Examining Student and Teacher Perceptions of the iLit 45 Reading Program: A Qualitative Case Study

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Examining Student and Teacher Perceptions of the iLit 45 Reading Program: A Qualitative Case Study

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the

College of Education and Social Work

West Chester University

West Chester, PA

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of

Doctor of Education in Policy, Planning, and Administration

By

Ashley O’Connor

May 2024

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I dedicate this dissertation to all the people that have encouraged me to keep going over the past couple of years. To my boyfriend, Andrew, you were one of my biggest supporters throughout this entire process. Thank you for believing in me and encouraging me to keep going even when I wanted to give up. To my family, my mom who instilled the importance of education in me at a very young age, and always taught me to reach for the stars and to my sister, Heather who was always there to listen when I needed to vent. I would not have been able to do this without you. To my two angels, my dad, and my brother, you always made it known that I could do anything I put my mind to, and I know you were with me every step of the way. I could not have made it this far without all of you. I hope I made you proud.
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Abstract

This case study examines student and teacher perceptions toward and experiences with the iLit 45 Reading Intervention. It focuses on the perceptions of both the teacher and students’ interactions and experiences with iLit 45. The case study included five ninth-grade students and their teacher, all of them participating in the iLit 45 reading program for the 2023-2024 school year. Data sources for this study included observations, semi-structured interviews, and a review of the iLit 45 Reading program materials. The researcher coded the data collected from the observations and interviews using a combination of in vivo coding and constant comparative analysis, allowing them to analyze the data and find common themes from the responses of the participants. The themes identified through the coding process allowed the researcher to examine how teachers, students, and the publisher perceive that the iLit 45 reading intervention supports student literacy development. This study highlights the importance of using asset-based language for students as well as considering their perceptions when designing lessons. These two aspects are vital in student success as they assist in creating a supportive learning environment that promotes student success.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill that is essential for both academic and everyday life (Arias-Gundín & García Llamazares, 2021). Unfortunately, a substantial number of students end up in remedial reading courses when they enter college (Boatman & Long, 2018). Similarly, there are many high school students that read below their academic grade level (Josephs & Jolivette, 2016); this means they have not yet attained the skills necessary to reach their full potential (Dudley, 2005; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). To assist striving readers, many school districts use reading interventions to aid them in attaining the skills needed to reach their full reading potential.

Students Reading Below Grade Level in High School

Students need ample reading comprehension skills to be successful in the educational setting, therefore, as the ability to understand written materials becomes more crucial as they progress through school (Clarke, Truelove, Hulme, & Snowling, 2013). However, researchers have found that the most prevalent student learning disability is in the area of reading (Arias-Gundín & García Llamazares, 2021). Educators must recognize and understand the individual needs of their students to help students maximize their reading skills. Recognizing that a reader needs extra support is the first step in being able to address their needs (Kuo, 2014). In response, schools implement reading interventions to ensure that they meet each student’s individual reading needs.

For some students, reading can be a challenging task, requiring extra support to acquire the skills necessary to become confident readers. Therefore, schools must provide them with the support they need to grow and succeed. One option to aid in this process is to provide extra support to the students through a reading intervention program. There are many different
interventions that are available to choose from to support striving students’ academic needs, however there are multiple considerations to identify the right fit for students. Considering the students who will use the intervention specifically for their individual academic needs is crucial. Researchers have argued that it is never too late for an adolescent to reach their maximum potential as a reader (Swanson et al., 2015; Calhoon & Petscher, 2013; Scammacca et al., 2015). In fact, researchers report that adolescents with learning disabilities can make significant gains using a reading intervention (Edmonds et al., 2009; Scammacca et al., 2007; Swanson & Hoskyn, 1998; Torgesen, 2005; Vaughn et al., 2013). Notably, Hock et al. (2015) indicated that “students with reading difficulties, including those with learning disabilities, could benefit from interventions that target both word-level and reading and reading comprehension strategies” (p. 196). These interventions provide growing readers with supplemental tools that can increase reading comprehension for adolescents (Hock et al., 2015). Thus, implementing reading interventions with students who need extra support can assist them in making academic growth.

Problem Statement

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] (2019), 30% of students entering their freshman year of high school were reading below NAEP’s standards of basic reading. In the school district used in this study, only 40% of students entering 9th grade were considered proficient in reading. Although this is only one marker, this data shows that there are many students in the district who are still not reading at grade level. At the high school level, students must read texts at increasingly difficult levels (Vaughn et al., 2015, p. 4). However, this task presents a problem for striving readers or those students with a specific learning disability (SLD) in reading. Therefore, it is crucial that researchers find age-appropriate reading interventions that address the needs of adolescent aged students. This research would
assist educators in supporting the students’ developing needs inside the classroom. Edmonds et al. (2009) shared that adolescent striving readers benefit from well-structured interventions that meet them where they are academically. Interventions give students the support they need to acquire the skills needed to grow as readers. Therefore, in order for students to thrive in the academic setting, providing them with extra support to address their needs is vital. However, this is not an easy task as students must see value in the interventions in order for them to be effective. Thus, students need an intervention that makes them feel confident in their abilities while also providing meaningful activities. These aspects will assist students in feeling supported and motivated therefore promoting student learning. Therefore, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the iLit 45 intervention program, one must conduct research to better understand the impact it has on student literacy development.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of both the teacher and students who are working with the iLit 45 reading intervention program. iLit 45 is an intervention for students that are in sixth grade and beyond who are reading below grade level. SAVAAS Learning Company (2023), the publisher of iLit 45, advertises that the intervention to be a “literacy intervention for adolescents who lack reading and writing skills’ (para. 1). To say a student is “lacking”, is an inaccurate word to describe these students as they are still developing. A better word to describe a developing student is “striving” as it acknowledges the potential that they have for growth and are able to develop them with the appropriate support. The iLit 45 intervention program recognizes this and provides a variety of materials and tools which can be adapted and modified to support striving readers. In addition, the company claims that a student can make significant gains throughout the course of a year, with upwards of two years of reading
growth possible in a one-year period (SAVAAS Learning Company, 2023). Thus, examining student and teacher perceptions of the iLit 45 reading intervention will assist in gaining a deeper understanding about the intervention, as well as its components, and the perceived impacts that it has on student literacy.

**Positionality**

As the researcher this study, I had to acknowledge how my experiences and educational background have shaped my view on adolescents reading. My research focused on both the perceptions of a teacher and their students working with the iLit 45 Reading Intervention. My educational background as well as my experiences strongly influenced my positionality, as I am a high school special education teacher with a background in literacy. I hold a bachelor's degree in both K-6 regular education and special education and a master’s degree in Reading and Literacy. My educational background has shaped my belief that every student can learn with support and guidance. Therefore, I believe if a student has not become a proficient reader by the time they reach high school, it is not too late, they can still develop with extra support. I believe those students just need a little extra time and help to grow and become academically successful. If we meet students where they are and provide them with the necessary tools to access the areas that they have not yet mastered, they will continue to grow. Therefore, finding a reading intervention that can assist students’ needs is essential.

I conducted my study at the high school where I had been working for the past five years. So, I witnessed the transition from the Read180 intervention to the iLit 45 reading intervention which has now been in use for about four years. However, I did not know much about iLit 45, so I wanted to learn more about the intervention and its components to see how impacted student literacy. Many students begin reading interventions in their elementary years and never make
enough progress to exit. So, the question is why is this happening if the interventions are saying it is possible? Maybe there is a key component missing in the interventions or maybe they are not able to meet the needs of the students in the classes. Therefore, my goal was to ensure that the iLit 45 intervention was a good fit for the students using it. I wanted to make sure the intervention was age appropriate for the students who were using it. Therefore, I examined perspectives of the students’ that were using the intervention and the teacher that is implementing it.

Research Questions

The following research question was the focus of this study: In what ways does the iLit 45 reading intervention support student literacy development?

Four sub-questions guided this study:

1. How does the iLit 45 curriculum convey their support of student literacy development?
2. How do students navigate and use the iLit 45 reading intervention program?
3. What are a ninth-grade teacher’s perceptions of how the iLit 45 reading intervention program supports student literacy development?
4. What are ninth-grade students’ perceptions of how the iLit 45 reading intervention program supports literacy development?

Rationale for Methods

A case study methodology following Stake’s approach is ideal for an investigation of these claims. Stake (1998) posited that “a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case” (p. xi). Therefore, the researcher examined a bounded case of ninth-grade students enrolled in the iLit 45 reading intervention in order to deeply understand and describe the
complexities, nuances, and unique characteristics of a specific case or individual. He continued by explaining that “cases of interest in education and social service are people and interventions (Stake, 1995, p. 1). Hence, when conducting a study in any of these fields, the focus is on studying and understanding the experiences, behaviors, and outcomes of the people involved, as well as the programs and interventions designed to support them. Stake (1995) shared that a case can range from specific individuals or groups to entire programs aimed at addressing their needs. By examining a case, a researcher can gain valuable insights into the complexities and dynamics of the people and programs involved, leading to a better understanding of their impact on student literacy.

As a researcher, I selected a bounded case of ninth-grade students and their iLit 45 intervention teacher to gain a better understanding of their experience with the iLit 45 reading intervention program. My research focused on a class of ninth-grade, special education students, all participating in the iLit 45 reading intervention. I wanted to focus solely on ninth-grade students, as the iLit 45 intervention was new to all of them. I selected this particular class because a veteran teacher of 20 years, who is highly experienced in the area of reading, taught it. Also, I knew she would be able to provide me with valuable insights on the iLit 45 intervention, as she is the one who initially piloted the program in the district. She received two days’ worth of training from the SAVVAS Learning Company before beginning to implement the program. All of the students enrolled in her class had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and a classification of a learning disability in the area of reading. All participants in the reading intervention program had access to the same materials while working with the iLit 45 intervention, however, it was likely to impact each student differently based on students current reading level, perceptions of the reading intervention, and also their lived experiences. Similarly,
the teacher would have a different perspective of the impact of the intervention as well as how it adapts to meet the individual needs of the students. According to Stake (1995), examining multiple viewpoints is an essential component of qualitative research in order to gain a deeper understanding of a subject. He encouraged researchers to go beyond the surface level and delve deeper into the research by considering participants’ experiences, beliefs, and values.

Stake (1995) also noted that the use of questions serves as a guiding force when it came to the framework of the research. The questions that I developed assisted in directing the focus of the study and helped me better understand the different perspectives about the intervention. By conducting a qualitative case study aligned with Stake’s (1995) design, I was able to delve deeper into the iLit 45 reading intervention program and all its components including the tools and supplemental supports included to assist students in growing their reading skills. By conducting interviews and observations with both the teacher and the students who work with the intervention on a daily basis I was able to gain more insight on the iLit 45 interventions components and tools. The participant perspectives allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the interventions perceived impact on student literacy development.

**Significance of the Study**

The iLit 45 reading intervention is fairly new and there is very limited research available on it. The district that was the focus of this study chose this intervention to replace Read 180, due to cost. Therefore, I wanted to examine the iLit 45 intervention program to provide a more comprehensive understanding of it by better understanding the perceptions of the students and the teacher who were working with it. Examining these perspectives had the potential to provide valuable insights that can lead to making improvements to the intervention in order to make it more impactful on student literacy. I will be able to share my findings with the school district so
that they can better understand the program, allowing them to reassess it and make potential adjustments to the implementation to better support student literacy. The data collected can also assist SAVVAS Learning Company in making modifications that will make the intervention a better fit for the adolescent aged students’ that are working with it. According to Stake (1995), qualitative research has the potential to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a program. In order to make sure an intervention is beneficial for all students interacting with it, it is vital to look at all areas included in the program that need improvement. Improving the areas of weakness in an intervention can provide students with a more inclusive and effective education, which could assist them in reaching their full potential. Consequently, this qualitative research examines the iLit 45 reading to make sure the intervention aligns with the goal of helping readers to maximize their potential.

There are many students throughout the world that are still striving when it comes to the area of reading. Even though the material might be above the student’s reading level, instruction will often continue to move on whether or not they have the skills needed to be successful or even fully participate in learning (Ko & Hughes, 2015). Expecting students to move on when they have not mastered the content results in negative consequences, and they can begin to fall behind their peers (Gottfried, 2014; Gottfried, 2015; Johnson, 2005). Reading interventions are one way to provide extra support to emerging readers as they can assist in addressing any areas in which a student may require additional help.

Most of the research that exists today when it comes to reading interventions focuses on elementary-aged students (Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, & Ciullo, 2010). Therefore, it is essential to examine more of the interventions used at the high school level to learn more about them so that we can add to the research that exists. According to the National Center for Education
Statistics (2023), reading support is vital for striving adolescent readers as it provides them with the assistance, they need to be academically successful. Fortunately, the small amount of research that exists on reading interventions for adolescents generally show positive outcomes for the students using it; This information is especially true for the interventions that incorporate multiple components (Wanzek et al., 2010). Providing multi-component interventions can provide support which allows students to work on a variety of reading skills such as fluency, vocabulary development, comprehension strategies, etc. These elements are ones that assist students in becoming proficient readers. Therefore, addressing all of these elements can benefit secondary-aged students (O’Connor et al., 2005; Ritchey, Silverman, Montanaro, Speece, & Schatschneider, 2012; Therrien, Wickstrom, & Jones, 2006; Vadasy & Sanders, 2008; Wanzek & Roberts, 2012), as these elements will allow students to work on the skills in which they are not yet confident. Providing extra support and addressing these vital components helps to foster the skills that students are not yet confident in, allowing them to continue to grow in those areas.

iLit 45 is an intervention that can potentially benefit the students that use it. The program provides the student and teacher with a starting point (their current reading level) allowing the teacher to make modifications to fit the students’ specific needs. This program compliments Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural learning theory in several ways, particularly in its alignment with the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is a fundamental concept in sociocultural learning theory that meets students at their current academic levels while also providing scaffolding from a more knowledgeable other along the way to assist them in academic growth. This concept is critical in assisting students to meet their maximum potential. A reading intervention serves students best when it allows teachers the ability modify materials while also offering a variety of tools to fit the individual needs of the students that are using it.
Therefore, in order to gain a deeper understanding of this program, one must conduct research to better understand the impact it has on student literacy. Thus, examining the perceptions of both the teacher and the students using the iLit 45 reading intervention program can provide insights into various aspects of the intervention such as the impact on student literacy as well as the student and teacher perceptions. These perceptions will allow me to see the intervention through multiple lenses and evaluate whether or not it is adaptable to fit the needs of the people that are navigating it. This will provide me with a more in-depth understanding of iLit 45 and all of its components.

**Limitations**

The use of a qualitative case study tried to eliminate limitations, however limitations still existed within the study. The first limitation was the sample size as the reading classes were on the smaller side and only five participants agreed to participate. Having such a small sample size made it difficult to generalize the findings to other sample groups. If more participants were involved in this study, it would have provided a more accurate understanding of the intervention itself as I would have been able to understand the lenses of more than five students and one teacher. A larger pool of participants would have assisted in drawing more accurate conclusions about the program itself. However, only students who enrolled in one particular class of the iLit 45 intervention program participated in this study, reducing the number of perspectives shared.

The timeframe of this study limited the amount of time set aside to collect data. By conducting this research for six weeks, I had the opportunity to collect a limited amount of data in the form of interviews and observations, providing me with student and teacher perceptions about the iLit 45 reading intervention program. The tools used to collect data throughout this study provided me with valuable insights about iLit 45. However, time constraints limited my
data collection, only allowing me to gain insight to a small segment of the iLit 45 intervention program. An extended amount of time would have allowed for a longer observation period which would have provided me with a more in-depth understanding of the interventions’ impact on the students in the class.

**Definitions of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, I have defined important concepts that I will use throughout the study:

*Specific Learning Disability (SLD):* According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), a specific learning disability is a deficit in a certain area such as reading, writing, or math that can affect a student’s ability to understand and learn the content taught in school.

*Striving Reader:* According to Venegas (2018), a striving student is one who is reading below their actual grade level but can grow academically with the right support.

*Reading Intervention:* a targeted approach used to assist striving readers. These interventions provide students additional support individualized support and can meet them at their current academic level. The interventions may focus on phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary and more (Kamil et al., 2008; Scammacca et al., 2007; Torgesen et al., 2007). Ultimately, they assist students in becoming more proficient readers and help them to achieve academic success.

*Computer-Assisted Interventions:* an educational approach that uses computer technology to support the intervention process. These interventions are able to provide support by providing students with remedial support and exposing them to the multi components of reading, which assists in perfecting their reading skills. These interventions include software that assists the
teacher in providing modifications and adaptations to meet students at their current academic level meeting each student's individual needs, providing them scaffolding, exposing them materials that will target the next stage in their developmental journey, allowing them to maximize their reading abilities.

*iLit 45:* According to SAVVAS Learning Company, iLit 45 is a computer assisted reading intervention program that supports students in grades 6-12 whether they are at or below grade level. It is an intervention used for a 45-minute class period as a supplemental tool and includes resources to support Tiers 1, 2, and 3 and allows teachers to support students’ individual needs.

*Differentiated Instruction (DI):* an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom (Moreau, 2014; Bearne, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999).

**Summary**

Striving readers are readers who have not yet reached their full potential when it comes to reading. However, with the right support these students can make academic growth. Reading interventions are one way to provide students with this extra support as it meets students at their current level and allows teachers to make modifications based on the student’s individual needs. However, there are many reading interventions that are currently available, so it is essential that school districts choose one that is going to meet the individual needs of the students working with it. This study examined students’ and teachers’ perspectives on the iLit 45 intervention program and how it impacts student literacy.
In this chapter, I introduced my research study regarding student and teacher perspectives on the iLit 45 intervention program and its impact on student literacy. I also provided an overview of the study's purpose, rationale, research questions, rationale for methods, limitations, and definition of terms. In the next chapter, I will delve into the literature regarding students with learning disabilities, reading interventions for adolescent striving readers, and the theoretical framework that guided this study.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The ability to read is a critical skill that students need not only for academic success in high school, but also in their postsecondary education, and future jobs. However, researchers have found that many students are still developing. However, these students can still make progress with assistance. Researchers have found that striving readers can benefit from receiving supplemental reading support through an intervention (Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, & Ciullo, 2010). Many striving readers will have a higher chance of living in poverty with fewer job opportunities available to them; whereas a student who can read fluently and effectively will be more likely to be academically successful (Josephs & Jolivette, 2016, p. 39). Unfortunately, striving students will continue to struggle with obtaining academic success if they are unable to become more confident in their reading skills, ultimately making it extremely difficult for them to gain independence (Josephs & Jolivette, 2016). Over the years, researchers have found that nearly 25% of students in the United States reach eighth-grade and are still striving to become proficient readers (Clarke et al., 2017). Therefore, to continue developing their reading skills, secondary aged striving readers continue to need reading interventions as a supplemental resource.

The Landscape of Special Education in High Schools

Special education at the high school level extends beyond academics to address the various learning styles as well as the needs of the students who learn differently. The Individuals with Disabilities Act [IDEA] (2004) stated that schools must integrate all students with disabilities into general education classrooms whether it be full-time basis or even only part of the time. For this to work effectively, the regular education teacher and the special education teacher must collaborate to provide students with the appropriate modifications made per their
Individualized Education Program (IEP), which will assist them in being successful in the
general education classroom (IDEA, 2004). Inclusion in the general education population will
look different for each student depending on their needs. This approach could be as simple as a
modification to an assignment, and adding an intervention for supplemental support, or even an
accommodation, as the IEP is unique to each individual’s needs (Friend et al., 2010).

At the high school level, there are two main types of inclusion for students, full
inclusion, and partial inclusion. According to Giangreco (2007), these placements provide
students an equal opportunity to learn in the same environment as their peers. Full inclusion is
when a student is in the general education classroom for the entire school day; these students
receive an itinerant level of support, meaning they are in special education for 20% or less of the
school day and in the regular education classrooms for most of the day (Center for Effective
Collaboration and Practice, 2001). All students in these classes have diverse abilities and require
differentiated instruction (Council for Exceptional Children, 2011); Special education teachers
collaborate with regular education teachers for students in this placement making modifications
to the curriculum to meet the needs of the students with disabilities (Fuchs, 2009).

