

MAXIMIZING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF TITLE I
FUNDING THROUGH A HIGH DOSAGE READING TUTORIAL PROGRAM IN A NORTH
CAROLINA SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

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ABSTRACT

In 1965, President Johnson launched a national initiative to promote educational equity. He focused on ensuring access to a basic education for all students. The goal of the initiative was especially those from low-income families. Despite significant advancements since then, the search for a genuine educational equity still continues. The mixed-methods research study examined the development, effectiveness, and impact of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a vital resource allocation aimed at reducing educational disparities in student achievement. The initiative would ensure all students had a fair chance at a quality education.

The study's quantitative component scrutinized longitudinal data on academic performance and resource allocation in schools that benefited from Title I funding of a high dosage reading tutorial program. The analysis identified patterns, evaluated the influence of funding on student outcomes, and measured the overall success of a Title I initiative over time.

Concurrently, the qualitative component involved detailed interviews with educators and policymakers, alongside comprehensive case studies of selected schools. These qualitative approaches sought to reveal the details of Title I funding on the implementation of high-dosage tutorial reading intervention, delved into the challenges and achievements experienced by schools and the perspectives of those directly engaged in the process.

By combining thorough statistical analysis with insightful qualitative findings, this study offered an evaluation of Title I's contribution to meeting the educational needs of students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The results aimed to guide future policy decisions and improve the effectiveness of Title I, thereby enriching the ongoing conversation on educational equity in the United States.

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FUNDING ON READING ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH A HIGH-DOSAGE TUTORIAL
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DEDICATION

To my husband, Terrell, my rock, my anchor, and my greatest blessing. We've been together since I was 19, and all that I am is because of your love and steadfast belief in me. Your unwavering support and encouragement carried me through every high and low. Thank you for being my safe place, my strength, and my constant source of encouragement. This doctorate is just as much yours as it is mine.

To my sons, Brycen and Braxten DuBose, my heartbeats, my joy, the very air that I breathe. You are my inspiration every single day. From riding with me to ECU as little boys to challenging me to finish before you graduate high school, this is for you! Let it serve as a reminder that no matter how others try to define or limit you, *you* write your own story. You can and will succeed. I am who I am because of you.

To my mother, my guiding light. You have always expected excellence from me, and your sacrifices for our family have never gone unnoticed. Thank you for your love, support, and strength throughout this long journey. For you, I will always shine.

To my brother, thank you for showing me what faith and resilience truly look like.
To my nephews, Carson and Cayden, your light and laughter brought joy when I needed it most.

To my grandmother, though you are no longer physically here, your love, wisdom, and gentleness remain in my heart. Your memory continues to comfort and inspire me.

To Aunt Linda, Aunt Claudine, and my uncles thank you for your constant presence and for being powerful examples of love, strength, and unwavering support.

To Aunt Ann, the best educator in our family thank you for dedicating your life to students and for inspiring me to pursue this path. Your example lives in my work and in my heart.

To my sisters of over 40 years thank you for standing by me through everything. To my cousins I've known all my life your love and support have lifted me higher. To my nieces and nephews your encouragement means more than words can say.

And to my father, Garry Elworth Moseley, Even though you are no longer here, your love and support will always guide me. I am who I am because of you. You fought so hard to be here for us, and I carry that strength with me every single day. I know you are always with me, and I hope I've made you proud.

This dissertation is more than a degree it is a living testimony of perseverance, purpose, and the enduring power of family, faith, and love. I stand at this finish line not alone, but surrounded by the presence and impact of every person who walked this path with me.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 1965, President Johnson's bold vision to set the United States on a transformative journey toward educational equity, recognizing that access to quality education is foundational for advancement and prosperity (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Over the past five decades, initiatives like Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) have been vital in broadening educational opportunities, significantly impacting the lives of millions of students (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Title I was introduced to combat the stark educational disparities experienced by students in low-income communities, where poverty often presented as barrier to access to quality education (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). With millions of children living in poverty, Title I sought to close this achievement gap by channeling critical resources into schools serving disadvantaged populations, thereby helping these institutions meet state standards in crucial areas such as reading and math.

Despite the program's goals, the implementation of Title I has faced numerous challenges, reflecting broader issues in the pursuit of educational equity. As of 2021, roughly 17 percent of children under the age of 18 were living in poverty, highlighting the persistent socioeconomic obstacles that obstruct educational attainment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Title I, supported by an annual budget of around \$14 billion, currently serves 21 million students in schools across the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). However, a considerable number of eligible students still lack the necessary support in schools and beyond, indicating an urgent requirement for increased funding and innovations in educational policy and strategies (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Addressing these challenges demands not only financial investments but also strategic enhancements, such as improved federal investments in K-12 infrastructure. Such enhancements

would benefit students in schools nationwide, helping to ensure that every child can receive a quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic status (Center for American Progress, 2020). It should not matter where your address to receive a quality education. This comprehensive approach is vital to overcoming the barriers that continue to impede educational equity and ensuring that education serves as a true catalyst progress.

Need for the Study

Reading proficiency is a cornerstone of educational success yet achieving it for economically disadvantaged students pose significant challenges. Economically disadvantaged students face many challenges in reading proficiency and beyond due to many factors. Recent studies highlight significant barriers, such as limited access to resources and educational support in the educational environment and beyond. (Idulog et al., 2023). Socioeconomic factors also play a critical role, impacting the general acquisition of literacy (Idulog et al., 2023). Addressing these issues is essential to improving results for all students, especially from disadvantage backgrounds.

As a result, there is a persistent achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers, particularly in foundational subjects like reading, which can influence their overall academic trajectory (Reardon, 2013). When students have difficulty in reading this makes for critical deficits in all other content areas. This study examined the impact of Title I funding on reading achievement through a high-dosage reading tutorial program in a North Carolina school district. Title I funding, which is allocated to schools serving large numbers of low-income students, is intended to provide targeted resources that can help mitigate these challenges. These funds provide supplemental support for students in Title I schools. By focusing on the implementation of a high-dosage tutoring program followed by frequent,

individualized instruction the study aimed to explore how federal resources could be effectively used to enhance reading outcomes for students who are most at risk of falling behind.

Title I of the ESEA, established in 1965, has undergone a significant change in its mission and focus over the past fifty years (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Initially aimed at providing funding to school districts with inadequate resources to support basic education, Title I has adapted to changing educational landscapes and policy priorities. Even in today's climate federal funding is an important topic that could seriously impact the operation of schools. Title I represented a landmark commitment to addressing educational inequities and ensuring access to quality education for all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. As part of this study, I examined the historical trajectory and significance of Title I, tracing its roots as a program focused on access to education, in order to position the present study within the historical context.

The sole purpose of Title I upon its inception was to provide funding to school districts with insufficient tax bases to support basic educational programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Amendments in 1968 and 1972 expanded the program's objectives to include initiatives aimed at closing the achievement gap between racial and ethnic groups, such as increasing the number of certified education specialists. Educators that are certified to provide quality instruction helps to close the achievement gap. Subsequent amendments in 1994, through the Improving America's Schools Act, emphasized the effectiveness of instruction as a key priority (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Improving America's Schools Act was designed during President Bill Clinton's administration to reauthorize ESEA created in 1965.

In 2002, the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) created by President George Bush introduced a new goal of closing the achievement gap for all students and ensuring

proficiency by 2013-14. This was a hefty goal by this administration. This also marked a significant shift towards accountability and standardized testing as measures of educational success (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). In 2009, President Obama's administration took office, and with it came a significant shift in educational policy. The administration's refocusing of Title I funds towards the turnaround of low-performing schools marked a renewed emphasis on school improvement efforts and this could impact closing the achievement gap. This change, as outlined by the U.S. Department of Education (2009), was part of a more extensive effort to address persistent achievement gaps and ensure that resources were directed toward schools that most needed intervention. The administration was also focused on ensuring the low-performing and turn-around schools increased in achievement within a certain time.

The reauthorization of the ESEA in 2015 through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) signaled another milestone in the evolution of Title I. ESSA aimed to fully prepare all students for success in college and careers, emphasizing teacher and principal quality, internationally benchmarked standards, and data-driven decision-making (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). ESSA, signed into law in December 2015, was designed to reauthorize the ESEA and replace the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Its primary goal was to ensure that all students, regardless of their background or circumstances, have access to a high-quality education that prepares them for success in college and careers. With the same goal in mind from the inception of ESEA in 1965, ESSA aimed to provide a more balanced, equitable, and flexible approach to K-12 education. This also shifted much of the responsibility for accountability and school improvement to the states and local districts. Unlike NCLB, which imposed stringent federal mandates and punitive measures for schools that failed to meet performance targets, ESSA gave states greater flexibility in designing their accountability systems, setting academic

standards, and determined how to support underperforming schools. However, ESSA still required states to report on student performance across key areas, including reading, math, graduation rates, and English language proficiency, ensuring that there is continued oversight and transparency. Some of these mandates made it impossible for Title I schools to show the growth needed in specific areas and caused punishment instead of positive impact.

A central feature of ESSA is its focus on closing achievement gaps, particularly for disadvantaged students, including those from low-income families, students of color, English language learners, and students with disabilities. The goal of ESSA is also to provide supplements for students and schools. The law provides additional resources and funding through Title I to support schools in underserved communities, requiring schools to identify and address achievement gaps within these student populations (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). ESSA also emphasizes the importance of teacher quality, requiring schools to ensure that students have access to highly qualified educators, particularly in high-need schools, and supports professional development to help teachers improve their instructional practices (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Title I compliance requires specific components to ensure students have quality educators and programs. Parental involvement is also a big component of Title I. While ESSA maintains the requirement for annual standardized testing in grades 3-8 and once in high school, it allows states to have more flexibility in how they use these assessments and encourages the use of multiple measures to gauge student progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The law also supports the exploration of innovative assessment methods, such as performance-based assessments, to better capture the full range of student abilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Additionally, ESSA places a strong emphasis on a well-rounded education, encouraging schools to offer not only core subjects like math and reading but also a broader curriculum that includes music, science, history and physical education. Preparing students academically is important but also socially and emotionally for life beyond the school setting (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The law also includes provisions to better support English language learners and students with disabilities, ensuring they have equal access to rigorous education and appropriate accommodations for assessments (U. S Department of Education, 2015). Making sure transparency happens and stakeholder engagement are also key components of ESSA, as it requires states to consult with educators, parents, and other stakeholders when developing their education plans, ensuring that policies reflect the needs and priorities of the community. All stakeholders should not just be aware of the plan but have an opportunity to contribute to its creation. Through these various provisions, ESSA aims to create an education system that is more equitable, flexible, and responsive to the needs of all students, helping to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed academically and beyond. (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Title I has played a crucial role in promoting educational equity, yet challenges persist in fully realizing its goals. During the current climate Title I funding is at risk for being cut due to policymakers not understanding how importance of funding. Ongoing achievement gaps, unequal resource distribution, and the dynamic nature of education highlight the necessity for ongoing innovation and flexibility in Title I initiatives. Currently as a country we are in limbo of why these funds are needed and so crucial to schools. As the educational environment continues to change, it is essential to remain dedicated to providing all students with the opportunities and resources required for their success (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

The federal government's role in shaping education policy in the United States has consistently focused on combating poverty and fostering equity for the most vulnerable. Although the U.S. Constitution assigns primary responsibility for education to the states, federal initiatives have significantly influenced the development of K-12 public education (Orfield & Lee, 2005). This analysis delves into the historical progression of federal education policy, highlighting key initiatives like the 2001 reauthorization of the ESEA. By exploring the interaction between federal and state powers, this study illuminates the intricate dynamics of education governance and the continuous effort to achieve educational equity as a strategy to alleviate poverty.

The United States' approach to education policy has been characterized by a cautious balance between state autonomy and federal intervention, with a common thread of addressing poverty and promoting equity. Despite the constitutional mandate granting primary responsibility for education to the states, the federal government has played a pivotal role in shaping education policy, particularly in the scope of K-12 public education. While specifically focused on the impact of a high-dosage tutorial reading program in a North Carolina school district, this study is rooted in the evolution of federal education policy such as the reauthorization of the ESEA, which underscored education's role as an antipoverty program. Throughout U.S. history, education policy has been a focal point of federal action, reflecting a recognition of education's transformative potential in breaking the cycle of poverty. The federal government's involvement in education policy has evolved over time, from early initiatives such as the establishment of land-grant universities to more recent interventions like the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). These initiatives have sought to address disparities in educational opportunity and outcomes, with a particular emphasis on serving disadvantaged

populations. One of the most significant milestones in federal education policy was the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001.

This reauthorization, commonly known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), marked a pivotal moment in the federal government's commitment to addressing educational inequities and improving student outcomes. By setting ambitious goals for student achievement and accountability, NCLB sought to ensure that no child would be left behind in the pursuit of educational success. While federal interventions in education have been driven by noble intentions, they have also been subject to criticism and controversy. Debates surrounding issues such as standardized testing, school accountability, and the appropriate balance between federal and state authority have underscored the complexities of education governance in the United States. Moreover, disparities in funding, resources, and educational opportunities persist, highlighting the ongoing challenges in achieving educational equity (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The federal government's involvement in education policy in the United States reflects a longstanding commitment to addressing poverty and promoting equity through education. Initiatives such as the reauthorization of the ESEA in 2001 have played a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape and advancing the nation's antipoverty agenda. As we look towards the future, it is essential to continue working towards a more equitable and inclusive education system that ensures all students have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background or circumstances.

This requires a multifaceted approach that addresses systemic inequities in funding, resources, and support services. Research indicates that investments in comprehensive support systems, including mental health services, after-school programs, and parental engagement

initiatives, can significantly enhance student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Furthermore, fostering a culturally responsive curriculum that reflects the diverse experiences of all students can promote engagement and belonging in the classroom. By prioritizing these strategies, we can create an educational landscape where every student is empowered to thrive and achieve their fullest potential.

Statement of the Problem

Despite significant investments in educational funding and resources, disparities in student achievement continue to persist, particularly in underfunded schools. Title I funding, which is designed to provide additional support to schools serving low-income communities, aims to address these disparities by enhancing educational opportunities and resources. However, the effectiveness of Title I funding in improving student outcomes is not uniformly evident, and there is a need for a comprehensive evaluation of its impact.

This study examines the impact of Title I funding on reading achievement through a high-dosage tutorial reading program in a North Carolina school district. A high-dosage reading tutorial program provides intensive, frequent one-on-one or small group reading instruction to improve literacy skills.

The primary objective is to assess how effectively this program, funded by Title I, enhances student achievement, with a particular focus on reading proficiency. While high-dosage tutoring is often touted as a promising method for improving student performance, there is a lack of substantial empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness when integrated with Title I resources.

Existing research on high-dosage tutoring indicates potential benefits for student outcomes, yet there is a notable scarcity of studies exploring the integration of these programs

with Title I funding. For instance, research by Fryer (2016) demonstrates that targeted tutoring can lead to significant academic improvements, especially for disadvantaged students. However, much of this research centers on standalone tutoring initiatives rather than their coordination with federal funding mechanisms like Title I. This gap underscores the need to explore how high-dosage tutoring, when supported by Title I, can effectively meet the specific needs of at-risk students. By addressing this research gap, the study aims to offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of high-dosage tutoring as a means to promote educational equity.

Significance of Study

By systematically evaluating these aspects, this study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of Title I funding in supporting high-dosage tutorial interventions and to offer recommendations for optimizing educational strategies to enhance student achievement in similar contexts. The allocation guidelines for Title I funding present significant challenges for LEAs) due to their inherent lack of structure. Although Title I legislation mandates spending in three specific areas, the absence of detailed, structured directives creates ambiguity in how funds should be utilized. This lack of clarity complicates the effective deployment of resources by LEAs, potentially undermining the objectives of Title I funding and leading to inconsistent practices in resource distribution across different LEAs (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

The primary issue is that the unstructured nature of Title I allocation guidelines may hinder the effective implementation of interventions designed to support students from low-income backgrounds. Without explicit spending priorities, LEAs may struggle to allocate funds in ways that optimize student outcomes, particularly in high-dosage tutorial reading programs. This variability in resource allocation can exacerbate disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes, ultimately perpetuating achievement gaps rather than narrowing them.

The challenges posed by the current allocation guidelines raise critical questions about the equity and effectiveness of Title I funding. Specifically, how do the unstructured guidelines affect the distribution of resources within LEAs? What barriers do LEA's face in implementing high-dosage tutorial programs, and how might these barriers impact student achievement? Examining these issues is crucial for understanding how Title I funding can be better utilized to support educational equity. Moreover, the strong association between socioeconomic status (SES) and academic performance in Title I schools highlights the need for targeted, effective interventions. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often experience various disadvantages that impact their academic progress, including limited access to educational resources and support services (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005; Lareau, 2003). High-dosage tutorial programs funded by Title I are intended to address these disparities, but their success depends on how well resources are allocated and managed.

This study holds significant importance as it delves into the intricate relationship between resource allocation, high-dosage tutoring programs, and student achievement in Title I schools. In a time when educational excellence and accountability are increasingly prioritized, gaining insights into the allocation of Title I funds and their effects on intensive tutoring interventions is essential for improving educational outcomes.

By addressing the gaps in current research, this study aims to provide valuable insights into how Title I funding can be more effectively utilized to support high-dosage tutorial programs. The findings will offer actionable recommendations for schools and policy makers, helping to refine resource allocation strategies and improve the overall effectiveness of Title I interventions. Furthermore, this research has broader implications for educational equity. By identifying which strategies within high-dosage tutorial programs are most effective, the study

will contribute to ensuring that all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to high-quality educational opportunities. In summary, the significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policy and practice, enhance the impact of Title I funding, and promote equity in education through evidence-based resource allocation and program implementation. This study examines the impact of Title I funding on reading achievement through a high-dosage tutorial reading program implemented in a North Carolina school district, with the aim of assessing its impact on student achievement, particularly in reading proficiency, when supported by Title I funding (Fryer, 2017; Jacob & Rockoff, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2020)

While high-dosage tutoring is often cited as an effective method for enhancing student performance, there is a lack of comprehensive empirical evidence regarding its efficacy when integrated with Title I resources (Fryer, 2016). Existing research on high-dosage tutoring indicates potential benefits for student outcomes, yet there is a scarcity of studies that specifically explore the synergy between these programs and Title I funding. For instance, research by Fryer (2016) highlights the significant academic gains that targeted tutoring can provide, especially for disadvantaged students. However, much of this research focuses on standalone tutoring efforts rather than their coordination with federal funding mechanisms like Title I.

