosed in the paper. I also have cited any sources from which I used data, ideas, or words, either quoted directly or paraphrased. I certify that this paper was prepared by me specifically for the purpose of this assignment, as directed.

Student's Signature: Sarah Martin

Needs Assessment, Process Tools, and Data Collection

Sarah Martin

Concordia Chicago

Introduction

School Demographics and the Community

The Bucyrus City School District in Bucyrus, Ohio is located in central Ohio about half way between Cleveland and Columbus. Bucyrus City Schools has a total of about 1340 students in the district. The district is comprised of six square miles and divided into only two buildings with 775 students at the elementary building and 565 students at the secondary building. There has been a steep decline in enrollment due to open enrollment, and this has negatively impacted the district.

Bucyrus is considered a rural, low socioeconomic school. Even though the school is a city school, it is considered rural since the city and district are surrounded by farmland and countryside. 91% of the students are Caucasian, 4% are multiracial, and 2% are Latino. 23% of Bucyrus students have disabilities and the non-student with disabilities population also struggles academically. The grade card from the state ranges from C-F. Many children have difficulty passing the state tests. There is an after-school program offered to those children who struggle academically, which is a large portion of the students. Many students have disciplinary issues, so this also hinders learning. 67% of Bucyrus students are economically disadvantaged and come from low income homes. At Bucyrus Elementary specifically, this percentage rises to 72% economically disadvantaged. Every child receives free breakfast, many of our children receive free lunches, and those students who attend the afterschool program receive free dinner. There is also a backpack program for students who may not have food over the weekends throughout the school year.

There is very little parental involvement at Bucyrus City Schools. At the elementary school, there is a PTO that is run by three or four parents. There are a few parents who volunteer

to serve as teachers' aides. Another problem is that parents frequently do not show up for IEP meetings, parent-teacher conferences, or school-wide events. Like many communities, Bucyrus has a severe drug problem. Many parents suffer from addiction and several have been arrested for dealing drugs. There are also many parents who are incarcerated for other reasons. Another issue is that many families in the district face is that they are fixed into the cycle of poverty. Many parents in the district most likely do not place high values on education.

Fortunately, Bucyrus has strong business community engagement. "The Leader in Me" Initiative was recently started, and the \$50,000 program cost was funded by community businesses. Also, recently built in Bucyrus was the Crawford Success Center, a branch of North Central State College, to conveniently service high school graduates who would like to attend college in town. Crawford 20/20 Vision has also been founded in Crawford County and is centered in Bucyrus. This group uses collaborative efforts to draw on the strengths of the community including schools, churches, and businesses. The business community definitely shows a vested interest in seeing the students and school do well since this will build a stronger community.

Mission and Vision in Relation to School Improvement

The overall vision of Bucyrus City Schools is "The Relentless Pursuit of Success" with the more specific mission being "We, the Bucyrus School Community, are inspired to achieve excellence, realize limitless potential, discover passions, and be outstanding members of society" (Bucyrus City Schools, 2016, p. 1). The goal of Bucyrus City Schools is to make children successful and be able to function as part of society no matter what their socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or disability. We would like for all children to know that they matter, that what they have to offer makes a difference, and that they can be successful in life.

One improvement that has taken place at Bucyrus Elementary School is the implementation of the Leader in Me initiative. The business community in town has funded \$50,000 for the Leader in Me initiative and the school, in turn, invites these community leaders into the school for events related to the initiative. This initiative was implemented with the intent of changing student behaviors and habits which in turn should increase both academic success and improve behavior. Another improvement that is in the beginning stages of being implemented is changing the image of the teachers in the eyes of the parents. Through perception data, the superintendent has assessed that parents have a negative idea of the teachers which includes teacher communication to parents and teacher approachability. The district has hired a marketing and public relations firm to perform a communications audit of the district.

An additional improvement that has been made is “Crawford Reads 20”. United Way of Crawford County and Crawford County Family and Children First Council along with Bucyrus City Schools have partnered together to create this initiative. This is a county-wide literacy initiative intended to encourage the parents to read to their child for at least twenty minutes each day. This initiative is a result of data collected from a community health assessment that showed that a majority of parents do not read to their children. This initiative will improve the children’s reading skills and increase the community’s value of academics.

Analysis of Three Areas of Strength with Supporting Data

Grade 4 Social Studies Achievement. The social studies achievement at Bucyrus Elementary, specifically at the fourth grade level, has been a strength over the past three years as shown by the Ohio’s State Achievement Test data. While the trend for the other subject areas is to not have a large enough percentage of students passing the tests to meet state indicators, the social studies scores have not only met the indicators for the past three years, but they have also

exceeded the state average. Students from Bucyrus Elementary School scored 4% to 11% greater than the state average in 2015, 2016, and 2017 (*Figure 1*).

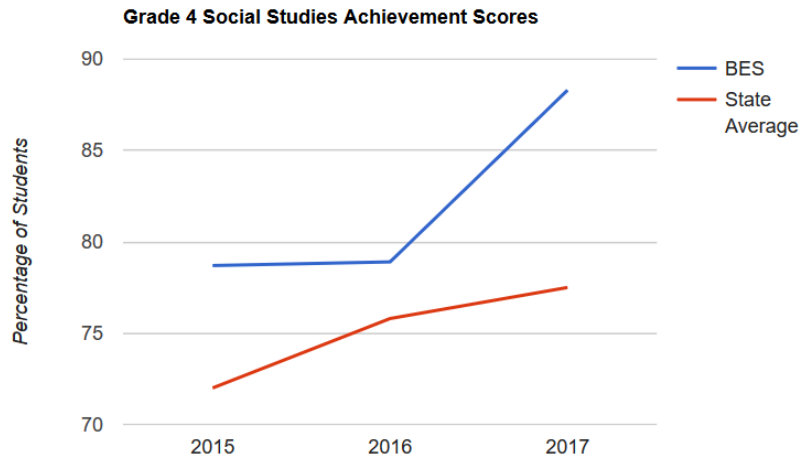


Figure 1

Most Kindergarten through third grade teachers spend a majority of their curricular day on teaching the core subjects of language arts and math, so this does not seem to be a factor in the success of the fourth grade social studies achievement. This leads to the assumption that the success is due to the preparation of the students by the fourth grade social studies teacher. When considering if the content for the social studies assessment was not as difficult as the other subject areas, which would make the test easier on which to score highly, there was no data or research to support this idea. Student preparation by the teacher seems to be the main factor in the favorable scores. This particular teacher spends much of his time during summer break planning the lessons he will teach throughout the school year, and he often uses cooperative learning, hands-activities, and role-playing to teach the students.

Attendance. Attendance at Bucyrus Elementary is very good as shown by in-house data stored by the principal and reflected in the advanced reports section of the Ohio State Report Card. The school has a consistent average attendance rate of 95% or greater for the past three

years. Most students rarely miss school. The majority of absences are comprised of students who are ill. There are also a few students who have chronic absenteeism, but this is a very small portion of the population.

Attendance can be attributed to several factors. As 67% of the student body comes from families with low socioeconomic status, many students benefit from coming to school by receiving the no-cost services the school has to offer. These include free breakfast and lunch, and free dinner for those in the after-school enrichment program. There is also free food for the weekend for many of the students through the school’s backpack program. In addition, we offer free dental work, eye exams, and the services of a school nurse. Many of the students receive more at school than they would at home, so this increases their desire to be at school.

Discipline. While severe discipline issues are of a concern at Bucyrus Elementary, there is encouraging in-house data that is logged by the principal regarding office referrals. Office referrals are generally written when the teachers are no longer able to handle classroom behaviors. Office referrals for minor behavioral infractions have decreased over the past five years. The data that has been logged each year shows that there has been a decrease from 1,018 office referrals in 2012 to 465 office referrals in 2017 (*Figure 2*).

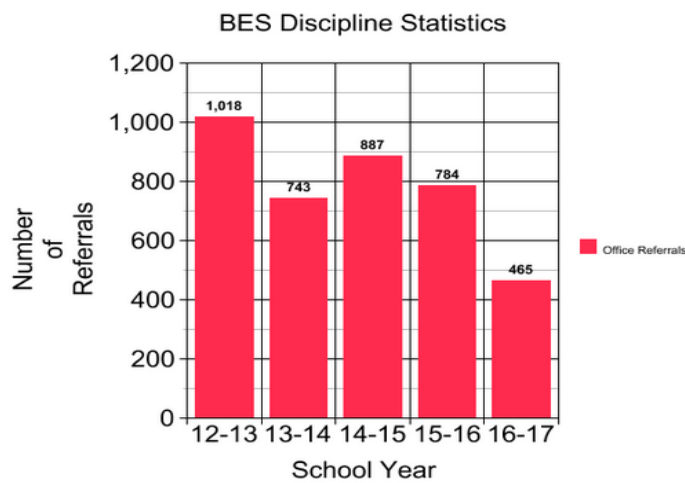


Figure 2

The decrease in office referrals can be attributed to several factors. The most important factor influencing this decrease is the implementation of the Leader in Me initiative. This program was implemented to increase academic success and decrease behavioral issues by teaching good habits that will make the students successful in life. Since starting the Leader in Me Initiative in the 2014-2015 school year, students have been taught the importance of being a leader in all aspects of their lives, including their behavior in school. This has helped decrease behavioral issues, thereby decreasing office referrals.