In contrast, partial inclusion is where the students participate in regular education for
some of the school day and receive extra support from a specialist or a special education teacher
in their areas of need for some of the day (Friend, 2008). Students that fall under this
classification receive a supplemental level of support, meaning they receive services outside of
the regular education classroom for at least 21% of the school day. They can receive more than
21%, but it should be no more than 80% (Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, 2001).
These students require more support than a student labeled as needing itinerant support to be
successful academically.
Sometimes, students require extra support in certain academic areas where they have not yet reached their full potential. Although, for many of these students, differentiated instruction in the general education setting is beneficial, sometimes they may need more support (Allington, 1994). Therefore, these teachers can implement supplemental interventions to provide students with additional support. Typically, these additional supports provide students with specialized instruction in specific areas such as reading. Extra support is crucial for students as researchers have found that there are many students that reach graduation that are still not reading on grade level resulting in not being prepared for the reading requirements that they will encounter after high school (Faggella-Luby et al., 2009). This issue will continue to exist if students do not receive the resources and support needed to assist them in continuing to grow along their academic journey. Therefore, for students with learning disabilities to be academically successful, school districts must follow the guidelines of the IDEA and their IEP.

**IDEA**

In the world of special education, educators strive to assist students in reaching their maximum potential, as many students with SLD can be up to three or four years behind their peers academically (Wagner et al., 2003). To address this ongoing issue, various legislation reports such as the National Reading Panel (NRP), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and IDEA (2004) work to ensure that each student has the opportunity to succeed. For example, they ensure that parents can be involved in their child’s education as well as providing opportunities for students of all levels to succeed in school (IDEA, 2004). These key pillars are key in the educational environment as they guide educational policies and practices and assist educators in providing an inclusive education for their students. Teachers can do this by providing modifications, adaptations, or even interventions for extra support.
Many students that receive a reading intervention fall under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) which assists special education students. This act is “the federal law that secures special education services for children with disabilities from the time they are born until they graduate from high school” (IDEA Regulations, IDEA Partnership, 2013, para 1). In 2005, Congress amended the act to ensure students with disabilities were receiving the support needed for academic success. According to the United States Department of Education (USDE):

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA 2004 governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. (IDEA Regulations, IDEA Partnership, 2013, para. 1)

The act covers all age groups beginning at birth all the way to the age of 21 and defines a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) as “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involve in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations” (IDEA, 2004; IDEA Partnership, 2013, para. 1). Moreover, there are 14 different disabilities that fall under the classification of SLD, including: (1) autism, (2) deaf-blindness, (3) deafness, (4) emotional disturbance, (5) hearing impairment, (6) intellectual disability, (7) multiple disabilities, (8) orthopedic impairment, (9) other health impairment, (10) specific learning disability, (11) speech or language impairment, (12) traumatic brain injury, and (13) visual impairment (IDEA 2004; IDEA Partnership, 2013). Each individual state is responsible for identifying students that fall under these categories and ensuring their
evaluation, so these students can get the individualized education program and services they need to become academically successful.

Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IDEA outlines specific procedures for both evaluations and eligibility determinations for any striving student that may meet the criteria for an Individualized Education Program (IEP). According to Dragoo (2020), the IDEA (2004) states, “Initial evaluations can be requested by a parent, the state, or the local educational agency (LEA). Within 60 days of receiving parental consent, the school must conduct the evaluation or (2) within a timeframe established by the state” (p. 2). An evaluation using a specific set of criteria is critical to maintain validity. When conducting an evaluation, the local education agency (LEA) must employ a variety of different strategies and tools for identifying students that have disabilities; also, a qualified person must deliver these tests (Dragoo, 2020, p. 2). Once the evaluation is complete, the team decides if the child has a learning disability. The entire IEP makes the decision, which includes a team of qualified professionals, the parent, and the child if they are 14 years of age and up (IDEA, 2004, IDEA Partnership, 2013).

When a child qualifies for an IEP, the team will get together to come up with a plan that will assist students on their educational journey. The plan provides information on the child’s current status in school along with goals and services that directly relate to the personal needs of the student; next they share it with all of the staff and personnel that work with the individual. Each person must review the document so that the striving student receives the support they need through modifications made through their IEP.

A learning disability is when there is a discrepancy between a person's competencies and their performance in specific areas of cognitive functioning (Palmbo, 1994). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2019), 7.3 million students in the United States received services
under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the 2019-2020 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Researchers found 33% of the identified students fit the classification of having a specific learning disability (SLD). At the secondary level, teachers assume students have the literacy skills needed to comprehend the content in class, and therefore students learn the majority of the classroom content through textbooks (Ko & Hughes, 2015). Unfortunately, this assumption is not accurate for many students who have not yet reached their full potential. Thus, striving readers in high school may require additional support to read texts that are more complex and are typically above their reading level (Ford-Connors & Paratore, 2015; Ko & Hughes, 2015; Nippold 2017). These students would benefit from opportunities for growth using the appropriate supports and by meeting them at their current level (Nippold, 2017; Lenhard et al., 2013).

**Differentiating Instruction**

To ensure the success of students of various academic levels, teachers can find an approach that can both meet them where they are and provide tailored instruction to meet their diverse needs (Pardini, 2005). Therefore, differentiated instruction is a flexible method that teachers use to modify and adapt classroom instruction to meet the needs of each and every student in the classroom (Tomlinson et al., 2001; Pardini, 2005). This approach is a type of instruction that is beneficial considering that education is unique to every learner. Students enter school with different backgrounds and experiences, and therefore there is a variation in the way each of them learns and grows throughout their academic career. Hence, differentiated instruction is the best way to assist every student is to make the adjustments necessary to provide them with individualized instruction so they can be academically successful. Differentiation is an
approach that assists in providing education for students of all academic levels it allows teachers to modify and adapt the activities to fit the individual needs of students.

Tomlinson et al. (2003) described differentiated instruction:

In differentiated classrooms, teachers begin where students are, not the front of a curriculum guide. They accept and build upon the premise that learners differ in important ways. Thus, they also accept and act on the premise that teachers must be ready to engage students in instruction through different learning modalities, by appealing to differing interests, and by using varied rates of instruction along with varied degrees of complexity. (p. 16)

Experts have noted that differentiated instruction is one of the best methods to meet the diverse needs of each individual learner in the classroom (Tomlinson et al., 2003; Pardini, 2005). Hence, school districts often use this approach to assist students in reaching their maximum potential. A differentiated approach is a beneficial way to assist LD students in the classroom, as it allows the educator to meet them where they are academically, so they can begin to work from their current academic level and work towards growing over time to their fullest potential (Vygotsky, 1978). Many researchers have found that using this type of instruction is an effective way in helping students to grow academically (Campbell, Campbell, & Dickerson, 1999; Koeze, 2006; Pardini, 2005; Tomlinson et al., 2003). In fact, Pardini (2005) found that using any increased amount of differentiated instruction to modify lessons and meet students where they are can improve the effectiveness of the instruction provided to students.

Students with learning disabilities require extra support to help them to succeed in their areas of need as well as their academic life. According to Pullen and Lane (2016), the “ultimate goal of reading is to gain meaning from the print” (p. 27). Therefore, one of the best practices
when it comes to reading, especially for students with a reading learning disability, is to provide differentiated instruction. A teacher must assess each student to provide an appropriate level of support to each student as these students require specialized instruction that is explicit and modified to meet their individual needs; this enables them to meet grade level standards (Moreau, 2014). Therefore, the use of differentiated instruction could provide students with the extra support they need to be successful academically.

Differentiated instruction is the kind of instruction that requires the use of ongoing assessments, such as pre-assessments, progress monitoring, and post-assessments (Tomlinson et al., 2003; Pardini, 2005). The pre-assessments provide a baseline, so the teacher knows each student's level, while the progress monitoring and post-assessments measure student growth. Researchers have found that the data from progress monitoring can assist in determining student growth, effectiveness of an intervention, and eligibility for special education (Johnson et al., 2006; Mellard & Johnson, 2008; NASDSE, 2007). Educators can also use the data to differentiate instruction based on each student's needs. For example, the data can show an educator the areas that students have not yet mastered so teachers can make modifications to the instruction, materials, and even the pace of the entire lesson to meet the student where they are currently (Powell et al., 2015; Roskos & Neuman, 2014). This individualized experience allows students to engage with the lesson on with the modifications needed based on their individual needs.

**High School Reading Interventions**

The team can decide the best way to support a student identified with a learning disability by reviewing their current needs. If, as part of this identification, a student needs reading support, the team may suggest for them to be enrolled in a reading intervention program designed to
provide extra support and differentiate instruction that can meet them at their current academic level. A reading intervention provides the student with the opportunity to participate in a class that will offer targeted support based on the skills the student has not yet mastered, so they can reach their maximum potential as a reader (Wanzek et al., 2010).

At the secondary level, teachers must tailor reading interventions to meet the specific needs of the students in the class. This can be difficult as students may find the materials uninteresting or “babyish” causing the students to have negative attitudes towards the class or even reading in general. In fact, Learned (2016) examined student perceptions and experiences of reading interventions and found that these programs could have negative effects on students’ identities as readers. Therefore, to avoid negative experiences, teachers must focus on both what students already know and what they can do. By doing this, teachers are able to personalize learning while also making it authentic for students, which in turn will assist in a more positive experience (Lupo et al., 2024). Hence, finding an intervention to fit the diverse needs of the students that require additional support in that area is crucial.

Opportunities for growth stem from the teachers working with the students. A teacher or intervention must be able to identify where a striving student is developing so they can provide them with the appropriate support to navigate the various classroom activities. Ford-Connors and Panatore (2015) shared that “students who have access to highly effective teachers are more likely to gain the requisite abilities that will propel them toward wide reading” (p. 83). Since “reading and writing are critical to success in secondary school and beyond” (Lupo et al., 2024, p. 13), secondary teachers must be familiar with how to assist the students who need additional support (Lupo et al., 2024). Therefore, providing students with opportunities to reach their maximum potential is critical (Moreau, 2014) as it allows for them to continue to develop and
grow academically. This step is especially true for students with learning disabilities as these students require modified instruction adapted to meet their individual needs.

Consequently, researchers have found that tailoring reading interventions to fit the various needs of students are beneficial for students with learning disabilities (Moreau, 2014; Vaughn & Wagner, 2014; Jitendra & Gajria, 2014). Moreau (2014) discussed the importance of teachers being responsible for providing students with the proper instruction based on their individual needs. Striving students need tailored instruction to assist them in reaching their academic goals (Moreau, 2014). Other researchers have concurred with Moreau (2014), as they have also found that interventions along with the proper support are critical in the success of striving readers (Vaughn & Wanzek, 2014). Moreover, Jitendra and Gajria (2014) shared that effective strategies and resources assist students in building comprehension skills and better understand the text that they are studying. Therefore, finding the appropriate reading interventions that fit the needs of the students who need them is vital (Moreau, 2014; Jitendra & Gajria, 2011), so they can continue to grow academically.

Reading comprehension is an essential component of education. It is a skill students must possess to be academically successful as they must be able to use their comprehension skills to make meaning of the text they are reading (Lan, Lo, & Hsu, 2014). It is through reading comprehension that students can derive meaning from the texts that they work with throughout their educational career. However, students do not all learn at the same pace, requiring extra support to reach their maximum potential, some of these students fall under the classification of special education. Vaughn et al. (2011) shared that special education students with learning disabilities can improve their reading skills when they participate in a reading intervention.
Researchers have examined different reading interventions to find out what the best design would be for students with learning disabilities (SLD) and found that interventions that tailor the lesson to a student's needs are more beneficial than a general group intervention (Calhoon et al., 2010). Therefore, reading interventions provide SLD students with extra support to ensure they can understand the texts read in school. However, for a student to read and understand the texts to the best of their ability, teachers must provide them with the appropriate strategies and instruction to be successful (Jitendra & Gajria, 2011). Reading interventions can provide striving readers with more exposure to the skills that they are still working on improving; while also reiterating strategies needed to assist them in understanding the content, they are working with so they can continue to grow along their academic journey (Swanson et al., 2015).

According to Vaughn & Wanzek (2014), reading interventions are essential components of educational approaches for students with learning disabilities and are crucial in determining whether students will find academic success. Therefore, it is vital that school districts do their research and find the interventions that will best fit student needs. Implementing instruction that will fit every student's needs is a difficult task for many educators as students vary in their abilities, making it more difficult for teachers to meet everyone's needs. However, technology has opened many doors in the world of education by providing teachers with the ability to individualize lessons while also targeting the skill areas that students are working towards mastering (Cheung & Slavin, 2013). Interventions provide students with extra support and allow them to continue to work on reaching their academic goals.

Considering student perceptions is beneficial when looking into a reading intervention. Researchers have found that when students are confused by their placements, it can have
negative effects (Frankel et al., 2021). Therefore, at times students even feel resentful towards their placements as they feel “forced” to participate and do not think that they belong there (Frankel et al., 2021; Gomez et al., 2004; Houchen, 2013). Students begin to feel frustrated especially if they have been in the intervention for most of their school career (Frankel et al., 2021). Students may also perceive that the interventions are “boring and irrelevant” causing them to have bad feelings about the intervention and therefore making their experience with it a negative one (Frankel, 2021, p. 46). To address this issue, Frankel et al (2021) recommended looking beyond test scores and forming a better understanding of student perspectives. Educators must make sure a reading intervention program is the right placement for students while also reassessing the interventions to make the necessary changes that make a positive impact.

To ensure students are receiving the appropriate support, educators need to stop focusing on the labels. Many students are labeled as “struggling readers”, “bad kids”, and even “low skilled” (Learned, 2016); this sets the kids up for failure as it has negative effects on them. These labels not only affect the students’ self-esteem, but they also affect their experiences in class as teachers may misinterpret students who are striving as being stubborn, making it more difficult for the students to learn (Learned, 2016). However, these labels are inaccurate as research has shown that these students are capable (Learned, 2016). In fact, these students just need teachers to step up and provide the support they need. Researchers have found that when teachers take the time to get to know and understand their students it is beneficial; this allows them to adjust their lessons, so they meet the individual needs of each learner (Learned, 2016; Collins & Ferri, 2016; Brooks & Frankel, 2018). It is essential to focus on the skills that the students have so that teachers can make the necessary modifications to meet them where they are (Learned, 2016). However, to do this successfully, educators need to consider student perceptions.
Considering student perspectives is necessary so students can be successful in school. Research has shown that students have more positive experiences in the classroom when they are able to have some control over what they are doing and assignments are relevant (Frankel et al., 2021; Collins & Ferri, 2016). Therefore, teachers must understand that students enter the classroom with very diverse backgrounds (Frankel, 2016; Frankel et al., 2021). Many aspects influence students and can affect their learning such as their literacy identities and even relationships with their teachers (Frankel et al., 2021). Therefore, a teacher must get to know their students to better understand what they find difficult about reading so they can use that information to adjust their teaching (Frankel & Brooks, 2018; Collins & Ferri, 2018; Brooks & Frankel, 2018). All students are capable of learning when provided with the appropriate support. Thus, to motivate students and keep them engaged, teachers must make the tasks relatable and continue to consider student perspectives as they provide valuable information on how to better support students in the classroom.

*Computer-Assisted Interventions*

Computer-assisted interventions are designed to assist teachers in scaffolding which is a crucial part of the learning process (Falth, Gustafson, Tjus, Heimann, & Svensson, 2013). Hence, teachers can tailor them to meet the students' individualized needs. These types of interventions assess students’ current needs, adapt lessons to meet them where they are, and provide lessons to help students work towards reaching their maximum potential (Cheung & Slavin, 2013). Meeting students where they are academically is beneficial as it increases relatedness and competence increasing student motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When students feel like an activity is achievable, they are more successful. Computer-assisted learning provides teachers
with many ways to integrate computer-based supplemental activities that can enrich reading and address other challenges experienced by a student with disabilities (Byrnes, 2013).

When teachers implement computer-assisted interventions into the classroom correctly, they utilize them as tools to supplement and make explicit instruction stronger. These reading interventions provide teachers access to data immediately (Powell et al., 2015; Roskos & Neuman, 2014). This data can assist teachers in making modifications and individualizing instruction based on the various student needs in the classroom (Cavanaugh, Sessums, & Drexler, 2015; Hilliard, 2015). Educators can implement computer-assisted interventions in a variety of ways in the classroom, whether it be using online tools, or even using a mixture of explicit instruction along with online instruction.

Researchers have found that students who receive a combination of the online and teacher-led instruction perform better than students who only access online instruction (Falth et al., 2013; Greer, Crutchfield, & Woods, 2013; Cheung & Slavin, 2013; Roskos & Neuman, 2014). The use of technology in the classroom provides teachers with many different possibilities to assist in making adaptations and modifications to meet the needs of their students. Computer-based interventions assist in the remediation process, as they allow for scaffolding and offer many other tools to assist students in understanding the material (Falth et al., 2013). The adaptability of computer-based interventions allows teachers to meet the individual needs of the students inside the classroom which assists them in working towards reaching their full potential (Cheung & Slavin, 2013; Roskos & Neuman, 2014). These interventions keep teachers informed by showing student data so the teacher can modify lessons as needed. Computer-based interventions target student needs by providing individualized instruction that is more engaging
while also meeting students where they are academically, providing them with more opportunity for growth.

Computer-assisted learning also allows educators to reduce the amount of time spent on whole-class lessons, so they can spend more time interacting one-on-one with students to meet their needs individually or in smaller groups to focus on the different skills and concepts that they striving readers have not yet mastered (Zavaraki & Schneider, 2019, Nkansah et al., 2010, Bui et al., 2010). Moreover, computer-based interventions provide students with the support they need to master their missing skills while also acquiring “technological literacy and greater confidence using new technologies, which is very essential in 21st century life and in the future” (Zavaraki & Schneider, 2019, p. 76). As a result, computer-assisted instruction works well for special education students because of the flexibility and ability to modify assignments while also providing them with the extra support they would not be able to get in a traditional classroom.

Ensuring that striving students receive the appropriate amount of support is essential for their academic success. Therefore, if school districts find the right intervention it can assist in guiding the students’ academic journey, as computer-assisted interventions are one approach that is beneficial (Cheung & Slavin, 2013). This approach combines the use of technology and a reading intervention program to provide targeted support to students, as they are adaptable to meet the needs of each student (Cheung & Slavin, 2013). When using technology with a reading intervention program, the technology serves as an instrument to assist in optimizing student learning (Labbo et al., 2010). Researchers have found that technology offers many beneficial elements that can enhance student learning when providing supplemental materials that support student needs (Cheung & Slavin, 2013). Technology provides many different components that would not be possible when working strictly one-on-one with a teacher, as it can enhance the
activities students are working on in many ways. For example, technology provides interactive elements such as images, sounds, and other additional resources. Technology can provide interactive experiences that are more engaging to students, students can access the content both in school and at home, and personalized lessons for the various needs of the students. These elements paired with direct explicit instruction and differentiated instruction provide students with an engaging experience to fit their individualized needs throughout the various lessons (Coppola, 2004; Hattie, 2008; Shanahan & Beck, 2006; Van Olphen et al., 2012). Computer-assisted technology has become an integral part of schools across the United States over the years. In fact, most of the educational computer-assisted technology that exists in schools relies on the implementation of reading interventions that blend face-to-face instruction with digital instruction (Pytash & O’Byrne 2018). Researchers found that over 70% of educators throughout the United States are using some sort of blended learning in their classrooms (NCES, 2019), often for remedial support for striving students. Consequently, researchers have indicated that most of the students introduced to these computer-assisted interventions are those who are still developing in their mastery of reading skills and strategies (Picciano et al., 2012).

Using computer-based interventions in schools can potentially assist in closing the existing reading gaps as they offer various benefits to both students and teachers (Greer, Crutchfield, & Woods, 2013). According to Quigley (2020) a reading gap is the gap that exists between reading access, reading practice, and reading ability for students. Therefore, students continue to need some sort of remediation to grow as learners. To try and help these striving readers, it is crucial to identify different supports that will assist them in growing academically. Researchers have found that “the traditional way of learning using textbooks, blackboard and chalk and white board has failed and has been ineffective in the teaching and learning of the
language” (Leong, 2019, p. 6). The traditional learning style does not meet the needs of the diverse students in today's classrooms. To meet these needs, a teacher must be flexible and be able to adapt lessons based on the needs of the students. Therefore, educators must reassess their methods and update to newer ones that will meet the diverse needs in their classrooms.

This discovery has prompted educators to seek out new methods that will assist students to grow academically. Implementing technology into the classroom is one effective tool that teachers have discovered. Technology is engaging and it allows the students to experience many different types of media that grab their attention. Leong and their colleagues (2019) have found that “this is a great way to get learners’ attention and arouse their interest in learning the language” (p. 6). Therefore, the use of computer-assisted interventions could be one way to support students so they can continue to grow as learners as they provide many different components in which a teacher can modify to assist their striving learners.