The high dosage reading program, Ignite, includes assessments of student reading skills, such as fluency, comprehension, and phonics, collected through regular progress monitoring. This data is used to track individual student performance, identify areas of need, and inform targeted interventions, helping educators make data-driven decisions to improve reading outcomes. The school district's Ignite Data shows significant growth in reading proficiency

among students who participated in the high-dosage tutoring program, as measured by three key assessment tools: mCLASS, the Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA), and the Ignite modules. The mCLASS assessment measures literacy through a series of diagnostic assessments that evaluate key skills such as phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and word recognition, providing a comprehensive view of a student's reading abilities.

The data from mCLASS, which includes both the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) and TRC (Text Reading and Comprehension) assessments, indicates notable improvements in students' foundational literacy skills as well as reading comprehension. Specifically, students showed marked gains in areas such as phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, as measured by DIBELS, while TRC results demonstrated an increase in students' ability to comprehend and analyze texts. The IRLA data further supports this trend, revealing that many students advanced one or more grade levels in their independent reading proficiency, particularly those who had initially struggled with basic literacy skills. This suggests that the high-dosage tutoring program effectively addressed gaps in reading ability, leading to substantial improvements in both foundational literacy and higher-level reading skills. Additionally, the data from the Ignite modules, which provide personalized, targeted instruction in vocabulary development, reading fluency, and comprehension strategies, show that students who engaged regularly with the platform experienced continuous growth in these critical areas. These findings, as presented in Figure 1, underscore the effectiveness of the high-dosage tutoring program in fostering academic progress and improving student reading outcomes across multiple dimensions of literacy.

This study is significant as it seeks to address this research gap by investigating the effective implementation of high-dosage tutoring within Title I frameworks. Specifically, it

examines a program that has already demonstrated success in improving student outcomes, as outlined, to assess whether the investment of Title I funding further enhances its effectiveness and impact.

By focusing on this specific intervention, the study not only enriches academic literature but also offers practical insights for policymakers and educators aiming to improve educational equity. Understanding the relationship between high-dosage tutoring and Title I funding can guide future program development and resource allocation, ensuring that at-risk students receive the personalized support necessary for academic success. Ultimately, this research endeavors to contribute to the discourse on effective strategies for narrowing the achievement gap and promoting an inclusive educational environment.

Implementing a high-dosage reading tutorial program, funded by Title I, can profoundly enhance the academic performance of students in a North Carolina school district. Research shows that high-dosage tutoring—characterized by frequent, intensive, and individualized instruction—can result in significant improvements in student achievement, especially for those at risk of falling behind (Fryer, 2016). These programs are crafted to offer targeted support, addressing the unique learning needs of students who may face challenges in traditional classroom environments. Title I funding plays a crucial role by providing schools with the resources needed to hire qualified tutors, create customized instructional materials, and implement comprehensive assessment strategies, all essential for optimizing student outcomes

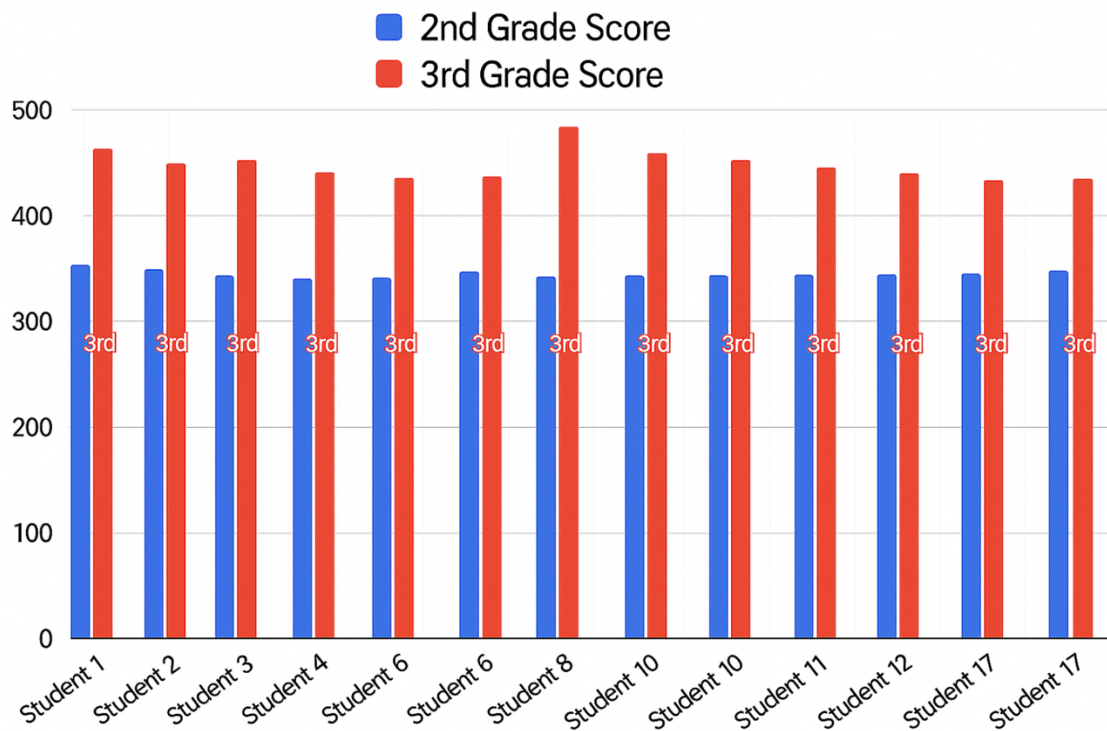


Figure 1. Count of Ignite Ending Level Grade 2/3 GEM School District (GEMSD)

Note. This chart presents the number of students who achieved each proficiency level at the conclusion of the High Dosage Tutorial Program, a targeted literacy intervention. By categorizing students based on their final assessment level, the data provides insights into reading skill development and highlights student progress over the course of the program. The distribution of students across proficiency levels allows educators to evaluate program effectiveness, identify trends in student achievement, and determine areas where additional instructional support may be needed.

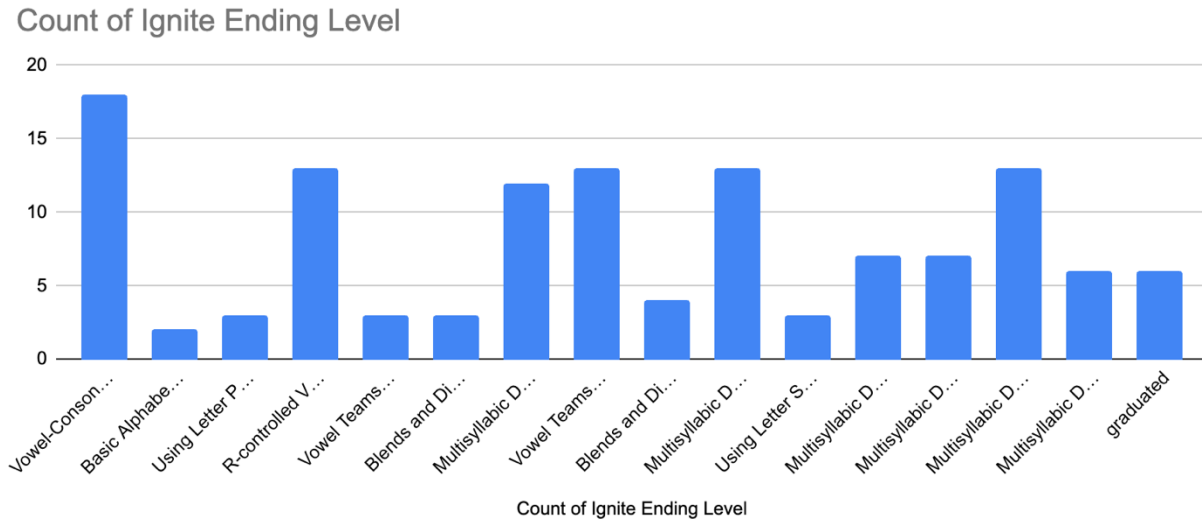


Figure 2. Count of Ignite Ending Level by Skill, GEM School District (GEMSD)

Note. The Count of High Dosage Tutorial Program Ending Level by Skill chart further details student proficiency levels by focusing on specific reading skills. It categorizes students based on their final skill-based assessment outcomes, allowing educators to analyze strengths and areas for growth in literacy development. This breakdown helps determine the effectiveness of the High Dosage Tutorial Program in fostering skill mastery and informs instructional decisions to support students in reaching higher levels of reading proficiency.

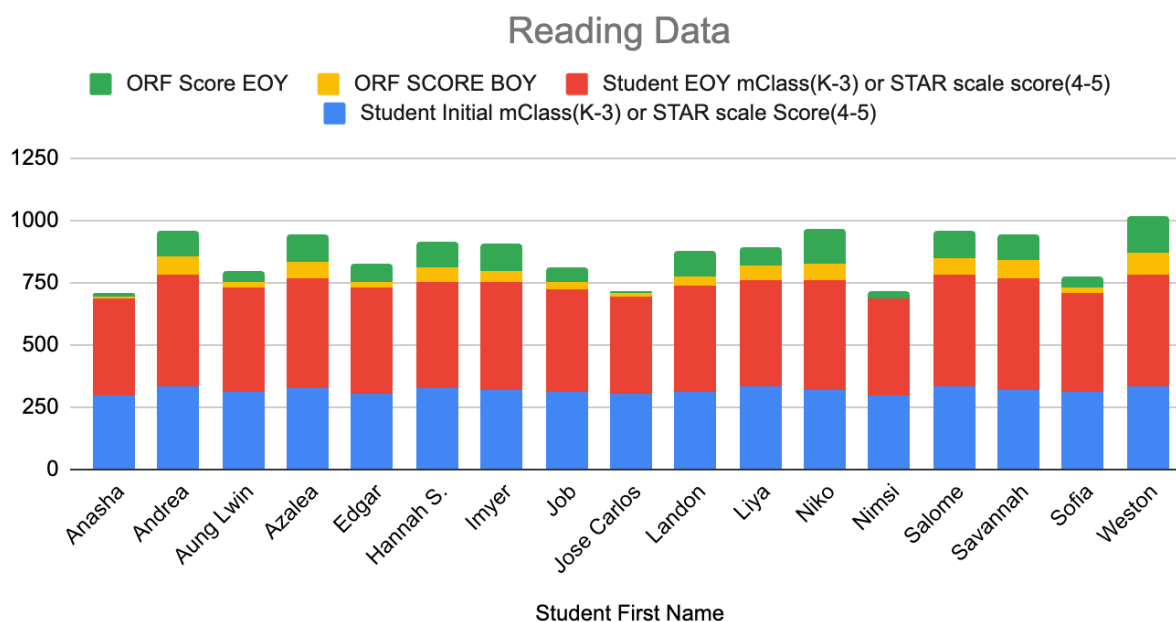


Figure 3. Ignite Data By Progress BOY to EOY

Note. This chart tracks student reading progress from the beginning of the year (BOY) to the end of the year (EOY) using scale scores from assessments such as mClass (K-3) and STAR (4-5). Additionally, it includes Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) scores to measure reading fluency at both time points. By comparing BOY and EOY scores, the data provides a comprehensive view of student growth in reading proficiency and fluency, helping educators assess the impact of the High Dosage Tutorial Program and identify areas where students may need further support.

(Kraft, 2024). By concentrating on reading proficiency, the high dosage reading tutorial program not only seeks to enhance literacy skills but also aims to cultivate a more supportive learning atmosphere that boosts student engagement and motivation. This comprehensive approach, backed by empirical evidence, highlights the transformative potential of high-dosage tutoring in improving academic performance in schools serving economically disadvantaged communities.

Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How does participation in a high-dosage tutorial reading program impact student proficiency, as measured by mClass scores and foundational reading skills before and after the program?

RQ2: To what extent does Title I funding support the implementation and effectiveness of the high-dosage tutoring program?

RQ3: What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness and impact of the high-dosage tutorial reading program on student learning outcomes?

The first research question aims to assess the effectiveness of the high-dosage tutorial reading program by examining student progress in reading proficiency. The data collection tool for this analysis will be mCLASS, which includes the DIBELS and TRC assessments. These tools measure critical early literacy skills and overall reading ability. Assessments are administered both at the beginning and end of the academic year to capture changes in student performance. This study will examine the assessment data from the 2023-2024 academic year.

The second research question seeks to evaluate the role of Title I funding in facilitating the implementation of the high-dosage tutoring program and its impact on program effectiveness. Data will be collected through a combination of financial records (e.g., Title I funding

allocations and expenditure reports) and program implementation logs. The logs will also track the quality and frequency of tutoring sessions to ensure the program is being implemented as intended.

The final research question explores teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness and impact of the reading program on student learning outcomes. This research question seeks to explore teachers' perspectives on the high-dosage tutoring reading program implemented within Title I frameworks. It aims to understand how educators perceive the program's influence on student learning outcomes, including improvements in reading proficiency, engagement, and overall academic performance. By gathering teachers' insights, the study will also assess the perceived strengths and challenges of the program, providing valuable feedback on how the program can be enhanced and whether Title I funding plays a role in its success.

These research questions aim to comprehensively explore the impact of Title I funding on student achievement within a specific context, considering the quantitative aspect. Through a combination of data analysis and stakeholder perspectives, the dissertation seeks to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and challenges of Title I funding in promoting educational equity and improving student outcomes in the selected North Carolina school district.

Overview of Methodology

This study will use a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively assess the impact of the high-dosage reading tutorial program funded by Title I. The data will be collected from a combination of quantitative and qualitative sources to provide a well-rounded understanding of the program's effectiveness. Quantitative data will include standardized test scores and per-pupil expenditure figures from schools participating in the program during the 2023-2024 academic

year, sourced from district and state educational databases. This data will be analyzed using statistical methods to identify trends, correlations, and changes in academic performance over time.

In parallel, qualitative data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews with educators, tutors, and policymakers, analyzing existing case studies for specific school implementing the program this qualitative analysis will focus on participants' experiences and perceptions of the program, offering insights into its implementation and perceived impacts. By integrating these two data sets, the study aims to triangulate findings and provide a more nuanced understanding of how high-dosage tutoring influences student achievement in the context of Title I funding. This mixed-methods approach not only enriches the data analysis but also ensures that the study captures both statistical trends and the lived experiences of those involved in the program.

Definitions of Key Terms

Achievement Gap - A significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between Caucasian students and students of color. This term is pivotal in discussing the objectives of Title I and high-dosage tutoring programs, which aim to reduce these disparities and promote educational equity (Baker, 2018; Fryer, 2016).

Curriculum - Using high-quality instructional materials aligned with classroom content allows tutors to reinforce and support teachers' classroom instruction. Alignment with the curriculum is essential for maximizing the impact of tutoring on overall academic performance and ensuring coherence in students' learning experiences (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Delivery Model - While most research has focused on in-person tutoring, emerging evidence suggests that virtual tutoring can also be effective. This acknowledgment of various

delivery models is relevant in the context of increasing digital learning opportunities and adaptability in educational interventions (Reardon, 2013; Harris, 2020).

Equity - The principle of fairness and impartiality in the distribution of funding and resources. In this study, equity highlights the necessity for sufficient resources to support all students, especially those from low-income backgrounds, in line with Title I's goals (Baker, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Focus - Tutoring is effective across all grade levels, with the strongest evidence for reading-focused tutoring in early grades (K-2) and math-focused tutoring for older students. This distinction helps prioritize interventions targeting critical learning phases in students' academic journeys, particularly relevant in a high-dosage reading program (Fryer, 2016).

Frequency - Refers to the regularity of tutoring sessions, with high-dosage programs typically offering three or more sessions per week or intensive, week-long small-group programs. Frequency is crucial for ensuring students receive consistent support needed for significant improvement in their reading skills (Fryer, 2016).

Funding - Refers to the financial resources allocated to a school or district by local, state, and federal entities, including the U.S. Department of Education.

Group Size - The number of students a tutor can effectively instruct at one time, with optimal results often achieved in one-on-one settings, though small groups of up to three or four are also effective. This definition emphasizes the importance of personalized instruction, a hallmark of high-dosage tutoring programs aimed at enhancing student learning outcomes (Baker, 2018; Fryer, 2016).

Higher Socioeconomic Area (High Income) - An area where the average family income is significantly above the federal poverty threshold. Contrasting this with lower socioeconomic

areas helps frame the disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes that Title I programs aim to address (Reardon, 2013).

High-Dosage Reading Tutorial Program - This program is an intensive educational strategy aimed at enhancing students' reading abilities through frequent, targeted instructional sessions. High-dosage indicates a significant amount of instructional time and personalized support, surpassing standard classroom instruction. This definition highlights the program's emphasis on individualized learning, which is vital for meeting the specific needs of struggling readers in a Title I context (Fryer, 2016).

Intervention - In education, an intervention is a strategic action or set of actions designed to address a specific issue or improve a situation, such as specialized teaching methods or additional resources aimed at helping struggling students. This term highlights the proactive measures taken to enhance educational outcomes through targeted programs like high-dosage tutoring (Gersten et al., 2014; Harris, 2020).

Measurement - Tutoring programs that incorporate data use and ongoing informal assessments enable tutors to tailor instruction more effectively for individual students. Effective measurement is key to monitoring progress and adjusting instructional strategies to meet student needs (Gersten et al., 2014; Baker, 2018).

Per-Pupil Expenditure - This term describes the average financial investment made per student within an educational institution or system over a given period, usually a school year. It is calculated by dividing total expenditures by the number of enrolled students. This metric offers insights into resource allocation in schools, influencing the effectiveness of educational programs designed to boost student performance (Baker, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Personnel - The skills required for tutoring differ from those needed for classroom teaching, allowing a variety of tutors, including volunteers and college students, to improve student outcomes with adequate training and support. Recognizing the role of diverse personnel highlights the potential for broad community involvement in educational interventions, especially in Title I schools (Garet et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Prioritization - The framing of tutoring programs is important when prioritizing students for participation. Targeting lower-performing students can support those in need of personalized instruction but may create a stigma. Programs that target all students in a lower-performing grade level or school benefit from broader commitment and a perception that tutoring is for everyone. Understanding prioritization is vital for ensuring equitable access to tutoring resources without stigmatizing students who need additional support (Gersten et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Quality Education - Education that equips all learners with the skills needed to become productive, positive, and effective members of society. Quality education is central to the objectives of Title I programs, which strive to ensure all students reach their academic potential and are prepared for future success (Fryer, 2016;).