Another factor that has decreased office referrals is the teachers' understanding of behaviors that need referred to the office and those that do not. In the past, there have been teachers who have referred students for behaviors such as not having a pencil. While this can be problematic if it occurs on a daily basis for an extended period of time, this is usually not a situation when an office referral would be appropriate. Through the teachers' understanding of appropriate behaviors that should be referred and helping the students to change these behaviors, fewer referrals have been written, allowing the administration to focus their attention on helping to correct the more severe behaviors.

Analysis of Three Areas of Need with Supporting Data

Reading Achievement. Reading achievement is an area in need of improvement for Bucyrus Elementary School. Figure 3 shows a steady decline in indicators met in reading achievement on Ohio's state reading test over the past five years. In 2013, 73% to 84.3% of students in grades 3, 4, and 5 had a proficient score on the reading achievement test. This dropped consistently over 2104, 2015, and 2016 to between 42% and 58% students proficient in 2017. Specifically, there is a very sharp drop between 2014 and 2015. This is a very concerning trend.

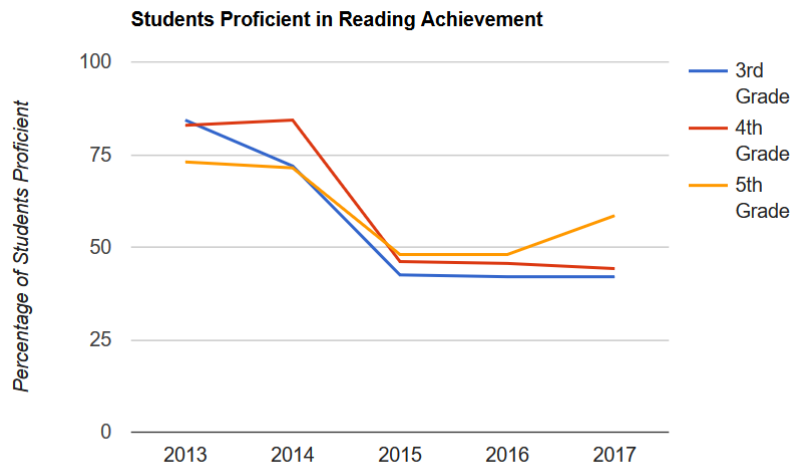


Figure 3

Looking deeper into the disaggregated data from the state report card provided to me by our testing coordinator, there is a sharp distinction between proficiency in reading for economically disadvantaged students and non-economically disadvantaged students (*Figure 4*). For 2016-17, in third grade, 14% more non-economically disadvantaged students demonstrated proficiency than economically disadvantaged students. In fourth grade, this difference increases to 42%, and in 5th grade, the difference is 23%.

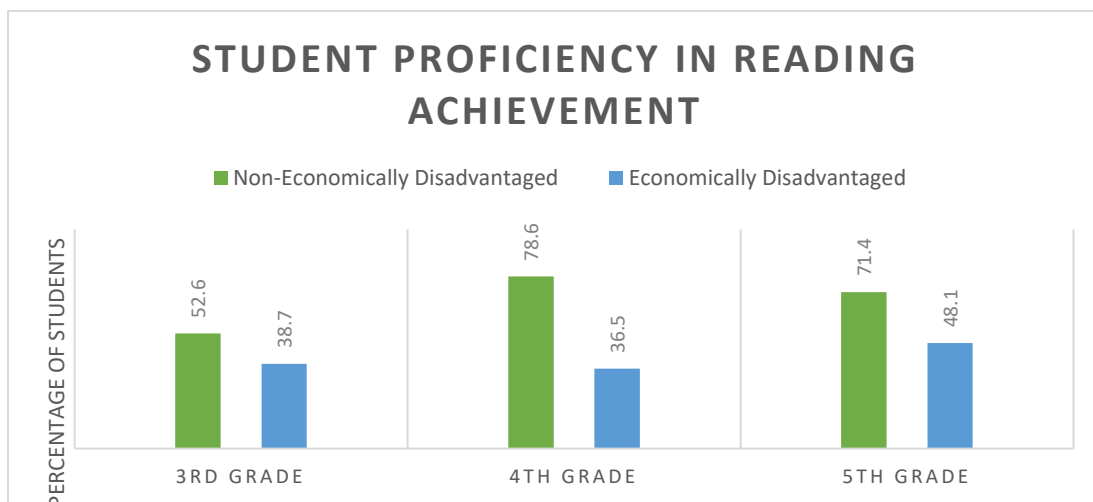


Figure 4

Taking the state report card data even a step further, there is a cross section of economically disadvantaged students who have specific learning disabilities. This cross section of students had the lowest percentage of students score proficient on the state reading test. Only 15.4% of third grade economically disadvantaged students with specific learning disabilities were proficient in reading, and in fourth grade, this percentage increase minimally to 16.7% (Figure 5). Data for this grouping of students in the fifth grade is not available.

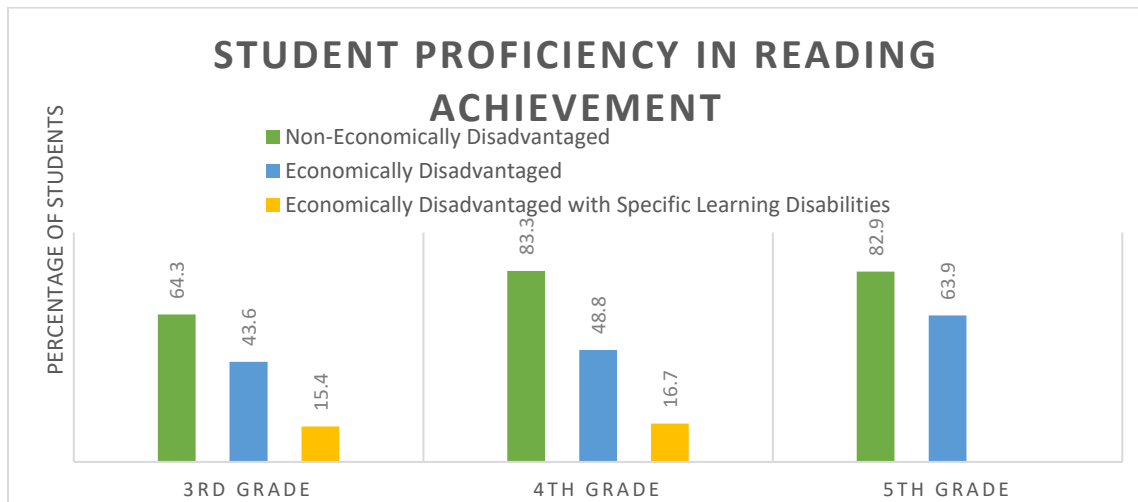


Figure 5

A possible reason for the step decline in scores for the state reading achievement test is the inconsistency in the test itself over the past couple of years. A fellow student recently pointed out to me that when the state changed from the OAA (Ohio Achievement Assessment) to the current format, this format is very much unknown to the teachers and students making preparation very difficult. This could easily result in lower test scores. Even if this does factor into the lower scores, there is enough other data and anecdotal evidence to show the need for improvement in reading for not only all students, but especially economically disadvantaged students and students with specific learning disabilities.

Because of the high percentage of low socioeconomic families in Bucyrus and the trend for these families to not place high priority on reading and literacy, reading achievement scores are far below where they need to be. Data from the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment indicates that a high percentage of students entering Kindergarten are not on track for where they should be for literacy achievement. It is apparent that many children are not exposed to reading and literacy in the preschool years. This has an effect on literacy later in elementary school. “Children who have not been read to before they enter school may not have experience listening to rhythms and sounds. They may also not have developed an interest in reading; that is, they may not be motivated to learn to read” (Factors Affecting Reading, 2013, p.6-7).

Open Enrollment Out. Data provided by the superintendent shows a high mobility rate of students due to open enrollment into neighboring school districts. While the state grade card records the mobility rates of 12% to 15% as students who did not remain in the district for the entire year, this does not take in to account students who live in the district but have attended another school for the duration of the year. There are 275 students who open enroll out, and the number usually grows larger every year. This is a problem since the district loses state funding for each student who attends another school due to open enrollment. We gain students from open enrollment in, but the number of students coming in does not balance the number going out.

There are many reasons for parents choosing to open enroll their children in other districts. Data from a community survey revealed these reasons. The reasons for open enrollment include school atmosphere, student discipline, and school safety. Some comments from parents collected through the survey about why they chose to enroll their children in another school include, “The school my kid attends does not have troubled kids who bother my kids...”, “Get the troubled kids out of the regular classrooms. They are disruptive and a bad

influence...” and “Do not approve of the way they handle bullying and discipline.” Much of this data points toward severe discipline issues as the reason for open enrollment.

Severe Discipline. There is a need for improvement in severe behaviors in a small population of students at Bucyrus Elementary as evidenced by out-of-school suspension and emergency removal data from inhouse data, the state report card, and perceptions data from a parent survey. This data shows that there are a high number of suspensions and emergency removals which generally come from a small population of students (*Figure 6*).