Computer-assisted interventions are one approach that can offer the extra support that they need. Students are able to receive personalized instruction with immediate feedback, while teachers have access to data (Freeland, 2015; Powell et al., 2015; Roskos & Neuman, 2014). They can also access the digital tools in the classroom from many locations and teachers are able to differentiate lessons and make modifications based on the individual needs of the students (Macaruso et al., 2020). Using technology makes the lessons in the classroom more engaging for the students and therefore makes them more motivated to participate in the daily activities (Repetto et al., 2018). Technology assists teachers in meeting students where they are academically and providing differentiated lessons that assist in working towards their goals.
Teacher Perceptions on Computer-Assisted Interventions

Computer-assisted interventions are a valuable supplemental addition to the classroom because technology continually develops to be able to meet the needs of the individuals using it. This component is especially beneficial for students with learning disabilities, as many of them require adaptations and modifications to be successful in the academic environment. While using these interventions, teachers are able to make the modifications that these students require in order to target the skill that students are still working to achieve (Leong et al., 2019; Cheung & Slavin, 2013). Many of the interventions that incorporate blended learning also provide different assessments and other data collection tools so teachers can keep track of student performance. By providing individualized instruction that can focus on student needs, educators are able to focus on the students’ opportunities for improvement so they can make progress in their areas for growth.

For computer-assisted technology to be effective, it is essential that the teachers working with it need to be open to adopting this method (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). However, many teachers are hesitant to work with these interventions, as they are not comfortable with change whether it be a curricular change or a new supplemental material such as the addition of new technology (Ponticell, 2003; Straub, 2009). The perceptions and attitudes that teachers may have about technology could potentially affect both the integration as well as the success of the implementation of a supplemental intervention or tool (Liu et al., 2004; Chikasanda, Otrel-Cass, Williams, & Jones, 2013). In fact, researchers have found that there are many reasons teachers may be resistant to the addition of technology (i.e., existing beliefs, lack of confidence with technology, and not being familiar with the program) (Atkins & Vasu, 2000; Ertmer, 2005; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Hew & Brush, 2007; Lawless & Pellegrino, 2007). These
barriers can present challenges to technology successfully integrating technology into the classroom as teachers may not be confident with technology, know very little about it, or just be nervous about trying to incorporate it into lessons. However, teachers must become familiar with these technological resources so they can provide students with the extra support they need to grow as learners and become academically successful.

School districts employ teachers with many different skill sets; however, some of them may not be comfortable with the ones needed to add extra supplemental support, such as technology. The term “digital immigrants” describes most teachers that uncomfortable with technology (Prensky, 2001; Smith, 2009) which is “someone not born in the digital age, not weaned on the multimodalities of computers, video games, and mp3 players” (Smith, 2009, p. 75). These “digital immigrants” have experience with traditional paper and pencil activities and textbooks that makes them less inclined to grasp the benefits of the addition of technology. However, it is possible that some novice teachers may also struggle with this task. Educators who are uncomfortable with technology should try to have an open mind and take a proactive approach to technology as it is becoming part of classrooms routines. Without technology these teachers could potentially hinder their students' chance to reach their maximum potential, as technology is an effective tool to assist striving students to be successful along their academic journey (Smith, 2013). Thus, educators must make the necessary changes needed to provide all students with the materials needed to succeed, specifically becoming more open minded about technology. Technology is vital to students as it can be adapted to meet them where they are allowing them to continue to grow in their academic environment (Macaruso et al., 2020). Hence this is the reason many schools offer different computer-based interventions for subjects, such as reading.
As technology continues to advance, school districts are moving away from print-based interventions (Hoium & Gahala, 2001; Grenawalt, 2004). In today’s society, students need technological skills in order to navigate through the world. Thus, educators are beginning to recognize the benefits of including technology into the classroom, in fact, many teachers have voiced that there should be a greater focus on technology in literacy instruction (Hoium & Gahala, 2001). O'Hara & Pritchard (2010) shared that technology can be beneficial in literacy instruction as it can enhance it in many ways. These interventions can provide extra support and tools that can assist in student learning (O'Hara & Pritchard, 2010; Freeland, 2015; Powell et al., 2015; Roskos & Neuman, 2014; Lovell & Phillips, 2009).

There are many different computer-based reading interventions that exist for adolescents and that claim they will assist striving readers as they work towards their maximum potential (Khan & Gorard, 2012). Accelerated reader (AR) and Read 180 are two of the more well-known reading interventions that are available to use with adolescent striving readers. For instance, AR is a supplemental intervention that assesses students at the beginning of the intervention to provide students with materials on their grade level, so they can later test via the computer to assess growth (Slavin et al., 2008). Whereas, Read 180 is a research-based intervention that is a mix of computer-based learning and teacher-led instruction. The Read 180 intervention is designed to incorporate a combination of explicit instruction, modeling, and independent activities (Kim, Samson, Fitzgerald, & Hartry, 2010, Papalewis, 2004). Both interventions have similarities as they are meeting students where they are academically, which according to Grenawalt (2004), this approach can improve student learning when it comes to literacy. Researchers have found that these interventions can have positive effects on student reading achievement when it comes to Read 180 and AR (Vollands et al., 1999; Papalewis, 2004;
Therefore, educators must ensure they find computer-assisted interventions that will best meet the needs of their students.

**iLit 45 Reading Intervention**

iLit 45 is a reading intervention program perceived to be beneficial to adolescent striving readers by the SAVVAS Learning Company (2023), however currently there is very little research on it. According to SAVVAS Learning Company (2023), states that the intervention focuses on improving student literacy specifically for middle school and high school students. The SAVVAS Learning Company (2023) recognizes that secondary literacy is more complex and that it is more likely for these older students to be as motivated in reading as younger students. Like Read 180 and AR, iLit 45 is a computer-assisted intervention that offers many opportunities for teachers to differentiate instruction. Teachers can provide students with personalized activities so they can work independently at their own pace, in small groups, one-on-one, or as a whole class. However, many researchers have found computer-assisted reading interventions to be beneficial (Kim, Samson, Fitzgerald, & Hartry, 2010, Papalewis, 2004).

iLit 45 is an intervention that is used for many different ages; therefore, school districts are able to use it as an intervention for students who read multiple grades below their reading level. SAVVAS Learning Company (2023) created it for use with adolescents in sixth grade and beyond, incorporating a variety of literature with topics perceived by the company to appeal to their interests. iLit 45 is an intervention that utilizes blended learning as it uses both technology and teacher-led explicit instruction. According to SAVVAS Learning Company (2023), this program provides school districts with many different resources that are needed to support Tier 2, Tier 3, and English language learner (ELL) students.
To make sure students are receiving the appropriate level of support, students participate in a pretest called the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) during the first week of the intervention. The GRADE, which takes approximately 70 minutes and is split across multiple class periods, serves as a baseline evaluation. This assessment not only determines the skills that students have mastered, it also pinpoints where a student requires extra support. This information from the GRADE is baseline data that assists teachers in measuring the students’ growth throughout the program. Furthermore, the baseline also places students at the appropriate grade level for reading comprehension in the intervention (SAVVAS Learning Company, 2023). The goal for the iLit 45 reading intervention program is to assist students in reaching their maximum potential so that they can succeed both academically and later in their post-secondary lives.

SAVVAS Learning Company (2023) advertised that they continually test and evaluate their interventions to ensure that they are ones that are effective. By examining existing literature and investigating the needs inside of the classroom, they continue to make the necessary updates to provide interventions that will assist students in reaching their maximum potential. To do this they base their interventions off the “perspective that effective reading comprehension relies on a combination of motivation, the ability to capably apply comprehension strategies, conceptual knowledge, and social interaction among learners (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Therefore, they incorporate all these components in their instructional approach. Specifically, “the iLit 45 course was designed around five main premises that are supported by this research: active engagement and motivation, explicit modeling, vocabulary instruction, authentic reading and writing experiences, and differentiated instruction” (SAVVAS Learning Company, 2023, p. 2). iLit 45 examined the research for these specific elements and
saw that they were key components of an effective intervention. They strive to provide the most effective interventions to students, and state that they will continue to reassess their programs to ensure that are beneficial and can meet the needs of the various students that are using them.

Striving students at the secondary level benefit from extra support, to continue developing their reading skills. To assist these students, teachers need to employ a variety of different strategies in the classroom such as differentiating instruction and providing opportunities for success such as interventions. Each of the above-mentioned studies has provided some insight into topics related to these strategies and how they can be effective in the classroom setting. Students in the secondary setting require these supports to increase their level of motivation, and their willingness to actively engage in the classroom curriculum. Therefore, researchers will need to conduct more research to find interventions that best support adolescent students.

**Theoretical Framework**

Teaching reading is a very complex process as a result of many different factors such as diverse learning styles and even different cultural backgrounds and brain pathways. According to McDermott and Varenne (1995), the process of teaching reading is a team effort that extends beyond the classroom and includes “school personnel, of course, and parents, and let us not forget the philosophers, curriculum designers, textbook publishers, testers, and educational researchers…in other words, “Us” (p. 331). Therefore, students depend on more than just their teacher to be successful readers. They also depend on the social, cultural, and contextual elements around them. Hence, looking at the process of reading through a sociocultural lens can help researchers better understand students and how various factors influence their reading skills.
**Bridging the Literacy Achievement Gap**

When discussing the literacy gaps that exist, most of the focus is on the elementary students; however, it continues to be a significant problem not only with that age group, but also in the middle grades and beyond (Alvermann, 2005). This issue causes an ongoing problem for many older students because as they advance through school, content area classes continue to grow more difficult, and require students to be reading at or near grade level to be successful (Ehren, 2010; Nippold & Scott, 2010; Snyder & Caccamise, 2010; Ward-Lonergan, 2010; Nippold, 2017). Therefore, students need the appropriate support to ensure educational growth, and to assist them in developing the skills to be academically successful.

The literacy gap is a complex and persistent issue that exists (Alvermann, 2005), and it will not go away on its own, therefore educators should not ignore it as it will cause serious consequences (Ferguson, 2004; Alvermann, 2005). Therefore, educators must look at this issue through a lens that does not focus on student deficits, but instead focuses on student strengths and assets. Also, they examine the instructional contexts in which the students are learning and determine how to best support the students so they can be successful. By considering students assets, an educator can create a learning environment that is more inclusive, which according to research is crucial (Learned, 2016, Collins & Ferri, 2016). Focusing on the assets of students makes them feel empowered and therefore supports academic growth.

**Sociocultural Learning**

Lev Vygotsky developed the sociocultural learning theory in 1978. According to Vygotsky, sociocultural learning emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in the process of knowledge and learning construction. It stresses the importance of interactions with others as well as the cultural context because they are an essential part of learning and
cognitive development. The role of cultural context in sociocultural learning theory is significant. Vygotsky (1978) recognized that cultural norms, values, and practices impact how an individual perceives the world and approaches learning. In addition, cultural tools such as language, symbols, and shared customs help learners understand their experiences together. Understanding these tools assists students in navigating their environment better and allowing them to succeed academically. Vygotsky (1978) also stressed the importance of scaffolding for learners. Scaffolding involves tailoring support to learners' needs and gradually reducing it as the learner becomes more competent in a task.

Zone of Proximal Development

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a key concept in sociocultural learning. ZPD refers to the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with assistance from a more knowledgeable individual, such as a teacher, parent, or even a peer. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning takes place in the ZPD which is the place where educators push learners beyond their current abilities. When a student engages in activities while in the ZPD, they can receive the necessary support and guidance to bridge the gap in their learning and develop new capabilities.

The ZPD is a dynamic concept that changes as a learner gains new skills and knowledge. However, for this to happen, educators must provide scaffolding. ZPD tailors’ instruction to make sure that instruction is individualized for a student's individual needs. This is where a teacher begins to provide the support a student needs to achieve their academic goals. Vygotsky, along with many other constructivists, such as Bruner, believed that adults should play an active role in assisting the child's learning” (McLeod, 2019). Therefore, it is a classroom teacher's job to act as a facilitator that guides a student through the learning process. Both Vygotsky (1978)
and Bruner (1966) emphasized the significance of providing appropriate support and guidance to students to assist them in achieving their academic goals. Hence, a teacher plays a very important role as they will need to continuously adjust and provide the proper support as a student progress to new levels.

The ZPD is a concept that can apply to both adolescent and adult learners. However, there are some differences when using it with the different age groups. For both age groups, it follows Vygotsky’s (1978) and Bruner’s (1966) beliefs by emphasizing the importance of learning with the support of a more knowledgeable other such as a teacher or a peer. This supports them and allows for the gradual progression of what they can do independently to what they can achieve with assistance. Social interaction also plays a significant role for both groups, as learners benefit from diverse perspectives and experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). However, when it comes to adolescents, they are still in the process of cognitive development, so the ZPD will focus more on academic subjects and cognitive tasks relevant to their educational stage. Adult learners on the other hand bring prior knowledge and life experience, making their ZPD involve applying existing knowledge or expanding skills in professional or personal contexts. Both adolescents and adults can utilize the concept of ZPD; however, its application may look different based on their developmental stages and life experiences.

**Self Determination Theory (SDT)**

Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985) developed the Self Determination Theory (SDT). This particular framework assists in providing a more in-depth understanding of why people make the choices that they make. Specifically, it provides a roadmap that can assist in examining both a person’s level of motivation and their personality. Deci and Ryan (1985) explained that humans, by nature, want to grow and learn in order to become more proficient at different tasks.
Deci and Ryan (1985) classified a self-determined individual as being able to: “engage in an activity with a full sense of wanting, choosing, and personal endorsement” (Wehmeyer, 2003, p. 15). These basic needs fall under the following three categories: “competence, relatedness, and autonomy” (Deci and Ryan, 1985, p. 228).

Deci and Ryan (1985) described confidence in a person as their ability to make confident choices, manage their decisions, and to think independently. In other words, a person must feel effective or capable when they are interacting with the world around them (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004, p. 25). If a person is able to achieve these feelings, their motivation is more likely to increase thus assisting them in performing better on the task at hand (Elliot, McGregor, & Thrash, 2002). This aligns with Vygotsky’s ZPD theory as he found that challenging a student just beyond their level is one way to make a student feel capable in their abilities. Hence both theories promote academic growth when students have the appropriate support.

The next category that Deci and Ryan (1985) discussed is relatedness. Relatedness is when a person has a feeling of belonging and connectedness to others (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). When a person feels a sense of relatedness, it is more likely that they will be intrinsically motivated. This category relates to the social aspect of ZPD. The “more knowledgeable others” such as a teacher or a peer can assist in providing a feeling of connectedness and belonging. These feelings can then contribute to a student being more engaged in the learning process.

Autonomy is the last category provided in the SDT. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), autonomy is when a person can both control and regulate their behaviors when working towards a goal. The category of autonomy involves an individual being able to both acts independently and make decisions; they have control over their choices (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). This
element is a part of ZPD as when students begin to move forward to more challenging activities that are independent and self-directed. Vygotsky (1978) shared that learners benefit from guidance just beyond their current level of competence in hopes that with appropriate support, they will become more self-regulated and autonomous learners over time.

All three of the categories in SDT interconnect and link to motivation. Depending on how a person sees these connections can determine their level of motivation. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), a person can feel more or less motivated depending on where their motivation is coming from and how well their needs for the above three categories of SDT; this can affect their levels of motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Thus, a person’s level of motivation can affect their performance on the task at hand. If a person feels forced to perform a task, it may cause them to have negative feelings toward that task (Koestner & Losier, 2002), and be less motivated to work on it.

Both ZPD, SDT, and Socio-Cultural Learning complement each other in many ways as they provide insight on learning, motivation, and personal development throughout the learning process. By implementing elements of these three frameworks, educators assist in addressing the diverse needs of students, while also incorporating social interactions to increase student motivation. These frameworks are evident in the iLit 45 reading intervention program as it provides students with the appropriate amount of support, while also pushing them just beyond their current ability level. iLit 45 also encourages collaboration with others, which is an aspect that aligns with SDT and the concept of guidance from a more knowledgeable other.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework. Lev Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Learning Theory and Zone of Proximal Development (1978), along with Edward Deci and Richard Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory (1985) provided the lens to examine the student and teacher perceptions of the impact of the iLit 45 reading intervention program on student literacy.

Conclusion

Sociocultural learning theory as well as ZPD and SDT, serves as a dynamic framework that can guide educators in customizing instruction to meet the needs of individual learners. These frameworks can assist in guiding students to reach their full potential and help bridge the existing literacy gap. Recognizing how crucial cultural context and social interactions are in this process allows educators to create a supportive environment that can foster growth and academic success for students. iLit 45 complements ZPD as it helps reading teachers provide tailored resources and scaffolding such as adaptive content, interactive activities, and assessments that target specific areas of improvement for students that will help them grow academically. While using this intervention, teachers facilitate learning, act as the more knowledgeable other, and guide students throughout their educational journey. By implementing the principles of sociocultural learning theory and its components SDT and ZPD, educators can create inclusive
and effective learning environments that will help students grow both cognitively and academically.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine both student and teacher perceptions and their experiences navigating the iLit 45 reading intervention program. In this chapter I introduce my case study methodology used to guide this study. I will also provide my rationale for conducting qualitative case study research and explain the details of my research including the participants, setting, and instruments that I used for this research study.

Overview of Study

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 7.3 million students in the United States qualified to receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the 2019-2020 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Within this group of students, 33% fall under the classification of having a learning disability (LD), most of these learning disabilities fall under the category of reading. This information is concerning as academic rigor increases at the high school level (Ko & Hughes, 2015) expecting students to read and understand texts at increasingly challenging levels. According to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) students must "develop and defend diverse perspectives as a means of becoming content area literate" (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). However, many high school students are not at their expected reading level, and therefore require extra support to assist them along their academic journey. Therefore, effective research-based interventions can support these students in becoming proficient readers.

This study examined the perceptions of below-level, striving ninth-grade students and their teacher regarding the iLit 45 reading intervention program as well as their experience navigating the intervention. The researcher also examined the iLit 45 website and The Gatti
Evaluation Group’s study to assess how the SAVVAS Learning Company conveys that iLit 45 supports student literacy. All students in this study had a specific learning disability in reading and rostered to participate in a reading intervention class in the 2023-2024 school year. For this case study, I invited one class of ninth-grade students to participate. I invited approximately 20 ninth-grade students classified with a reading disability to participate in the study. In order to conduct the study and gather enough data, I needed a minimum of four participants. Five participants agreed to participate; therefore, this provided me with enough data so the I could reach saturation and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the iLit 45 reading intervention program.

**Case Study Research Design**

Many researchers use a case study method when conducting a qualitative research study. Yazan (2015) shared that this approach is one of the most frequently used methods for conducting research. Case studies examine a specific area, such as an individual, group, organization, event, or process (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). Therefore, a researcher conducting this type of research must gather data from a range of sources. Examining a variety of data allows them to understand different viewpoints and better understand the results of their research. According to Yin (2014), Stake (1995), and Merriam (1998), examining multiple perspectives enhances the depth and validity of the research, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the data and the topic at hand. Figure 2 below outlines the different components of this qualitative case study.

**Defining Case and Case Study**

Several methodologists are well-known in the area of case study research; however, according to Creswell (2007), the three most well-known case study researchers are Yin (2014),
Stake (1995), and Merriam (1998). Yin (2014), Stake (1996), and Merriam (1998) provided researchers with their unique perspectives on how to conduct case study research to maintain validity. Each methodologist strongly favored using qualitative research, providing insight into their slightly different viewpoints regarding case study research (Yazan, 2015). Examining the multiple perspectives of these well-known researchers is beneficial as it can assist a novice researcher in designing and implementing their case study. The knowledge of these methodologists can inform and support future case study research.

Yin (2014) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident" (p. 16). Yin (2014) primarily conducted qualitative research and recognized the benefits of using quantitative data sources as supplemental sources depending on the case study and what the researcher is hoping to find. While he noted the potential benefits of this combination, he stressed the importance of careful consideration when using both to maintain reliability and validity. Conversely, Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) found using both quantitative and qualitative to be challenging and, therefore, focused only on the qualitative data when conducting a case study. Stake (1995) defined a case study as a "study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances’ (p. xi). Unlike Yin (2014), who took a broader approach to defining a case study, Stake (1995) focused on studying a single case along with all the nuances and intricacies. At the same time, Merriam (1998) defined a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as an intervention, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (as cited in Yazan, 2015, p. 148). Both Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) are similar in their case study definitions. They described a case as
being specific and including boundaries. Although Yin (2014) also believed in including boundaries, he provided more detailed instructions in his definition, adding that a case study must be thorough and systematic. Yin’s (2014) perspective placed greater attention on methodological rigor than those of Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998).