Relationships - Maintaining a consistent tutor over time can foster positive tutor-student relationships and a better understanding of students' learning needs. Strong relationships between tutors and students can enhance the effectiveness of interventions, contributing to improved academic outcomes (Baker, 2018).

Scheduling - Tutoring interventions conducted during the school day tend to result in greater learning gains than those offered after school or during the summer. Scheduling

considerations are crucial for optimizing the effectiveness of high-dosage tutoring programs, as they impact students' engagement and learning opportunities (Fryer, 2016).

Socioeconomic Status - An economic and sociological measure of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. This term is crucial for understanding the challenges faced by students from diverse backgrounds, particularly those in low-income areas served by Title I (Reardon, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Title I, Part A - Part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, providing financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high percentages of low-income students. Understanding Title I funding is essential for examining how resources are allocated to support high-dosage tutoring programs and improve educational outcomes (U.S. Department of Education, 2021)

Limitations/Delimitations of the Study

This mixed-methods study sought to thoroughly evaluate the high-dosage reading tutorial program funded by Title I, yet it is important to recognize several limitations inherent in the research design. A primary concern is the potential for selection bias during the qualitative phase, where participants might choose to engage in interviews based on their personal experiences, whether positive or negative. This self-selection could lead to an overrepresentation of certain perspectives, which may not accurately reflect the broader population's views (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). To counteract this, I aimed for a diverse participant pool, including educators and tutors with varying levels of involvement and outcomes, to ensure a more balanced representation.

Moreover, while quantitative data derived from standardized test scores offers valuable insights into student performance, it may not fully capture the complexities of student learning and development. Standardized tests often overlook socio-emotional factors and diverse learning styles that can significantly impact academic results (Linn, 2000). To address this gap, I integrated qualitative data that delves into these aspects, providing a more comprehensive understanding of student experiences.

Unexpected events, such as shifts in school policies or changes in funding during the study period, could also influence the implementation of the high-dosage tutoring program and, consequently, the outcomes measured. To manage this, I maintained open communication with participating schools to monitor any changes and adjust the research design as needed.

Additionally, there is a risk of researcher bias, especially in interpreting qualitative data. To mitigate this, I used triangulation by comparing insights from multiple data sources and engage in a peer review process to validate findings (Maxwell, 2013). By proactively addressing these limitations through a rigorous design and diverse data sources, this study aimed to enhance the reliability and validity of its findings, contributing valuable insights into the effectiveness of high-dosage tutoring in Title I settings.

This study establishes specific boundaries to concentrate on evaluating the effectiveness of the high-dosage reading tutorial program funded by Title I within a defined context. The primary boundary was the selection of a single school district in North Carolina, which facilitated a thorough examination of the program's implementation and outcomes. This decision ensured the study remained manageable and produces rich, detailed data, avoiding the dilution of findings and complications in data collection that could arise from covering multiple districts.

Participants included students in grades 3 to 5 enrolled in the high-dosage tutoring program, as this age range is crucial for developing foundational reading skills. The study targeted students from low-income families, identified by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch programs. This focus aligns with Title I's mission to support disadvantaged students and addresses the specific challenges they face. By concentrating on these grade levels and socioeconomic backgrounds, the study aims to assess the program's impact on students most at risk of lagging in reading proficiency.

The study excluded students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds or those in non-Title I schools, as these groups may not encounter the same educational challenges. While aiming for a diverse participant sample, the study did not separately address special education students or English language learners, as their unique needs and experiences could necessitate a distinct study.

By clearly defining these boundaries, the study maintained a focused perspective to analyze the high-dosage reading tutorial program's impact on student achievement, ensuring findings are relevant and applicable to similar Title I contexts. This approach also supported targeted recommendations for educational policy and practice tailored to the specific needs of students in low-income areas.

Assumptions

In this investigation, several pivotal assumptions were established, which are essential for the study's significance but may not fully align with real-world conditions. Firstly, it was presumed that data from standardized tests and school records accurately represent student performance and progress. This assumption is crucial, as the quantitative analysis heavily depended on these metrics to assess the high-dosage reading tutorial program's effectiveness.

However, factors such as test anxiety, environmental conditions on the day of testing, or inconsistencies in assessment standards can affect scores, potentially leading to inaccurate conclusions about student achievement.

Secondly, it was assumed that all participants—students, educators, and tutors—provided truthful and thoughtful responses during interviews and surveys. This reliance on self-reported data is vital for understanding the program's qualitative impact. Nonetheless, social desirability bias might cause participants to portray their experiences more positively, which may skew the results.

Furthermore, it was assumed that the high-dosage tutoring program was implemented consistently throughout the study. Changes in staffing, training, or adherence to instructional methods can influence how the program is delivered, thereby affecting student outcomes. Such variations may undermine the validity of the findings and their relevance to other contexts.

Lastly, the study assumed that the sample population was representative of the broader student body in Title I schools. Although efforts will be made to ensure diversity within the sample, any limitations in participant selection could impact the generalizability of the findings. If the selected students do not adequately reflect the diverse needs and backgrounds of all Title I students, the conclusions may not be applicable across different settings.

These assumptions underscore the inherent complexities of educational research and emphasize the need for careful interpretation of the findings. Recognizing these potential discrepancies allows for a more nuanced understanding of the study's outcomes and their implications for practice and policy in similar educational contexts.

Summary

This study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of a high-dosage reading tutorial program funded by Title I in a North Carolina school district. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research aims to thoroughly understand the program's impact on student achievement by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. This dual approach is intended to shed light on the complexities of educational interventions tailored to meet the needs of low-income students.

The study is carefully delimited to focus on students in grades 3 to 5 who are at risk of lagging in reading proficiency. By selectively including certain demographics and excluding others, the research strives to generate insights that are both relevant and applicable to similar educational settings. Nonetheless, the study is predicated on several key assumptions, such as the reliability of assessment data, the sincerity of participant responses, and the uniformity of program implementation. Recognizing these assumptions is crucial for understanding the potential limitations and implications of the study's findings.

As research progresses, Chapter 2: Literature Review will examine pertinent literature on educational equity, Title I financing, and high-dosage tutoring. This chapter will examine recent research that provides insight into how targeted instructional interventions impact student achievement, with an emphasis on poor areas. Theoretical models, the history of Title I funding, the effectiveness of high-dosage tutoring programs, and resource distribution equality will all be significant components. This literature review will assist in forming the research by offering a foundation for the analysis and interpretation of the results. This chapter will highlight information gaps and the significance of the research in bolstering discussions on effective teaching strategies for marginalized populations by synthesizing previous studies.

Chapter 3: Methodology will discuss the research design, subjects, data collection methods, and analytical approach used in the study. This chapter will address the research design and rationale, participant selection procedure, data collection instruments, data analysis methodologies, and ethical considerations. A clear and rigorous strategy will ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings, providing a solid foundation for examining the impact of high-dosage tutoring programs.

Chapter 4: Findings will present the findings derived from the collected data, organized according to the research topics. The data overview, analysis of student performance statistics, and presentation of fresh concepts derived from qualitative responses will all be significant sections. This chapter will provide an unbiased overview of the investigation's findings, emphasizing any themes or patterns discovered during the inquiry.

Chapter 5: Analysis, Findings, and Suggestions will, last, assist in interpreting the findings in accordance with the corpus of existing knowledge. This chapter will combine the main findings, implications for educational policy and practice, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research. By merging the knowledge gained from the study, this chapter will offer useful recommendations for educators, policymakers, and researchers who wish to improve educational equity through high-dose tutoring interventions.

The field of educational leadership and policy will benefit from these chapters' comprehensive examination of the role Title I funds play in promoting high-dosage tutoring and its effects on student achievement.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study aimed to examine the impact of a high-dosage reading tutorial program, supported by Title I funding, in a North Carolina school district. This initiative seeks to improve reading skills among students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Existing research underscores the persistent achievement gaps experienced by low-income students, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions such as high-dosage tutoring. While previous studies suggest that these programs can lead to substantial academic improvements, there is a notable lack of empirical evidence specifically evaluating their effectiveness within Title I settings. This study is therefore crucial in enhancing our understanding of how customized educational strategies can foster educational equity.

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature on high-dosage tutoring, Title I funding, and the broader context of educational equity. The chapter is divided into several key sections: High-dosage tutoring, Title I funding, Equity in education, and gaps in current literature. I first examine the theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence related to high-dosage tutoring interventions, with a specific focus on their design, implementation, and outcomes. This provides a foundational understanding of how high-dosage tutoring is structured and its impact on student performance. Next, the role of Title I funding is explored, tracing its historical development and evolution over time. Emphasis will be placed on Title I's critical function in mitigating educational disparities, particularly for students from low-income families, and supporting schools in providing equitable educational opportunities. The third section addresses the importance of educational equity, focusing on how socioeconomic status influences student achievement and access to high-quality educational resources. This is a key consideration in understanding the broader context of interventions like high-dosage tutoring.

Finally, the chapter concludes by identifying the gaps in the existing literature that this study aims to address, particularly the need for more research into the integration of high-dosage tutoring programs within Title I-funded schools. This underscores the necessity for further investigation to better understand the potential and challenges of these programs in improving outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Through this structured examination, Chapter 2 will lay a solid groundwork for the study, situating the research within the current academic discourse and setting the stage for a thorough analysis of the data and findings in the following chapters.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Change Theory, as articulated by Michael Fullan, a prominent scholar in the field of educational reform. Fullan has extensively explored the dynamics of educational change and the multifaceted processes involved in implementing reform within school systems. At its core, Change Theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the context, culture, and relationships that shape the adoption of new practices, particularly in educational environments. According to Fullan (2007), effective change is not simply about introducing new programs or strategies; rather, it involves a deeper understanding of how individuals and organizations adapt, engage with, and commit to the transformation process. Fullan argues that sustainable change requires more than just top-down mandates or external initiatives; it hinges on cultivating a shared understanding, building trust, and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders. This framework is particularly relevant for examining how schools can successfully navigate the complexities of reform and achieve lasting, meaningful improvements in practice. By focusing on the relational and contextual factors that

influence change, this study seeks to explore how educational institutions can engage in transformation in ways that are both effective and enduring.

Emerging in the late 20th century, Change Theory was developed in response to the need for systemic improvement in schools. It highlights several key components: the importance of collaboration among stakeholders, the role of effective leadership, and the necessity for ongoing professional development. These elements are essential in creating an environment conducive to sustainable change, especially in addressing the achievement gaps faced by disadvantaged students (Fullan, 2007).

In previous research, Change Theory has been applied to various educational initiatives, including high-dosage tutoring programs and other interventions aimed at improving student outcomes. Studies have demonstrated that schools adopting collaborative approaches and prioritizing stakeholder engagement are more successful in implementing new instructional practices (Borko, 2004). Additionally, the theory's focus on feedback loops and iterative processes aligns well with the dynamic nature of educational settings, making it a valuable lens for analyzing the high-dosage reading tutorial program in this study.

The rationale for selecting Change Theory as the guiding framework for this inquiry lies in its relevance to Title I-funded programs. By concentrating on the processes of change, this theory facilitates a nuanced exploration of how the high-dosage tutoring program is implemented, received, and sustained within the school district. It emphasizes the relationships among educators, students, and administrators, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the program's effectiveness.

Change Theory directly relates to this inquiry by framing the exploration of how the high-dosage reading tutorial program impacts student achievement while considering broader

systemic factors. It highlights the necessity of not only measuring academic outcomes but also understanding the implementation processes, stakeholder perceptions, and the collaborative efforts required for successful educational reform. This framework will enhance the design of the inquiry by ensuring that the analysis is grounded in the realities of change management within educational contexts, ultimately contributing to more meaningful insights and recommendations for future practice.

Effective Reading Programs

Effective reading programs are characterized by explicit instruction, which often includes small group interventions. Programs like i-Ready and Renaissance Star leverage technology to engage students, making reading more appealing for those who struggle (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The essence of direct and explicit instruction lies in the active communication between teachers and students, as highlighted by Nichols (2009). Programs grounded in robust reading research form the foundation of effective reading instruction.

It is crucial for students to comprehend texts at their grade level, and mastering foundational reading skills in guided groups enhances their proficiency (Fuchs et al., 2001).

For readers with learning disabilities, it is essential to provide opportunities that enhance their learning, such as extended time on reading lessons, choral reading, silent reading, and interactive computerized programs like i-Ready Reading. Partner reading is also an effective strategy to boost their reading skills (Swanson et al., 2014). Without appropriate interventions, many struggling readers with learning disabilities risk falling behind (Gersten et al., 2009). Core intervention programs must address the challenges associated with these learning deficiencies.

In addition to explicit instruction, effective reading intervention programs incorporate differentiated instruction. The successful implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI) relies

on four key criteria: (a) a multi-tiered system for academic and social interventions; (b) evidence-based interventions; (c) a routine, systematic monitoring system; and (d) a data-driven decision-making process (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

To effectively place students in appropriate reading groups, categories for subgroups must be established based on their tiered level. The tiered system ranges from one to three: Tier 1 involves interventions for the entire class through whole-group instruction; Tier 2 includes smaller group interventions within the class or strategic ability grouping among teachers; and Tier 3 is designed for students needing additional support through pull-out and push-in services (Burns et al., 2008).

Students who receive continuous one-on-one attention from educators benefit significantly from this individualized instruction. Reading clinics at many research universities provide quality, intensive remedial instruction for students with severe reading difficulties and also train literacy professionals (Torgesen et al., 2006). Engaging, collaborative activities are crucial for effectively closing reading gaps. Lessons should be designed with the whole student in mind, ensuring they are relevant to their learning experiences.

The Importance of Early Interventions

Reading proficiency in early grades, particularly in 2nd and 3rd grades, is crucial for long-term academic success. Research consistently shows that students who develop strong foundational reading skills during these early years are better equipped to tackle more complex reading tasks as they progress through their education (Snow, 2010). Title I funding, designed to support schools with high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students, has long been recognized as a key mechanism for improving educational outcomes, particularly in literacy. This funding often supports high-dosage tutorial reading programs aimed at helping struggling

readers gain proficiency. The literature review explores the foundational reading skills that are most critical for 2nd and 3rd graders and investigates how Title I-funded interventions, particularly those utilizing high-dosage tutoring, impact student achievement.

As students advance through elementary school, the focus of their literacy instruction shifts from learning to read to reading to learn (Chall, 1983). In grades 3 through 5, students are expected to use their reading skills to acquire knowledge in subjects beyond language arts, such as science and social studies. This shift necessitates that students have a strong foundation in reading to comprehend more complex texts and engage in higher-order thinking and analysis. Foundational skills such as phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension are essential for reading development. Research indicates that these skills support students in decoding words, understanding meaning, and developing critical thinking abilities (National Reading Panel, 2000). For example, phonics instruction helps students decode words, vocabulary development aids in understanding text, fluency supports reading speed and accuracy, and comprehension strategies ensure students can retain and process what they read. Together, these skills form the bedrock upon which later reading and academic success is built.

Students with strong foundational reading skills are better able to handle grade-level content, engage in classroom discussions, and perform well on assessments. These skills also contribute to students' overall academic achievement and self-confidence in reading (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). As such, instruction should include explicit teaching of phonics, vocabulary development, and reading fluency to build a robust reading foundation. High-quality instructional materials and research-based practices, such as those aligned with the Science of Reading, are integral to developing these skills effectively.

Providing equitable access to high-quality English Language Arts (ELA) instruction is essential for closing achievement gaps, especially for students from underserved communities. Schools serving low-income students often face barriers to high-quality instruction, but Title I funding can help address these gaps by providing resources for targeted interventions (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Ensuring that instructional practices and materials are both effective and equitable is key to supporting all students in building the necessary skills for reading success.

Teachers play a critical role in delivering instruction that emphasizes foundational reading skills. Professional development and ongoing support for educators are vital to ensure they can implement evidence-based practices with fidelity (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). As such, targeted training and coaching should be part of a comprehensive strategy to improve reading instruction, particularly in schools that serve high numbers of disadvantaged students.

A strong foundation in ELA is not just beneficial but necessary for students in grades 3 through 5. By prioritizing the development of phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills, educators can better support students in becoming proficient readers and successful learners. This investment in early literacy not only boosts academic achievement but also helps foster lifelong learning and success (Torgesen, 2000). By leveraging resources such as Title I funding and focusing on evidence-based instructional practices, schools can ensure that all students, regardless of background, have the opportunity to develop the foundational skills they need to thrive in school and beyond.

The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) posits that reading comprehension is the product of decoding (the ability to translate text into spoken words) and linguistic comprehension (the ability to understand spoken language). For 2nd and 3rd graders, mastering these components is essential as they transition from learning to read to reading to

learn. This model underscores the importance of both phonics instruction and language development in early reading education.

Scarborough's Rope Model (2001) offers a more detailed depiction of reading development, illustrating how strands of skills such as phonological awareness, decoding, and vocabulary intertwine to produce skilled reading. For young readers, the development of these strands is crucial as they form the foundation for more advanced reading skills.

Phonological awareness, which includes skills like phonemic awareness (recognizing and manipulating individual sounds in words), is critical for reading development in early grades. Research indicates that strong phonological awareness in early readers is a strong predictor of later reading success (Yopp, 1988). In 2nd and 3rd grades, this skill supports the ability to decode words and build fluency.

Phonics instruction involves teaching students the relationship between letters and sounds, which is essential for developing decoding skills. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), effective phonics instruction helps students learn to read unfamiliar words and contributes significantly to reading fluency and comprehension. In 2nd and 3rd grades, phonics instruction is crucial as students encounter more complex text.