BES Suspension and Emergency Removal Statistics

YEAR	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of Out-of-School Suspensions and Emergency Removals	167	103	113	62	167

Figure 6

Anecdotal evidence reveals that many teachers at Bucyrus Elementary do not feel equipped to deal with students who have severe behaviors. This is a concerning trend because it has a negative effect on the students. Students who cause excessive distraction in the classroom coupled with teachers who are unsure of how to handle students such as this makes for a poor learning situation. This situation has also led to a number of parents choosing to open enroll their students in another district.

There are many reasons that students may have severe negative behaviors. Generally, this is usually a cause that is relating to their home lives or upbringing, carrying over to school. A possible reason for this trend continuing at Bucyrus Elementary School is the school’s tolerance of these behaviors and acceptance of students with severe behaviors from other districts through open enrollment in. Because of the issue the district has with large numbers of

students open enrolling out, there is often acceptance of students with negative behaviors from other districts. The school tolerates these behaviors in order to retain these students in an effort to even out the enrollment numbers.

Identification of Need Area and School Improvement Efforts to Date

While there are many areas of need at Bucyrus Elementary School, one of the greatest areas of need is reading achievement. As reading is foundational to academic and life skills, a need for improvement in reading cannot be overlooked. This area of need has been recognized previously and has been addressed in several manners, but in order to see improvement, it should be addressed more comprehensively.

There have been many efforts to address this area of need throughout the district and community. Three years ago, a literacy coach was hired for the district. In these 3 years, the Fountas and Pinnell literacy teaching system was implemented along with the Lucy Calkins reading and writing methods. In addition, the Leveled Literacy Intervention teachers were hired to work with struggling readers. The district has spent a great deal of time and resources in the past few years on the support of reading achievement at the elementary level. Tobal, Schilling, and Trybus (2013) stated that "...organizational needs to improve student achievement are also dependent on availability of school resources which have to be carefully assessed in order to provide the support needed for school improvement" (p. 10). Bucyrus Elementary School has already allotted many resources toward improving reading achievement, but this needs to continue and expand in order for more improvement to be shown. Additionally, "Crawford Reads 20" has been implemented by community agencies who partnered with Bucyrus City schools to encourage parents to read to their children for twenty minutes each day.

Data Analysis and Summary of Results

Having determined reading achievement as an area of need at Bucyrus Elementary, the process tool of a needs assessment was designed to distribute to the staff. The needs assessment was written in the form of a survey (see Appendix A), and the intent was to gain information on teacher perception data about the current reading achievement in the district. A document of permission was signed by the principal allowing the survey to be distributed. (See Appendix B). The staff was chosen as the group to complete the survey because they have the greatest effect on reading achievement. After considering various methods to collect the information from this survey such as Google Forms and Survey Monkey, it was determined that the survey would be distributed as a paper-pencil survey. The reason for the paper-pencil survey is that the staff is inundated with electronic and email communications making the possibility of overlooking the survey likely. All teachers in the building who teach reading were sent an email inviting them to take part in the survey, but to minimize any persuasion which may have been implied, they were also given the opportunity to decline participation. The results of the survey were kept anonymous. All of the paper-pencil surveys were completed and returned.

In order to minimize bias, the needs assessment was designed with multiple forms of questions. There were 23 Likert scale questions and 3 open-ended questions from 7 categories including school policies, communications, student-centered learning, instruction and resources, curriculum, organizational climate, and community involvement. When writing the survey questions, the aim was to keep the phrasing neutral while being single-focused. This, along with placing the more personal, open-ended questions at the end of the survey helped minimize both survey and respondent bias.

After the staff completed the survey, the results were analyzed. Pie charts were created using the results of the survey to show the frequency distributions for the questions. The

questions in the survey related directly to reading achievement. There were many favorable responses showing strengths, or at least perceived strengths in reading in many areas of our school. One trend of note is that while many questions were answered favorably by the majority, there was a constituency of respondents who answered mostly negatively. Because the surveys were written surveys, it can be determined that, in general, the negative responses across the survey were given by the same people. Additionally, there were several responses that stood out because they pointed to an area of need. Most of these were related to student-centered learning and parental involvement.

In the area of communication, the trend shows that most teachers felt that communication about reading is effective. 76% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that teachers being communicated with about reading and that teachers communicating with parents is an area of strength (*Figures 7 and 8*). The literacy coach often meets with teachers and provides professional development about reading. Teachers communicate to parents through phone calls, notes home, parent-teacher conferences, and progress reports.

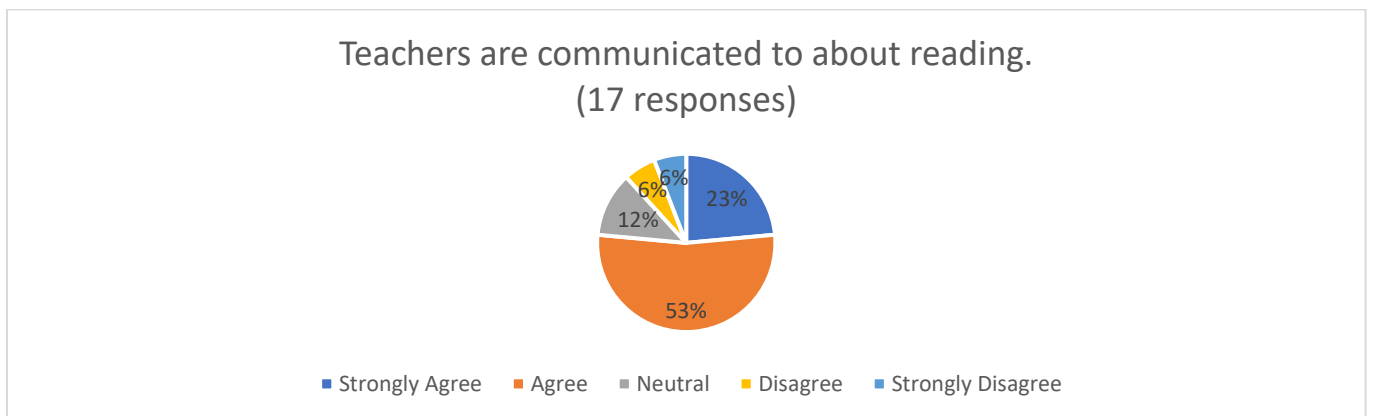


Figure 7

Teacher communicate with parents about reading.
(17 responses)

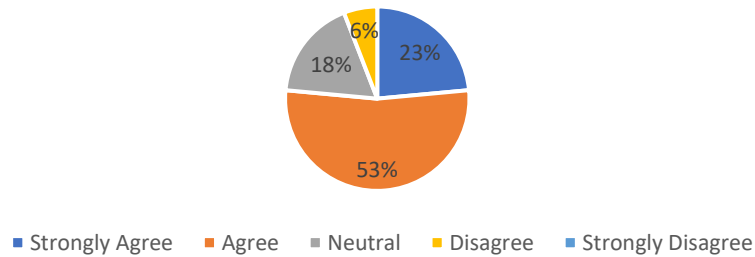


Figure 8

Additionally, 61% of teachers felt they are able to communicate to administration with suggestions or concerns regarding reading instruction (Figure 9). While this is a majority, it is of concern that over one third (39%) of teachers either felt that they cannot communicate with administration or are unsure of if they can. Teachers are the ones who are on the forefront in the classroom, so they should feel comfortable enough to approach administration and feel as though they are heard.

Teachers feel like they are able to communicate with administration
about reading. (17 responses)

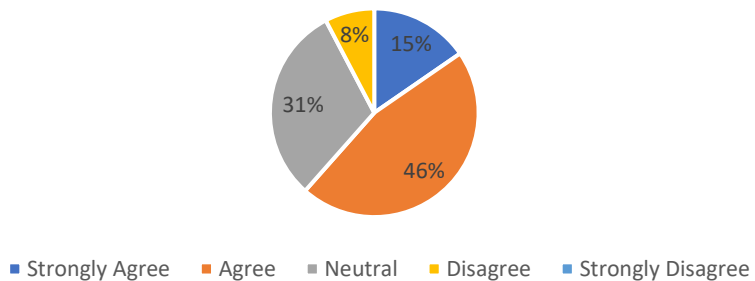


Figure 9

In the category of student-centered learning, the majority of teachers (71%) felt that preschoolers who enter Kindergarten more prepared in reading than in the prior years (Figure

10). This is most likely because reading has been a focus in our school, including our preschool. Preschool students are included in all school activities.