**Designing Case Studies**

According to Yin (2014), “the development of case study research design called for careful craftwork” (p. 27). Unlike other methods of research, there is not a complete and standardized guide for designing case studies. A case study is unique because it looks at real world situations and so the researcher must adapt and create their own designs based on the specific cases that they are studying. Yin (2014), Stake (1995), and Merriam (1998) all recognized the uniqueness of a case study and the need for a thoughtful design even though they did have some variations to their perspectives about case study research. Yin (2014) shared that a case study design needs to be more structured. In his book, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, Yin (2014) emphasized this structure by providing five components that he feels are essential when it comes to case study research. He stated that “a case study’s questions; its propositions, if any; its unit(s) of analysis; the logic linking the data to the propositions; and the criteria for interpreting the findings” are an essential part of the case study research design (Yin, 2014, p. 29). Yin (2014) shared that it takes a lot of careful planning to conduct a case study. A researcher must take the time to review relevant literature that relates to the topic while also making sure that they include some sort of theoretical propositions before beginning the data collection process. This component is an important step as “theory and theoretical propositions in doing case studies is an immense aide in defining the appropriate research design and data to be collected” (Yin, 2014, p. 44). However, the components of the case study are not the only
essential factors when it comes to conducting a case study. Yin (2004) discussed the benefits of measuring the quality of the design as well. He suggested comparing the quality of the design against four different criteria which include “construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability” (Yin, 2014, p. 45). An important element in the case study approach is measuring the quality of the design as it assists in making sure the researchers’ data is both valid and reliable. Based on Yin’s (2014) perspective of case study research, measuring the quality of the data assists in the process of making sure that it is both valid and reliable. This component is essential as it ensures that the data that the researcher collected is trustworthy, thus enhancing the overall quality of the study at hand.

In contrast to Yin (2014) who emphasized the importance of having a well-planned design from the beginning and only making minor adjustments during data collection, Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) argued for a more flexible design. Stake (1995) tended to be a little more flexible in his definition than Merriam (1998), however they both acknowledged that flexibility is a crucial part of the process. One example of this is change, Stake (1995) as he stressed that a researcher could make changes even after the research begins. He shared that “in a qualitative research project, issues emerge, grow, and die” (Stake, 1995, p. 21). Therefore, flexibility is a huge part of a case study according to Stake (1995) because many things can change throughout the research process. For example, in the beginning of a research study, a researcher may identify certain issues or questions to guide their study and then as they get deeper into the research process, the researcher may come across unexpected issues. Although the issues identified at the beginning of the research may stay relevant, the importance of some may diminish as the research unfolds. Thus, a researcher must be willing to make the changes necessary so they can adjust their focus and adapt their research design accordingly.
Although Merriam (1998) agreed with Stake (1995) on certain aspects of case study her approach was a little less flexible. She provided more structure and guidance when it came to constructing a case study. Merriam (1998) provided a clear set of guidelines that really focused on explaining the details of designing a case study. These guidelines were not a focus in either of Yin’s (2014) or Stake’s (1995) texts. The guidelines she provided include “conducting literature review, constructing a theoretical framework, identifying a research problem, crafting and sharpening research questions, and selecting the sample (purposive sampling)” (as cited in Yazan, 2015, p. 141). These guidelines made her idea of a case study research design sound a little more structured, however her approach still leaned more towards flexibility, allowing the researcher to adjust as necessary throughout the research process. Overall, Merriam’s (1998) approach to case study design assisted in bridging the gap in Yin’s (2014) structured design and Stake’s (1995) flexible design on case study research.

Case Study Data Collection

Yin, Stake, and Merriam share different perspectives based on their research beliefs when it comes to data collection. All three methodologists commonly utilized qualitative methods for collection which could include interviews, observations, surveys, artifacts, etc. (Yin, 2014; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998). However, Yin (2014) argued for a systematic approach when it came to case study research; hence his data collection may have differed. Unlike Stake and Merriam who posited that the data should be strictly qualitative, Yin (2004) believed that a researcher could use a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data if needed. He emphasized the importance of planning before beginning the data collection process, especially if a researcher uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative data (Yin, 2004). If the “preparation is not done well, the entire case study can be jeopardized, and all earlier work-in
defining research questions and designing the case study—will have been for naught” (Yin, 2014, p. 71). So, Yin (2014) stressed the importance of conducting a pilot case as part of the planning process. He shared that this allows the researcher to have a practice run before their actual research begins. This step enables the researcher to test their data collection tools along with their procedures, providing them the opportunity to identify any issues or challenges that exist, so they can adjust as needed, ensuring that their research collection plans are reliable. This differed from Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) who did not find a pilot study to be a necessary component of a case study. They posited that a researcher should focus on testing and adjusting specific tools for collecting data, which assists in making sure their tools are effective, reliable, and suitable for the research they are conducting. Even though all three methodologists’ different perspectives on gathering data, they all have a common goal of ensuring the quality and reliability in their research.

*Selecting a Specific Case Study Approach*

After reviewing the texts of Stake (1995), Merriam (1998), and Yin (2004), I decided that Stake’s case study approach aligns most with my research. Stake (1995) shared that “a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case” (p.xi). Therefore, the researcher seeks to deeply understand and describe the complexities, nuances, and unique characteristics of a specific case or individual. He continued explaining that “cases of interest in education and social service are people and programs (Stake, 1995, p. 1). Hence, when conducting a study in any of these fields, the focus is on studying and understanding the experiences, behaviors, and outcomes of the people involved, as well interventions designed to support them. Stake (1995) shared that a case can range from specific individuals or groups to entire programs aimed at addressing their needs. Case study research can provide researchers with valuable insights into
the complexities and dynamics of the people and programs involved, which in turn will lead to a better understanding of their impact and effectiveness.

For this study, I conducted an instrumental qualitative case study as it aligned with my research. Stake (1995) defined this type of case study as a study that looks at a specific case to delve deeper into it and gain insight on a particular issue. This approach was the best fit for my study as it involved an examination of a class of ninth-grade students participating in the iLit 45 reading intervention for the 2023-2024 school year. The group of students who participated assisted me in obtaining a variety of data which gave me a more in-depth understanding of the iLit 45 reading intervention.

One of the methods I used to gather information was semi-structured interviews. Stake (1995) stated that the use of questions serves as a guiding force when it comes to the framework of research. The questions that I had about the reading program developed throughout the process directing the focus of the study and helped the researcher determine what information that they were looking for. By conducting an instrumental qualitative case study aligned with Stake’s (1995) design, I was able to gain a better understanding of the iLit 45 reading intervention by examining the perceptions of the students and teachers that are working with it.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine student and teacher perceptions of the iLit 45 reading intervention, and the experiences students had while navigating it. I also conducted a review of materials to see how the SAVVAS Learning Company supports student literacy with the iLit 45 reading intervention program to better understand their perceived effectiveness of the program and its components. By using an instrumental qualitative case study design (Stake, 1995), it allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participants perceptions of
the iLit 45 reading intervention program as well as their experiences while navigating it. The data collected throughout the study will assist in answering this primary research question: In what ways does the iLit 45 reading intervention support student literacy development?

In addition to the primary research question, the data collected will assist in answering the following sub-questions:

1. How does the iLit 45 curriculum convey their support of student literacy development?
2. How do students navigate and use the iLit 45 reading intervention program?
3. What are a ninth-grade teacher’s perceptions of how the iLit 45 reading intervention program supports student literacy development?
4. What are ninth-grade students’ perceptions of how the iLit 45 reading intervention program supports literacy development?

**Participants**

The target population for this study was ninth-grade students enrolled in the iLit 45 reading intervention for the 2023-2024 school year. I invited one class of approximately 20 students classified as having a learning disability in reading to participate in this study. All of the students in the class receive special education services and have IEPs to provide them with extra support in their areas of need so they can be academically successful. Out of the 20 students invited to join the study, five agreed to participate, all of them were male except for one female. After I received the consent forms back from the parents, the students involved in this study returned an assent form agreeing to participate in the observations and semi-structured interviews. To ensure student names were confidential, I assigned them pseudonyms to assist in analyzing their interview responses. In addition to the students, I invited their teacher to
participate in the study. The teacher agreed to participate in the study, agreeing to participate in both a semi-structured interview and three classroom observations.

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The inclusion criteria for this study limited students to those in ninth grade and enrolled to participate in a reading intervention for the 2023-2024 school year. The students participating in these interventions are striving students who need extra support to reach their maximum potential in reading. Therefore, this limited the research study to one specific reading instructed by a veteran reading specialist. By examining this specific group of students and the teacher who worked with them ensured that the students participated in the same reading intervention with the same teacher at the same time. Including both the students and their teachers’ voices in this study provided valuable insights and perspectives that assisted me in better understanding iLit 45 as well as the experiences of the students as they navigated the intervention. If a student enrolled in the class after the session had started or chose not to participate, they did not participate in the study. However, they continued to receive the same reading instruction and have the same access to the iLit 45 reading intervention as the participating students.

**Description of Setting**

The setting for this study was a suburban public high school located in a mid-Atlantic state. The total population of this high school is approximately 1000 students in grades 9-12. Overall, approximately 50% of enrolled students identify as White, while 50% identify as African American, Hispanic, Asian or another race. Many students attending this school are of a lower socioeconomic status. While the school is in a suburban area, it is close to an urban area that experiences high volumes of crime and poverty. Environmental factors such as socioeconomic status and access to resources affected many students at this school.
The class observed in this study consisted of ninth-grade students with learning disabilities in reading. One veteran teacher, who is a certified reading specialist and has been teaching for 20 years, was in charge of teaching approximately 20 students during that time. The class is a reading intervention, which uses the iLit 45 reading program to support students' specific needs. The teacher provides the students with differentiated instruction using the iLit 45 intervention throughout the year to assist students in making academic growth, so they can continue to strive along their academic journey.

**Procedures**

In this study, I investigated the student and teacher perceptions of the iLit 45 reading intervention program. To begin the research process, I first received permission from the West Chester University Institutional Review Board (IRB), superintendent of the district, and the principal of the school where the study took place. The IRB granted me permission to begin my research in November 2023 (see Appendix A), however I did not begin my data collection until January 2024. In the end of December, I began my research process by inviting the teacher of the ninth-grade class of iLit 45 users that I would be asking to participate in the study, providing them with information on my study such as time requirement, frequency of interviews, number of observations, and a teacher consent form (see Appendix C) to participate in the research study. Next, in early January, I composed an email containing all the information for my study for the participating teacher to send out to parents of the students. I discussed the information regarding the study and included the link to a consent form (see Appendix B).

In mid-January, I began conducting my interviews with both students and their teacher. I set up dates and times in which I would meet with each participant to conduct a semi-structured interview across two different weeks. I also scheduled three separate times to observe the class
throughout those two weeks, one before interviews began and the other two spread out in between the interviews. I conducted a total of five interviews, four student interviews (as one student decided not to participate in the interviews) and one teacher interview, along with three classroom observations. During the interviews I began by asking students the same questions and added questions to expand on certain topics based on their responses. I recorded all of the interviews through Zoom using audio only so I could transcribe the interviews at a later. This would allow me to analyze the data and find common themes.

**Data Collection Schedule**

I collected the data for this study over a six-week time period. In the beginning of the study, I sent a recruitment email containing a description of the study and a link to an electronic consent form to the teacher. Then I composed an email for the teacher to send to the parents of the students with information regarding the study, consent form, and the link to sign the consent for on the Qualtrics website. I made three attempts to secure the participants' consent forms before the research began. The table below shows the timeline for the data collection process for this study.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Recruitment letters and consent forms sent out to parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Teacher and Student interviews and observations (3) conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Interviews transcribed and analyzed using thematic content analysis to look for common themes and patterns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table shows the timeline of the data collection schedule and procedures.

Instrumentation
The data sources for this study included: semi-structured one-on-one interviews for the teacher and the students enrolled in their class as well as observations of the intervention class of ninth-grade students. These three sources provide qualitative data that assist in understanding the effectiveness of the iLit 45 reading intervention through the perceptions of the participants that are interacting with it on a daily basis.

*Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) Assessment*

The GRADE is an iLit 45 intervention component that provides teachers with beneficial information. The GRADE is an assessment given at the beginning of the intervention to assess where a student is academically and then two more times after that (middle and end of year) so teachers can measure academic growth throughout the year. This assessment takes approximately 70 minutes to complete, typically spread across two class periods. Specifically, this assessment determines the student’s current reading level as well as other aspects that assist in identifying student growth overtime (SAVVAS Learning Company, 2022). In order to assess the skills and weaknesses of the students, the GRADE provides four subtests: vocabulary, sentence comprehension, listening comprehension, and passage comprehension. These subtests provide valuable information about grade-level equivalent reading levels and their grade equivalency for reading comprehension and vocabulary (SAVVAS Learning Company, 2022).

The GRADE determines which of the nine levels of interactive books and materials are appropriate for each student. The students will begin on these levels, and every two weeks, based on the assessments embedded in the intervention teachers can adjust the materials based off students’ progress. According to SAVVAS Learning Company (2022), the students can end the year two grade levels higher than where they started the school year. However, it is possible that students perform well on this test because they become familiar with the content as they work
with iLit 45 daily. Conversely, these students may not be able to transfer these skills over to other statewide assessments as the skills learned in the iLit 45 intervention program are specific to each student, whereas statewide tests are broad in context and may require skills that the iLit 45 intervention does not cover.

Observations

I conducted three observations throughout the research study to observe both whole group lessons and lessons requiring students to work independently. I recorded student comments throughout the class so they could refer back to their comments after the observation was complete. Therefore, I focused on the student comments and their participation throughout the class. This technique assisted me in gaining a better understanding of the student's perceptions of the reading intervention (Appendix F).

According to iLit 45, the intervention includes the six reading strategies identified by the NRP. These six strategies are activating background knowledge, student questioning, searching for information, summarizing, organizing graphically, and learning story structure for literary materials. Based on these strategies, iLit 45 has designed an intervention that provides motivation and active engagement, explicit instruction, vocabulary instruction, authentic reading and writing experiences, and differentiated instruction. Therefore, I looked specifically at student engagement/time on task while observing explicit and differentiated instruction to understand better what the intervention says it will do for the students. The perceptions of both students and teachers were essential as I wanted to know if the participants perceived that the iLit 45 intervention does what it advertises and provides enough tools and support to assist them in making progress.
Since this study required the participants to share their perceptions of the iLit 45 reading intervention, they needed to feel comfortable doing so. I informed the participants I would share the study results but would keep their names anonymous. If the research findings included critiques of the program or discussed administrative decisions, then I would share the results constructively using member checks. After transcribing both the student and teacher interviews, I allowed each participant to see their individual transcriptions, to ensure that I was accurately sharing their responses in my study. This step allowed the all participants to see my in-progress analysis or draft allowing them to make sure they were comfortable with my wording in the publication.

Teacher Interview Protocol

The teacher that agreed to participate in this study participated in one 45-minute semi-structured interview. I designed the interview to include questions that would assist in better understanding the teachers’ thoughts and feelings about the iLit 45 intervention. The questions in the study allowed the researcher to adjust as needed based on the teacher’s responses (see Table 2).

Table 2
Sample Teacher Semi-Structured Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>How do you differentiate instruction within the reading intervention program to meet the needs of the individual students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>In your experience, what challenges or obstacles have you encountered while implementing iLit, and how have you addressed them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>What is your pedagogical philosophy about the importance of reading interventions for struggling readers at the high school level?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How does the iLit 45 intervention program differ from what you consider to be effective instruction for high school literacy intervention settings?

Note: The table includes sample semi-structured interview questions that may be expanded based on participant responses.

The flexibility of these questions allowed me to gain a better understanding of the teacher’s perceptions of the iLit 45 reading intervention program. I was able to add further questions based on participant responses to expand upon the previously asked questions. For the full list of interview questions, (see Appendix D).

Student Interview Protocol

Four out of five students who agreed to participate in the study participated in a semi-structured interview that lasted approximately 15-20 minutes. The interview questions for the students were similar to the teacher interview protocol, as the researcher was trying to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions of the iLit 45 reading intervention program. The questions included in the study allowed the researcher to adjust based on the student’s responses (see Table 3).

Table 3

Sample Student Semi-Structured Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you think reading is important? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In what ways have reading interventions helped you improve your reading skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What are your overall impressions of the iLit 45 reading intervention program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Do you believe the reading intervention is necessary for your academic growth and success?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: The table includes sample semi-structured interview questions that may be expanded based on participant responses.

The above chart contains a sample of the interview questions asked to the students. These questions could be modified based on student responses. See Appendix E for the full list of questions.

Review of the iLit 45 Reading Curriculum

To have a clearer understanding of iLit 45 I reviewed its curriculum to gain a better understanding of the program and all its components, so that I could contextualize the data collected during both my semi-structured interviews and my three observations. Comparing the various viewpoints of the participants and SAVASS Learning Company will provide common themes and assist the researcher to see the whole picture allowing the researcher to identify the strengths and weaknesses that may exist. This analysis of the iLit 45 reading curriculum can contribute to making improvements to ensure that it will better meet the needs of the students that are using the intervention.

Coding and Analysis

In order to assess the data, I coded and analyzed the data that I collected throughout the research process. This is a step that assisted me in identifying common themes from my interviews and observations which helped me to organize the topics in a way that assisted in answering the research questions that guided this study.

In Vivo Coding

In vivo coding “is a form of qualitative data analysis that places emphasis on the actual spoken words of the participants” (Manning, 2017, p. 1). This type of coding is especially beneficial when focusing on the “spoken words or phrases of the participants” participating in
the study (Manning, 2017, p. 1). In vivo coding is one type of coding used in qualitative case study research. Some researchers also refer to in vivo coding as "verbatim coding, literal coding, and natural coding" (Saldaña, 2016). This type of coding assists the researcher in better understanding the participants perceptions by listening to what they have to say about a specific topic, in this case the iLit 45 reading intervention program. Thus, a researcher must really listen to the participants’ responses to form a true understanding of what they are saying (Saldaña, 2016). One way to ensure this is by member checking; this is where the researcher can share their findings with the participants to ensure that what they heard accurately represents what the participant has shared with them. In this case, I conducted and transcribed the interviews and shared the results with the participants. This process ensured that I fully understood the perspectives shared by the participants. If I misunderstood a perspective, I was able to make the edits needed to correct the errors that participants brought to my attention. Focusing on the viewpoints of the participants allowed me to learn more about both student and teacher perspectives. This approach-maintained authenticity as it used the exact words from the participants to form the codes that accurately represented what they shared. This method, in turn, enhanced the reliability and validity of the study because it accurately shared participant responses which prevented bias from the me. To analyze my observations, I reviewed my notes and looked for common themes and patterns until I reached the point of saturation. I related the themes and patterns back to my interview data which assisted in deepening my understanding of the intervention and helped to keep my findings valid.

**Constant Comparative Data Analysis**

For this particular study, I used a constant comparative approach as one of my methods to learn more about the participants' experiences and gain valuable insights throughout the
responses given in the interviews. Constant comparative analysis allowed the researcher to break information down into similar “incidents” (Glaser & Stauss, 1967), or smaller parts and then coded into different categories. This method allowed me to grasp the perceptions of the participants in order to understand how they interact and behave in their environment; in this case, their interactions with the iLit 45 reading intervention program. As the I continued to code information to reflect different patterns and relationships, the categories that existed became clearer until I reached the point of saturation; meaning I had gathered enough information that assisted in drawing meaningful conclusions for the study.

**Ethical Considerations**

I conducted this qualitative case study in the school district where I am employed, so there was a chance that I would be familiar with the participants. I had to be conscious of many ethical considerations throughout the study in order to make sure that my research was valid and reliable. Protecting the rights of the participants involved was also a vital concern. This step was a crucial part of the process because this step is necessary in order to be “able to trust research results” (Merriam, 2009, p. 209). Keeping these ethical considerations in mind assisted me throughout my entire research process as they were extremely important in making certain decisions, so that I could ensure my study was a successful one.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity**

According to Neuman (2011), “It is the moral and professional obligation of the individual researcher to be ethical even when research participants are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics’ (p. 143). I had to keep many things in mind in order to make sure I was conducting ethical research. Many well-known researchers have argued that it is the job of a researcher to protect the rights of both the institution where the study takes place as well as the
participants (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, I protected the participants’ identity by allowing them to choose their own pseudonyms so that I would never refer to them using their actual names. This component was crucial for my research since I was working with students that were only between the ages of 14 and 15 years old. Any information I collected in this study, I put on my password protected computer or in a locked cabinet in my classroom only accessible by me. These steps protected participants and the institution in which I was conducting my study.