Vocabulary development is another cornerstone of reading proficiency. Beck et al. (2002) emphasize that explicit instruction in vocabulary helps students understand and retain new words, which is vital for reading comprehension. For 2nd and 3rd graders, expanding vocabulary through direct instruction and contextual exposure enhances their ability to comprehend and engage with text.

Reading fluency, defined as the ability to read text smoothly and accurately, with appropriate expression, is closely linked to reading comprehension. Rasinski (2004) highlights

that fluent readers are better able to focus on understanding the text rather than struggling with decoding. For early readers, building fluency involves practicing reading with expression and increasing reading speed.

The Importance of Decoding for 2nd and 3rd Grade Students

Decoding, the ability to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships to read words, is a fundamental skill in the early stages of reading development (Snow et al., 1998). For 2nd and 3rd grade students, mastering decoding is crucial as they transition from learning to read to reading to learn (Chall, 1983). This skill forms the bedrock of literacy and has a profound impact on students' overall reading proficiency and academic success (National Reading Panel, 2000). Understanding the importance of decoding helps educators and parents support children in developing strong reading abilities, ensuring they are well-equipped for future academic challenges (Ehri, 2014).

Decoding is essential for reading fluency, which refers to the ability to read text smoothly and with expression (Rasinski, 2010). In 2nd and 3rd grade, students are expected to read with increasing speed and accuracy. Decoding enables students to recognize and sound out words independently, which is critical for developing fluency. When students can decode words efficiently, they are better able to read more complex texts without becoming bogged down by unfamiliar words (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). This fluency allows them to focus on understanding the content of what they are reading rather than struggling with individual words.

Reading comprehension, the ability to understand and interpret text, is deeply connected to decoding skills (Perfetti, 2007). When students struggle with decoding, their cognitive resources are consumed by the effort to sound out words, leaving fewer resources available for comprehension. Conversely, proficient decoders can navigate through texts more smoothly,

allowing them to allocate more mental energy to making sense of the material. Thus, a strong foundation in decoding helps students engage with and comprehend more challenging texts, fostering their ability to extract meaning and learn from reading (Hoover & Gough, 1990).

Decoding is not only important for immediate reading tasks but also for long-term academic success. Proficiency in decoding can prevent reading difficulties from becoming entrenched issues. Early intervention in decoding challenges ensures that students receive the support they need to develop this essential skill (National Reading Panel, 2000; Torgesen, 2004). Addressing decoding issues promptly helps prevent future academic struggles, setting students on a path to long-term success in reading and other academic areas (Ehri, 2014)

Mastering decoding skills contributes to equity in literacy development. All students, regardless of their background, benefit from strong decoding abilities. Effective decoding instruction helps bridge gaps in literacy development, providing all students with the opportunity to achieve reading proficiency (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2010). This focus on decoding ensures that students from diverse linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds have the skills necessary for academic success (Juel, 1988; Kamil et al., 2008).

Decoding contributes to fostering a love of reading. When students are confident in their ability to decode words, they are more likely to enjoy reading. This enjoyment is crucial for developing lifelong reading habits (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). Students who find reading accessible and enjoyable are more likely to engage with books and other reading materials, further enhancing their literacy skills and academic achievement (Schunk, 1991; Stanovich, 2000).

Decoding is a critical skill for 2nd and 3rd grade students as they build their reading abilities. It supports fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development, and independent reading,

while also facilitating early intervention and long-term academic success (National Reading Panel, 2000; Torgesen, 2004). By focusing on decoding, educators and parents can help students establish a strong foundation in reading, promoting a love of literature and setting the stage for future academic achievement (Snow et al., 1998). The importance of decoding in early literacy cannot be overstated, making it an essential component of effective reading instruction (Ehri, 2014).

High-Dosage Tutorial Programs

High-dosage tutoring programs are characterized by frequent, intensive, and personalized instruction designed to address specific academic needs. These programs typically involve small group or one-on-one tutoring sessions focused on foundational reading skills. Research has shown that when implemented with fidelity, high-dosage tutoring can lead to significant improvements in reading achievement (Cheung & Slavin, 2012). For 2nd and 3rd graders, these programs often include targeted interventions aimed at addressing gaps in foundational skills such as phonics, fluency, and comprehension. The individualized nature of these tutoring sessions helps students catch up on missed skills and reinforces concepts necessary for grade-level reading proficiency.

Empirical evidence strongly supports the effectiveness of high-dosage tutoring programs in improving reading outcomes. Programs such as *Success for All* have demonstrated significant gains in reading achievement by providing structured and intensive tutoring (Slavin et al., 2008). High-dosage tutoring programs that use well-trained tutors and evidence-based curricula have been shown to be particularly effective in enhancing reading skills among early readers (Torgesen, 2000). These programs not only help students improve their reading proficiency but also support them in developing the confidence needed to tackle more complex academic tasks.

As such, high-dosage tutoring has emerged as a promising strategy for addressing reading gaps in early elementary grades.

However, despite the potential benefits, high-dosage tutoring programs face several challenges related to implementation. The quality of instructional materials, tutor training, and program fidelity are critical factors that determine the success of these programs. Effective tutoring programs require tutors who are well-trained in both content and pedagogy, as well as access to high-quality, research-based instructional materials (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Additionally, maintaining program fidelity is essential to ensure that the interventions are delivered consistently and as designed. If any component of the program is not implemented correctly, the expected outcomes may not be realized. Ensuring that tutors are provided with ongoing support and professional development is also key to maximizing the effectiveness of these programs.

The Science of Reading

The Science of Reading provides the evidence-based strategies needed to ensure that all students achieve reading proficiency, setting them up for long-term academic success (Lexia, 2024). At the heart of the Science of Reading is the development of foundational skills, which are essential for effective reading instruction. For 2nd and 3rd graders, these skills include phonemic awareness and phonics. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words. This skill is critical because it helps students understand the relationship between sounds and letters (National Reading Panel, 2000). Phonics instruction builds on this by teaching students the systematic relationship between letters and sounds. This systematic approach to decoding words is crucial for reading fluency (Adams,

1990; Torgesen, 2004). By mastering these foundational skills, students can decode unfamiliar words, leading to more fluent and confident reading (Ehri, 2014).

Fluency, the ability to read text smoothly and accurately, is another key area where the Science of Reading has a profound impact. As students become proficient in decoding words through phonics, they can read more quickly and with greater accuracy. This fluency allows students to focus on understanding the content of what they are reading, rather than getting bogged down by individual words. Fluent readers are better able to comprehend texts, as they can devote their cognitive resources to making meaning from the text rather than struggling with word recognition (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski, 2010). Furthermore, increased reading fluency supports vocabulary growth. As students encounter and successfully decode a wider range of words, their vocabulary expands, which in turn enhances their comprehension skills (Jenkins et al., 2008; Scarborough, 2001).

Reading comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading instruction, and the Science of Reading provides a strong foundation for its development. With solid decoding skills and fluency, students are better equipped to understand and engage with texts. The Science of Reading emphasizes the importance of integrating reading strategies that support comprehension, such as summarizing, predicting, and questioning. These strategies help students make sense of the material they read and build a deeper understanding of texts (Snow, 2002). By focusing on comprehension alongside foundational skills, educators ensure that students not only can read but also understand and analyze what they read.

One of the important advantages of reading science is its role in early intervention. Using research-based assessments and educational strategies, educators can identify and resolve reading difficulties from the start (Torgesen, 2000). This early identification allows timely and

targeted interventions that prevent reading challenges from becoming more serious. For students who need additional support, reading science provides structured and effective methods to help them make up for their peers. This proactive approach guarantees that all students have the possibility of developing solid reading skills.

The science of reading also plays a crucial role in promoting equity in education. Its practices, based on evidence, have proven to be effective for various students, including those from different linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds (Allington, 2012). By implementing these strategies supported by research, educators can help fill the gaps in reading success and offer equitable learning opportunities to all students. This commitment to fair education guarantees that each student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their starting point.

The impact of a solid reading foundation extends far beyond the early years. The mastery of reading is linked to long-term academic success because reading is an integral part of learning in all areas (Snow, 2002). Students who master fundamental reading skills in 2nd and 3rd grade are better prepared for future academic challenges. They are more likely to excel in their studies and achieve their educational objectives.

The science of reading is the backbone of high-dose tutoring programs, ensuring that teaching practices are rooted in proven methods based on research. The tutoring, characterized by frequent sessions and small groups (Torgesen, 2000), can be significantly enhanced by the application of the science of reading principles, which focus on the systematic development of fundamental reading skills. By targeting the specific needs of struggling readers through a structured approach that emphasizes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension, high-dose tutors can accelerate student progress.

The emphasis placed by the science of reading on early intervention aligns closely with the objectives of high-dosage tutoring programs, which aim to provide appropriate and targeted support for students who are lagging (Allington, 2012). Using a diagnostic approach, tutors can identify gaps in students' reading skills and provide personalized instruction designed to effectively fill these gaps. Additionally, the science of reading's commitment to equity ensures that these interventions can be adapted to meet the needs of diverse students, particularly those from underserved or disadvantaged backgrounds. As such, the integration of the science of reading in high-dosage tutoring maximizes the potential for academic success, particularly for students who require intensive individualized instruction to achieve reading proficiency (Snow, 2002).

Teacher Perceptions of High-Dosage Reading Tutorial Program

Teacher perceptions of educational interventions, such as high-dosage reading tutorial programs, play a crucial role in the implementation and effectiveness of these programs. Teachers' insights and attitudes can influence the success of these interventions by affecting how they are applied in the classroom and how students respond. This section reviews the literature on teacher perceptions regarding high-dosage reading tutorial programs to provide a comprehensive understanding of their views, experiences, and the impact these perceptions may have on program outcomes.

Research consistently indicates that teachers generally recognize the potential benefits of high-dosage reading tutorial programs (Torgesen, 2000). Teachers often perceive these programs as valuable tools for addressing reading difficulties, especially for struggling students. They appreciate the focused, intensive nature of high-dosage programs as it aligns with the needs of students requiring more substantial interventions.

Despite recognizing the benefits, teachers also report several challenges associated with high-dosage reading tutorial programs. According to O'Connor et al. (2017), common concerns include the logistical difficulties of fitting additional tutorial sessions into the school schedule, particularly in schools with limited resources. Teachers also note that the high demand for instructional time and resources can strain their already busy schedules and may lead to burnout if not managed effectively.

Teachers' experiences with high-dosage reading tutorial programs are closely linked to the quality of professional development and support they receive. Studies by Slavin et al. (2018) emphasize that comprehensive training and ongoing support are essential for teachers to effectively deliver these programs. Teachers who feel adequately prepared and supported are more likely to have positive perceptions and to implement the program with fidelity. Conversely, insufficient training can lead to frustration and reduced program effectiveness.

Teacher perceptions also encompass the impact of high-dosage reading tutorial programs on their relationships with students. Research by Fuchs et al. (2020) indicates that while these programs can enhance student achievement, they can also affect the dynamic between teachers and students. Teachers often report that personalized, intensive instruction can strengthen their relationships with students, providing more opportunities for individualized feedback and support.

Different opinions that exist among teachers on the motivation and involvement of students in high-dosage reading tutorial programs (Allington, 2012). Higher levels of student participation and enthusiasm are frequently observed by teachers who believe that the program is interesting and pertinent to the pupils (Torgesen, 2000).

On the other hand, disengagement and decreased efficacy may result if the program is thought to be unrelated to the needs or interests of the students. According to the literature, most teachers believe that high-dosage reading tutorial programs help struggling pupils improve their reading abilities (Snow, 2002).

Their opinions, however, are complex and include worries about schedule conflicts, implementation and the necessity of efficient professional development. The success of high-dosage reading tutorial programs is largely influenced by the opinions of teachers regarding their incorporation into the curriculum, their effects on the relationships between teachers and students, and the involvement of students. Gaining insight into these attitudes can help improve the planning, execution, and results of these interventions in learning environments.

mCLASS Assessments

The mCLASS is a sophisticated suite of formative assessments designed to enhance early literacy instruction and improve reading outcomes for elementary students. Developed by Amplify, it incorporates key assessment tools, notably the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) assessments. These tools target essential literacy components such as phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development, providing educators with critical insights into students' reading abilities and areas needing targeted intervention (Amplify, n.d.).

The mCLASS framework includes DIBELS, a set of standardized, brief fluency measures for monitoring early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. These assessments are concise, allowing for frequent progress checks without disrupting classroom instruction. DIBELS results provide actionable data that help educators identify students at risk of reading difficulties early and implement necessary interventions promptly (Good & Kaminski, 2002).

In contrast, TRC assesses students' reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension through guided reading sessions and text discussions (Parker et al., 2015). It offers a comprehensive understanding of students' literacy development by combining quantitative assessment data with qualitative insights into comprehension skills. Together, these components form a holistic assessment approach, enabling educators to tailor their instructional strategies to meet individual student needs effectively. Together, these components form a holistic assessment approach, enabling educators to tailor their instructional strategies to meet individual student needs effectively.

Research consistently demonstrates mCLASS's effectiveness in promoting literacy achievement, particularly for students at risk of reading difficulties. For example, a study by Goodman and Shanker (2016) found that schools using mCLASS experienced significant improvements in literacy rates compared to those employing traditional assessment methods. These findings suggest that data-driven instruction supported by mCLASS can lead to enhanced educational outcomes.

Further research by (Amplify, 2020) highlighted mCLASS's potential for differentiated instruction, noting that its real-time data enables teachers to customize their teaching to each student's unique needs. This adaptability is crucial for fostering a responsive learning environment where all students, regardless of their initial reading levels, can progress and thrive.

The implementation of mCLASS has not only improved student achievement but also influenced teacher practices and perceptions of literacy instruction. Educator feedback often indicates increased confidence and effectiveness in teaching reading, thanks to the actionable insights generated by mCLASS assessments (Amplify, 2020). Moreover, engaging with the mCLASS platform encourages greater collaboration among educators and promotes a culture of

continuous professional development. As teachers share data and strategies based on real-time assessments, they create a collaborative learning community focused on improving literacy outcomes (Shanahan, 2020).

mCLASS is a powerful tool in early literacy education, leveraging assessment data to inform instruction and improve reading outcomes. Its comprehensive approach to monitoring and supporting literacy development equips educators with the resources needed to address the diverse needs of their students effectively. The growing body of research surrounding mCLASS highlights its role in fostering educational equity, making it an essential component of modern literacy instruction frameworks.

Title I Funding

The development of federal education policy concerning reading has its roots in the broader educational reforms of the early 20th century. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 was one of the first legislative efforts to influence education, primarily focusing on vocational training. However, it also set the stage for federal involvement in educational standards and funding, highlighting the growing role of federal policy in shaping educational practices, including reading and literacy (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

A pivotal change in federal education policy towards reading and literacy occurred with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, ESEA aimed to tackle educational disparities and enhance outcomes for disadvantaged students. Title I of ESEA allocated federal funds to schools serving low-income students, specifically targeting reading and math programs. This act underscored the importance of reading as a fundamental skill for academic success and initiated targeted federal support for literacy initiatives (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) of 1975, later known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), was another significant piece of legislation affecting reading education. EHA required that children with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. This act included provisions for special education services and support, including reading instruction tailored to the needs of students with disabilities, reinforcing the federal commitment to inclusive education and equitable access to literacy instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

A major milestone in federal education policy was the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. Building on the foundation of ESEA, NCLB introduced strict accountability measures and focused on improving student achievement, particularly in reading. The act mandated annual testing in reading and math for students in grades 3 through 8 and required schools to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading proficiency. NCLB encouraged the use of scientifically based reading research and interventions, significantly influencing reading instruction practices across the nation (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), marking a significant shift in federal education policy concerning reading. ESSA sought to address the criticisms of NCLB by granting states greater autonomy in establishing educational standards and creating accountability systems. While continuing to prioritize reading proficiency, ESSA promoted a more balanced approach to assessments and interventions. The legislation permitted a wider array of assessment tools and support mechanisms for reading instruction, signifying a move towards a more comprehensive understanding of student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

In recent years, federal education policy has further evolved, placing increased emphasis on early literacy and evidence-based practices. Programs like Reading First, initiated under NCLB, and subsequent funding for early literacy initiatives under ESSA demonstrate ongoing federal efforts to enhance reading outcomes (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Current policy discussions underscore the importance of catering to the diverse needs of students and incorporating technology into reading instruction, highlighting the necessity for adaptable and responsive educational strategies (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

The development of federal education policy concerning reading highlights an increasing acknowledgment of literacy's critical role in education. Beginning with the Smith-Hughes Act's initial emphasis on vocational training, federal legislation has evolved to include comprehensive literacy initiatives, such as those under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This progression has significantly influenced reading instruction practices and the support systems in place, reflecting broader educational objectives and societal priorities. It underscores a sustained commitment to enhancing reading proficiency for all students, recognizing literacy as a cornerstone of educational success.

Title I funding under the ESEA is designed to support schools with high percentages of low-income students. The funds are intended to improve educational outcomes by providing additional resources for instructional materials, staff development, and targeted interventions (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Research on Title I funding's impact on student achievement reveals mixed outcomes. Borman et al. (2001) found that Title I programs generally have a positive effect on student achievement, although results vary based on implementation quality. Title I funding can lead to

improved educational resources, smaller class sizes, and additional support services, which contribute to better reading outcomes (Ladd, 2012).

Title I funds can be used in schoolwide programs that aim to improve the entire school's educational program or in targeted assistance programs that focus resources on specific students identified as needing extra help (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Research suggests that schoolwide programs, by enhancing the overall educational environment, may offer broader benefits, including improved school climate and teacher effectiveness. Targeted assistance programs can provide more immediate support to struggling students, potentially leading to more focused improvements in reading achievement.

Case studies and empirical research provide valuable insights into how Title I funding supports high-dosage tutoring programs and their impact on reading achievement. The alignment between funding allocation, program quality, and student performance has been shown to be crucial in determining whether these interventions lead to significant improvements in student achievement.

Several factors influence the success of Title I-funded high-dosage tutoring programs, including the quality of instructional materials, the training and support provided to tutors, and the extent to which the program is tailored to meet students' specific needs. Effective tutoring programs are typically characterized by careful planning, continuous evaluation, and adaptations based on student progress. Ensuring that these programs are responsive to the unique needs of each student and that tutors are provided with the tools and resources they need to succeed is critical to achieving positive outcomes.