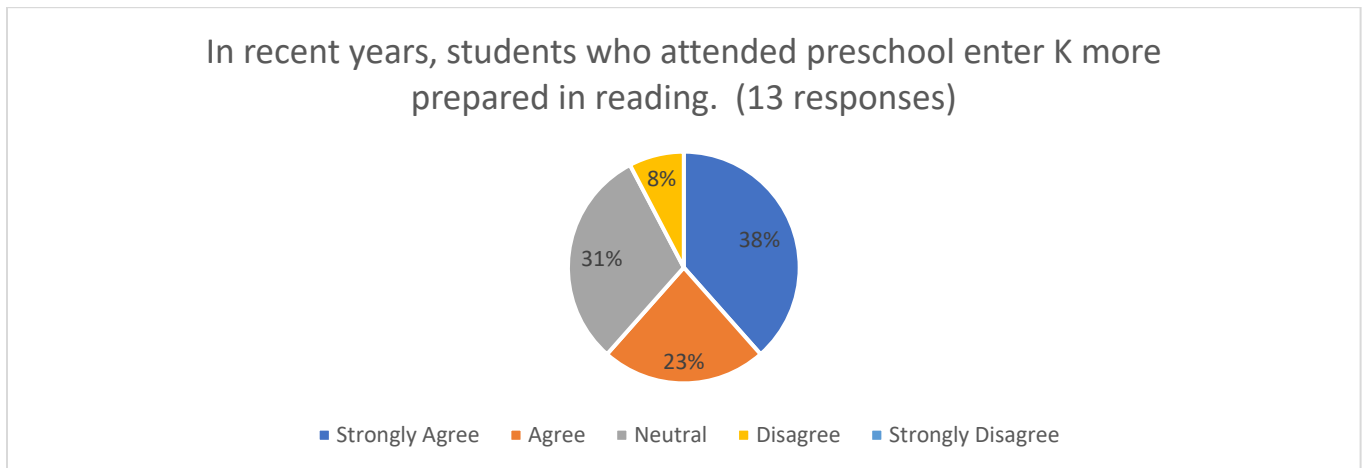


Figure 10

Also, most teachers felt that students who attended preschool are more prepared in reading in Kindergarten than those who did not (*Figure 11*). This is obviously because those in preschool receive more intensive instruction than those who remained at home. Alternatively, no teachers felt that students who did not attend preschool were more prepared in reading than those who did attend preschool (*Figure 12*). Even with community efforts such as “Crawford Reads 20” that has placed the importance of reading to young children and reading in the community at the forefront, there does not seem to be much preparation in reading for children who do not attend preschool. Often children come to preschool screening not even knowing the correct way to hold a book.

Students who attended preschool are more prepared than those who did not. (14 responses)

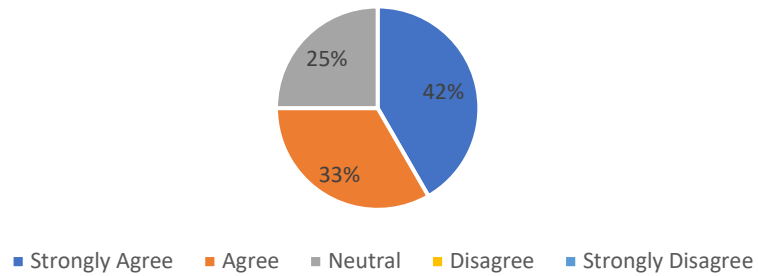


Figure 11

In recent years, students who did not attend preschool enter K more prepared in reading. (13 responses)

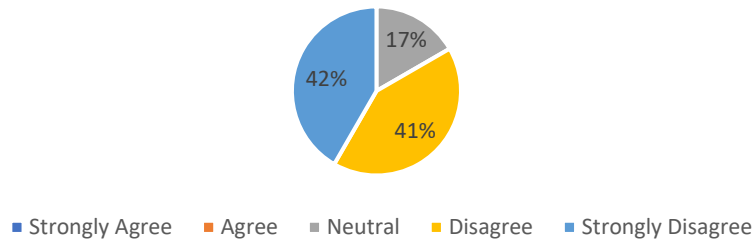


Figure 12

A trend in student-centered learning is that most teachers viewed student enjoyment in reading as positive (*Figures 13 and 14*). Due to low test scores and poor achievement in reading in general, it may have been expected that students do not enjoy reading but this is not what the majority of teachers' perceptions regarding this topic.

Students show enjoyment in being read to. (16 responses)

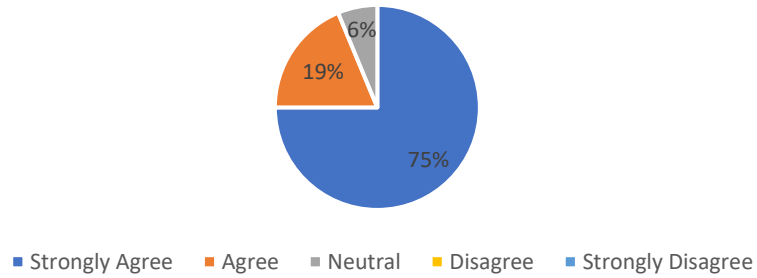


Figure 13

Students show enjoyment in reading alone. (16 responses)

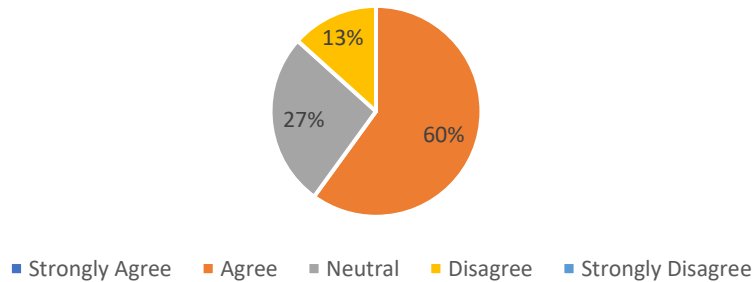


Figure 14

Alternatively, there is a different view of students taking ownership of learning in reading and understanding the importance of reading. Only 25% of teachers felt that students take ownership of their learning in reading. That leaves 75% of teachers who either perceived that students do not take ownership of their learning or they are not sure if they do (Figure 15). Additionally, most teachers felt that students do not understand the importance of reading. Only 40% of teachers felt students understand the importance of reading (Figure 16). This is certainly an area that will need addressed.

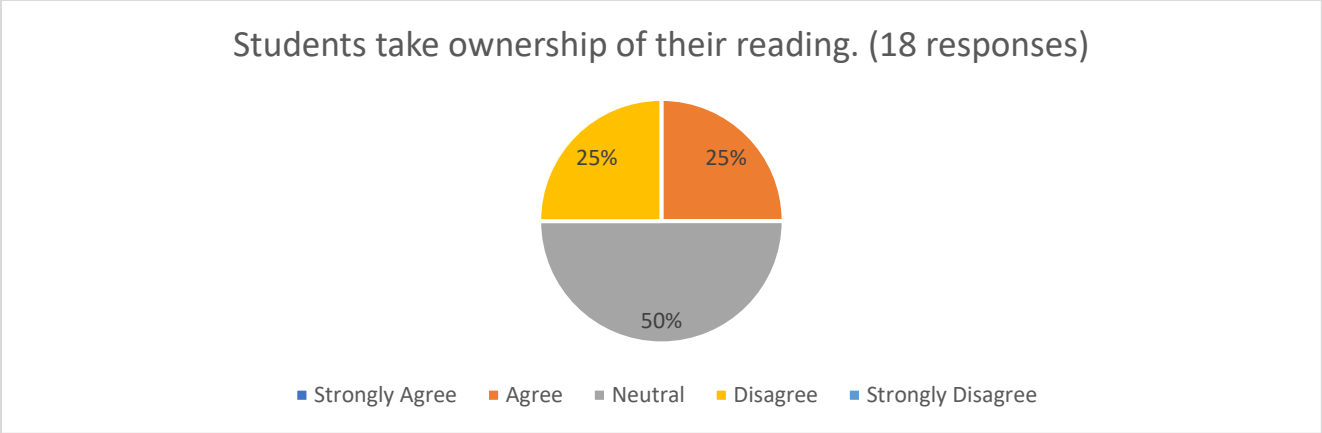


Figure 14

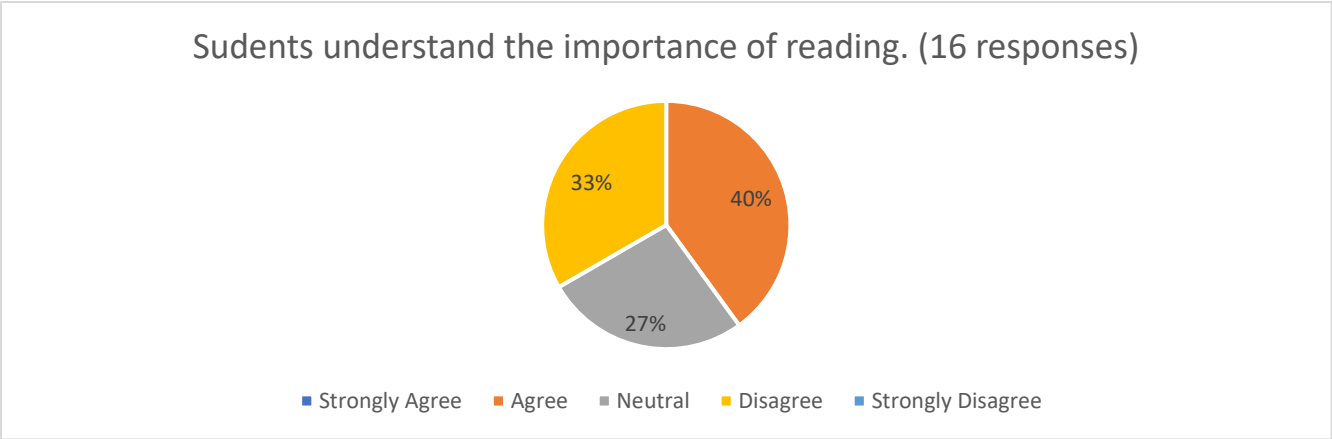


Figure 15

In the category of reading instruction, there was the teacher perception from the majority that they are trained in effective reading instruction techniques and that the reading curriculum can be differentiated to meet the needs of every student (*Figures 16 and 17*). While there has been some training in reading instruction techniques, in speaking with the literacy coach and after interviewing the principal, there is a discrepancy in the effectiveness of guided reading instruction among teachers. Both the literacy coach and principal felt that some teachers who thought they were implementing effective guided reading instruction techniques were not necessarily doing so. They also felt that more professional development on this was needed.