**Boundaries Between Participant and Researcher**

According to Garrels et al. (2022), when conducting qualitative research, researchers “are considered to be research tools where they use themselves actively in order to gain rapport and gain access to personal accounts” (p. 2). Thus, this idea assisted the researcher in gaining a better understanding of the topic, however, they had to remember to maintain boundaries. For my study, maintaining boundaries was not an easy task; as mentioned earlier, the institution that conducted my research has been my place of employment for the past five years. For most of the day, I push into the academic English classes for our ninth-grade students, therefore, there was a good chance that I would be familiar with and even have some relationships with some of the students that are participating in the reading intervention. Out of all the participants, I only had one student that I worked with outside of their reading class. To maintain boundaries throughout the study, I made sure to stress to the students and the teacher that the study was voluntary. I made sure that they understood that I would not share the information that I was collecting with any staff or administration in the building. Therefore, I followed all guidelines to keep everyone safe and to keep the data that I had collected valid and reliable.
Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is essential when conducting qualitative research as it ensures that the research is valid and reliable. In order to do this, I used multiple methods data collection methods which included a review of the iLit 45 intervention, semi-structured interviews (student and teacher), and classroom observations. To analyze the data, I used both constant comparative analysis as well as in vivo coding until I reached total saturation. Once I had my information organized, I used member checking to make sure it was accurate. I asked all of the participants in the study to review the information that I had to make sure I was representing them accurately. These steps ensured that my study was valid and made the participants feel comfortable sharing their honest thoughts about the program.

Informed Consent

At the beginning of this process, I received permission to conduct this student research through the Institutional Review Board at West Chester University (see Appendix A). I also received permission from both the superintendent and principal of the school district the study took place in. Both the parents and the teacher received a separate recruitment email that contained a consent form (see Appendices B & Appendix C). that they signed at the beginning of the study before the classroom observations and interviews began.

Since I was working with ninth-grade students, I made sure that I kept everyone informed of the research process and made sure that they knew that it was voluntary. I made sure that I collaborated with the reading teacher so that the parents would understand the process and so they could sign the consent form for their child. I then made sure that the students in the reading class understood what the research was going to look like and how they could assist me in completing it; this included receiving consent forms back from them if they are willing to
participate. I made sure that any paperwork provided was not too high of a grade level for both students and their parents. This step was to ensure that they were able to read and understand what I am asking of them, so that they felt comfortable participating. I stressed that the study was voluntary and made sure students could stop at any time if they felt uncomfortable. I made sure that my participants understood that there was no pressure and I ensured confidentiality throughout the entire process.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, I acknowledged the purpose of my case study design in order to examine the perceptions of both the students and teachers that are working with the iLit 45 reading intervention as well as their experiences while navigating it. Also, in this chapter, I described the setting where I collected the data for my study as well as the participants that were involved. To ensure that I was collecting a variety of data as required in the case study process, I made sure to incorporate multiple qualitative instruments when it came to gathering data, to ensure I could triangulate it to identify the common themes for this study. In the next chapter, I will review the results of the data and summarize the findings from my semi-structured interviews, observations, and review of the iLit 45 curriculum.
Chapter 4: Results

Historically, researchers have geared most literacy intervention research towards elementary-aged students; however, over the past several decades, attention has shifted towards older adolescents (Frankel et al., 2021). In this time, educators have placed an increased emphasis on providing these supports to students outside of the early elementary grades (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Kamil et al., 2008; Lee & Spratley, 2010). Therefore, I investigated both student and teacher perceptions to see if they found the iLit 45 reading intervention program and in what ways it supports student literacy. I aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the intervention through the lens of the participants so that I could identify whether participants perceived that iLit 45 was assisting them in their continuing reading journey. The primary research question guiding this study was: In what ways does the iLit reading intervention program support student literacy development? This study addressed four sub-questions:

1. How does the iLit curriculum convey their support of student literacy development?
2. How do students navigate and use the iLit reading intervention program?
3. What are a ninth-grade teacher’s perceptions of how the iLit reading intervention program supports student literacy development?
4. What are ninth-grade students’ perceptions of how the iLit reading intervention program supports literacy development?

In the beginning of the study, I invited the ninth-grade reading teacher to participate in the study. When the teacher consented to participation in the study, I provided the teacher with a pre-written email to send to parents introducing myself and the research study. The email also included my recruitment letter explaining the research process and a Qualtrics link where they could find the consent form per the IRB protocol. Once I had consent from the parents, I went
into the participating class and explained the research process to the five students that had permission to participate. These students all elected to sign the assent forms and returned them to me.

After finishing the recruitment process, my first step was to schedule three observations with the participating teacher so I could observe the iLit 45 program implementation during a typical class period. I also worked with her to schedule times to pull students to conduct the semi-structured interviews. As per my IRB protocol, I recorded the interviews with the camera off on the Zoom platform. Afterwards, I used the Zoom platform to provide an initial transcript, which I then listened to recordings to edit for accuracy before uploading them to the coding platform, Dedoose. In order to accurately represent participants’ statements, after I had transcribed the interviews, I used member checking by asking participants to look over their transcript to ensure I had accurately represented their thoughts (Creswell, 2005; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Through this process, students had the opportunity to correct any errors and ensure I represented the interpretations of their interviews accurately.

**Student Participants**

The ninth-grade students who participated in this study all required extra support in reading, were in the same class and taught by the same teacher. There were approximately 20 students enrolled in the class; all students had the opportunity to participate in this study, however only five of the student’s received permission from their guardians. Therefore, I observed five students within the classroom setting for this study. When the researcher began the student interview process, one of the five participants decided that they did not want to participate in the interview portion of the study, so the researcher only interviewed the four students who elected to participate in interviews. Participants chose pseudonyms to use instead
of their birth names to protect their identity. Below is more information about each of the participants shared during their interviews.

**Lucas**

Lucas is a 14-year-old, ninth-grade student who has received support in reading classes since the second grade. Lucas has been in the same school district for his entire educational career. He explained that he does not like to read but shared that he believes that reading is important to help him be successful both in and outside of school. He shared that his main goal is to demonstrate enough improvement and no longer require the support of the reading intervention before he graduates.

**Alex**

Alex is a 15-year-old, ninth-grade student who has received reading support since second grade. He has been in the same school district for his entire educational career. Alex expressed that he does not like to read but noted that being a better reader will help him succeed in his classes.

**Justin**

Justin is a 14-year-old, ninth-grade student who recalled being in a reading intervention since the fifth grade. Justin shared that he is an ‘okay’ reader but explained that he does not like to read unless he is looking at comic books. He stated that “chapter books with no pictures” do not really interest him (Justin Interview). He acknowledged that reading is an important skill to have as it will help with his current classes and things in the future such as college applications.

**Scott**

Scott is a 14-year-old, ninth-grade student who remembered being in a reading intervention from as early as third grade. He stated that he liked to “read, kind of, if the book is
good” (Scott Interview). Scott shared that reading is an important skill because you see it everywhere. He shared that when you get a job “you will have to read a lot of stuff” (Scott Interview). However, he explained that “the goal is to get out of the reading class, so he would like to get out” (Scott Interview).

**Teacher Participant**

The teacher of the iLit 45 intervention has been working at the high school that was the site for this research for 20 years and has been working with iLit 45 for the past four years. She noted that throughout that time she has worked with many different reading interventions and has many success stories to share. She explained that she believes that reading is beneficial to high school-aged students but acknowledged that reading is “not a one-size-fits-all, the intervention has to be meaningful and purposeful” (Teacher Interview).

**Description of Classroom**

The room where this intervention took place was one of the smallest rooms inside the building. There was only one window in the entire classroom, and it did not open. Below the window was a grassy area that had no specific purpose and across the way was an adjoining wing of the high school. The walls in the classroom were white cinderblock and decorated with a few different posters that are reading related. The classroom had 15 student desks and one teacher desk and did not have room for any additional desks. There were very few options for the teacher to set up the room because of the size and the shape of it. Therefore, the teacher had the desks arranged in a “U” shape with a few desks in the middle of the “U”. There were also a few desks that do not fit inside of the “U” and are alongside the teacher’s desk. The teacher arranged the desks in this manner so that they had access to all of the desks. There was not much room to
move around as the desks take up most of the space and the students sit very close together, making it difficult to navigate the classroom.

There are limited outlets inside the classroom, so the teacher provided extension cords since most student activities in this class required a computer. If a student did not have a charger, the teacher had one extra laptop charger to lend out, and if that one was in use, then the students had to borrow from their classmates. During my three observations, all students were able to use their own computers except for one observation where a student could not get their computer to turn on, so the teacher lent the student her personal computer, so the student could complete the assignment.

**Exploration of Themes**

After collecting data for this case study, I identified themes that addressed each research sub-question and explained my qualitative findings. From the four students that participated in the interviews, I was able to identify the following themes from the semi-structured interview questions that were used to answer each sub question. In this section, I summarize the findings for my research questions along with discussing and comparing the different themes discovered throughout the research process.

**iLit 45 and Student Literacy Development**

To answer the question: *How does the iLit curriculum convey their support of student literacy development?* I reviewed the iLit 45 intervention program through viewing the iLit Research Overview Study as well as the iLit website to gain a better understanding of how the company conveys their support for student literacy. According to SAVVAS Learning Company (2020), the iLit 45 intervention is for students in grades 6 and beyond and can potentially assist striving readers in making two years reading growth in one school year. In order to assess their
interventions outcomes, SAVVAS worked closely with the Gatti Evaluation Group and conducted a study over the course of two years. The Gatti Evaluation Group collaborates with various researchers and research centers throughout the world to assist them in conducting educational research.

The Gatti Evaluation Group conducted the iLit 45 Research Overview study over a two-year period in order to assess the effectiveness of the intervention in assisting students in acquiring literacy skills while also examining both usage and implementation of the intervention (Gatti, 2016). During the 2013-2014 school year, the study examined seventh-grade classrooms and in the 2014-2015 school year it examined eighth-grade classrooms. This study had a longitudinal randomized, control trial design, meaning some of the students in the research schools. Therefore, researchers randomly assigned students to work with iLit 45 while the other students would continue to use their school’s current reading intervention (comparison group). Randomly placing the students into the two different categories would assist the researchers in evaluating the iLit 45 intervention to see if there were any significant impacts on the students that were using it. There was a total of 283 students involved in this study and a total of 19 different classes. Although the researchers only used a total of 19 different classes, they made sure that there was a variation in both ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Gatti, 2016). Researchers assigned a total of eight teachers to work specifically with the iLit 45 reading intervention, while eleven other teachers worked with the comparison group students. To ensure teachers were following the program to fidelity, SAVVAS curriculum specialists provided multiple training sessions introducing the teachers to the iLit 45 intervention. The researchers provided the first training for one school day, in this training they familiarized the teachers and administrators with the key components and resources of the iLit 45 reading intervention (Gatti,
A few weeks later, Pearson provided follow up training to ensure that the teachers would be able to follow the intervention with fidelity; this training lasted one school day. During this time, they continued to work with the teachers on using the different tools and components of the program. They paired these training sessions with observations as well as one-on-one meetings between Pearson consultants and the teachers, allowing teachers to ask questions and receive feedback. Then one final training used as a refresher training which was online and lasted about two hours to make sure the teachers felt confident in implementing the intervention. Although there were multiple training sessions, the time allotted to learn the program and all of its components may not have been enough to truly understand how to successfully incorporate it into the classroom. Although the researchers provided teachers with three days of professional development to ensure that they could implement the intervention, this may not have been enough time to ensure the teachers were able to teach it with fidelity. In order to ensure teachers were confident with the program the researchers should have offered ongoing professional development to ensure teachers were able to fully implement the program properly. Darling-Hammond et al., (2017) stated that “effective PD provides teachers with adequate time to learn, practice, implement, and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their practice” (2017, p. vi). Therefore, it may have been more beneficial for the teachers that would be working with the iLit 45 intervention to receive more PD’s. While three days may have been enough to allow the teachers to attain certain skills, it may not have been enough time to have mastered all of them. Therefore, these teachers may have not been teaching to the level that they could be teaching having more exposure to the intervention.

The researchers randomly placed the students in this study to either an iLit 45 classroom or a comparison classroom. This may have had effects on the comparison group students as they
could have potentially denied students access to an intervention that may have been beneficial for them. However, the research never showed if the students in the comparison group were able to have access to the iLit 45 reading intervention after the study had ended. The study included public school districts that were in both suburban and urban areas in states across the United States including Arizona, California, Colorado, Michigan, New Jersey, and New York. This study included students of various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds’ which is beneficial as it represents a diverse group of students. However, using students from different states could mean that there are different educational standards, resources in the schools, and many other challenges that could make it difficult to ensure that the teachers of the iLit 45 intervention implemented it with fidelity. The researchers in this study used a variety of measures to assess the students that were using the two interventions such as student perceptions and academic performance (Gatti, 2016).

Researchers chose to measure changes in the literacy skills of students with the GRADE which is an assessment that used three times a year with the iLit 45 reading intervention to measure vocabulary, sentence comprehension, passage comprehension, and listening comprehension (SAVVAS Learning Company, 2020). While GRADE is not a timed assessment, typical student time spent on the assessment can range anywhere from 50-90 minutes. This study solely uses the GRADE assessment to measure student progress. SAVVAS Learning Company created this assessment for the iLit 45 intervention specifically so there are limitations in this research. As the students continue to work with the program and become more comfortable with it, their scores will most likely increase. Depending on the assessment and how much it changes, students may become familiar with the tests and be able to perform better as a result of familiarity with the test. Also, using only the GRADE may not show an accurate picture of what
the student is capable of. For example, a student may perform well on the GRADE which is related to the specific content they are working on in iLit 45 and then not perform as well on a standardized test.

Other measures used to address the researchers' questions were teacher perceptions, intervention implementation, and student attitudes. To learn more about these components, the researchers conducted observations as well as surveys and interviews with the participating teachers. These measures allowed researchers to gain a better insight into what was going on inside of each classroom. Using this variety of measures provided researchers with information on the different content and activities implemented in the classroom as well as allowing them to assess the effectiveness of the materials used with the different programs. In order to gain a better idea of student attitudes toward the iLit 45 intervention, the Gatti Evaluation Group created a survey and provided it to participants of the study two different times, once in the beginning of the study (Fall) and once in the end of the study (Spring). This survey included questions that addressed “literacy attitude, confidence, motivation, and self-perceived aptitude” (Gatti, 2016, p. 4). The researchers implemented these measures to assess the effectiveness of the iLit 45 intervention. Although the researchers used a variety of methods to gain a deeper understanding of the program some of these methods could have caused some of the outcomes to be inaccurate. For example, when conducting observations, may not show a true picture as teachers and students may act differently when someone is observing. Also, the surveys provided to the students may not reflect their true attitudes toward the intervention. Therefore, while this study does offer some valuable insights about the iLit 45 reading intervention, some of the results of this study make others question the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings.
Student Performance Results. The Gatti study took place over a two-year time span (initial year using iLit and the year after), comparing the iLit users to the students who were using their current school literacy interventions. For Year 1, the researchers found that the seventh-grade iLit 45 users performed as well as their peers using that were not using the iLit 45 intervention on the GRADE test when it came to “Vocabulary, Sentence Comprehension, Passage Comprehension, and Total Comprehension” (Gatti, 2016, p. ii). iLit 45 did not make a difference in reading comprehension, which shows that it is not necessarily better than other interventions. However, when it came to Listening Comprehension, the results of the study show that the students participating in the iLit reading intervention groups outperformed their peers that were using the other programs. Although listening comprehension is an important skill to have for certain literacy-related activities, students need more than listening comprehension to become proficient readers (Kim & Pilcher, 2016). Reading comprehension requires a specific set of skills, as students must be able to decode and understand the words that they are reading. In order for a student to become a proficient reader they need to build their reading skills, so although listening skills are important, they are just one component of the reading process (Hogan & Alonzo, 2014). Therefore, outperforming students when it comes to listening comprehension is a positive attribute of the intervention as listening comprehension is an important component that can assist in understanding texts (Hogan & Alonzo, 2014). According to Hogan and Alonzo, (2014), strong listening comprehension skills benefit students throughout their academic career as they can assist them in understanding the various texts they encounter. Therefore, although listening comprehension is only one component of reading comprehension, students can benefit from being competent in this skill.
During the second year of the study, the students were in eighth grade and the results were very different from the students' initial year of using the iLit 45 intervention. The researchers found that in the second year of using the program the iLit users made greater gains than their peers using the other interventions on the GRADE test including the areas of vocabulary, sentence comprehension, listening comprehension, passage comprehension, and total comprehension (Gatti, 2016). According to the company, after two years of using iLit 45, the students outperformed their comparison peers that participated in their school’s currently implemented reading interventions (Gatti, 2016). The Gatti Evaluation group discussed how the teachers working with the iLit 45 intervention were teaching with fidelity, however, one of the flaws with their study is that they focused solely on iLit 45 and never mentioned the comparison groups and whether they were also teaching with fidelity. If the comparison group teachers were not teaching with fidelity, this could have compromised the results of that particular group, potentially lowering their results.

Also, this study only evaluated the results of the GRADE and not any other tests outside of the iLit 45 intervention. This presents a limitation for their study as using an assessment made specifically for iLit 45 can provide skewed results. Relying only on the GRADE assessment makes it difficult to determine the student's true literacy skills outside of the iLit 45 intervention. This limitation can prevent an accurate comparison of iLit 45 with other reading interventions. iLit 45 users interact and work daily with the program, making them more familiar with the content that was presented to them on the GRADE test. The GRADE assessment, designed specifically for the iLit 45, may not accurately depict the skills of the non iLit 45 users. Additionally, the researchers of this study did not examine whether the students' skills transfer over to standardized tests and other assessments. This limitation makes it difficult for the
researchers to draw valid and reliable conclusions about the true effectiveness of iLit 45 in comparison to other interventions.

iLit 45 Implementation. During the two years of the study, the researchers observed the teachers that were working with the iLit 45 intervention. This happened biannually and the researchers said the teachers implemented it with fidelity. In order to receive a higher rating, the teachers had to “consistently exceed expectations on the indicators and component usage” (Gatti, 2016, p. 14). There were eight teachers assigned to teaching the iLit 45 intervention while the other eleven teachers worked with the comparison groups. Looking at the results of the eight teachers implementing the iLit 45 intervention, the researchers rated five of them to be medium implementers while the other three were high implementers and were consistently exceeding the researchers’ expectations for implementation.

**Participant Feedback.** The researchers asked both the students and their teacher to participate in a semi-structured interview to provide thoughts on the iLit 45 reading intervention that they work with on a daily basis.

**Student Attitudes.** In order to address the attitudes of the participants, the Gatti Evaluation Group created surveys to gain a better understanding of their perceptions of the iLit 45 intervention. When it came to the student participants their general attitudes toward the iLit 45 intervention were positive. The Gatti Evaluation Group was able to identify several themes that expressed the overall opinions of the students' perceptions when it came to using the intervention. In the first year of survey, the Gatti Evaluation Group found that “85.9% of students reported they “definitely” or “sometimes” preferred iLit to their previous English class, 81.7% reported iLit was “definitely” or “sometimes” more interesting, and 41.3% wanted to continue using iLit next year” (Gatti, 2016, p. 26). However, as the school year progressed, the
students’ opinions of the program changed. The surveys found that the students began to show a less positive attitude toward the intervention as it became more routine for them. However, during the second-year teachers noticed a decline in motivation, so they began to change things. They began to supplement materials and even reduce the amount of time the spent using the intervention during a class period. Teachers noticed that student motivation increased after these modifications (Gatti, 2016). These small changes assisted teachers in gaining student engagement back.

During this study, the teacher taught the students in 90-minute blocks, so it is possible that they began to feel fatigued with the reading session, which would lower motivation and engagement. Also, in regard to the activities, if students were completing similar activities on a daily basis, it is possible that they became predictable which would also explain students losing both motivation and interest, therefore having a less positive attitude about the intervention. The student responses in this study were similar to the responses that I received in my student interviews. The students shared that the activities could be boring and repetitive at times. They also shared that some activities were “way too easy” and some seemed very babyish. Also, the students shared that there were not a lot of activities that related to their interests.