The findings from evaluations of Title I-funded tutoring programs have significant policy implications. Policymakers must consider how to allocate resources effectively, support high-

quality program implementation, and ensure that interventions are designed to meet the diverse needs of students. As Title I funding continues to play a central role in supporting underserved students, it is essential to ensure that these resources are directed toward programs that have been proven to work. The success of Title I funding in improving reading outcomes depends on strategic planning, targeted support, and a commitment to continuous improvement (Jackson & Dynarski, 2001). By prioritizing high-dosage tutoring programs that are evidence-based, well-implemented, and closely aligned with students' needs, schools can significantly improve reading proficiency and academic achievement.

Educational Equity

Disparities in Reading Achievement

Disparities in reading achievement are a critical issue in educational equity, particularly affecting Black and Brown students. These disparities arise from a confluence of socioeconomic, racial, and cultural factors that impact reading outcomes and contribute to the achievement gap. Understanding these disparities requires an exploration of the demographic indicators that influence reading performance and the application of relevant theoretical frameworks (Reardon, 2013).

Socioeconomic status (SES) plays a pivotal role in shaping reading achievement. Students from low-income families, which disproportionately includes many Black and Brown students, often face significant barriers such as limited access to educational resources, less parental involvement, and greater exposure to environmental stressors. These challenges contribute to lower reading proficiency compared to their higher-income peers. Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) *Cultural Capital Theory* elucidates this by suggesting that students from higher SES families have access to more resources and enriching experiences that support academic success.

In contrast, Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *Ecological Systems Theory* underscores how various environmental systems, such as family and community, interact to influence a child's development. For students from lower SES backgrounds, these systems often provide fewer resources and less support, impacting their reading outcomes (Duncan & Murnane, 2011).

Racial and ethnic disparities in reading achievement are evident in the educational experiences of Black and Brown students. Systemic biases and institutional inequalities contribute to these disparities, manifesting in lower expectations, fewer high-quality educational opportunities, and curricula that may not reflect the diverse backgrounds of these students. *Critical Race Theory* (CRT) provides a framework for understanding how systemic racism permeates educational practices and policies, affecting the academic achievement of marginalized groups. CRT argues that racism is not just an individual issue, but a structural one embedded within institutions and societal norms (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Additionally, Gloria Ladson-Billings' *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* emphasizes the need for integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum to engage Black and Brown students more effectively and make learning more relevant to their experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This approach advocates for a more inclusive pedagogy that validates the lived experiences of students, helping them connect more deeply with the material and fostering higher academic achievement.

Language and cultural barriers also significantly impact reading achievement, particularly for Black and Brown students who are English Language Learners (ELLs). These students may struggle with reading due to language difficulties and cultural differences that affect their comprehension and engagement with the curriculum. The *Funds of Knowledge* theory highlights the valuable cultural and linguistic resources that students bring from their home and community

experiences. By recognizing and integrating these funds into the classroom, educators can enhance reading instruction and address language barriers. This approach shifts the focus from viewing language differences as deficits to recognizing them as strengths that can support learning (Moll et al., 1992). Furthermore, Lev Vygotsky's *Sociocultural Theory* emphasizes the importance of social interactions and cultural context in learning. Vygotsky argued that cognitive development is deeply rooted in social and cultural contexts, and that learning is a collaborative process that occurs through interactions with more knowledgeable individuals (Vygotsky, 1978). For ELL students, bridging language and cultural gaps through supportive instructional practices can improve reading outcomes by ensuring that these students have access to both linguistic and cognitive support in their learning environment (Evans, 2004).

The quality of schools and communities also plays a crucial role in determining reading achievement for Black and Brown students. Schools in underserved communities, where many Black and Brown students reside, often face challenges such as inadequate resources, less experienced teachers, and lower overall educational quality (Kozol, 2005). These schools may struggle to provide the kind of high-quality literacy instruction necessary to close achievement gaps. *Social Capital Theory* explores how networks and relationships within communities can support or hinder educational outcomes. Social capital refers to the resources and opportunities available through social networks and community connections, which can play a critical role in supporting students' academic success (Coleman, 1988). In communities with limited social capital, students may have fewer opportunities for reading support and enrichment, contributing to educational disparities. The concept of *Community Cultural Wealth* emphasizes the strengths and resources present within marginalized communities, suggesting that leveraging these assets can enhance educational practices and improve reading achievement. By acknowledging and

integrating these community strengths into the educational process, schools can foster environments that promote academic success for all students, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The intersectionality of various social identities further complicates the understanding of reading achievement disparities. For Black and Brown students, the overlap of race, socioeconomic status, language, and other factors can compound educational disadvantages. Kimberlé Crenshaw's *Intersectionality Theory* provides a lens for examining how these overlapping identities impact educational experiences and outcomes. Crenshaw (1991) argues that social identities such as race, class, gender, and language do not exist independently but intersect in ways that create unique experiences of discrimination and disadvantage. For Black and Brown students, these intersecting identities can result in compounded barriers to academic achievement, particularly in the realm of reading. This theory suggests that to fully understand and address the challenges faced by these students, it is crucial to consider how multiple forms of social inequality work together to shape educational outcomes.

Additionally, *Critical Literacy Theory* encourages an examination of power dynamics within educational texts and practices, helping to address how systemic inequities affect reading experiences for these students. Critical Literacy, as proposed by Freire (2000), emphasizes the need for students to critically analyze the content and structure of texts, recognizing how literature and curriculum are shaped by social, political, and economic forces. By questioning the power structures embedded within educational materials, students can better understand how these structures may contribute to their own marginalization and, in turn, improve their ability to engage with and critique texts. This perspective is particularly important for Black and Brown

students, whose experiences and cultural perspectives may be underrepresented or misrepresented in traditional educational materials.

The disparities in reading achievement among Black and Brown students are influenced by a range of socioeconomic, racial, and cultural factors. Theoretical frameworks such as Cultural Capital Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Intersectionality Theory offer valuable insights into these disparities and inform strategies for addressing them. Cultural Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986) suggests that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds possess cultural resources—such as educational support at home and access to enriching experiences—that support their academic success. In contrast, Black and Brown students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may lack access to these resources, putting them at a disadvantage in terms of reading development. *Critical Race Theory* (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) highlights how systemic racism is embedded within educational systems, often resulting in lower expectations for students of color, fewer opportunities for academic enrichment, and a curriculum that may fail to reflect their cultural identities. *Intersectionality Theory* (Crenshaw, 1991) further deepens this understanding by showing how multiple forms of oppression—based on race, class, language, and other identities—intersect to create unique educational challenges for Black and Brown students.

By understanding these complex factors and applying targeted interventions, educators and policymakers can work towards more equitable educational outcomes for all students. Addressing the disparities in reading achievement requires an approach that takes into account the various social, cultural, and structural influences on learning. By applying frameworks such as *Cultural Capital Theory*, *Critical Race Theory*, and *Intersectionality Theory*, schools can better understand the root causes of these disparities and develop strategies to promote more

inclusive and equitable educational experiences that foster academic success for Black and Brown students.

Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth review of the existing literature on key elements of early reading development, with particular focus on decoding as a foundational skill. The review first examined the critical components of decoding, including phonemic awareness and phonics, and explored their role in developing reading fluency. It highlighted how these skills contribute not only to word recognition but also to overall reading comprehension and vocabulary development. The literature emphasized the importance of decoding in preventing reading difficulties, underscoring the need for early intervention to address decoding challenges before they become entrenched issues. Additionally, the review addressed the broader implications of decoding for academic success, noting its impact on long-term reading achievement and its role in promoting educational equity.

The purpose of this study is to further explore how decoding skills influence reading proficiency in 2nd and 3rd grade students, particularly in relation to fluency and comprehension. The inquiry aims to identify effective instructional strategies that can improve decoding abilities and support overall literacy development in elementary students. Chapter 3 will describe the research methodology employed in this study, including the study design, data collection methods, and analytical approach.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

To assess the effectiveness of the high-dosage tutorial reading program, I collected and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data from a diverse group of stakeholders, including teachers, principals, assistant principals, and district administrators from Title I schools. The data collection involved surveys with both primary and secondary questions, allowing participants to provide detailed feedback and express their views on the program. By examining these responses, I gained insights into how the program is perceived by those directly involved in student learning. This analysis helped me understand the teachers' perspectives on the program's effectiveness and the impact of Title I funding on its implementation. Additionally, I examined academic performance data measured by the mCLASS assessment tools to assess the impact of the high-dosage tutorial reading program on student reading proficiency. This chapter described the mixed-methods research design used to address the three research questions guiding the study, including descriptions of study context, participants, data collection and analysis procedures.

Study Context

GEM School District (GEMSD), a pseudonym, is a progressive district in North Carolina known for its commitment to educational excellence and equity. Despite its reputation, GEMSD faces significant challenges related to student achievement, particularly in reading, within specific student groups. The district serves a diverse student population, including a substantial proportion of students from low-income families. Research indicates that socioeconomic status plays a critical role in reading achievement, with students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often facing greater obstacles in literacy development

due to factors such as limited access to resources, early childhood literacy experiences, and instructional disparities (Reardon, 2013; NCES, 2022).

Historical data highlight persistent disparities in reading performance within GEMSD, particularly among economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, and students of color. These achievement gaps mirror national trends, where historically marginalized student groups tend to score lower on standardized reading assessments than their peers (Fryer & Levitt, 2004; NCES, 2022). While GEMSD has implemented various interventions to address these disparities, students in Title I schools continue to struggle with foundational reading skills, affecting their overall academic performance and long-term educational outcomes. High-dosage tutoring has emerged as a promising intervention to accelerate literacy gains among struggling readers, particularly in districts with significant achievement gaps (Robinson et al., 2021). This study sought to examine the effectiveness of high-dosage reading tutorial programs funded through Title I, with the goal of determining their impact on closing the reading achievement gap and informing future policy decisions.

Research Participants

The study involved educators from all identified Title I schools within the GEM School District (GEMSD) School District, a pseudonym. Participants will include classroom teachers, reading specialists, and instructional coaches who are directly involved in student instruction and familiar with student reading data. These educators were selected from a pool of staff at each Title I school, and their participation was coordinated through school administrations.

Before recruiting participants, I obtained permission from the district's Research and Accountability Department to conduct research across all identified Title I schools. In addition to seeking permission to conduct research within the school district from the Research and

Accountability Department, I obtained permission to conduct the study through East Carolina University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Following approval from both, I reached out to the principals of these schools to initiate the research and distribute surveys to educators. The survey protocol can be found in Appendix B. In my communication, I emphasized that their participation was entirely voluntary and reassured them that their responses would remain confidential and not be shared publicly. The key participants in this study included educators who have direct interactions with students and are well-acquainted with student reading data. Additionally, I conducted interviews and surveys with the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and key finance officers within the district to gather comprehensive insights related to the allocation of the Title I funding of the high-dosage tutorial reading program.

To recruit participants, school leaders were contacted by email and provided with an overview of the study. Invitations to participate were distributed via email, with the inclusion of detailed information about the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality measures. The recruitment process ensured that all participants understood their rights, including their ability to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The emphasis was placed on voluntary participation, with a focus on creating an open and non-coercive environment that encourages candid feedback.

In addition to educators, the study involved interviews and surveys with key district personnel, including members of the Federal Programs team and finance officers. These participants were selected based on their direct involvement in Title I funding allocation and oversight. District staff members were identified by district administrators, and participation will be solicited through email invitations and follow-up communication. These key informants will

provide insights into how Title I funding is allocated, how it supports the high-dosage reading tutorial program, and its perceived impact on program effectiveness.

Design of the Study

This study utilized a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze the implementation and effectiveness of the high-dosage reading tutorial program (Ignite, 2025). Quantitative data were collected from educator surveys on factors like student reading proficiency through mCLASS assessments, program effectiveness, and resource allocation. Qualitative data stemmed from semi-structured interviews with educators and finance officers, offering insights into challenges in improving reading outcomes and the influence of Title I funding on literacy interventions. By integrating these data types, the study aimed to provide a holistic understanding of the program's impact and identify areas for improvement in implementation, funding, and effectiveness in enhancing student literacy.

The high-dosage tutoring methodology focused on a structured, virtual, one-on-one tutoring intervention designed to boost reading proficiency (Ignite, 2025). Each student participated in 15-minute sessions, five days a week, with qualified tutors using research-based support for consistent literacy development. Sessions included a phonemic awareness warm-up, systematic phonics instruction and application through decodable text reading, allowing for real-time feedback

In the last 15 minutes of the session, a virtual one-on-one reading tutorial emphasized personalized instruction through targeted practice in reading skills. Tutors adapted their approaches based on individual student needs and progress, reinforcing concepts covered while integrating new materials to foster growth. This tailored focus aimed to close gaps in proficiency and ensure students were effectively supported in their literacy journey.

Conducted virtually, the program optimized space usage while promoting personalized instruction and consistent student-tutor relationships (Peterson, 2021). Tutors, trained in the Science of Reading, implemented systematic methodologies to develop foundational skills with ongoing assessments for tailored instruction (Chen, 2023).

Real-time data tracking monitored student progress and informed instruction adjustments. Challenges with specific skills prompted lesson modifications, while regular assessments identified areas needing support (Martin, 2024). This individualized approach facilitated accelerated learning for students, ensuring that each child received the necessary tools to improve their reading skills.

Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview guide for Title I personnel and financial officers and a structured survey for educators served as the study's main instruments for gathering data. Using best practices from current educational research, these tools were meticulously created to guarantee validity and reliability. The educator survey focused on the implementation, efficacy, and impact of the high-dosage reading tutorial program on student reading proficiency. It included both open-ended and Likert-scale questions, allowing for a comprehensive analysis that integrated both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

The survey instrument was adapted from validated tools used in educational research, and other reputable sources that assess teacher perceptions of student engagement, school climate, and instructional interventions. The final selection of survey questions was developed with feedback from a panel of educational experts, including literacy specialists, school administrators, and researchers in educational evaluation. This collaborative approach ensured that the survey encompassed relevant constructs aligned with the study's research questions.

To refine the instrument and identify potential bias, measurement accuracy issues, or clarity concerns, a pilot study was conducted. A small group of educators participated in the pilot study, providing feedback on usability, response burden, and question clarity. Following an analysis of the pilot study's findings, modifications were made, including rewording items, eliminating unnecessary questions, and enhancing overall consistency. This process strengthened the survey's reliability and ensured that it accurately captured educators' perspectives.

The semi-structured interview protocol for finance officers and Title I staff explored key themes related to resource management, budget allocations for high-dosage tutoring programs, and the perceived effectiveness of Title I funding in supporting literacy interventions. The interview guide was developed in consultation with financial administrators and experts in education policy to ensure it captured the complexities of financial decision-making in literacy-focused interventions. The open-ended nature of the interview questions allowed participants to share their experiences and provide in-depth qualitative insights on the program's impact and financial sustainability.

By using a validated survey instrument and carefully designed interview protocols, this study maintained scientific rigor in assessing the implementation and effectiveness of the high-dosage reading tutorial program. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data provided a comprehensive understanding of both instructional and financial components, offering insights that will help inform future policy and practice in Title I-funded reading interventions.

Threats to Internal and External Validity

This study faced several potential threats to its validity, both internal and external, that must be carefully considered and mitigated in order to ensure the accuracy and generalizability

of its findings. Two key threats—sampling bias (external) and attrition (internal)—could significantly affect the results of the study, but steps have been taken to minimize their impact.

Sampling bias occurs when the sample selected for the study is not representative of the larger population, leading to skewed or non-generalizable results. In this study, the sample consists of students from a large North Carolina school district that receives Title I funding, with a focus on those participating in a high-dosage tutorial reading program. To mitigate sampling bias, the study uses a large and diverse sample size drawn from multiple schools within the district, ensuring that it includes a broad range of students from different backgrounds, including varying levels of academic performance and socioeconomic status. The district's size and diversity are crucial in ensuring that the sample is representative of the broader population of Title I students. Additionally, the schools involved have been selected to ensure that the sample reflects both urban and suburban populations, further strengthening the external validity of the study's findings.

The study employed a matched comparison group design, which served to control for potential confounding variables that might skew the results. By selecting a comparison group of students who are not in the high-dosage tutoring program but are otherwise similar in characteristics such as socioeconomic status, academic performance, and demographic factors, the study aims to isolate the effect of the tutoring program from other factors that could influence reading achievement. This matching procedure helps to ensure that the differences observed between the treatment and comparison groups are due to the intervention itself rather than underlying differences between the groups.

Attrition, or the loss of participants over the course of the study, can also pose a significant threat to internal validity, particularly in long-term interventions. If students drop out

of the study or fail to complete the program, the final sample may no longer be representative of the original group, potentially leading to biased estimates of the program's effectiveness. To address this, the study has built-in measures to track and retain participants throughout the duration of the program. These include consistent communication with schools and families, as well as incentives for student participation and attendance. Additionally, a robust data tracking system was used to monitor attrition rates and ensure that the remaining sample maintains its representativeness. In cases of significant attrition, statistical techniques such as intention-to-treat analysis will be employed to account for any loss of data, ensuring that all students originally assigned to the study are included in the analysis, regardless of their level of participation.

Another potential internal threat to validity is selection bias, which occurs when the characteristics of the participants in the study differ systematically from those of the broader population, leading to results that are not generalizable. This can be particularly problematic in educational interventions where students who choose to participate in a program may have different baseline characteristics than those who do not. In this study, selection bias is mitigated through the use of a matched comparison group. By matching students who participate in the high-dosage tutoring program with those who do not, based on a range of key variables such as academic history, family income, and grade level, the study controls for these pre-existing differences. This matching process helps to ensure that the two groups are as similar as possible at the outset, allowing for a clearer assessment of the tutoring program's impact on reading achievement.

The large sample size of this study further strengthened its ability to address these potential biases. By including a substantial number of students across multiple schools, the study enhances its statistical power, making it more likely to detect meaningful differences between the

treatment and control groups. Larger sample sizes also help to buffer against the effects of random variation and increase the precision of the estimated treatment effects. Additionally, a large sample provided more opportunities for subgroup analyses, allowing the study to explore whether the impact of the tutoring program varies based on specific student characteristics, such as grade level or initial reading proficiency.