Teachers are trained in effective reading instruction techniques.
(16 responses)

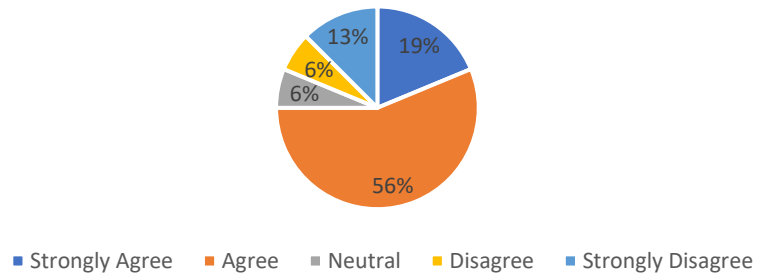


Figure 16

The reading curriculum can be differentiated to meet the needs of every student. (17 responses)

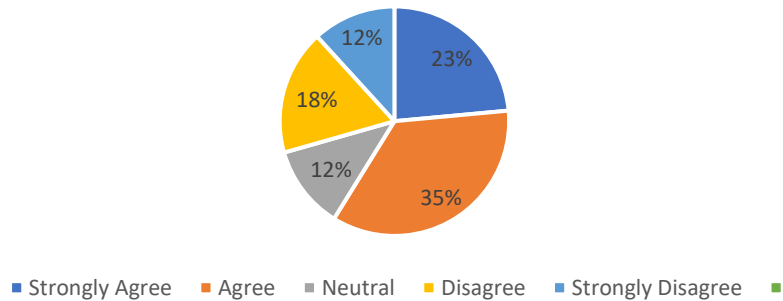


Figure 17

An area of improvement that a majority of teachers felt is needed is in the consistency of the reading curriculum between grade levels (*Figure 18*). 75% of teachers felt that the reading curriculum is not consistent between grade levels. While each grade level team is very confident in the way they teach reading and the resources they use, it is not uncommon for other grade level teams to approach reading instruction very differently and use different resources. This is an area that will need addressed.

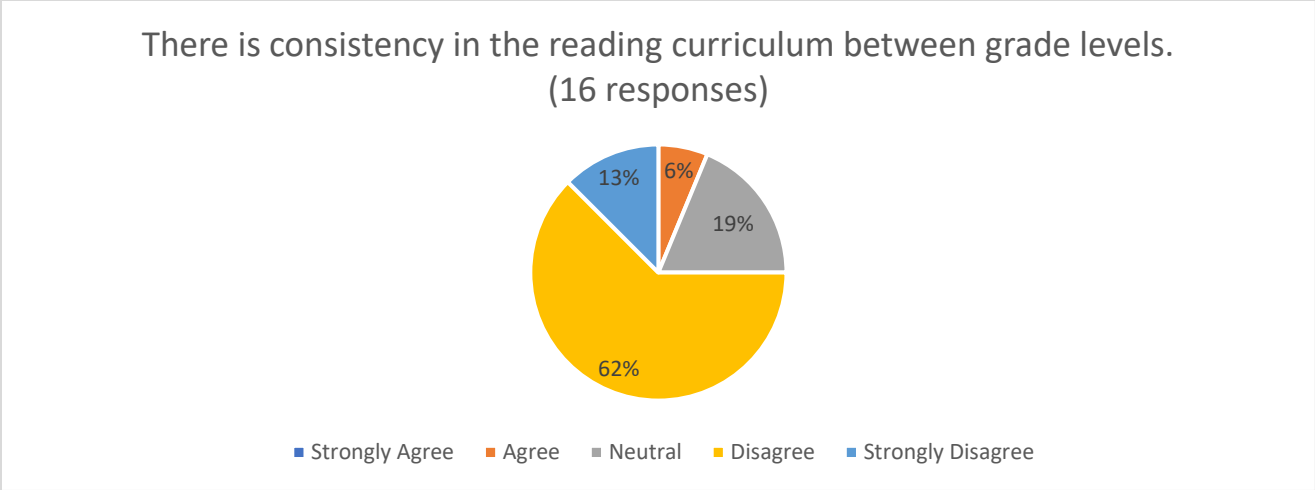


Figure 18

Regarding parent involvement in reading, there was a trend that most teachers felt that parents are not involved. 72% of teachers felt that parents do not read to their children at home (*Figure 19*). 78% of teachers believed that parents do not understand the importance of reading, and 82% of teachers felt that parents do not understand the importance of being literate in society (*Figures 20 and 21*). This is definitely an area that will need focus. Parent influence on reading is important and without parent support, it is much more difficult to make reading important to children at school. This is supported in the data from the students who do not attend preschool having lower reading achievement than those who did attend preschool (*Figure 12*). Likewise, students not taking ownership of their learning in reading (*Figure 14*) and students not understanding of the importance of reading (*Figure 15*) are reflected in this lack of parental support.

Parents read to their children at home. (17 responses)

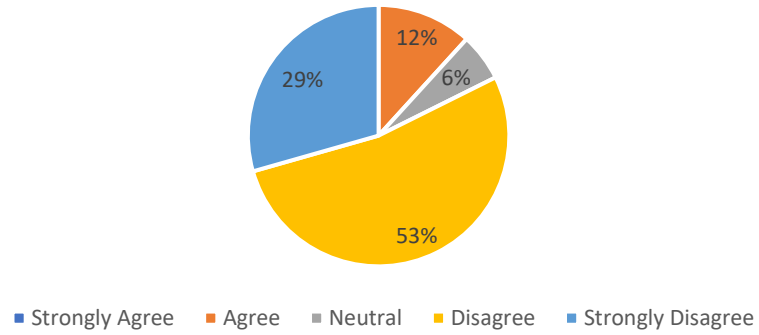


Figure 19

Parents are aware of the importance of reading to children. (17 responses)

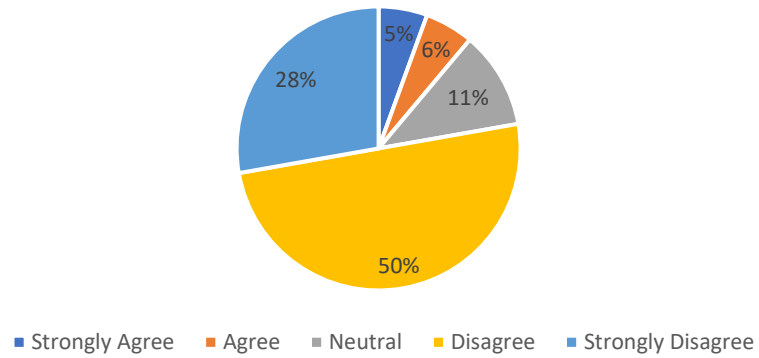
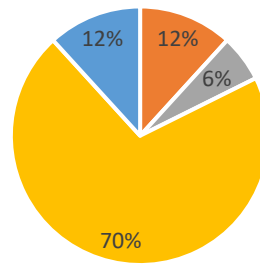


Figure 20

Parents are aware of the importance of literacy in society.
(17 responses).



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

Figure 21

From the open-ended questions, there was one trend that was noticeable. For the question about what teachers would do to improve the reading program, every person taking the survey answered that they would have more people to help with reading instruction. Half of the respondents answered that they would hire more reading teachers. The others answered that they would either bring in more volunteers to help with reading or that they would hire more paraprofessionals so that every teacher would have extra help during their reading block. This seems to be an important topic that will need explored further.

Action Plan

After the analysis of the survey data, an action plan was developed to help improve reading achievement scores at Bucyrus Elementary. Three SMART Goals were designed with one being a student-focused goal, one being a parent-focused goal, and the final being a teacher-focused goal. Through the survey it was determined that each of these groups could positively affect reading achievement.

SMART Goal #1: By the end of the 2019-2020 school year, Bucyrus Elementary School students will show an increase of 5% annually as measured by the annual state reading assessments.