**Teacher Attitudes.** The teachers’ responses were similar to student responses as they also had a positive opinion of iLit 45. Teachers generally found the program easy to use and they also liked the activities included with the intervention. In fact, Gatti Evaluation found that “majority of iLit teachers, 67%, reported the programs content was appropriately difficult and personalized and 83% of teachers reported iLit 45 had adequate skills practices and progress monitoring. Approximately half the teachers would recommend iLit to a colleague” (Gatti, 2016, p. 27). The teacher participants perceived that the intervention was engaging as it incorporated a
variety of activities; however, they noticed as the year went on many students did show a
decrease in motivation (Gatti, 2016). Yet, many of them still mentioned that they really enjoyed
the iLit intervention and found it to be both engaging and comprehensive. This information is
contradictory as the teachers said that the program is engaging but the students showed a
decrease in motivation. This information could potentially mean that the intervention is not as
engaging as the teachers believe. This information shows that it might not sustain the students' interests after a certain period of time. Therefore, is iLit 45 effective? Looking at the teacher’s perceptions along with the student experiences in this study, the information found was inconsistent.

Gatti (2016) found the iLit 45 intervention program to be effective for students that were using the intervention after the conclusion of this study. Both the students and teachers that participated in the study had a positive experience throughout the process. Ultimately, the researchers found that the participants using the iLit 45 intervention made significant gains when it came to literacy achievement. The results of this study and the information on the SAVVAS Learning Company website share information about the same components of iLit 45. Both perceive iLit 45 to be effective, however I would not make the same conclusion based on some of the inconsistencies in the study.

iLit 45 Website. The SAVVAS Learning Company website shares how the intervention aligns with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards as well as the report, Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy (Snow & Biancarosa, 2004). Therefore, they base their intervention on five main areas including: motivation, explicit instruction and modeling, vocabulary instruction, authentic reading and writing experiences, and differentiated modeling and instruction (SAVVAS Learning Company,
SAVVAS Learning Company reviewed all of these areas and has explained how each of the areas are beneficial. However, after reading the study conducted on iLit 45 and interviewing the students and teachers for this current study, it appears that iLit 45 may benefit from reassessing their materials and making some modifications.

While iLit 45 incorporates research-based ideas, student motivation while using the program has been inconsistent in their results. The study conducted by The Gatti Evaluation Group confirmed this information. In the study, the results were inconsistent saying that the intervention was engaging, but the students showed a decrease in motivation. Therefore, the SAVVAS Learning Company may need to reassess iLit 45 intervention if they want to increase student performance and engagement.

Students’ Navigation and Use of the iLit 45 Curriculum

In the second sub-question, the researcher addressed the question, How do students navigate and use the iLit reading intervention program? Two themes arose from the analysis of this data: (a) ease of navigation, (b) challenges related to feeling overwhelmed.

Ease of Navigation. In order for a student to be successful in an intervention, they must be able to navigate it with ease. This is essential as it allows the student to focus on learning instead of struggling to use the tools and other components of the program. When an intervention is user friendly it allows students to be more successful as they feel a sense of autonomy, meaning they feel in control and have more motivation to engage with the intervention (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Being able to navigate an intervention involves many different aspects such as accessing the course materials, resources/tools, completing and submitting assignments. Based on both student interviews and observations, the students perceived that iLit 45 was a user-friendly intervention. For instance, all four of the student participants shared that the iLit 45
intervention was easy to navigate. Lucas noted that “it is easy to go through” and that he did not have any difficulty finding his assignments or submitting them (Lucas Interview). Likewise, Alex, Justin, and Scott all shared that they were also able to log on to iLit 45 and complete the activities without help. Alex shared that he liked how “it’s like organized and it’s just easier to do; you can log on any time of the day and just do it like in the middle of the night or something like that (sic)” (Alex Interview). Accessing and completing assignments was a simple task for all of the students, as evidenced during the three observations conducted during their class where I was able to watch as the students switched from screen to screen locating the specific activities and worksheets used in class for that day. During my time in the classroom, no students had to ask for assistance logging on or completing the actual assignments. However, students did appear to struggle with most were related to laptops not turning on and not having a charger. The interactive notebook was a component that students used to keep track of information from the texts they work with. During an observation I watched the students use the interactive notebook for a story they were reading in class. The teacher provided the students with directions of how to access the notebook, while also providing them with a visual on the Promethean Board using her own laptop (observation). I observed the students logging into the iLit 45 intervention program and navigating the different screens to find the interactive notebook. The notebook was something students mentioned in the interviews. One of the students shared that they like this tool because it opens by clicking on a fingerprint and provides them with boxes to fill in [graphic organizer] (Justin Interview). The students seem to like the idea of a fingerprint to open the notebook up. I imagine that this fingerprint component makes the notebook more appealing as it almost looks like something from a video game, which is a leisure activity in which all four participants expressed interest. The students liked the notebook as it reminded them of a
component from a video game, it was something relatable for them which made it more engaging to work with. The notebook is a document that opens and allows the teacher to add graphic organizers and different boxes for the students to take notes in while working on an assignment. The notebook the students used during the observations contained a graphic organizer that went along with the story they were reading. The teacher would stop after each chapter of the story to discuss new characters, places, and other important aspects that the students needed to remember. Students would look at the different boxes of the organizers and go through each one with the teacher to decide if there was any new information that they needed to add to their organizers for the chapter they had just finished. They were able to share their thoughts out loud and receive assistance from the teacher to ensure they were recording all of the details correctly.

I watched as students followed along with the teacher filling in the different categories, which helped them keep track of the different parts of the story (e.g., characters, setting, important events). After the students read the chapters assigned for the day, they would leave their interactive notebooks open to use the information with the closing activity for the class. The teacher prompted the students to switch back to the home page of the iLit 45 intervention where they were to respond to a question that went along with the story. I watched as some students navigated back and forth between the notebook and the questions, while other students used the teacher’s notebook, projected on the board in the front of the room. During the student interviews and my observations, I was able to find evidence to support the students’ claims that iLit 45 is a user-friendly intervention, as all students were able to find the different activities that they were using during that class period. Through observations, it was evident that the students were able to navigate the program with no problem. This was a positive aspect of the iLit 45
intervention program. Research has shown that a user-friendly platform is a beneficial part of a reading intervention (Falth et al, 2013).

**Feeling Overwhelmed.** The participants of this study responded to various questions asked about the iLit 45 reading intervention, specifically related to likes and dislikes. After interviewing all four ninth-grade students, one common theme that arose from their interviews was that the students felt overwhelmed as a result of the number of activities required for the students to complete throughout the week. For instance, Scott noted that “sometimes in iLit there are a whole lot of assignments that are listed” while also sharing that he does not feel that they are always difficult activities, but seeing the long list can be very overwhelming (Scott Interview). Similarly, to Scott, Justin reported that “sometimes iLit can be overwhelming because you see the assignments you have, and you can start overthinking it” (Justin Interview). The students find it overwhelming when they see the list of assignments getting longer on their iLit 45 platform. When students begin to feel this way, they could potentially shut down when this happens causing them to disengage with the program, as students need to feel in control and capable while working on assignments (Deci & Ryan, 1985). I asked students how to improve the iLit 45 and they shared that reducing the number of assignments would be helpful. The students expressed that the number of assignments that show up on their iLit 45 make them feel less motivated. They shared that seeing the assignments build up made them feel overwhelmed (Alex & Scott Interview). Deci and Ryan (1985) shared how students must feel the work is challenging enough but not overwhelming, however in this case when the list grows, students are less motivated to complete the work. Therefore, keeping the list smaller would assist students in being more motivated to complete their assignments (Alex, Scott, Lucas, & Justin Interview). When students do not see value in the assignments or begin to feel overwhelmed by them, they
will not comprehend the materials as well (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Thus, to maximize student learning, find a way to keep the list of assignments to a minimum, something that could assist students in increasing motivation and engagement, which will increase their comprehension.

Student participants also discussed the types of activities in the iLit45 intervention noting, “They [iLit 45] give us too many passages at once. In one assignment you get like three or four passages and have to do a summary” (Lucas Interview). According to the participants, they receive new assignments daily. The students shared that the teacher posts assignments “maybe every other week or whenever she posts them” (Alex Interview). Students will not always complete assignments on time which makes their workload larger (Teacher Interview). Therefore, the students could be feeling overwhelmed due to not completing work in a timely manner. The participants reported that they felt that the number of assignments was both time consuming and overwhelming. These responses are almost contradictory because students shared that the assignments are easy most of the time. However, this should not be the case, as assignments should challenge students just past their current academic level (Vygotsky, 1978). Some of the assignments asked the students to do elementary things like “who sat on the mat?” which makes me think that the activities are not engaging and therefore students are not completing them. Deci and Ryan (1985) stressed the importance of appropriately leveled activities as it supports aspects such as student engagement, motivation, critical thinking, and many other things that are essential for developing students. Therefore, if the students identify the iLit 45 tasks as too easy, it would explain the buildup of activities that they are seeing when they log into iLit 45.
In order to gain a better understanding of student concerns, the researcher asked the teacher about the activities and workload in the iLit 45 intervention. The teacher shared that once per week the students must complete an iLit assignment:

Sometimes, I do assign more than one task. If it is Interactive Reading (IR), a passage that students read independently on their level, I only assign that. I expect IR will take them the entire period or one and a half periods. Some assignments are very small, so I may assign multiples. The other day the students received three assignments. The assignments included information connected to the novel we were reading. One asked them to make a prediction, the other asked them to write about two characters (this was super short), and the third they had to draw three conclusions from what they read in class. It becomes overwhelming because they are off task and then have so many [assignments] to finish (Teacher Interview).

According to the teacher, students are not always on task, and this is why their assignment list grows in length. Sometimes instead of completing assignments, the students will play on their phones, or surf the Internet. Sometimes distractions cause students to be off task, and they do not always complete their work; therefore, the assignment stay on their list of things to do. If the teacher provides a new assignment the next day, the list begins to build. This information shows that the students do not find some of the activities to be valuable which can have negative effects on their learning. According to Deci and Ryan (1985) students will succeed when they are engaged and interested in the content. Therefore, researchers and educators should review the content of the iLit 45 intervention program to ensure it is meeting the needs of the students using it.
Teacher Perceptions of the iLit 45 Reading Intervention

The major themes that emerged through the data analysis for What are ninth-grade teachers’ perceptions of how the iLit 45 reading intervention program supports student literacy development? were: (a) reading fatigue and motivation and (b) differentiated instruction and challenges.

Reading Fatigue and Motivation. The school district where this study takes place currently uses a couple of different reading interventions to support their students’ literacy development. A few years ago, both the high school and the middle school both used the Read180 intervention for their student reading intervention. However, over the past couple of years, the high school has adopted the iLit 45 reading intervention program, while the middle school continues to use Read180. All of the student participants in this study have shared that they have been in a reading intervention since a very young age, some of them as early as third grade. Each year they continue to participate in these programs with the goal of becoming better readers so they can eventually exit their reading intervention class. However, some students continue in these interventions when they reach high school as they are continuing to develop reading proficiency. When interviewing the teacher of the iLit 45 reading class of this particular group of students, she shared, “The students come to the high school after being bombarded with reading programs”. She reported that her students are tired when they reach the high school level as “many students are coming up from middle school having had a reading class, an English class, and a reading intervention class like Read180” (Teacher Interview). The students in the reading classes have had many years of reading intervention by the point they reach high school. Many of them begin to lose motivation as they perceive they should not be in reading class by this point, some of them are even embarrassed, especially when comparing themselves to peers.
This may cause students to perceive themselves as different, which can undermine their sense of belongingness. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), having a sense of belonging is something that is needed for students to feel motivated and engaged. Thus, by the time students reach the high school level, she perceives that the students are not very motivated anymore:

They are so jaded by these classes that motivation becomes a problem. They no longer want to improve; they just want to get the work done and get the grade. In turn, we found students were not applying skills taught into content areas (Teacher Interview).

In fact, the teacher shared that the students “know they need help, but they no longer want to work with interventions that are pointless” (Teacher Interview). Most students are no longer interested in participating in a reading intervention and by the time they reach high school they no longer find them to be beneficial for their academic journey.

For many students, the loss of motivation builds over time as a result of previous experiences in their educational careers. For example, the teacher shared that some of the students' previous teachers just assigned work to make sure the students had something to do and as long as they were busy, the teachers were not concerned about the intervention itself. Thus, she explained that she is working to build the motivation of students because she perceives that if she identifies the right program, students can be successful in continuing their literacy development (Teacher Interview). However, this is not an easy task as she shared, “an intervention like iLit 45 isn’t very exciting. It is difficult to add creativity into a program and it also lacks authenticity. A reading intervention in isolation weakens the effectiveness if it doesn’t have a purpose” (Teacher Interview). This goes along with the research of Learned (2016) who shares the importance of providing students with choice which would make the activities more valuable to the students. When students can relate to an activity, they are more likely to succeed
as their motivation and engagement will increase (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Without authenticity, students will continue to lack motivation as they will not see the relevance of the intervention. Students need to be able to both relate and feel competent while using the program in order to see value in it. Providing activities that students see as “babyish” or not interesting is not going to make them engaged. If a reading intervention is beneficial for adolescents, then they need to be relevant to students. Despite student motivation concerns, she explained that she has seen students make progress this year. The students participated in the GRADE assessment two times so far this school year, and the results showed growth for many of them. Therefore, even though the teacher is seeing that students lack motivation, the activities she is using with the students are working for nearly half of the students. Specifically, she has noticed an improvement in both class assignments and GRADE assessments. Thus, showing that students are making some improvements. She has found that the iLit 45 intervention can show student success. Thus, through this teacher's lens, while iLit 45 is not her favorite program she perceives some students have shown success. However, she noted that she does supplement outside materials in order to try and increase engagement while also working to assist the students in their specific areas of need. The teacher of this class is always looking for ways to assist her students in succeeding, therefore she goes above and beyond. By doing this she is providing students with chance to meet the three aspects that Deci and Ryan (1985) share to be beneficial for student success: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. She uses supplemental activities to enhance the students' engagement and to try to make the lessons more valuable for her students. She understands the importance of differentiating instruction to meet the individual needs of the students, so she goes beyond the intervention to ensure she is meeting the needs of her students.
Differentiated Instruction and Challenges. The students participating in the iLit 45 intervention program at the high school were “enrolled due to their status from middle school” (Teacher Interview). The students that participate in the iLit 45 reading intervention are striving readers as they are continuing to work on developing skills so they can improve academically. The students enrolled in the class all have different needs as well as are on various reading levels, requiring tailored instruction to meet them at their current academic level, so they can receive the support needed to continue to grow as readers. The teacher shared her feelings about reading at the high school level:

Teaching reading at the high school level is not one-size-fits-all, the program must be meaningful and purposeful. It is less about teaching students the mechanics of reading and more about the strategies students can use to make themselves better/stronger readers. This really should be in small group settings so students can get individualized support. (Teacher Interview)

This teacher appears to recognize that reading is crucial not just for elementary aged students, but to older students as well. She shared that all of her students enter her classroom on different levels and therefore need different amounts of support. Therefore, the teacher modifies all assignments provided to the students to meet their individual needs. The iLit 45 program assists in this process as it levels students based on their performance. As students make growth, the program will adjust to meet their needs. Specifically, iLit 45 allows her to test the students in the beginning of the school year using the GRADE assessment to see where they are academically when it comes to reading. The results of the GRADE allow the teacher to help group students and offer them extra support. iLit 45 also allows her to assign specific tasks to the whole group or individually, so they are able to receive the practice and support they need to grow as readers.
However, she also uses supplemental materials in order to assist students on their reading journey. In addition to iLit 45 she uses readworks.org to assign students articles on their independent levels as well as a supplemental activity called The Six-Minute Solution to build fluency. This activity pairs two students who are on the same level to practice fluency. Her goal is to try and make the intervention as engaging as possible and to ensure that the students are receiving the support that they need to grow as readers (Teacher Interview). Through her years of teaching, she has experienced how essential it is for students to be engaged in classroom activities. The teacher of the intervention is a veteran teacher of 20 years and advanced in the field of reading and literacy and therefore knows how to assist her students. Therefore, she recognizes that sometimes iLit 45 is not enough on its own and she supplements other materials that will assist her students in making academic growth.

Although the teacher perceived she was seeing positive results within the iLit 45 intervention program, she has found some challenges in the implementation. For instance, she identified that there is a lack of continuity within the program. This is an intervention that urges teachers to follow it with fidelity, meaning each day you follow the 45-minute lesson that is available. However, the teacher shared that the lay out of the intervention is not always ideal:

Some days you are reading a novel then the next three [days] you are working on phonics. It doesn’t make sense as the phonics work does not pertain to the novel we are even reading. Then if you are using Direct Instruction (DI), it might not even be a skill that they need so it turns into “busy work” and the students’ revolt (Teacher Interview).

Although the teacher has seen positive results within the iLit 45 intervention, she has found some challenges in the implementation. For instance, she identified that there is a lack of continuity within the intervention. This is a program that teachers are supposed to follow with
fidelity, meaning each day you follow the 45-minute lesson that is available, however she has found that this is not always possible, as sometimes supplements need to be added to keep students engaged.

She reported that in her experience the programs that work best for adolescents are those that are strategy based:

> I wish iLit 45 was more content related but due to Special Education politics, we need a research-based program. In the beginning, we had a strategy-based intervention with research-based materials. This [intervention] was very effective because the students found value (Teacher Interview).

Over the years this veteran teacher has found that strategy-based interventions are more beneficial for the students she has worked with in her reading classes. According to the USDE (2023), research supports these interventions as they improve students’ educational outcomes. She found that the students saw the value in those interventions and therefore were more engaged. However, the district has changed the reading program she used to a research-based intervention. The teacher shared that she works tirelessly to assist her students in progressing no matter what program she is using with them; however, “It is very difficult to tailor activities when you have 14 students whose reading levels range from first to seventh grade” (Teacher Interview). There are many obstacles to overcome when working in an environment that requires differentiation, so it is necessary for the teacher to be flexible and willing to ensure they are accommodating the needs of all the students. Since the teacher participant in this study is a veteran teacher, she expressed that she understands the importance of meeting students' individual needs and does anything she can to assist her students in becoming better readers. Her goal is to help her students in any way she can and help “students to believe in themselves and
know if they read quickly or slowly or need help with words, it doesn't make them less intelligent” (Teacher Interview). The information the teacher provided in her interview supports the research that exists for reading interventions for adolescents, which finds that reading interventions are beneficial for high school students when differentiated to meet their individual needs to ensure students feel a sense of competence, relatedness, and autonomy in the classroom. When a teacher incorporates these aspects into a lesson, students will feel more positive about the activity, increasing engagement and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This extra form of support assists students in developing their skills further and therefore allows them to grow academically. Thus, providing striving students with a tailored reading intervention along with the appropriate guidance can assist them on their academic journey.

Student Perceptions on How iLit 45 Supports Literacy Development

The themes discovered through data analysis that addressed the sub question, What are ninth-grade students’ perceptions of how the iLit reading intervention program supports literacy development? were: (a) engagement and motivation and (b) suggestions for improvement.

Engagement and Motivation. Through observations and interviews, the researcher was able to see that the iLit 45 intervention program offers many components to try and it is engaging for students. After talking with the students, I was able to examine how engaged and motivated they were by the iLit45 intervention. For the most part, students posited that they did not find the iLit 45 reading intervention to be very engaging. Alex stated that “some of the activities are engaging” but he could not remember what the name of the engaging activity was. He described the activity as “a video you can watch on the endings and sounds of words. Then you have to try and fill in the blanks on ten different questions and then fill in words for a sentence in a passage” (Alex Interview). Alex also shared that this activity is not an activity that you get to do very
often, but he enjoys watching the videos because he is able to listen and follow along without actually reading a passage. Justin shared that he liked the interactive readings because “it's easy, it's not too long, and there are not a lot of questions” (Justin Interview). Both Alex and Lucas struggled to think of an activity that they found to be engaging.

The literature states that they offer a variety of activities to try and engage the students (SAVVAS Learning Company, 2020); however, according to the four students that I interviewed many of the activities are not “fun” and can be “boring”. Students shared that they have very little autonomy with the intervention as the teacher picks all the books that they read. Scott shared “we usually only read as a class and the book is picked for us” (Scott Interview). Thus, the majority of the time they do not find the stories relatable to their actual lived experiences.