While there are several potential threats to the validity of this study—particularly in terms of sampling bias, attrition, and selection bias—these threats were mitigated through the use of a large, diverse sample, matched comparison groups, retention strategies, and statistical techniques. By taking these precautions, the study aimed to provide a reliable and valid assessment of the impact of Title I funding on reading achievement through a high-dosage tutoring program. These efforts ensure that the findings will be both internally and externally valid, contributing meaningful insights into how Title I resources can be effectively utilized to support disadvantaged students and close the achievement gap.

Data Collection

To assess the impact of Title I funding through a high-dosage tutorial reading program and to assess teacher perceptions, this study will employ a multifaceted approach to data collection. I will begin by obtaining permission from the appropriate school or district administrators to access student data for research purposes. This will involve submitting a formal request that outlines the purpose of the study, the confidentiality measures in place, and the specific data required for analysis. The instruments used will include standardized reading assessments, financial records, surveys, and interviews. Each research question will be addressed with specific data collection methods tailored to gather relevant information.

Research Question 1

To evaluate the impact of the high-dosage tutorial reading program on student reading proficiency and examine how outcomes differ before and after the program, mCLASS served as the primary data collection tool. The mCLASS, developed by Amplify Education, is a formative assessment system designed to track early literacy and reading proficiency (Amplify, n.d.). It includes two key assessments: DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), which measures foundational skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, and TRC (Text Reading and Comprehension), which assesses reading comprehension and overall reading ability. These assessments were administered at both the beginning and end of the 2023-2024 academic year to measure student progress. DIBELS has been shown to predict future reading success, making it an effective tool for this study (Good et al., 2001).

For the selection of student data, participants were chosen based on their involvement in the reading program. I will review school records to identify students who have participated in the program and those who have not, forming a control group. The study group consisted of students who have completed the reading program within the past semester, while the control group will include students who did not participate in the program during the same period. To ensure comparability between the two groups, I controlled for factors such as grade level, baseline reading ability (if available), and demographic variables.

Students were assigned to either the study or control group using a matching procedure, where possible, based on similar reading levels at the start of the study. If matching was not feasible, random assignment was used to minimize potential biases in group selection. Pretest and posttest data was collected to measure the impact of the reading program. A standardized reading assessment will be administered at the beginning of the study to establish

baseline reading skills (pretest). Posttest data was collected after the students in the study group have completed the program (or after a comparable time period for the control group), using the same assessment to measure improvements in reading abilities. Both pretest and posttest data were gathered ensuring consistency in administration and scoring.

Research Question 2

For Research Question 2, which evaluates the extent to which Title I funding supports the implementation and effectiveness of the high-dosage tutoring program, data were collected through financial records and program implementation logs. Detailed financial documents, including Title I funding allocation records and expenditure reports, were analyzed to assess how the funds are utilized and their impact on the program's implementation. Program implementation logs maintained by coordinators will be reviewed to ensure fidelity to the program's design and to document the frequency and quality of tutoring sessions.

The study included both a program group (students who participated in the high-dosage tutoring) and a control group (students who did not participate). By comparing pre- and post-assessment scores from mCLASS for both groups, the study used statistical analyses to identify any significant differences in reading proficiency and assess the role of Title I funding in supporting student achievement. This comparative analysis will help determine the effectiveness of the high-dosage tutoring program and whether Title I funding contributed to improving reading outcomes for participating students. Comparing pre- and post-program assessments is a well-established method for evaluating the impact of educational interventions (Kulik, 2003) and will provide valuable insights into the program's success.

The mCLASS assessment is recognized for its effectiveness in tracking early literacy development and guiding instructional decisions. Research indicates that mCLASS assessments

provide reliable indicators of reading progress and are valuable for identifying students at risk for reading difficulties and tailoring interventions (McCormick, 2020; Pearson, 2019). By utilizing these data collection methods, this study aimed to deliver a comprehensive evaluation of the high-dosage reading tutorial program and the role of Title I funding in maximizing student achievement.

Research Question 3

For this research question, I selected teachers who have directly participated in or implemented the reading program. The selection will include a mix of teachers from different grade levels and experience levels to ensure a broad range of perspectives. Twenty percent of the teachers were invited to participate in the study through email. Participation was voluntary, and teachers will be informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

To gather teacher perceptions, I used a combination of surveys and semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C for surveys and Appendix D for the interview protocol). The survey, distributed electronically, included both closed- and open-ended questions designed to capture teachers' experiences with the program. These questions explored key aspects such as the program's effectiveness, challenges encountered during implementation, and levels of student engagement.

Table 1.

Research Questions & Methodology

	Method	Source	Theoretical Framework
RQ1. What are the experiences of stakeholders (administrators, teachers, and parents) with Title I-funded reading interventions?	Conduct interviews based on protocol and review program artifacts	Administrators, Teachers, Parents	Analyze stakeholder experiences to determine the effectiveness of Title I-funded reading interventions
RQ2. How do stakeholders describe the impact of the Ignite reading program on student achievement?	Conduct interviews based on protocol and analyze student performance data	Administrators, Teachers, Parents	Understand the perceived impact of the Ignite reading program on literacy outcomes
RQ3. What specific strategies are being used by stakeholders to implement and sustain the Ignite reading program?	Conduct interviews based on protocol, document analysis, and program observations	Administrators, Teachers, Parents	Evaluate strategies using a data-driven framework to assess sustainability and effectiveness

In addition to the survey, I conducted interviews with a select number of teachers to gain more in-depth insights. These interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for the teachers and will last approximately 30-45 minutes. While the interviews will be structured around key themes, there will be flexibility to explore individual experiences further.

Teachers' written responses to open-ended questions will be analyzed for common themes and patterns. Interviews were conducted via Google Meet and recorded with transcription, with the teachers' consent. I transcribed the recordings verbatim, reviewed the transcripts for accuracy, and analyzed them thematically to identify key insights.

To maintain confidentiality, all data, including survey responses, teacher feedback, and interview recordings were kept confidential. Personal identifiers will be removed, and only aggregated data will be reported. Data was stored securely in a password-protected digital file and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study, following ethical guidelines for data retention.

Data Analysis

Once I received approval to conduct the surveys, I contacted all participants to explain the study, providing details about the research purpose, how their feedback would be used, and assuring them that their participation was voluntary and confidential. This study received district approval to access participants and data, and IRB approval ensured ethical compliance (Appendix A). All participants provided informed consent, acknowledging the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality (Appendix B), ensuring adherence to institutional and district guidelines. For Research Question 1, I used descriptive statistics to summarize pre- and post-test results and paired t-tests to determine if the changes in reading scores were significant. To analyze qualitative data in response to Research Question 3, I conducted thematic analysis,

beginning with open coding to identify key ideas, followed by axial coding to group related themes.

Finally, to address Research Question 2, I employed content analysis to examine financial reports and school records, identifying how funding was allocated and assessing its impact on addressing reading achievement gaps. These combined analyses provided a comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness.

Ethical Consideration

This study has received district approval to evaluate the High-Dosage Tutorial Reading Program, ensuring alignment with the district's research policies and priorities. Additionally, the research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at East Carolina University (ECU) to ensure compliance with ethical research standards (see Appendix A for IRB approval). As required by the IRB, I have completed the CITI training modules on the ethical treatment of human subjects.

Prior to participation, all teachers will receive an informed consent form outlining the study's purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and confidentiality measures (see Appendix B for the informed consent form). Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and used solely for research purposes. Personal identifiers have been removed, and only aggregated data is reported.

Teachers completed surveys and interviews outside their regular work hours to prevent interference with professional responsibilities. The survey, distributed electronically, was designed to be completed in approximately ten minutes and included both closed- and open-ended questions addressing the program's effectiveness, implementation challenges, and student

engagement (see Appendix C for the survey instrument). Participation was entirely voluntary, and individuals were assured that they may withdraw at any time without consequences.

To protect confidentiality, all collected data—including survey responses, teacher feedback, and interview recordings—was stored in a password-protected file, accessible only to authorized individuals. Participants had the right to request information related to their individual responses. All findings were reported in aggregate form to maintain anonymity. Additionally, survey results were shared through a secure survey platform, ensuring transparency while preserving participant confidentiality.

Summary

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the high-dosage tutorial reading program as administered by a school district to support students performing below grade level in their journey to achieve reading proficiency. Specifically, the study seeks to assess how Title I funding, allocated to implement high-dosage tutoring, influences student achievement in reading. By analyzing a robust set of data—including student performance before and after program participation, teacher feedback, and implementation fidelity—I intended to gain a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact on student outcomes.

The results of this study are presented in Chapter 4, offering educators who use the High-Dosage Tutorial Reading Program useful insights. These results provide evidence to support the improvement of reading performance, student engagement, and instructional approaches. The findings are arranged topically, emphasizing significant patterns found in teacher interviews and surveys. In addition to quantitative analysis of survey data to show more general trends in teacher opinions, this chapter features direct participant responses that provide qualitative viewpoints on the program's obstacles and efficacy. Additionally in chapter 5, the school district

received recommendations based on these insights, which promoted sustained and strategic investment in supplemental programs like this one that were financed by Title I. The district was able to make sure all children, especially those who are at danger of falling behind, had the chance to achieve academic success by maintaining and improving the use of high-dosage tutoring.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of a Title I-funded high-dosage reading tutoring program in enhancing the reading abilities of economically disadvantaged pupils in seven Title I primary classes within the GEMSD School District. Understanding the program's implementation, efficacy, and long-term viability was the main goal of the study. It also looked into the effects of consistent reading structures on teaching reading to enhance students' development.

The study used quantitative and qualitative data collection in a mixed-methods manner to produce a comprehensive analysis. The quantitative element examined gains in fluency, comprehension, and general reading abilities with an emphasis on student reading achievement. To track student progress during the 2023-2024 academic year, data were collected from benchmark examinations, standardized reading assessments, and progress monitoring reports. Student gains were measured using a combination of percentage growth in reading scores across assessment periods and standard deviations to analyze variations in student performance over time. This approach allowed for both an absolute measure of improvement and an understanding of how individual student progress compared to overall trends within the program.

Teachers, administrators, and financial officials participated in interviews as part of the qualitative component. The interviews were recorded and transcribed using Google Meet, then analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights regarding participants' perceptions of the program's impact, the challenges they encountered, and their overall experiences.

All interviews followed the procedures outlined and approved by the East Carolina University (ECU) Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants were briefed on the study's

objectives, the intended use of their responses, and their confidentiality rights prior to each interview. In accordance with ECU IRB guidelines, informed consent was obtained before the interviews commenced. All interviews were conducted digitally to facilitate participation, providing administrators and teachers with a flexible and accessible platform to share their insights.

With consent from the participants, all interviews were recorded via Google Meet and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate capture of responses. The transcription process was essential in preserving the integrity of participants' perspectives. To fully engage with the data, the researcher initially listened to the interviews in their entirety to identify overarching themes and patterns. Following this initial review, I conducted a more detailed examination, focusing on sub-themes that emerged within the responses of the interviewees.

A structured coding process was applied to the data, guided by predetermined areas of interest related to my study's research questions. Responses were analyzed within these areas to identify key themes and trends. I also took notes during and after interviews to highlight significant points and recurrent themes that might not have been explicitly captured in the transcripts. These annotations provided additional insights and helped refine the thematic analysis.

As the researcher, I systematically analyzed the interview data using a structured coding process. I first conducted an initial review of the transcriptions, using open coding to identify recurring words, key phrases, and emerging themes. Axial coding followed, grouping these initial codes into broader categories aligned with the study's research questions, such as instructional strategies, resource allocation, teacher perceptions, and student outcomes. I then refined these categories through selective coding, identifying the most prominent themes across

participants. To ensure accuracy, I engaged in recursive analysis, revisiting transcripts multiple times to validate coding and thematic patterns. Finally, I compared the qualitative themes with the quantitative findings on student reading gains, providing a comprehensive understanding of how Title I funding and the high-dosage reading tutorial program influenced student achievement.

After coding and categorizing individual responses, the researcher analyzed the data in aggregate to determine major themes across all participants. This approach allowed for both individual perspectives to be recognized and broader trends to be established. The qualitative findings were then compared with the quantitative data on student reading gains, providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the high-dosage reading tutorial program. By integrating qualitative and quantitative insights, the study offered a well-rounded analysis of the effectiveness of Title I funding in supporting student achievement.

Participant Demographics

Participants in this study included a total of 13 individuals, consisting of six teachers, five administrators, and two finance officers who were directly involved in the implementation and oversight of the high-dosage reading tutoring program. The six teachers provided insight into the instructional delivery and student engagement, while the five administrators offered perspectives on program coordination, support, and overall effectiveness. The two finance officers shared information about budget allocations and financial sustainability related to the program. To protect confidentiality, individual demographic details such as age, gender, and ethnicity are not disclosed. However, the participant pool represents a diverse cross-section of educators and district officials within GEM School District, ensuring a broad range of perspectives were

captured. This diversity of roles provided a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact and sustainability from multiple vantage points.

The sample includes elementary school teachers with varying years of experience in seven Title I schools who provide direct instructional support to students enrolled in the tutoring program. It also includes administrators responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Title I program, offering insight into the logistical and strategic decision-making processes. Additionally, the sample consists of finance officers who are involved in the allocation and management of Title I funds, providing perspectives on budgetary considerations and financial sustainability.

In addition to the interviews conducted with teachers, administrators, and finance officers, secondary data were obtained from GEM School District to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the high-dosage reading tutoring program. This data consisted of student reading achievement records from the seven participating Title I schools within the district. A total of 120 student records were analyzed, representing students who participated in the high-dosage tutoring program during the previous academic year. These records included beginning-of-year (BOY), middle-of-year (MOY), and end-of-year (EOY) reading fluency and comprehension scores, which were measured using the district's benchmark assessment system. Additionally, student demographic information, including grade level, was provided to facilitate a more detailed analysis of performance outcomes across different student subgroups.

The breakdown of student records included 17 student records from six schools and 18 student records from one school, totaling 120 student records across the district. This data provided critical insight into the reading growth of students who received tutoring services,

allowing the study to explore measurable academic gains associated with the program. By analyzing data from a diverse group of schools, the study captured a broad view of the program's effectiveness across different school contexts. This data will enable the committee to better understand the quantitative outcomes of the high-dosage reading tutoring intervention and its potential to close reading achievement gaps within the district.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How does participation in a high-dosage tutorial reading program impact student proficiency, as measured by mClass scores and foundational reading skills before and after the program?

RQ2: To what extent does Title I funding support the implementation and effectiveness of the high-dosage tutoring program?

RQ3: What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness and impact of the high-dosage tutorial reading program on student learning outcomes?

The qualitative data collection, through semi-structured interviews, was structured to capture firsthand experiences and insights from educators and district officials, enriching the quantitative findings with contextual narratives.

Data Collection

The school district provided student achievement data that was collected from school-based meetings. This data included assessment scores, progress monitoring results, and other relevant academic performance metrics used to evaluate student growth. To increase efficiency and provide a comprehensive assessment of student development, monthly data meetings were incorporated into already-existing school-based meetings. In the spring of 2024, these sessions were held six times from November to May and offered an organized way to analyze student

performance data, identify learning gaps, and select appropriate instructional interventions.

Teachers, principals, interventionists, assistant principals, and central office leaders participated in these sessions; each of them was essential to the implementation and evaluation of the high-dosage reading tutoring program. In order to keep conversations focused on the larger objective of assessing how the tutoring program was affecting students' reading achievement, each meeting started with a review of the study's objectives.

To evaluate progress in fluency, comprehension, and overall reading proficiency, teachers reviewed student reading data, including benchmark assessments, progress monitoring reports, and formative assessment results, during these sessions. Together, the team analyzed data trends, discussed areas of concern, and identified areas in which students needed more instructional support. In order to give the quantitative results important context, teachers and interventionists contributed their observations from tutoring and classroom sessions. To ensure that the interpretation of student performance data was thorough and representative of actual classroom experiences, participants came to an agreement on key takeaways through group discussions.

These meetings functioned as a platform for instructional decision-making in addition to assessing student progress. While discussing strategies that were proven effective in increasing student performance, educators also thought about how the tutoring method might need to be modified. Intervention plans were created in the event that learning gaps were found, enabling prompt and focused assistance. In addition to ensuring that difficult kids received prompt interventions, this cooperative approach fostered accountability among educators. This process remained practical, actionable, and connected with educators' ongoing responsibilities by integrating data review conversations into already-existing sessions. In addition to improving the

study's findings, the organized format of these sessions fortified professional learning communities and promoted a district-wide culture of ongoing introspection and data-driven decision-making.

Results

The 2023–2024 school year saw the introduction of the high-dosage reading tutorial program, and the outcomes demonstrate that the 120 students who took part advanced significantly. The targeted, customized assistance that this structured intervention provided to improve reading skills was extremely beneficial to students who were performing below grade level. The program was designed to ensure that children received regular, high-quality literacy instruction because research shows that this is essential for improving reading outcomes. Through small-group coaching and specialized learning techniques, the program aimed to bridge learning gaps, increase comprehension skills, and improve reading fluency. These objectives were met, as evidenced by the first year's data showing a significant improvement in children's reading proficiency.

I have organized my results according to the research questions that guided the study. I grouped the data into key themes that emerged during analysis. The structured approach allowed the opportunity for a coherent presentation of findings. This structure also ensured that each research question was addressed systematically. Aligning the themes with the core inquiries of the study, the organization supports a deeper understanding of patterns, insights, and variations across the participant responses.

Research Question 1

What effects does take part in a high-dosage tutorial reading program have on students' competency as determined by their pre- and post-program mClass scores and foundational reading skills? Based on mClass scores and foundational reading skills, the results of the first year of the high-dosage tutorial reading program show positive development in student proficiency. When pre- and post-test results are compared, it is evident that students who participated in the program made quantifiable gains in comprehension, decoding, and reading fluency.

Prior to enrolling in the study, every the average fluency score of the students participating in the high-dosage tutorial reading program was 46%. After the intervention, they achieved an average score of 57%, a rise of 11 percentage points. These enhancements imply that pupils profited from the program's focused, organized assistance. The program successfully accelerated reading development, with 50% of enrolled students showing at least average or above-average improvement. Students who started the year At Benchmark showing the largest gains. Within this group, 58.3% demonstrated improvements in reading proficiency, confirming that the program effectively reinforced and strengthened existing literacy skills. This progression shows how important the curriculum was in helping children who were already reading at grade level improve their foundational reading abilities so they could go from basic competency to more sophisticated comprehension abilities.