Action Step	Person(s) Responsible)	Timeframe	Evidence of Effectiveness
<p>Develop staff understanding of the need for increasing reading scores on state assessments through PD.</p> <p>Allow for staff input for how to improve scores.</p> <p>Release time will be granted as needed.</p>	<p>BLT</p> <p>Admin</p> <p>Literacy Teachers</p>	<p>Sep. 2018</p>	<p>State Reading Assessment Scores</p> <p>TBT Meeting Notes</p> <p>Staff Idea Notes</p>
<p>Literacy teachers will ensure alignment of curriculum to State Standards.</p> <p>Release time will be granted as needed.</p>	<p>Literacy Teachers</p> <p>Admin</p>	<p>Sep. 2018 to Dec. 2018</p>	<p>State Reading Assessment Scores</p> <p>Curriculum Map</p> <p>Pacing Guides</p> <p>PD Notes on aligning curriculum</p>
<p>Teachers will begin to work cooperatively with grades above and below to align the reading curriculum.</p> <p>Release time will be granted as needed.</p>	<p>Literacy Teachers</p> <p>Admin</p>	<p>Sep. 2018 to May 2022</p>	<p>State Reading Assessment Scores</p> <p>Curriculum Map</p> <p>Pacing Guides</p> <p>PD Notes on aligning curriculum</p>
<p>Literacy teachers will use formative and summative assessments to determine student deficits.</p> <p>Release time will be granted as needed.</p>	<p>Literacy teachers</p>	<p>Sep. 2018 to May 2019</p>	<p>Assessment scores and rubric scores; formative data</p> <p>TBT Meeting Notes</p>
<p>Literacy teachers will implement Universal Design for Learning in the classroom daily.</p> <p>Proper instructional time will be devoted to this.</p>	<p>Admin</p> <p>BLT</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Outside consultants</p>	<p>Sep. 2018 to May 2021</p>	<p>State Reading Assessment Scores</p> <p>Lesson Plans</p> <p>Formative Student Data</p>

			Teacher Instructional Walk Data and Admin Walk Through Data TBT meeting notes PD Notes on Research-Based Instructional Strategies
Teachers will receive training on how UDL and guided reading work together. Release time will be granted as needed.	Admin Teachers	Oct. 2018	State Reading Assessment Scores PD Notes

The first SMART Goal for improving reading achievement at Bucyrus Elementary is for students to increase state reading assessment scores by 5% by 2020. If reading achievement is to improve overall, it will be reflected in the improvement in the state assessment scores. To achieve this goal, the first task is to make teachers aware of the need for this improvement through professional development at TBT meetings. While most teachers will be aware of this need, there will be some who will not acknowledge that the low reading achievement can be remedied. Administration will arrange for release time for all trainings and work sessions within this goal. If state test scores improve by 5% by 2020, then the goal will have been met.

Literacy teachers will need to be sure that the reading curriculum align to the state standards, since this is directly reflected in the assessment. It is important to teach the topics that are expected at each grade level. It has been found that "...improved student performance on standardized tests can result when teachers carefully align instruction with learning goals and assessments. An analysis of international studies shows implementing and monitoring an aligned curriculum to result in a measurable impact (31 percentile points) in student achievement" (The Benefits of Curriculum, 2004). Additionally, teachers will need to align the reading curricula

between grade levels. The teacher survey revealed that most teachers felt that the curriculum does not align, so to see improvement, it will be beneficial for children to be on a continuous path throughout the years, not having to change directions each year.

Also, literacy teachers will need to analyze the data from the state assessments to determine where weak areas are occurring. This will give the teachers the knowledge they need to approach a path of correction. Without knowing in which areas the children are struggling, corrective action cannot be taken. Craig Jerald (2006) stated that “When teachers and administrators examine data as part of the school improvement process, school improvement teams become more efficient and effective, decision making becomes more collaborative, teachers develop more positive attitudes about their own and their students’ abilities, and educators begin to feel more in charge of their own destinies” (as cited by Richard & Mero, 2004, p. 35).

Finally, as Universal Design for Learning has already been implemented within the district, each literacy teacher will need to use UDL daily. Since guided reading will be the focus of their teaching, teachers will receive professional development on how guided reading fits within the premise of UDL. As UDL uses multiple means of representation, expression and engagement, there are many ways that guided reading could fit within this teaching method. It will be a priority to have the school day set up in a way to allow for adequate time for this instruction to occur.

SMART Goal #2: By the end of the 2019-2020 school year, Bucyrus Elementary will increase student achievement in reading by increasing the percentage of parents/families participating in literacy events by 25% in order to increase parental involvement in reading as measured by event sign-in sheets.			
Action Step	Person(s) Responsible)	Timeframe	Evidence of Effectiveness

Develop staff understanding of the need for parent involvement in reading through PD. Allow for staff ideas in how to get parents involved.	BLT Admin Literacy Teachers	Sep. 2018	TBT Meeting Notes Staff Idea Notes
Host family literacy nights.	Teachers Admin	Quarterly	Sign-in Sheets
Provide one book a month at literacy night for each family to add to a home library.	Admin	Monthly	Parent survey
Host parent literacy workshops.	Teachers Admin	Monthly	Sign-In Sheets
Invite family members to be reading partners at school.	Teachers Admin	Weekly	Sign-In Sheets
Invite families to school to watch how reading skills are taught.	Teachers	Weekly	Sign-In Sheets
Assign interactive reading homework	Teachers	Weekly	Homework Samples
Offer homework help nights for parents to get help with their children's reading homework.	Teachers Admin	Monthly	Sign-In Sheets
Send home newsletters, text messages, email messages and School Connect calls as well as well as promoting the school website and local newspaper that include reading tips and reading events at school.	Teachers Admin	Weekly/Mon thly	Newsletter Call Logs

The second SMART Goal for improving reading achievement at Bucyrus Elementary is to increase student achievement by increasing parent participation as evidenced by sign-in sheets. Since there is no specific data about how many parents have attended events regarding literacy in the past, and only anecdotal data that there has been poor attendance, a baseline will need to be collected at the first event of the school year. The goal of parent involvement is to improve student engagement, thereby improving student achievement. If parent attendance at reading events increases by 25%, then the goal will have been met. Teachers and administration will be responsible for implementing each step in the action plan, and all steps in this action plan will be completed by May 2019.

The first step to this goal is make teachers aware of the need for more parental involvement resulting in increased student engagement and achievement. While most teachers see the need for parental involvement, the teacher survey reflected that a small number of teachers felt that the parents are already involved and participating their children's educations. Even if this is true for a small majority of parents, there is still a long way to go to involving all of the other parents and families.

The next steps in the action plan consist of hosting quarterly family literacy nights and monthly parent literacy workshops. Both events will get parents on campus and involved in learning about literacy. The family night would involve parents bringing their children to participate in reading activities. Part of this night would involve providing these families with a book to take home to begin or add to a home library. The purpose of the parent night is for parents to learn techniques to help their child with reading activities at home. Baker and Scher (2002) found that "There is ample evidence that parents who promote the view that reading is a

valuable and worthwhile activity have children who are motivated to read for pleasure” (Clark, 2007, p.2).

Inviting parents and families to school during the school day on a weekly basis is an option for parents who cannot attend afterschool events. Those parents who feel comfortable could volunteer to read with students, somewhat like a tutor or mentor. Those parents who do not feel comfortable to read with students could come into the classroom and watch a literacy lesson or reading skills being taught. This would make them more comfortable with teaching reading skills or helping their children at home. Flouri & Buchanan (2004) found that “Parental involvement in their child’s literacy practices is a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education” (as cited by Clark, 2007, p. 1).

The next steps in the action plan involve homework. Interactive reading homework, where parents and students need to work together could be assigned, allowing the parent to become more involved in the child’s work. Also, parents who need more guidance for helping their children at home could attend a homework help night. This night is intended to teach parents how to help their children with reading homework. Both of these reading action steps could be offered on a weekly basis. Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich & Welsh (2004) stated that “Involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences...on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills...” (as cited by Clark, 2007, p. 1).

Finally, phone calls and newsletters home could be sent weekly reminding parents about upcoming reading events at the school such as those listed above. Also, text messages, emails, and website pages could be used. These forms of communication could also highlight the

importance of reading and tips for parents to use while working with their children on reading.

“Provision through various media also needs to be made to help guide parents to provide a literacy-rich and stimulating environment. Since not all parents realize the importance of their role in supporting their children’s literacy, or have the resources or capabilities to do so, it is important that the agencies in contact with them are able to offer them appropriate support”

(Clark, 2007, p. 2). These efforts to improve parental involvement should be directly reflected in the student’s engagement and achievement.