**Suggestions for Improvement.** The students did not appear very excited when discussing the iLit 45 reading intervention and struggled sharing things that they enjoyed doing in reading class. When asked if they thought reading was important, all students discussed fluency. When asked how to make iLit more engaging for them, two of the students began to discuss prior reading interventions that they used in elementary school. They explained how the programs were gamified and that was something that they enjoyed. I asked each student if they would like iLit 45 to incorporate some type of game into the intervention, and Scott was very excited. He shared that he said he would like “if you finish assignments, you can get some kind of currency like in a video game where you can buy stuff with it. Maybe the currency would allow us to add different characters or unlock different outfits; things like that” (Scott Interview). The students want more engaging activities related to things that they enjoy. Another students’ response when asked how to make it better was “to try to get out of it. iLit is not great, they are just trying to get you to buy it” (Alex Interview). Alex feels like the company is more about
making money than helping students learn. Justin shared that providing more age-appropriate activities would make it better as he said, “some of it is kinda (sic) too easy sometimes” (Justin Interview) which was a similar response to his classmate Scott who discussed some of the activities requiring them to fill in a blank answering something along the lines of “the cat sat on a mat” (Scott Interview). This activity is more for elementary aged students and Scott finds it to be too easy. Therefore, this is an indication that this activity is not challenging enough for high school students. This is something that the SAVVAS Learning Company could reevaluate as this activity is one that is not age appropriate in the eyes of the students, thus causing students to not want to complete the activity. Therefore, the program should adapt its activities to ensure they are meeting the needs of secondary students, so students will be engaged and motivated.

iLit 45’s literature expressed that it provides authentic, engaging activities, but the students using the intervention do not feel that way. These kids have been in reading classes since they were very young and are now in another one in their first year of high school. They have experienced many different interventions throughout their educational career, some of which they expressed they enjoyed more than others. They are at the age where they want to be out of reading class, therefore, in order for students to succeed in these interventions they must see value (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Although students expressed feedback that was positive, that there are some components of the intervention that require improvement.

Summary

Throughout the data collection process, I collected a variety of data through observations and semi-structured interviews. These instruments allowed me to see iLit 45 through different lenses so I could better understand the perceptions of both the teacher and the students that were working with the intervention. This chapter examined several different themes that I was able to
identify through the data that I had collected. In the next chapter, I discuss the results of this study along with its limitations and provide implications for future research.
Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of both a teacher and their classroom of ninth-grade students as they interacted with the iLit 45 Reading Intervention program. This qualitative case study design provided the opportunity for the teacher and their students to share their perceptions using semi-structured interviews, while also allowing the researcher to conduct three observations of their class. In Chapter 4, conducted data analysis that led to finding common themes that would address the research questions that I used to guide this study. In this chapter, I will reflect on my findings in the context of my theoretical framework and discuss how the results may inform the implementation of iLit 45 with future ninth-grade students. I will also discuss the limitations of this study as well as my recommendations for future research.

Summary of Study

This study took place at a high school in a suburban school district within the mid-Atlantic state. The school services grades 9-12 and has a population of about 1000 students enrolled. Most of the students in this school are of low socioeconomic status. This is important for this study as students may experience trouble accessing the program, causing more barriers such as lack of prior experience with technology, lack of access to literary materials in the home, and limited background knowledge. The school district provides opportunities for students to participate in a pull-out reading intervention to provide students with the extra support that they need to reach their maximum potential in that area. The program used in this school district for support is the iLit 45 reading intervention program.
In this study, the participating students participated in the reading intervention class during the same period, and they all have the same teacher. Four of the participants were males and two were females (one student and one teacher). The female student decided not to participate in the interviews, so she was only a part of the classroom observations. The students participate in the intervention Monday through Friday for 48 minutes a day. For this particular study, the class is in the afternoon, therefore each observation happened during that time. The iLit 45 intervention is new to all of the participants as they are all new to high school and previously used the Read180 intervention in middle school.

In this study, I used several different methods to collect data including both student and teacher semi-structured interviews and three observations of the class participating in this study. Initially, I used purposeful sampling to select a class to participate in this study. I knew that ninth graders would be ideal participants for this study as they would not have prior experience with the iLit 45 intervention. Approximately 20 students were in this selected class, all received an invitation to participate, and five students agreed to be a part of this study. The teacher and four students participated in a semi-structured interview, where I was able to add questions based on the participants' responses to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions of the iLit 45 intervention. To see the students navigating and interacting with the program, I also observed three of their class periods. This allowed me to gather more data that helped me to form a complete picture of the perceptions of the iLit 45 intervention. Last, I looked at both the iLit 45 website along with their study on the effectiveness of the program. I was able to use this to assess how they share that iLit will support striving students. By conducting interviews, observing, and assessing the iLit 45 website, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the intervention, the teacher and student perceptions, and classroom experiences when developing
literacy through the iLit45 reading intervention. The data I collected in this study enabled me to answer the following sub-questions:

1. How does the iLit curriculum convey their support of student literacy development?
2. How do students navigate and use the iLit reading intervention program?
3. What are a ninth-grade teacher’s perceptions of how the iLit reading intervention program supports student literacy development?
4. What are ninth-grade students’ perceptions of how the iLit reading intervention program supports literacy development?

I was able to collect and analyze the data that assisted me in analyzing questions that I used to guide this study. I used student and teacher semi-structured interviews along with three classroom observations. I used the constant comparative analysis method in order to look for common themes that arose from the interview responses. I then coded the interview responses looking for key words and phrases that were similar.

The student participants shared that the iLit 45 reading intervention program was not very engaging as they have little freedom when it comes to activities. The teacher assigns all activities via the iLit 45 platform and students must complete those tasks. Students also shared that some of the activities are too easy, which in turn makes that boring. Thus, students shared some ideas that they felt would improve the program and make it more enjoyable. As for the teacher, she finds that many of the students in her classroom are experiencing reading fatigue due to being in a reading class for such a long period of time. However, she did share that the intervention provides the opportunity to differentiate instruction for all students and she has seen growth in some of her students this year.
**Theoretical Framework**

In order to gain a deeper understanding of high school teacher and student perceptions of and experiences with the iLit 45 reading intervention, I integrated a theoretical framework incorporating Socio-Cultural Theory, the Zone of Proximal Development [ZPD] (Vygotsky, 1978), and Self-Determination Theory [SDT] (Deci and Ryan, 1985). The combination of these provided a lens that allowed for an in-depth analysis of the iLit 45 reading intervention.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

![Theoretical Framework Diagram](image)

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework. Lev Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Learning Theory and Zone of Proximal Development (1978), along with Edward Deci and Richard Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory (1985) provided the lens to examine the student and teacher perceptions of the impact of the iLit 45 reading intervention on student literacy.

The theoretical framework illustrates how Socio-Cultural Learning Theory, Zone of Proximal Development, and the Self Determination Theory assist in gaining a more in-depth
understanding the perceptions of students and their teacher the iLit 45 reading intervention’s impact on student literacy.

*Socio-Cultural Learning Theory*

Reading is a complex process that relies on many factors in order for a student to be successful (McDermott & Varenne, 1995). In addition, reading is not a one-size fits-all process as there are many different aspects to take into account such as learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and societal norms (Vygotsky, 1978) Therefore, one must take these factors into account when working with a diverse group of students to ensure educators are able to meet the diverse needs of each one of them. This idea relates to Vygotsky’s (1978) Socio-Cultural Learning Theory given the importance of social interaction during the learning process. Vygotsky stressed how crucial it is for students to interact with both teachers and peers throughout the learning process as working collaboratively makes the learning process more engaging for students. This collaboration assists students in gaining a deeper understanding by both sharing their own viewpoints and listening to their classmates' perspectives as well (Vygotsky, 1978).

Socio-Cultural Theory relates to this study as the students participated in a reading intervention in which the teacher could “tailor” the activities to fit their individual needs. Students were able to collaborate with both the teacher and their classmates, building a positive classroom environment. This was essential as when a student feels like they belong and have support, their motivation and engagement increases (Vygotsky, 1978; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Through the use of observations and interviews, I was able to both see how the students participated in a classroom in which they collaborate with their classmates while receiving guidance from the classroom teacher to ensure that instruction meets the needs of each individual
student. The teacher understands that students must see the value in the work in order to be engaged. Therefore, she uses a combination of strategies to motivate them. One of the activities I observed aligned with socio-cultural learning theory as it required collaboration as a class to fill in a graphic organizer, while the teacher facilitated the lesson. Also, during both student and teacher interviews, students provided evidence of this theory as the participants discussed the use of collaborative group work, such as discussions, where students and teachers discuss stories, they were working on together in class (Classroom Observation). Throughout the classes, I was able to witness the teacher guiding students through discussions while providing them with graphic organizers to assist them in keeping notes ensuring everyone was able to record the important information (Classroom Observation). This demonstrated evidence of students’ diverse needs through modifying her lessons and scaffolding activities with the goal of attaining the skills that they have not yet mastered. The teacher of this classroom was a skilled facilitator who recognized the importance of engaging her students by relating the content to things the kids were interested in. While reading a story, I watched as the teacher prompted the students to think of tv shows that were similar to the ones in the text they were reading. The students shared various answers including all of the reality tv shows they knew that dealt with singing since that is what the character was auditioning for. The teacher asked one question, and was able to grab the students’ attention, increasing participation and making them want to engage.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is an important aspect of Vygotsky’s (1978) Socio-Cultural Learning Theory as it recognizes the importance of what a learner can do on their own and what they can do with guidance from a more knowledgeable other, such as a peer or a teacher (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory assisted me in maintaining an assets-based approach as it
helped me to focus on the strengths of the students. The students that participated in this study have so much to offer and have knowledge about a lot of different things, however they are still developing in certain areas. Therefore, they are still striving on their academic journey. A striving student is a good example of someone who can continue developing with extra support. Thus, ZPD stresses the importance of tailoring instruction to meet students where they are academically and providing both this tailored instruction and guidance to support them in continued skill development.

Throughout this study, I was able to see ZPD in action within the iLit 45 reading intervention classroom. iLit 45 assessed the students and assigned work based on their current academic levels. The program tailored the activities based off of the results of the students’ assessment results, making activities just challenging enough, so that students did not feel overwhelmed. Throughout the entire class, students received guidance and support from their teacher to ensure that they were able to successfully complete the activity at hand. In the teacher interview, the teacher shared how she assigned individually leveled work to students through the iLit 45 intervention. The students are able to work on different skills that they need extra support with (Teacher Interview), therefore the teacher shared how she tailors everything in her classroom due to her classroom being so diverse in terms of academic needs. Therefore, for instruction she used a combination of independent, one-on-one, small group, and whole-class lessons that allowed her to adapt and modify the different lessons in the classroom to ensure each student received the support that they needed to grow as readers. During her interview, she shared that she has seen improvement in about half of her students from the GRADE assessment from September to January. However, it is difficult to say if this is only from the iLit 45 intervention as she provides other supplemental support as well.
**Self-Determination Theory**

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) explains how people want to grow and learn so they can perform different tasks. Thus, a self-determined person would participate and engage in an activity by choice in hopes that they will become proficient at that skill (Deci & Ryan, 1985). SDT focuses specifically on the importance of three basic needs known as autonomy, competence, and relatedness; these three aspects are essential for a person to feel engaged in an activity. This theory compliments ZPD as they both provide insight on the learning process. The iLit 45 intervention incorporates these theories as the program meets the students where they are academically, while also providing guidance and activities which are just challenging enough that students have the skills to still complete them. In addition, the program also provides support and guidance so students can receive assistance from a more knowledgeable other along their reading journey.

Through both interviews and observations, I was able to see pieces of SDT shine through. When it came to the use of autonomy, I looked for student choice in activities in their reading class. According to student interviews, the students interacting with the iLit 45 reading intervention program did not feel as though they had a lot of choice in the program. The students shared that the teacher assigns activities them on a daily basis, which is something their teacher confirmed (Alex Interview and Teacher Interview). The only activity where choice is involved is when they can choose to read a story with the class or individually (Alex Interview). However, when it came time for this autonomy, many students chose to read along with the teacher so they could complete the activity that went along with the book as a class (Student Interviews). Thus, while the intervention included elements that support student autonomy, observations of actual
classroom practice demonstrated that these choices did not always occur as intended in the actual classroom setting.

Next, I examined how competence, researchers describe this as the perception that the activities are challenging but achievable. In their interviews, students shared that most of the activities in the iLit 45 intervention program were “doable”; however, they noted that some of the activities were extremely easy (Student Interviews). In addition, while students were able to complete the various activities assigned to them, they explained that they do not see the value in the activities and, therefore, are reluctant to put forth effort. This avoidance results in activities building up in an ever-growing to-do list. In contrast, I was able to see the teacher facilitate students as they worked through a class novel. Students seemed to be more motivated as the activity was one that involved reading, discussions, and filling in a graphic organizer. The students showed engagement by volunteering to read parts of the story, sharing ideas, and also working together as a class to fill in a graphic organizer with important events and ideas from the story (Observation one).

Finally, I looked for the relatedness aspect of SDT while observing the students in their classroom environment. This aspect of SDT readily apparent as all of the students inside the classroom interacted with each other as well as the teacher on a regular basis. As students entered the classroom, the teacher stood in the hall at the door to greet all of her students each day. The teacher stands at the door to set a positive tone for students as they enter, which is something that Hattie (2012) shared assists in forming a learning environment that is conducive. During this time, I noted positive interactions between the teacher and her students as they all greeted her with a smile, and some of them even stopped to share stories of their daily events with her. Inside the classroom while the students waited for the bell to ring, I observed them
discussing music videos and chatting about different things in which they shared common interests. Everyone talked with one another, and it was evident that the classroom environment was positive and that they had built positive relationships in that space. This relatedness is an essential part of SDT as when students feel connected to their teacher and peers they are more likely to be engaged in the class.

**Discussion of Results**

The results from this study pointed to three significant takeaways in terms of publisher, teacher, and student perceptions of and experiences with the iLit 45 reading curriculum: (a) big claims, (b) easy to navigate, (c) not quite the right fit, and (d) growth with modification.

*Big Claims*

Vaughn (2011) has found that reading interventions can assist students in improving their developing skills. Thus, as a part of this study, I wanted to understand how iLit 45 supports student literacy. iLit 45 is an intervention that provides opportunities for students to receive tailored support to meet their individual needs along with guided support from a teacher. SAVVAS Learning Company (2023) shares that their intervention focuses on improving student literacy. Specifically, the iLit 45 intervention is for adolescent students, therefore the program includes many different texts and activities that are diverse in order to gain the interest of older students (SAVVAS Learning Company, 2023). However, students in this study did not find this statement to be completely accurate as they shared that they were unable to choose the stories that they work with in class.

This adaptability is a positive aspect of the program as researchers have expressed that activities for students are beneficial when teachers modify and adapt them to meet students where they are academically (Cheung & Slavin, 2013; Powell et al., 2015; Roskos & Neuman,
2014). iLit 45 uses a blended learning style, allowing educators to use a combination of both teacher-led instruction along with the use of technology, which assists in the differentiation of instruction for students. According to SAVVAS Learning Company (2023), the intervention comes with every material needed to support all students’ needs. iLit 45 is a program that is supposed to provide students with enough support so that they can make a significant amount of growth over a year (SAVVAS Learning Company, 2023). However, the teacher interview revealed that the classroom teacher needed to add supplemental materials outside of iLit 45 in order to make sure her students were able to continue to make progress throughout the year.

According to Swanson et al (2015), providing more exposure to developing skills while also reviewing strategies to assist them in being successful help students to grow as readers. The iLit 45 intervention does this to some extent, as the Gatti Evaluation Group found that students demonstrated growth on the GRADE assessment. However, they did not share much else when it came to how the intervention benefits students. The website and the study did not share data to show whether or not students were able to demonstrate growth on assessments and assignments outside of the program. Although the student participants had made some progress since the beginning of the year, the teacher shared that it was not two years of growth which is what iLit 45 advertised. Therefore, these students will use the iLit 45 intervention again next year.

SAVVAS Learning Company (2023) stated that they continually test their interventions to make sure they are effective, making updates, when necessary, yet the study on which they stake their claims is from 2015. After interviewing the participants in this study, I have found that the iLit 45 intervention is a program that high-school aged students do not find very motivating as there is very little choice involved in the intervention and many of the activities are not very engaging. Thus, a reevaluation of the curriculum might enable SAVVAS to examine how technological
advances and student learning post-pandemic may have altered expected outcomes of the intervention.

*Easy to Navigate*

Research has shown that educators should consider student perceptions throughout the entire educational process (Frankel et al., 2021; Collins & Ferri, 2016). This is essential as most students want to be successful in school and they can when they have the confidence and motivation to do so. Students enter the classroom with very different experiences that can affect their learning (Frankel et al., 2021). Frankel et al. (2021) shared that students will have a more positive experience when assignments are relevant, and students have control in the task at hand. It also is beneficial for them to have a good relationship with their teacher. These factors align with both ZPD and SDT as they are important elements that will assist in enhancing the learning process. Therefore, an intervention should be easy to access so students can focus solely on the material presented to them. Removing barriers in the intervention assists in promoting autonomy as students can work independently on activities that are on their level competency (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Throughout this study, autonomy was evident as students navigated the iLit 45 intervention program. Students were confident in using the tools (interactive notebook) and locating the tasks at hand. Students felt in control as they were able to navigate the intervention without teacher assistance, however, they knew if they needed guidance, she was there to help. Students must perceive they can be successful for them to feel motivated and engaged (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Thus, it is essential that a teacher is flexible, willing to make modifications, and provide students with all the tools that they need to be successful (Collins & Ferri, 2016). Falth et al., (2013) found that a program that has positive impacts on students will not be overwhelming to them. Therefore, a teacher must make sure that students understand the
intervention and all of its components before focusing on the actual tasks. The teacher in this study focused on this in the beginning of the school year, and because of that her students are confident in navigating iLit 45. By familiarizing students with the intervention, students now feel in control and feel that they can independently navigate it. Being able to navigate the intervention independently is beneficial as Deci and Ryan (1985) shared that this will increase student motivation. This is one aspect of the intervention that they can feel competent in, allowing them to focus on the other tasks at hand.

Not Quite the Right Fit

The students in this study participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews in order to answer questions about the iLit 45 and their experience while using the intervention. They shared that the program was supposed to assist them in becoming better readers. However, the students shared that some of the activities are “too easy” while others are “boring” (Student Interviews). Unfortunately, when students label activities as “too easy” or “boring”, it can mean that it is having negative effects on the students (Deci & Ryan, 1985). A task that is too difficult can lead to frustration, while a task that is too easy will lower motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Student perception of their ability to complete the assignments on iLit 45 often impacts their performance or willingness to perform in the intervention. Since the population of students used in this study are Special Education, they have often experienced challenges with completing work in the classroom setting. Past experiences with failing assignments or struggling to complete classwork can often lead students to feel that they are incapable of working on certain assignments before they even begin. ZPD focuses on meeting students where they are academically and challenging them just beyond that point, however we need to go deeper than that if we want students to be successful. While iLit 45 is designed to try and meet
students at their grade level, it can’t always account for where the students perceive their abilities to be (Frankel, 2016). When a teacher assigns students a multitude of tasks, if they do not feel they have the competence to complete them, it can affect their willingness to complete those assignments (Deci & Ryan, 1985). So, we need to consider students’ perceived competence (sense that they can complete work). Students who feel they are not competent to complete the tasks may choose to shut down instead and will not complete the assignments. Therefore, teachers should consider students’ perceived competence when assigning work. Teachers must go beyond the ZPD and include SDT considering students perceived competence along with meeting students where they are academically can assist in building student confidence, as they will see that they are able to complete the work and that it is reasonable.

In this study, student participants expressed that the iLit 45 intervention does not allow them to make many choices for themselves, as the teacher assigns all the activities throughout the week. Research has shown that choice is also an important part of the student learning process (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Collins & Ferri, 2016), something that iLit 45 is not allowing students to have which could be causing negative effects on their learning. When a student can choose an activity, they are more likely to engage in the task. According to Collins and Ferri (2016), student choice empowers students, making them feel more motivated and engaged. This is something that the iLit 45 intervention program is lacking. Although participants shared that some of the stories they read as a class are kind of enjoyable, they would like more opportunities to choose stories with topics that they find interesting. Research has shown that when forced, a person is most likely going to have negative feelings about the task (Frankel et al., 2021). The students in this study shared the activities assigned to them and they had very little choice. They said that many of the activities were ones that were not interesting and therefore did not have a
lot of motivation to complete them. When asked what would make the activities more engaging, they shared that iLit 45 would be more enjoyable if it included games where they could earn prizes. This goes along with the findings of Alvermann and Rush (2004) who suggested that reading interventions should be reassessed to see if they are meeting the needs of the students who are using it, especially in secondary education. Therefore, researchers should do more research inside secondary classrooms with students and learn more about them, the only way to make sure an intervention is beneficial is to listen to the students who are using it. Listening to student perspectives is essential if intervention programs are going to be both effective and relevant to students (Collins & Ferri, 2016).