For 120 children who started the year Well Below Benchmark, the curriculum also had a major impact; 51.4% of them made at least average growth. Well Below Benchmark means that a student's performance on an assessment, such as a reading fluency or comprehension test, falls significantly below the expected grade-level standard. This designation indicates that the student

is performing at a level that is substantially behind their peers and is in need of intensive intervention and support to catch up.

A paired-sample t-test was used to compare the mean scores before and after the intervention in order to ascertain whether the observed gains were statistically significant. The reading increases were not likely to have happened by accident, as the data show that the difference in scores was statistically significant ($T = 3.47$, $p = 0.0027$). This makes the case for maintaining and growing the program stronger while the programs first year saw some discernible improvements, students who have continued into the second year are already demonstrating much greater progress. These early results suggest that sustained participation in the high-dosage reading tutoring program leads to even more noticeable reading gains over time. This highlights the importance of long-term intervention in helping students develop the foundational skills needed for literacy achievement.

When compared to Title I students who did not participate in the program, children in the high-dosage reading tutorial program showed competitive progress, indicating the potent impact of this high-frequency, structured tutoring approach on student learning. The intervention's effectiveness in helping struggling readers improve their reading skills is demonstrated by the Students Below and Well Below Benchmark program's gains, which were on par with those of their Title I peers. This is an opportunity to strengthen and enhance the teaching approach to maximize its future impact, even if the overall growth rates of Title I children who did not participate in the program were slightly higher. Additionally, students who continued in the program for a second year have already shown further improvements, confirming the long-term benefits of sustained participation in high-dosage tutoring. For students who entered the program with foundational reading deficiencies, repeated exposure to structured, intensive reading

instruction increased the likelihood of sustained literacy growth. These results further support the widely accepted research that high-frequency, long-term tutoring is one of the most effective methods for improving literacy outcomes. Given that children who continue into a second year are already showing larger gains, it is clear that the program's effects compound over time, making it a promising long-term strategy for improving reading results.

These students, who are often most at risk of persistent academic challenges, were able to achieve consistent gains in their comprehension, decoding, and fluency with consistent, rigorous tutoring sessions (see Table 2). The fact that these students demonstrated measurable improvements suggests that they will likely make considerably more progress if they continue to engage, even though it was not expected that the program would totally close achievement gaps in a single year (see Figure 4). The growth seen across all achievement levels demonstrates the program's capacity to provide substantial assistance to a diverse group of learners.

The goal of the high-dosage reading tutoring program was to improve literacy for the long run, not only as a band-aid solution. The results from the first-year show that it is successfully laying the groundwork for future reading success. With changes and enhancements like extending the school day, incorporating more tailored learning strategies, and enhancing the curriculum, even higher reading increases could be possible. The implementation insights from the first year also provide valuable critiques for improving program delivery. Emphasizing data-driven education, continuous evaluation, and targeted intervention can help teachers make this technique more effective.

Table 2.

EOY Growth of the Students who Started the Year At or Below Benchmark

End of Year (EOY) Growth				
		Average or Above Average		Below Average Growth
BOY Classification		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i> %
At Benchmark <i>n</i> = 12		7	58.3%	5 41.7%
Below Benchmark <i>n</i> = 13		6	46.2%	7 53.8%
Well Below Benchmark <i>n</i> = 35		18	51.4%	17 48.6%

Note. 58.3% of students who began the year “At Benchmark” demonstrated improvements in reading proficiency after completing the high-dosage tutorial reading program. More than half (51.4%) of students who began the year at “Well Below Benchmark” demonstrated average or above average growth.

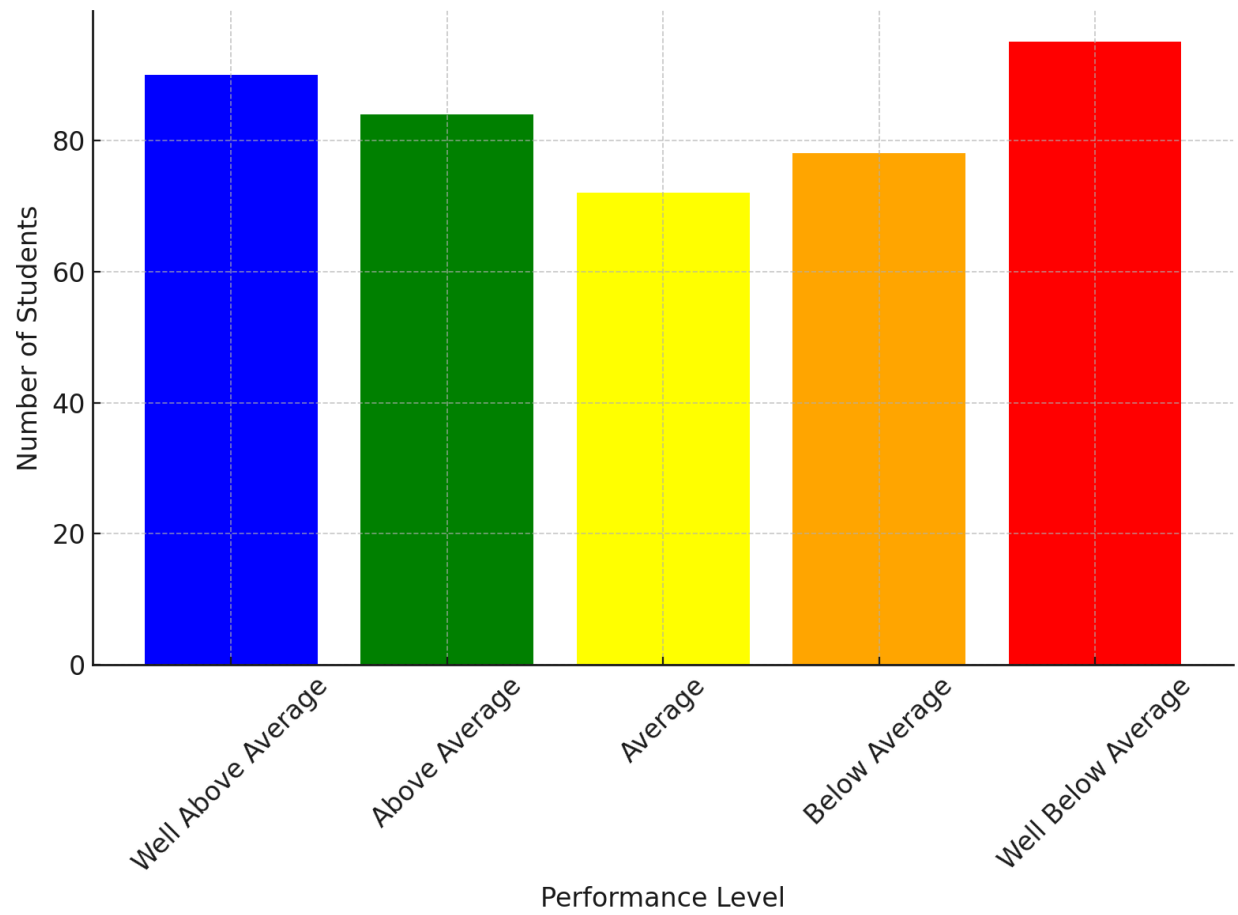


Figure 4. Participant performance by level

During the first year of the high-dosage reading tutorial program, students showed measurable progress in their reading abilities. The benefits of long-term participation are significantly greater, which emphasizes the importance of prolonging the program for a number of years. With more funding and development, this program could yield even higher reading results, particularly for pupils who are below grade level. The effectiveness of the high-dosage reading tutorial program was proven during the first year of implementation, and second-year participants' continued performance attests to its long-term benefits. With additional enhancements, this tool might establish itself as a cornerstone of literacy intervention programs, helping even more students become fluent readers.

As the program evolves, maintaining its high educational standards, adaptability, and customized support will be crucial to maximizing its impact. The ways that certain program elements—such as small-group instruction, tutor-to-student ratios, or the use of technology in reading practice—help students succeed could be the subject of future research. This program has the potential to be a game-changer in reducing literacy gaps and guaranteeing that all students, regardless of background, have the chance to acquire good reading abilities for success in life if the model is further improved and additional students in need are made available.

Research Question 2

To what extent does Title I funding support the implementation and effectiveness of the high-dosage tutoring program? The high-dosage tutoring program was implemented in large part because to Title I funding, which provided the funds required for staffing, instructional materials, and tutors' continuous professional development. Teachers, district administrators, and finance officers from the seven participating Title I schools participated in semi-structured interviews to examine how Title I financing aided in the program's implementation and

effectiveness. These individuals were specifically chosen because they have firsthand experience with budget management, program oversight, and instructional execution. Participants' opinions on the program's finance, sustainability, and general efficacy were the main topics of each 25–30-minute interview.

To learn more about how Title I financing supports the high dosage reading tutorial program's recurrent themes and patterns emerged from the interview data. The themes emerged through a systematic process of thematic analysis. This approach involved carefully reviewing the audio recordings through and transcribing them verbatim to preserve the accuracy and integrity of participants' responses. A structured coding framework, developed in alignment with the central research questions and study topics, was then applied to the transcripts. This framework allowed for the identification, organization, and categorization of key ideas, experiences, and perceptions shared by each participant (see Figure 5). The consistent use of this framework ensured a transparent analysis process. It also enabled the recognition of commonalities and differences across interviews and supporting the development of meaningful themes grounded my research data.

Research Question 2 was mainly addressed using data from district leaders and finance officials since their perspectives offered a more thorough comprehension of resource management, budget distribution, and program viability. Teacher interviews also helped to clarify the ways in which instructional practices, materials, and professional development were directly aided by Title I resources. From this analysis, two larger themes emerged.

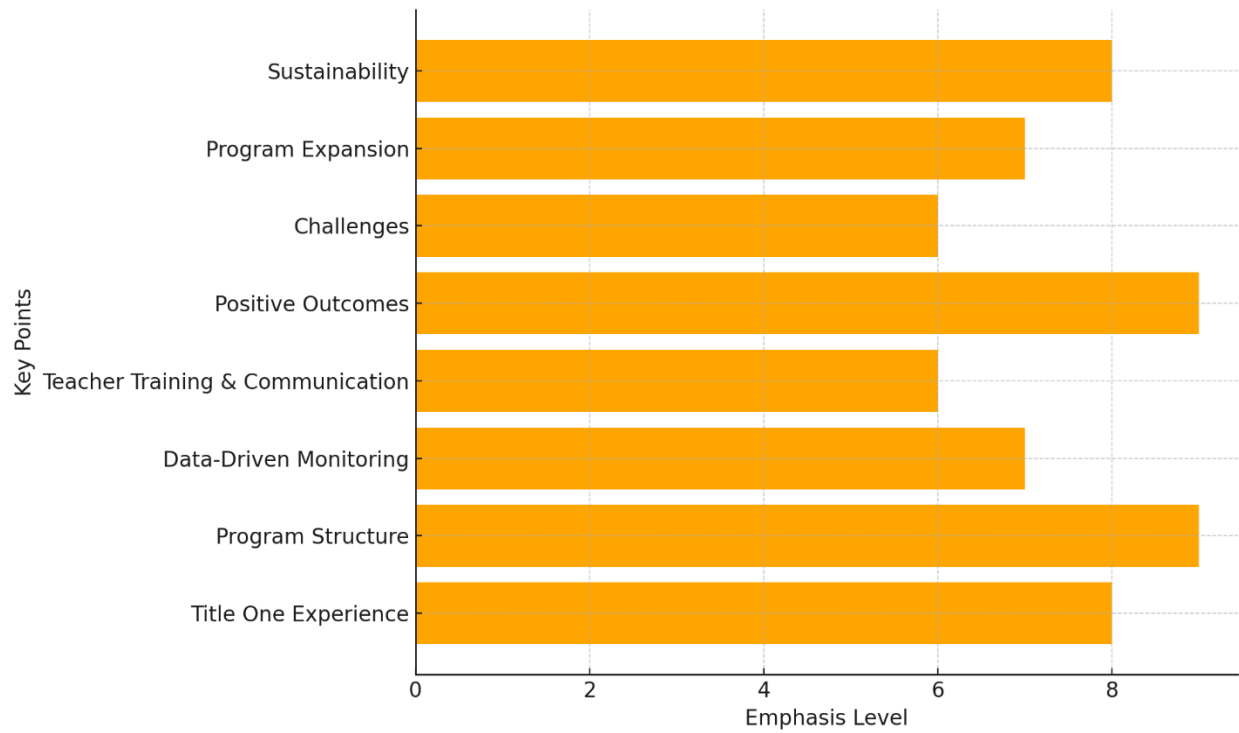


Figure 5. Interview key discussion points

Theme 1: Title I Funding is Crucial to Closing the Performance Gap

Title I funding plays a pivotal role in closing the performance gap for students who require additional support in literacy development. Many participants recognized Title I resources as essential to sustaining the tutoring program, ensuring that students who struggle with reading receive the targeted interventions necessary to improve their skills. The program's success in improving literacy outcomes has been widely acknowledged yet concerns persist about its long-term sustainability. Educators, administrators, and finance officers voiced the necessity of Title I funding in maintaining essential program components, including instructional materials, additional personnel, and targeted interventions (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

A finance officer explained, "Without Title I funding, we wouldn't have the additional personnel and instructional materials needed to make this program successful. However, budget limitations mean we can't expand it as much as we'd like" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). This statement reflects the financial reality that while the program is effective, its reach remains constrained by funding availability.

Administrators also expressed concerns about the program's future. One participant noted, "While the results are impressive, we have to constantly justify funding needs. If federal allocations change, we may struggle to maintain the same level of support" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). This uncertainty poses a challenge, as the program's continued success hinges on financial stability.

Additionally, teachers highlighted the challenges of relying solely on Title I funds, especially given the variability of federal budgets and competing district priorities. One educator emphasized, "We see the difference this program makes, but we also know that without

consistent funding, its longevity is uncertain. We need assurances that this program won't be cut just as students are making significant progress" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

Another concern raised was the impact of potential funding reductions on the quality of services provided. A school administrator remarked, "If funding is reduced, we may have to decrease session frequency or reduce staffing, which would ultimately impact student outcomes" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). This statement underscores the direct relationship between funding levels and instructional effectiveness.

Despite these challenges, participants acknowledged that Title I funding has been instrumental in enabling individualized instruction that directly benefits struggling readers. A teacher observed, "High-dosage tutoring is making a measurable impact, but if we can't sustain it, we risk reversing the progress we've made" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

To address these concerns, district leaders emphasized the need for strategic financial planning and advocacy. One administrator suggested, "We need to explore alternative funding sources, such as grants and community partnerships, to supplement Title I funding. Relying on one funding stream is too risky" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). This sentiment reflects a growing consensus that diversifying financial resources is necessary for program longevity.

Some districts have already taken proactive steps by seeking partnerships with local organizations and state funding initiatives to lessen dependency on federal resources. Another finance officer commented, "Sustainability requires us to think beyond the immediate funding cycle. If we want to ensure this program remains viable, we have to build long-term financial strategies" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

Moreover, participants stressed the importance of demonstrating program efficacy through data-driven advocacy. A literacy coordinator explained, “When we present data showing student gains, it strengthens our case for continued funding. We must continue to collect and analyze data to justify future investments” (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

Theme 2: Teachers are Concerned about Long-Term Sustainability of Relying on Title I Funding

While Title I funding has been the foundation of the program’s implementation, long-term sustainability remains a pressing issue. Educators and administrators agree that without consistent financial support, the program’s future remains uncertain. As a result, strategic planning, diversified funding sources, and strong advocacy efforts will be essential in ensuring that high-dosage tutoring continues to benefit students in the years to come (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

Participants emphasized that one of the biggest challenges is the unpredictability of federal funding allocations. One educator shared, “Each year, we wonder whether we will have the necessary funds to maintain this program. It’s hard to plan long-term when funding is never guaranteed” (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). This statement highlights the difficulty of maintaining consistent instructional support under financial uncertainty.

In response to these concerns, some districts have begun lobbying for more stable funding sources. A district administrator explained, “We are working with policymakers and local stakeholders to advocate for increased literacy funding. If we don’t take action, we risk losing one of the most effective interventions we’ve seen” (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). Advocacy at the state and federal levels has become a crucial strategy for securing the future of high-dosage tutoring programs.

Another key issue identified was the impact of staffing fluctuations due to budget constraints. One school leader noted, “We’ve seen amazing gains, but if we lose our trained tutors due to funding cuts, we’re back to square one” (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). This concern underscores the need for long-term workforce investment in addition to financial resources.

Title I funding has been instrumental in providing critical literacy interventions, reliance on it alone presents significant risks. As one educator summarized, “We know this program works. Now, we need to make sure it lasts” (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). Moving forward, school districts will need to develop multi-faceted funding strategies to ensure that students continue receiving the support they need to succeed. District leaders voiced worries over the sustainability of Title I funding, highlighting the possibility that the program's long-term survival could be jeopardized by uncertainty in future federal funding. Administrators pointed out that although the program has been successful, many non-Title I schools also have pupils in need of literacy interventions but are unable to pay for them. District leaders suggested looking into local financial options and promoting ongoing federal support in order to maintain the program.

The support of students who started the program Well Below Benchmark was one area where Title I funds had a particularly significant impact. These students' growth was equivalent to that of their counterparts in Title I schools who did not participate, demonstrating that the program offered the most underprivileged students a useful literacy intervention. To guarantee that all qualified kids in Title I schools have access to high-dosage tutoring, the results also highlight the necessity of evaluating the program's scalability. The program's influence on

student accomplishment could be further strengthened by broadening its scope through more staffing, longer class times, and greater funding allocation.

Research Question 3

How do teachers feel about the high-dosage tutorial reading program's impact on student learning outcomes and effectiveness? Feedback from teachers, district leaders, and finance officers gathered through semi-structured interviews and monthly data meetings suggests that educators view the high-dosage tutorial reading program as a highly effective and valuable intervention for improving student literacy. Qualitative data provided insight into teachers' perceptions. Two larger themes were synthesized in the analysis process.