SMART Goal #3: By the end of the 2019-2020 school year, Bucyrus Elementary School teachers will increase their understanding of guided reading (including fluid student groupings) to in order to enhance engagement and comprehension as measured by logs of participation at school sponsored trainings and professional development, as well as staff surveys.			
Action Step	Person(s) Responsible)	Timeframe	Evidence of Effectiveness
<p>Develop staff understanding of the need for being aware of research-based strategies for teaching guided reading.</p> <p>Allow for staff input into their successes/challenges with guided reading.</p> <p>Release will be granted as needed.</p>	<p>Teachers</p> <p>Admin</p> <p>BLT</p>	<p>Sep. 2018</p>	<p>Training Log</p> <p>Teacher Survey</p> <p>TBT Notes</p> <p>Staff Idea Notes</p>
<p>Teachers will participate in a book study of “Guided Reading” by Fountas and Pinnell.</p> <p>Release time will be granted.</p>	<p>Teachers</p> <p>Admin</p>	<p>Sep. 2018</p> <p>to</p> <p>Oct. 2018</p>	<p>Training Log</p> <p>Teacher Survey</p> <p>Book Study Notes</p>
<p>Teachers will receive continued training on effective guided reading instruction.</p>	<p>Teachers</p> <p>Admin</p>	<p>Sep. 2018</p> <p>to</p> <p>May 2019</p>	<p>Training Log</p> <p>Teacher Survey</p> <p>PD Notes</p>

Release time will be granted as needed.			
Teachers will work with colleagues to plan guided reading instruction according to Fountas and Pinnell standards. Release time will be granted as needed.	Teachers Admin	Oct. 2018 to Dec. 2018	Training Log Teacher Survey Planning Notes
Teachers will view colleagues modeling proper guided reading strategies. Release time will be granted as needed.	Teachers Admin	Oct. 2018 to May 2019	Training Log Teacher Survey Teacher notes on strategies viewed.
Develop staff understanding of the need for flexible guided reading groups through continued PD. Release time will be granted as needed.	Teachers Admin	Jan. 2019	Training Log Teacher Survey PD Notes
Teachers will monitor student progress and adjust guided reading groups as necessary. Proper instructional time will be devoted to this.	Teachers	Jan. 2019 to May 2019	Guided Reading Data Reading Achievement Scores Lesson Plans Formative Student Data Teacher Instructional Walk Data and Admin Walk Through Data TBT meeting notes
Teachers will provide targeted interventions within guided reading groups when necessary.	Teachers	Jan. 2019 to May 2019	Guided Reading Data Reading Achievement Scores Lesson Plans

Proper instructional time will be devoted to this.			Formative Student Data Teacher Instructional Walk Data and Admin Walk Through Data TBT meeting notes
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The final SMART goal for improving reading achievement at Bucyrus Elementary is the teacher goal. Literacy teachers will increase their understanding of guided reading as evidenced by participation in professional development and trainings on guided reading. By increasing their understanding, they will increase their effectiveness of implementation, thereby increasing student reading achievement. Teacher training logs and surveys will serve as evidence of implementation. The administration will arrange for release time for all trainings, planning meetings, and observations related to this goal. All steps in this action plan will be completed by May 2019.

The first step in this plan, as in other action plans, will be to make teachers aware of the need for improvement in guided reading instruction. The teacher survey showed that most teachers felt that they were trained in effective reading instruction techniques. While teachers have been trained, they may not realize the discrepancies in the implementation in guided reading as noticed by those in monitoring positions such as the principal and literacy coordinator. The discrepancies need to be brought to the teachers' attentions, so they may become aware of the need for improvement. "If guided reading isn't working, we as teachers need to examine our instruction and determine where the problem lies" (Wren, 2014, p. 180).

The next step in the action plan is for teachers to participate in a book study using the book "Guided Reading" by Fountas and Pinnell. By studying this book, all teachers will gain the same view of guided reading. Also, teachers will receive continued training on guided reading

throughout the school year. The current state of guided reading in our school is that there are many differing views and methods of implementation. This continued training will keep everyone on the same page and will also help with aligning the curriculum.

Next, the teachers will work with colleagues to not only plan guided reading instruction, but to also plan times to observe each other in implementing guided reading strategies. The teachers will form groups with colleagues “to discuss common problems of practice, and then co-plan lessons to teach as colleagues observe” (Wren, 2014, p. 136). By working with colleagues, teachers will gain confidence while at the same time learning the same techniques allowing guided reading to become more consistent across the school. By watching others, much knowledge can be gained about the process of using guided reading within a classroom. Release time will be granted for this as well as all of the trainings and professional development.

Another training that the teachers will receive is that of the need for flexible guided reading groups. To implement effective guided reading, groups must be fluid and change as the students demonstrate or do not demonstrate new skills. “The groups are formed flexibly according to similar reading levels and demonstrated needs, and students are never sentenced to a specific group for an indefinite, lengthy period” (Wall, 2014, p. 135). Many teachers’ groups at Bucyrus Elementary remain stagnant for a length of time. As teachers become aware of the need for fluid groups, they can monitor them and then adjust as necessary. Also, they can apply targeted interventions within the group. Literacy teachers will be provided an adequate amount of time during the school day to implement these guided reading processes.

Process Tools

To build organizational capacity of the staff in the development of the action plan, several process tools were used. A Pareto chart is the first process tool that was used to help

determine high areas of need in regard to reading achievement. The chart was created using results from the staff survey regarding reading achievement, and it was shared with the staff through email. The staff then viewed the chart within a PowerPoint presentation as well as through paper copy at a staff meeting. There are many factors that affect reading instruction, so the goal of this chart was to visually show where the largest areas of concern lie. This made it very easy to determine what areas need addressed first. At Bucyrus Elementary, the largest need was in parental involvement, more specifically, in parents reading at home to their children (Figure 22).

Teacher Perception of Reading Achievement at BES

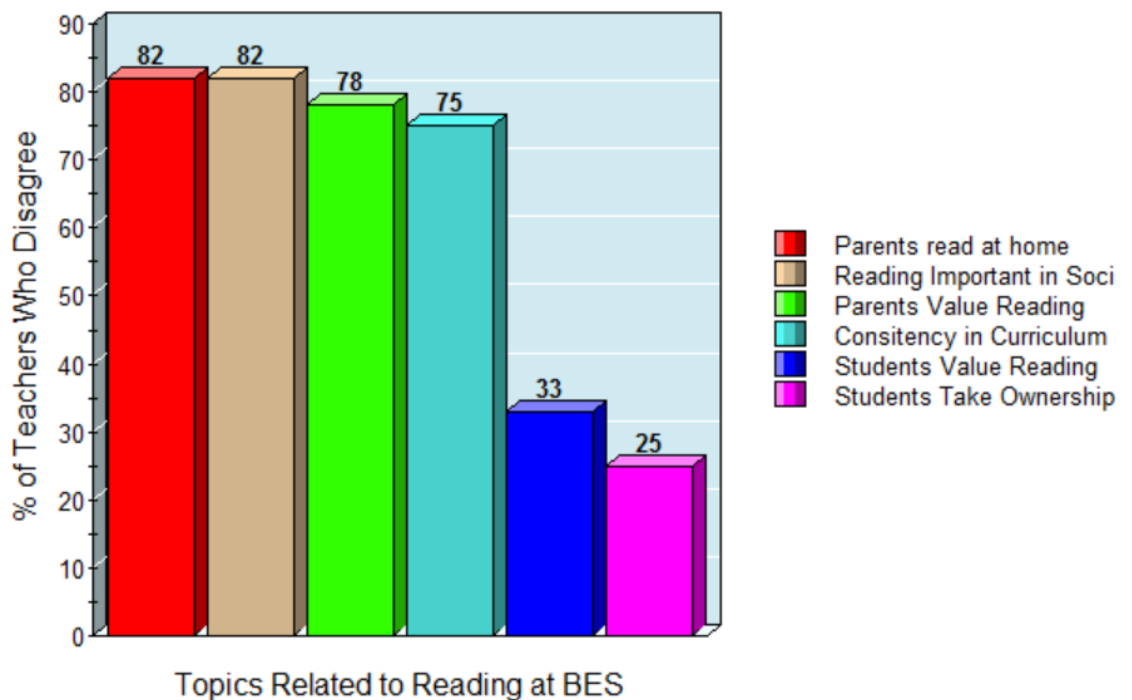


Figure 22

The pareto chart showed that this most serious of area need (parental involvement in reading) should be addressed first. At the same time, by addressing this area of need, other areas

of need will also be addressed. For example, by addressing parent involvement in reading, student achievement and engagement in reading will also be addressed. Technology used to address parental involvement will involve using multiple media sources to communicate with parents. School connects calls, text messages, email messages, website articles, and newspaper articles could be used to advertise to parents regarding upcoming reading events and tips for reading with their children at home.

Following the determination of the greatest areas of need, the next step was to identify positive and negative forces that affect reading achievement by using a force field analysis. There are many positives to reading achievement at our school, but there are also negatives. This process tool helped determine barriers and advantages to reading achievement at Bucyrus Elementary (*Figure 23*). “Occasionally, time spent doing a force field analysis saves a group from investing time and effort when restraining forces so outweigh driving forces that it’s clearly a lost cause from the outset” (Holcomb, 2009, p. 95). The tool was used cooperatively with the staff. The staff met in small groups and worked to complete the analysis. Then answers from the small groups were compiled technologically into different categories and projected onto a screen at a staff meeting. Using the force field analysis was empowering to the staff in that it identified strengths and not just weaknesses. Ideas from the force field analysis were used within the action plan. As stated by Holcomb (2009), from this process tool will “emerge strategies that can be further developed as part of the action plan” (Holcomb, 2009, p. 96).