_Growth with Modifications_

There was one teacher that participated in this study as she works with the class of ninth-grade students that were a part of the study. The teacher reported that while using the iLit 45 intervention she has witnessed growth in half of her students in the classroom. However, she stated that “reading is not a one-size-fits-all, the program has to be meaningful and purposeful” (Teacher Interview). Therefore, she has to acknowledge each of the individual needs of the students to assist them in increasing their reading skills and she differentiates her instruction on a daily basis as a result. Researchers share that this is beneficial for students as it allows educators to meet their students where they are and scaffold the materials so students can grow over time (Pardini, 2005; Tomlinson et al., 2003). Moreover, the teacher assesses each of her students and determines how to best accommodate each of their needs, this is essential in identifying the areas a student needs extra support in (Vygotsky, 1978; Deci & Ryan, 1985). This step allows teachers to guide and push students just beyond their current ability level which will challenge them and expose them to new skills and concepts (Vygotsky, 1978; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Thus, this
component is an important step in the learning process as it supports students to challenge themselves with the support of their classroom teacher.

Although the teacher in this study uses iLit 45 every day, she shared that she sometimes adds supplemental materials to assist students in better grasping the materials. Research has shown that teachers must make modifications to not only the instruction, but also the materials to make sure the needs of the students are met (Powell et al., 2015; Roskos & Neuman, 2014). According to Alvermann and Rush (2004), some literacy interventions rely solely on the technology component. However, even though these programs provide students with extra support, sometimes the intervention alone is not enough. The teacher that participated in this study recognized that and was proactive in addressing this issue. She shared that she incorporates supplemental materials outside of the interventions. Therefore, it is difficult to say if the students in this study have made progress this year because of their iLit 45 use, supplemented materials, or a combination of both. Alvermann and Rush (2004) shared that there is not enough research on how reading interventions work inside the actual classroom, this is an issue that needs to be addressed. If there was more research on this topic, it would be evident that the reading intervention alone is not enough. We still need teachers, not only to guide students, but to supplement and differentiate classroom materials.

In order to address the diverse needs in the classroom, teachers need to understand their students as individual learners, not just their academic needs. It is imperative that the classroom teacher find out why students find reading difficult, so they can use that information to adjust different activities in the classroom to meet the individual needs of each student (Brooks & Frankel, 2018). By assessing what students are struggling with, a teacher can have a better understanding of the students’ capabilities. Students have many skills that may not be apparent if
teachers put a label on them without assessing them as individual learners (Learned, 2016). Educators must work harder to get to know their students and their abilities to give them a fair chance of succeeding in the classroom. The teacher in this study works very hard to do this. She has a good rapport with her students, and supplements materials into the curriculum that her students can relate to. She is aware that her students are capable of many things, and that they just need the proper support to be successful in the classroom setting. The teacher in this study reported that sometimes you must go beyond the intervention to assist students (Teacher Interview). Conversely, some teachers will choose to use the online intervention to fidelity, and do not supplement with additional materials. This has a negative effect on students, especially when they feel the lesson is not interesting, it can make it difficult for students to learn and retain the information (Frankel et al., 2018). Although iLit 45 shares that the lessons included in the program are relevant to students, the teacher finds that this is not necessarily true. Based on the community the students are from, they are not able to relate to many of the topics included. Therefore, she takes her students’ interests into consideration and works to provide supplemental activities that they can relate to. Research shows that there are positive results when students find their classroom assignments to be valuable and relevant (Frankel et al., 2021). For some students an intervention is part of their educational career for years, so educators must know their students and their needs to properly adapt and modify lessons to assist the students with growing as readers.

Many students enter reading interventions at a very young age and continue throughout their high school career. Being in a reading intervention for so long can be frustrating as students do not understand why they are in the class, which is the case for all the students who participated in this study. Educators label these students as struggling readers which is a term
that affects them negatively, causing them to shut down (Learned, 2016; Brooks & Frankel, 2018; Collins & Ferri, 2016). However, the labels placed upon these students are inaccurate as they are capable of many things; they have interest and knowledge and can perform many tasks when they have the right amount of support (Learned, 2016). Unfortunately, teachers sometimes mistake the students distress for stubbornness when they do not complete a task (Learned, 2016). Instead of labeling students, teachers need to focus on what they can do to provide a more positive and inclusive experience for them inside the classroom (Collins & Ferri, 2016).

Understanding the educational needs of students requires teachers to balance challenges and provide enough support to students. The teacher in this study made sure to build a relationship with her students so she could make sure they were receiving exactly what they needed. She also completed assessments for the students so she could ensure the tasks were not too challenging, pushing them a little past the point of what they already know. She recognized that many of these students have participated in a reading intervention for most of their lives and is trying to keep them invested. To do this she tries to incorporate activities that the students can relate to. This helps in reducing reading fatigue as it increases engagement and motivation. Therefore, we must consider students' competence (matching abilities) and relatedness (making learning meaningful so they can connect to help them be successful (Ryan & Deci, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). Students will perform better when they feel supported, included, and can see relevance in the activities (Frankel et al., 2021; Collins & Ferri, 2016). These factors are necessary if we want students to be successful inside the classroom.

**Limitations of the Study**

As with most research studies, this particular study contains limitations, particularly in the areas of methodology, analysis, and generalizability.
Limitations in Methodology

The sample size and number of teacher participants posed as a limitation in this study. This particular study only included one specific reading intervention class that contained approximately 20 students and one teacher with the reasoning behind this decision was to ensure that all students were in ninth-grade and participating in the iLit 45 reading intervention program for the first time. In addition, the time period for this study occurred over a 6-week period. Having more time would have allowed me to conduct more observations and include student performance data, therefore being able to see more of the lessons and interactions with the iLit 45 intervention as students continued to progress throughout the school year.

Limitations in Analysis

One limit in this study was the analysis of my classroom observations. The classroom observations required me to take detailed notes while observing the lessons over three different occasions. Therefore, I depended heavily on my personal notes that I had taken during that time, which potentially could have affected the validity and reliability of my research. In an ideal situation, I would have had the ability to record and transcribe the classroom observations to better capture classroom dialogue to support my claims.

Limitations in Generalizability

As a result of the study focusing on only one class of ninth-grade students, the sample size was small. I invited approximately 20 students along with the teacher of their reading intervention class to participate in this qualitative case study. Only five parents consented and five students in the class assented to participate along with their classroom teacher. This participation rate may have been affected by the generally low parent involvement in this low-socioeconomic district. Having only four students and one teacher limited the amount of data
that was able to collect from the interviews. This is a limitation for the study as the voices of only a small number of ninth-grade boys agreed to participate thus making it impossible to generalize the findings beyond this group of students enrolled in this specific classroom at this specific time.

**Implications for Future Research**

The findings from this study suggested that iLit 45 has the potential to successfully support students who need accelerated literacy growth. Both the data and the themes shared in this study suggested that iLit 45 is user friendly: students considered the program easy to navigate and found they could complete the activities that come along with the intervention with ease. However, additional research could replicate this case study to include a larger participant pool of students or teachers. A larger sample size allows for a variety of perspectives which will assist in gaining a deeper understanding of the program and its components, and how participants experience its implementation. A broader range of perspectives would contribute to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

Until conducting this research study, I took everything it said on the website and believed it to be true. However, as I dove deeper into the study conducting interviews and observations of the participants working with the intervention, I quickly realized that the activities included with iLit 45 were not ones that students found to be valuable and engaging to students. In fact, many of the participants shared that they did not enjoy the activities for a variety of reasons, such as not being able to relate to them. Many of the reading choices offered by the intervention included references to experiences or cultures that the student population included in this study were not familiar with. Since teachers cannot choose which novels to pull for each class, this limits their ability to individualize the instruction. Once the intervention assigns a grade level to the
students’ accounts, a teacher cannot change it, this limits the options for activities that the students will interact with. Therefore, when creating lessons or programs for students, educators should incorporate SDT. This study has shown that students are more engaged and motivated when they have a choice, so their choices should be considered from the very beginning. Students know how they learn best and so we should take this information and use it when designing different programs and activities related to them. Taking all of this into consideration could really assist students in making academic growth. This goes along with the research of Hall (2016), who conducted a study which focused on empowering students inside the classroom. In the study, the teacher considered the perceptions of the students as she provided them with the opportunity to make choices about what they read and how they learned. Hall (2016) found that by the teacher fostering this type of relationship with the students, there were positive effects. The students began to change their identities about reading into a more positive manner and therefore, they began to be more motivated and engaged. This study aligned with Deci and Ryans’s (1985) SDT as this teacher created a supportive environment for students where they felt valued and competent. This idea is something that iLit 45 should add, as students are yearning for choice after many years of not having it. If educators paid more attention to the students and their perceived identities, the students would be more excited about the learning process, making them more engaged.

Additionally, many of the novels for iLit 45 include a narrating function for the students to listen to the class novels. iLit 45 periodically loses the licenses for these audio files, and thus the narrator function is unreliable and does not always work, therefore students are unable to use that tool. Also, aside from the independent reading selections, students cannot choose which stories to read or what assignments they receive. This lack of choice can often frustrate students
and limit the ability for the teacher to help students relate to the content. It is difficult for students to thrive in an academic setting when they do not find value in the content, and in turn, can make the experience frustrating and uninteresting. Throughout the interviews, the kids discussed wanting the activities to be more engaging, sharing that if there could be more game-like qualities to the activities, they would enjoy them more. For example, winning coins for completing activities to put towards buying clothes for a character they can pick would be a small example of something that would make them more interested in completing the assigned tasks.

Therefore, further research on the iLit 45 intervention program should include a larger pool of participants to gain more diverse perspectives of more students and teachers that work with the program. Although this study examined the perspectives, and it did provide some perspectives, it would be beneficial to have more than five. Also, the study should take place over a longer period of time to see how students interact with the intervention as the year progresses. More time and participants will provide a more in-depth understanding to the program which could contribute to being able to enhance the iLit 45 intervention so that it can positively impact students as they continue to work towards their maximum potential.

**Implications for Future Educational Practice**

The findings of this study revealed participants’ perceptions on the iLit 45 reading intervention program and how it impacted their literacy development and their thoughts on navigating the intervention. It will assist in better understanding the intervention as a whole and the impact that it has on its current users. The iLit 45 intervention was new to the students that participated in this study, however students quickly learned how to navigate the program. Therefore, the SAVVAS Learning company was successful in creating an accessible
intervention. However, students in this study did not perceive the activities are not engaging, so teachers may want to find supplemental materials to use with the intervention to assist student growth. Also, finding a way to incorporate more choice activities would boost engagement in terms of student learning. Teachers could survey students to find out things that they are interested in and add in some relatable activities, as they would appeal to them and also increase student learning.

Summary

This study adds to the existing literature on adolescent computer-assisted reading interventions. Specifically, it provided student and teacher perceptions of the iLit 45 reading intervention program and the impact that it has on student literacy. Through semi-structured interviews, observations, and a review of the iLit 45 website, I was able to gain a more in-depth understanding of the intervention and all of its components through the lens of the teacher and students in this classroom. The information in this study supports the need to stop labeling students but also to consider their perceptions. These two aspects may seem small, but they are crucial in supporting striving readers along their academic journey.
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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval

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IRB #: IRB-FY2024-22  
Title: Examining Student and Teacher Perceptions of the iLit Reading Intervention: A Qualitative Case Study  
Creation Date: 7-26-2023  
End Date:  
Status: Approved  
Principal Investigator: Ashley O'Connor  
Review Board: West Chester University Institutional Review Board  
Sponsor:  

Study History

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Key Study Contacts

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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Consent Form

Project Title: Exploring the Perceptions of teachers and students on the iLit 45 Reading Intervention

This study has been approved by the West Chester University Institutional Review Board, protocol IRB-FY2024-22.

Investigator(s): Ashley O’Connor

Project Overview:

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Ashley O’Connor is doing this research as part of her dissertation to understand the student and teacher experiences with the iLit 45 reading intervention as it relates to student reading comprehension and student perceptions of how the intervention supports their literacy development.

Your child’s participation will begin in December and end in January. They will participate in one interview that lasts between 20-30 minutes and allow me to conduct 2-3 observations that will last for about 15-20 minutes each of them using the iLit 45 intervention during their class time. There is a small risk of loss of confidentiality as well as mild discomfort when responding to questions about their experiences as a reader. While there are no direct benefits to you or your child for participating in this study, this research may help in determining how the iLit 45 intervention is supporting ninth-grade students’ literacy development.

If you would like your child to take part, West Chester University requires that you agree and sign this consent form.

You may ask Ashley O’Connor any questions to help you understand this study. If you don’t want your child to be a part of this study, it won’t affect any services from the High School and your child will still be able to take part in their reading intervention. If you choose to be a part of this study, you and your child have the right to change your minds and your child may stop taking part in the study at any time.

1. What is the purpose of this study?
   - To examine student experiences with the iLit 45 reading intervention as well as the perceived impact of the intervention on their reading comprehension.
2. If you decide your child can be a part of this study, your child will be asked to:
   - take participate in one 20–30-minute interview
   - allow 2-3 observations of each participant that will last 15-20 minutes each
   - This study will begin in December and end in January
3. Are there any experimental medical treatments?
   - No
4. Is there any risk to my child?
   - Possible risks include loss of confidentiality and mild discomfort when answering questions.
o If your child becomes upset and wishes to talk with someone, they may talk to Ashley O’Connor.
o If your child becomes uncomfortable, they can stop taking part at any time.

5. Is there any benefit to me or my child?
o There are no benefits to your child.
o Other benefits may be: While there are no direct benefits for participating in this study, this research may help in determining how the iLit 45 intervention is supporting ninth-grade students’ literacy development.

6. How will you protect my child’s privacy?
o The session will be recorded.
o Your records will be private. Only Ashley O’Connor and the IRB will have access to your name and responses.
o Your child’s name or the name of their school will not be used in any reports.
o Records will be stored:
  ● in a locked cabinet in Ashley O’Connor’s classroom
  ● Password Protected File/Computer
  ● Your child will be assigned a pseudonym in place of their name. The names of the children will not be used in any publications, or presentations.
  ● Records will be destroyed three years after the study is finished.

7. Do I or my child get paid to take part in this study?
o No

8. Who do I contact in case of research related injury?
For any questions with this study, contact:
  ● Primary Investigator: Ashley O’Connor at [Redacted] or [Redacted]
  ● Faculty Advisor: Dr. Heather Schugar at [Redacted] or [Redacted]

9. What will you do with my Identifiable Information?
  ● Your child’s information will not be used or given out for future research studies.

For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact Ashley O’Connor, [Redacted]

I, _________________________________ (your name), have read this form and I understand the statements in this form. I know that if my child is uncomfortable with this study, they can stop at any time. I know that it is not possible to know all the risks in a study, and I think that reasonable safety measures have been taken to lower any risk.

Child’s Name: ________________________________

O I consent to my child’s participation in this study.
O I do not consent to my child’s participation in the study.
Appendix C: Teacher Consent Form

Project Title: Exploring the Perceptions of teachers and students on the iLit 45 Reading Intervention

Investigator(s): Ashley O’Connor
This study has been approved by the West Chester University Institutional Review Board, protocol IRB-FY2024-22.

Project Overview:
Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Ashley O’Connor is doing this research as part of her dissertation to understand the student and teacher experiences with the iLit 45 reading intervention as it relates to student reading comprehension and student perceptions of how the interventions supports their literacy development.
Your participation will begin in December and end in January. You will participate in one interview that lasts about 45 minutes and allow me to conduct 2-3 observations of your class that will last for about 15-20 minutes using the iLit 45 intervention during their class time. While there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study, this research may help in determining how the iLit 45 intervention is supporting ninth-grade students’ literacy development. While the risks to participating in this study are minimal, risks may include loss of confidentiality and mild discomfort when answering questions.
If you would like to take part, West Chester University requires that you agree and sign this consent form.

You may ask Ashley O’Connor any questions to help you understand this study. If you don’t want to be a part of this study, it is completely understandable. If you choose to be a part of this study, you have the right to change your mind and you may stop taking part in the study at any time.

1. What is the purpose of this study?
   o to examine student experiences with the iLit 45 reading intervention as well as the perceived impact of the intervention on their reading comprehension.
2. If you decide to be a part of this study, you will be asked to:
   o take part in one 45-minute interview that will be audio recorded.
   o allow 2-3 observations in your class that will last 15-20 minutes each.
   o This study will begin in mid-December and end in January.
3. Are there any experimental medical treatments?
   o No
4. Is there any risk to you?
   o Possible risks include loss of confidentiality and mild discomfort when answering questions.
   o If you become uncomfortable, you can stop taking part at any time.
5. Are there any benefits to you?
   o There are no benefits to you.
   o Other benefits may be: While there are no direct benefits for participating in this study, this research may help in determining how the
iLit 45 intervention is supporting ninth-grade students’ literacy development.

6. How will you protect my privacy?
   o The session will be recorded.
   o Your records will be private. Only Ashley O’Connor and the IRB will have access to your name and responses.
   o Your name or the name of their school will not be used in any reports.
   o Records will be stored:
     ● in a locked cabinet in Ashley O’Connor’s classroom
     ● Password Protected File/Computer
     ● You will be assigned a pseudonym in place of your name. Your name will not be used in any publications, or presentations.
     ● Records will be destroyed three years after the study is finished.

7. Do I get paid to take part in this study?
   o No

8. Who do I contact in case of research related injury?
   For any questions with this study, contact:
   ● Primary Investigator: Ashley O’Connor at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]
   ● Faculty Advisor: Dr. Heather Schugar

9. What will you do with my Identifiable Information?
   ● Your information will not be used or given out for future research studies.
   For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact Ashley O’Connor, [REDACTED].

I, _________________________________ (your name), have read this form and I understand the statements in this form. I know that if I am uncomfortable with this study, I can stop at any time. I know that it is not possible to know all the risks in a study, and I think that reasonable safety measures have been taken to lower any risk.
   O I consent to participating in this study.
   O I do not consent to participating in the study.
Appendix D: Teacher Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How would you currently describe the iLit 45 reading intervention?

2. How do you determine which students are eligible to participate in iLit?

3. How do you differentiate instruction within the reading intervention to meet the needs of the individual students?

4. How do you monitor and assess the progress of the students participating in iLit?

5. What kind of resources or materials do you use to support the iLit 45 reading intervention?

6. In your experience, what challenges or obstacles have you encountered while implementing iLit, and how have you addressed them?

7. What is your pedagogical philosophy about the importance of reading interventions for struggling readers at the high school level?

8. How does the iLit 45 intervention differ from what you consider to be effective instruction for high school literacy intervention settings?

9. Can you share success stories about students who have benefitted from the iLit 45 intervention?

10. Can you share any examples of a time that iLit 45 did not work for students?

11. Are there any parts of the intervention that the students particularly like or dislike?

12. How do you engage and motivate students during the reading intervention sessions?

13. How do you stay updated on the best practices in reading interventions and how does it influence your instructional decisions?
Appendix E: Student Interview Questions

1. Do you like to read?
2. How would you describe yourself as a reader?
3. Do you think reading is important? Why or why not?
4. What do you think the benefits are of reading?
5. In what ways have reading intervention helped you improve your reading skills?
6. What are your overall impressions of the iLit 45 reading intervention?
7. What aspects of the reading intervention do you find the most engaging or enjoyable?
8. Can you share how the reading intervention has connected with your personal interests or experiences?
9. Do you believe the reading intervention is necessary for your academic growth and success?
10. What aspects of the iLit 45 reading intervention do you find challenging?
11. How do you think those aspects could be improved to make the intervention more beneficial for you?
Appendix F: Observation Protocol

iLit Observation

Date:

Start Time:

End Time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to Lesson</th>
<th>Observed (Yes/No)</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening to teacher/following directions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with teacher in class/group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with teacher 1-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with other students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interaction with students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Observed (Yes/No)</td>
<td>Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing seat work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working on computer assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inattention</td>
<td>(Observed (Yes/No))</td>
<td>Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staring blankly/daydreaming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Doodling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking around</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiddling with objects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed (Yes/No)</td>
<td>Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking/humming/ singing to self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping/head down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being out of the room</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-task/Distracting Vocalization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguing/talking back to teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to peers about off-task behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>