Reading Achievement at BES

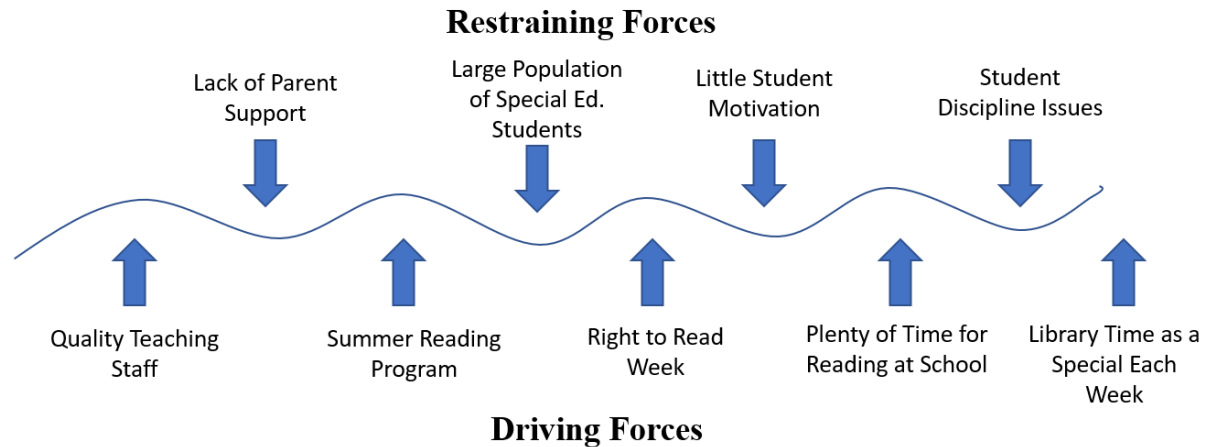


Figure 23

The force field analysis helped to develop specific parts of the action plan. Within the action plan, it was decided that more parent engagement activities were needed in our school. Family literacy nights and parent literacy workshops were planned on a regular basis throughout the year. Technology such as video and PowerPoint presentations will be incorporated into these nights. Also, parents will be taught about the availability on children's books through computer programs and e-readers.

From the discoveries made in the force field analysis, the fishbone diagram was used to determine some of the causes and/or effects of the restraining forces. The fishbone diagram was completed cooperatively with the staff. By using the restraining forces from the force field analysis as the topics for larger categories in the fishbone diagram, staff worked in small groups to complete one section of the diagram (*Figure 24*). The groups combined efforts and used a fishbone template projected onto a screen to complete a master diagram.

Factors to Low Reading Achievement at BES

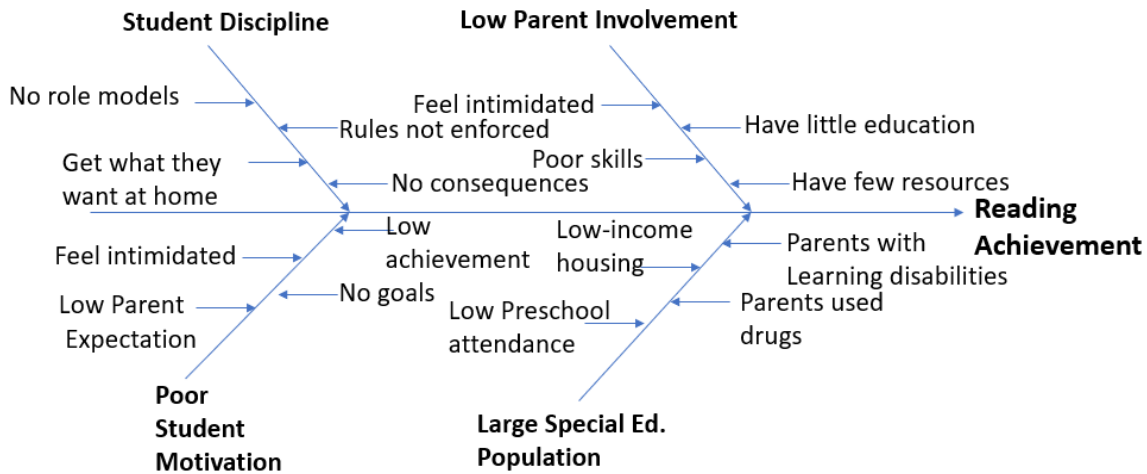


Figure 24

As described in the Holcomb text, the barriers or restraining forces were then used to determine strategies that counteract these barriers. For example, a barrier is that parents have few resources, and they don't read to their children at home. A strategy could be to offer locations such as the local library where there are volunteers to read to the children or to provide books to the families to create a home library. The fishbone diagram will make the staff feel empowered because the diagram breaks down reasons for problems into manageable groupings. This makes it easier to think of ways to combat these problems.

Reflection on the Process

The needs assessment process has been very enlightening, and it is a tool that can be used in almost any situation to determine areas of need and implement change while gaining input and buy-in from the staff and stakeholders. As a leader, I am now able to use the needs assessment process to take an organization through the five critical questions when implementing change. Holcomb (2009) suggested that these questions include "Where are we now?", "Where do we want to go?", "How will we get there?", "How will we know we are getting there?", and "How

will we sustain the focus and momentum?” (p. 2-3). “Where are we now?” involves determining the school’s current state by looking at areas of strength and areas of need. Through the question “Where do we want to go?”, a specific area of need is determined. Data is then analyzed and process tools are used to assist in the creation of an action plan to answer the question “How will we get there?” This action plan is monitored for effectiveness giving the answer to “How will we know we are getting there?”. Finally, “How will we sustain the focus and momentum?” is addressed by staying the course and not engaging in the “TYNT-NYNT syndrome: ‘this year’s new thing’ soon replaced by ‘next year’s new thing’” which often happens to organizations as suggested by Holcomb (2009).

This needs assessment process also addresses fear of change in school and allows for ways to work through this fear. Fullan (2007) and Stivers and Cramer (2009) found that “These reactions can be dealt with more effectively if people can attach ‘personal meaning to the experiences’ in a way that is individualized yet collectively understood as needed for the organization to improve” (as cited by Tomal, Schilling, and Trybus, 2013, p. 2). As a school leader, it is my job to not only prepare staff and stakeholders for the change process but also to walk beside them and help them through.

The goal of Bucyrus Elementary is to create lifelong learners. Through the needs assessment process above, dealing with improving reading achievement, lifelong learning is being addressed. To be a lifelong learner, a person must be an effective reader, so an action plan to improve reading achievement was developed. The Bucyrus community does not place much importance on reading or on school in general, so by creating an action plan to address this, hopefully it will help to improve not only the school but also the community. All children

deserve to learn and get as much from their education as possible. By helping them to achieve the most possible, it will help their future, the future of the school, and future of the community.

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Appendix A

Likert Scale-Style Questions

Questions Regarding Reading Policies

1. Reading is a priority at our school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Questions Regarding Communications about Reading Achievement

1. Teachers are communicated with adequately about the expectations of the school/district for students reading achievement in their classrooms.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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2. Teachers communicate with parents on a regular basis regarding their children's progress in reading.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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3. Teachers feel like they are able to communicate with administration if they have suggestions or concerns regarding reading instruction in the school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Questions Regarding Student-Centered Learning in Reading

1. Students take ownership of their progress in reading.
2. In the recent years, students who attended preschool enter kindergarten more prepared for reading than in prior years.
3. In the recent years, students who did not go preschool enter kindergarten more prepared for reading than in prior years.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------	----------------------

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------	----------------------

- 4. Students who attended preschool are more prepared when they enter kindergarten than students who did not attend preschool.
- 5. Students understand the importance of reading.
- 6. Students have the opportunity to read independently during the school day.
- 7. Students show enjoyment in reading alone.
- 8. Students show enjoyment in being read to.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer

Questions Regarding Reading Instruction and Resources

- 1. Teachers are trained in effective reading instruction techniques.
- 2. Teachers have adequate resources to instruct students in effective reading techniques.
- 3. My classroom has adequate independent reading materials to engage all types of readers.
- 4. Students are placed in appropriate classes/groups to help them achieve in reading.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Questions Regarding Reading Curriculum

- 1. The reading curriculum can be differentiated to directly meet the needs of every student.
- 2. There is consistency in the reading curriculum between grade levels.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Questions Regarding Organizational Climate Related to Reading Achievement

- 1. The school day is organized to allow for adequate time for reading instruction.
- 2. The school day is organized to allow an appropriate time of day for reading instructions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Questions Regarding Parent and Community Involvement in Reading

- 1. Parents read to their children at home.
- 2. Parents are aware of the importance of reading to young children.
- 3. Parents are aware of the importance of literacy in society.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer Not to answer
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Open-Ended Questions

1. If you had unlimited time, money, and support, what would you improve about the reading program at our school?
2. How do you feel about the current state of reading instruction at our school?
3. What ideas do you have to improve literacy and/or the knowledge awareness of the importance of literacy in our community?

Appendix B

Approval Form to Distribute a Needs Assessment Questionnaire/Survey


Please include your name and your school name where you will be conducting the needs assessment questionnaire. Have your administrator sign the following form indicating permission to collect and analyze your questionnaire data. Return the signed permission form to your instructor.

I, (insert name) Sarah Martin am enrolled in a graduate course at Concordia University Chicago. . As part of the course requirement, I am to construct a needs assessment instrument with a minimum of 15 likert statements and a minimum of 3 additional open-ended response items.

I am requesting administrative permission to administer the instrument to 20 teachers, staff, parents, and/or administrators at (insert name) Bulyras Elementary school all of whom are 18 years of age or older.

Participants will not be identified and they may refuse participation. Results of the questionnaire will not be published or publicly presented at any time and are for use only in fulfilling the requirements of my graduate course.

In signing this form, permission is granted for the above student to collect the needs assessment data as stipulated in the course syllabus.



Administrator signature

1/23/18
Date

Sarah Martin

Student signature

1/23/18
Date