Theme 1: Effectiveness of Individualized Instruction

The first year of implementation of the high-dosage tutorial reading program demonstrated significant growth in student reading proficiency, as measured by mClass scores and foundational reading skills. When educators first introduced the program, the goal was clear: to provide consistent, intensive reading instruction that could accelerate literacy development for students most in need. As the year unfolded, teachers and district leaders witnessed firsthand the transformation of struggling readers into more confident, engaged learners (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). Most educators reported that the structured, small-group tutoring approach provided students with the individualized support necessary to improve their foundational reading skills.

Quantitative data from the first year supports these observations. A comparison of pre- and post-program scores revealed that 50% of students demonstrated at least average or above-average growth, with students At Benchmark showing the most significant gains. Among this group, 58.3% showed improvement in their reading proficiency, reinforcing the effectiveness of

structured, individualized tutoring in reinforcing and strengthening existing literacy skills. More importantly, students who began the year Well Below Benchmark also made measurable progress, with 51.4% achieving at least average growth. For many of these students, reading had always been a struggle. The structure and consistency of the program allowed them to receive targeted interventions that addressed specific skill gaps, resulting in breakthrough moments where once hesitant readers gained confidence and fluency (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

Teachers recall watching students who once avoided reading aloud in class gradually volunteer to read. They described the pride in students' faces when they recognized new words or successfully decoded a challenging sentence (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). One district leader described a third grader who, at the start of the year, "refused to read in front of his peers, but by the end of the program, was reading full paragraphs with excitement" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

Even more encouraging was the impact on students who continued into a second year of the program. Early indicators suggest that these students are showing even greater gains, reinforcing the idea that long-term, high-frequency tutoring results in sustained literacy growth. The cumulative effect of repeated exposure to structured reading instruction appears to increase the likelihood of long-term proficiency improvements, particularly for students who enter the program with foundational reading deficiencies (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

Additionally, interviews with educators revealed that the individualized approach allowed tutors to adapt lesson pacing based on students' needs. One teacher stated, "The ability to modify instruction in real time helped struggling students grasp key concepts more effectively" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). Another administrator noted that "students who had

previously been disengaged with reading began participating actively, eager to show their progress" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

While the program's early success is evident, educators acknowledge that there is still work to be done. Among students Below Benchmark, 46.2% demonstrated at least average growth, but their progress was slightly slower than their peers. Teachers and administrators believe that targeted instructional refinements—such as adjusting session frequency, personalizing lesson plans further, and integrating adaptive learning tools—could help accelerate progress for these students (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

The results of the first year offer a compelling case for the effectiveness of high-dosage tutoring, as both qualitative and quantitative evidence affirm that the program is positively transforming reading outcomes for students who previously struggled. However, as the district looks to scale and refine the program, another challenge looms—ensuring that the necessary funding remains available to sustain these gains (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025).

Further research and additional data collection will be necessary to fully assess the long-term impact of the program. Administrators are considering tracking student progress over multiple years to evaluate whether literacy gains remain consistent. One district official suggested, "We need to examine how sustained exposure to structured tutoring affects reading performance beyond elementary school" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). These ongoing evaluations will be crucial in refining instructional strategies and securing funding for continued implementation.

Ultimately, the first-year results validate the power of individualized instruction in improving student literacy outcomes. As educators continue to enhance the program, ensuring equitable access and long-term sustainability will remain a top priority. A teacher shared:

I've seen students move from below grade level to meeting benchmarks within a few months. The small-group setting allows for targeted instruction that just isn't possible in a full classroom.

Another educator highlighted the program's flexibility:

Being able to work closely with students, identify their specific challenges, and immediately adjust strategies has made a noticeable difference in their confidence and ability to read.

Individualized instruction has proven to be a key factor in the success of the high-dosage tutoring program. Many educators emphasized that the small-group and one-on-one structure allowed for targeted intervention that would not be feasible in a traditional classroom setting (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). This approach ensured that students received customized support tailored to their specific reading deficits, resulting in measurable academic gains.

One teacher stated, "The ability to adjust instruction in real time has been a game-changer. We can pinpoint exactly where a student is struggling and immediately modify our approach to address those challenges" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). This flexibility was cited as a major advantage over traditional classroom instruction, where time constraints often limit the ability to provide personalized support.

Data collected from the program's implementation further supports the effectiveness of individualized instruction. A district administrator noted, "We've seen significant progress in students who were previously struggling to keep up. Those who received individualized tutoring were able to reach and, in some cases, surpass benchmark expectations" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). The focus on tailored lesson

plans and direct engagement with students allowed educators to address learning gaps effectively and accelerate reading proficiency.

Teachers also observed an increase in student confidence and participation. "Students who were once hesitant to read aloud in class are now eager to volunteer. The program has not only improved literacy skills but also boosted self-esteem," one educator shared (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). The structured, targeted nature of the program provided struggling readers with the reinforcement they needed to gain fluency and comprehension skills. Teachers noted that students in the program became more confident in their reading abilities, leading to greater engagement and participation in classroom instruction. Educators observed that program participants developed stronger fluency, decoding skills, and comprehension strategies compared to non-participating peers. Additionally, the program was found to be particularly effective for students struggling with phonemic awareness and word recognition, as the intensive, targeted instruction helped reinforce these critical literacy skills.

Theme 2: Ease of Implementation Due to Virtual Tutoring Structure

Another major factor contributing to the program's success was its virtual tutoring structure. The ability to provide reading intervention remotely allowed for greater flexibility in scheduling and ensured that more students could receive support, regardless of location (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). Educators noted that the virtual format eliminated several logistical barriers that often come with in-person tutoring programs.

A district leader explained, "Virtual tutoring made it possible to reach students who might otherwise have been unable to participate due to transportation or scheduling conflicts. It expanded access and allowed us to serve more students efficiently" (GEMSD

Staff Interview, February 2025). This accessibility was particularly beneficial for students in need of consistent, structured support outside of regular school hours.

Additionally, the online format enabled educators to track student progress more effectively. "The digital tools we used allowed us to collect real-time data on student performance. We could immediately see where students were excelling and where they needed more help, allowing us to adjust our instructional strategies accordingly," one teacher noted (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). These technological advantages provided valuable insights into student learning and helped educators refine their approach over time.

Teachers also highlighted that virtual tutoring minimized classroom distractions and allowed for focused learning sessions. "Students who struggled in a traditional classroom setting found it easier to engage in a virtual one-on-one environment. The reduced distractions helped them stay on task and absorb the material more effectively," an educator shared (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). This observation aligns with research suggesting that individualized online instruction can enhance student focus and retention.

Raising parental knowledge and involvement in the program is another crucial area for improvement. Even though tutoring sessions were held at the school, making sure parents are aware of the program's objectives, structure, and advantages can support students' learning outside of the classroom. According to a district official, "Parents can support and reinforce their child's reading skills at home more effectively if they understand the goal of high-dosage tutoring and how it supports their child's reading development" (GEMSD Staff Interview, February 2025). The program's impact could be

increased by discussing student success, giving regular updates and providing resources for at-home reinforcement.

Overall, the high-dosage tutoring program's virtual structure played a vital role in its effectiveness. By removing logistical barriers and leveraging digital tools, educators were able to provide consistent, high-quality reading intervention to a larger number of students. As schools look toward the future, ensuring access to funding for virtual tutoring initiatives will be critical in maintaining these positive outcomes.

Summary

The implementation of a structured, data-driven tutoring strategy that guaranteed students got regular, high-frequency literacy instruction—a crucial component in enhancing reading proficiency—was made possible in large part by Title I money, according to the findings. Targeted funding is crucial for helping struggling readers, as seen by the differences in student outcomes between Title I schools that adopted the program and those that did not. Growth rates among kids in participating Title I schools were similar to those of Title I students who did not get tutoring, demonstrating that the program successfully used Title I resources to deliver significant intervention. However, overall growth rates were somewhat higher for students in Title I schools without access to high-dosage tutoring, indicating that more program improvements could enhance the delivery of teaching and optimize its effects.

Despite its success, the program made clear how important it is to have dependable technical infrastructure and continual professional growth. Maintaining these beneficial results will require financing for virtual instruction to continue. Chapter 5 will offer suggestions for further study as well as useful applications for teachers.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a synthesis of the findings from the study on the High-Dosage Tutorial Reading Program implemented in seven Title I elementary schools in GEM School District. It discusses the implications of the study's results, the study's limitations, and recommendations for practice, policy, and future research. The chapter also explores how the findings contribute to existing literature on reading interventions for economically disadvantaged students. The study's primary goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of high-dosage tutoring in improving reading proficiency among at-risk students and to examine educators' and administrators' perspectives on its implementation and sustainability.

Summary of Findings

The findings from Chapter 4 suggest a positive impact of high-dosage tutoring on reading achievement in Title I schools (Robinson et al., 2021). The research highlights several key takeaways that demonstrate the effectiveness and sustainability of the program. Individualized instruction has proven to be a powerful tool in improving reading fluency and comprehension. The data supports that small-group and one-on-one tutoring sessions allow educators to provide targeted support tailored to students' specific needs, resulting in measurable academic gains (Slavin et al., 2010).

Another critical takeaway is the role of Title I funding in sustaining the program. While essential for maintaining instructional materials and tutoring staff, concerns persist regarding financial stability and the potential impact of budgetary constraints on long-term implementation (GEMSCD Interview, 2025). Without consistent funding, the ability to continue providing high-dosage tutoring at scale remains uncertain, raising important questions about future investment in literacy intervention programs.

Another key factor contributing to the program's success was the role of monthly data meetings. These meetings ensured accountability by allowing educators to analyze student performance trends and adjust tutoring strategies in real time. By prioritizing data-driven decision-making, schools were able to provide timely instructional support to students who needed it most, reinforcing the program's effectiveness in closing literacy gaps (Robinson et al., 2021).

Finally, scalability remains an important focus. Identifying best practices for expanding high-dosage tutoring while maintaining instructional quality will be key to ensuring that more students benefit from this intervention (Slavin et al., 2010). Research on how districts can implement similar models across multiple schools while addressing logistical challenges will be essential for long-term educational improvement. These considerations will be crucial for educators, policymakers, and district leaders seeking to maximize the effectiveness and longevity of high-dosage tutoring initiatives in Title I schools.

These findings reinforce existing research that supports the efficacy of intensive, personalized reading interventions in fostering literacy skills among struggling students (Slavin et al., 2011). However, financial sustainability remains a major concern, with administrators highlighting the need for continued federal support.

Interpretation of Findings

Effectiveness of Individualized Instruction

The significant gains in reading proficiency that have been documented are consistent with earlier research on high-dosage tutoring, highlighting the vital role that tailored teaching plays in the development of literacy. Targeted, one-on-one, or small-group interventions have been repeatedly demonstrated to provide children the support they need to improve their reading

fluency, comprehension, and self-confidence (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Rasinski, 2004). According to the study's teachers, students who received individualized instruction exhibited higher levels of engagement, a greater willingness to participate in reading activities, and increased confidence in their ability to handle challenging materials.

The program's effectiveness was influenced by several key factors. Reduced student-to-teacher ratios allowed instructors to provide personalized instruction tailored to individual learning needs, offering more focused and responsive support. This finding supports the work of Fuchs and Fuchs (2006), who emphasize that lower ratios enable more precise, effective interventions, ultimately improving student outcomes. Immediate feedback and scaffolding techniques also played a pivotal role, enabling teachers to identify areas of difficulty in real time and adapt their approach accordingly. The structured, consistent nature of the intervention sessions further contributed to learning gains by reinforcing reading skills and preventing regression.

These findings align with Michael Fullan's Change Theory, which underscores the importance of capacity building, shared vision, and coherence in implementing effective, sustainable educational change. Fullan (2006) emphasizes that successful change efforts are grounded in purposeful collaboration, teacher leadership, and a systemic commitment to improvement—principles clearly reflected in the implementation of this tutoring program. The collaboration between educators, the use of research-based practices, and the shared commitment to student growth collectively supported meaningful progress in literacy outcomes.

In spite of structural barriers, these results reinforce the idea that economically disadvantaged students can achieve significant academic gains when provided with committed, individualized, and research-based instruction (Torgesen et al., 2006). Tailored support equips

students with the foundational literacy skills essential for long-term academic success and helps to close persistent opportunity gaps. If educators and policymakers continue to prioritize high-dosage, personalized instruction, all students—regardless of their socioeconomic background—can have the opportunity to become proficient readers.

The Role of Title I Funding

Title I funding plays a crucial role in bridging educational disparities. The study findings indicate that the High-Dosage Tutorial Reading Program would not be possible without federal funding. However, financial constraints limit its scalability. Administrators expressed concerns about the long-term viability of the program, particularly given the fluctuations in federal and state budget allocations.

Recent policy changes at the national level have introduced significant uncertainties regarding the continuity of federal funding for educational programs. In March 2025, the Trump administration terminated \$600 million in grants aimed at teacher training programs, citing concerns over the promotion of "divisive ideologies" such as critical race theory and social justice activism (Associated Press, 2025). These grants were essential for addressing teacher and principal shortages in rural areas, offering scholarships and funding training for aspiring educators.

The dependence on Title I funds highlights the need for strategic financial planning and advocacy to ensure that effective intervention programs remain sustainable. School districts may need to explore alternative strategies for funding and resource management to maintain and expand high-dosage tutoring programs. Securing diverse funding sources—such as state and federal grants, charitable donations, and private partnerships—is a crucial first step. This approach can enhance program stability and reduce reliance on a single funding source.

By proactively seeking diverse funding avenues, educational institutions can better navigate the challenges posed by shifting federal policies and continue to provide essential services to their students. Furthermore, lobbying based on statistics might be crucial in defending ongoing funding for literacy initiatives. Districts can provide convincing proof of the program's effectiveness by utilizing student accomplishment indicators to show quantifiable improvements in reading comprehension and general academic performance. By using these data-driven narratives to convince decision-makers of the program's importance in reducing achievement disparities, more local, state, and federal money can be advocated for (Torgesen et al., 2006).

Moreover, optimizing the effectiveness of existing finances requires smart resource allocation. Prioritizing funding for the most effective programs, such keeping tutor-to-student ratios low, purchasing top-notch teaching resources, and offering professional development to teachers, is imperative for districts. Districts can guarantee that high-dosage tutoring programs continue to be sustainable and effective, eventually helping the students who need them the most, by carefully managing their human and financial resources.

Ease of Implementation Due to Virtual Tutoring Structure

One of the most noteworthy findings from this study is the success of the virtual tutoring format. Unlike traditional in-person interventions, the virtual model reduced logistical challenges such as space constraints and teacher workload. Participants noted that the program's design allowed for seamless integration into the school day without disrupting core instructional time (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

The effectiveness of virtual tutoring highlights several key considerations for future program implementation. A robust technology infrastructure is essential to support virtual learning, ensuring that students and educators have reliable access to high-speed internet, user-friendly platforms, and digital resources that facilitate seamless instruction. Without a strong

technological foundation, students may face connectivity issues or struggle with navigating online learning tools, which can hinder their progress. Additionally, comprehensive training for both teachers and students is crucial to maximizing engagement in virtual sessions.

Educators must be equipped with strategies to foster interactive and dynamic online learning experiences, while students should receive guidance on how to effectively participate in virtual tutoring. Beyond technology and training, parental involvement plays a vital role in enhancing student participation. Encouraging parents to create a supportive home learning environment, monitor student progress, and reinforce literacy skills outside of tutoring sessions can significantly improve outcomes. By addressing these considerations, districts can strengthen the effectiveness and accessibility of virtual tutoring, ensuring that it remains a viable and impactful option for literacy intervention.

This study highlights the benefits of differentiated instruction for educators, emphasizing the continuous use of small-group models to provide tailored literacy support based on the needs of each individual student (Allington, 2012). Data-driven decision-making should inform instructional strategies, and regular evaluations should be used to track student progress and tailor interventions. Additionally, by giving teachers access to the newest best practices in virtual instruction and reading intervention, professional development is required to guarantee that they are prepared to successfully implement evidence-based strategies.

Administrators must wisely allocate resources, with schools prioritizing the support of effective literacy projects. High-dosage tutoring programs must be expanded through program expansion initiatives, such as finding additional funding sources to increase implementation and serve more children in need (Baker et al., 2016). Furthermore, collaborating with stakeholders—

parents, community organizations, and lawmakers, for example—can provide vital advocacy and support for literacy programs, ensuring that they remain a primary focus of school reform efforts.

The findings highlight the significance of the federal government continuing to support evidence-based literacy programs. To ensure that economically disadvantaged kids continue to receive targeted support, authorities should consider increasing Title I funding to support and expand high-dosage tutoring programs (Amplify, n.d.). Furthermore, boosting the use of technology in tutoring programs can improve virtual instruction by enhancing accessibility and student interaction. Establishing accountability systems is crucial to ensuring that these programs are implemented properly, optimizing their effectiveness, and generating measurable improvements in literacy outcomes. Without steady funding and oversight, the academic gains made by these interventions may be lost, thereby exacerbating achievement gaps among students from low-income families.

Limitations of the Study

It should be mentioned that this study has several limitations even if it provides useful information. Due to the tiny sample size—just seven elementary schools, all of which are Title I schools in the district—the results might not be as widely relevant. Additionally, the short-term data collection period (one academic year) limits the ability to analyze long-term effects on reading achievement. Furthermore, the study relies on self-reported data, and its qualitative findings are predicated on the views of educators and administrators, which may introduce bias or subjective interpretations. Future study should try to overcome these limitations by expanding the sample size, implementing longitudinal studies, and using student success factors other than standardized evaluations in order to have a more complete understanding of program efficacy.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for district leaders, school administrators, teachers, and parents to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of high-dosage tutoring programs like the High-Dosage Tutorial Reading Program. District leaders should prioritize securing diversified funding sources, including state and federal grants, charitable donations, and private partnerships, to ensure the long-term success of these programs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Additionally, they should advocate for policies that support tailored, high-dosage tutoring interventions, ensuring that these programs are integrated into district-wide strategies aimed at closing achievement gaps (Torgesen et al., 2006). For school administrators, fostering collaborative planning among teachers and providing them with the necessary time and resources to implement effective interventions is crucial. Ensuring that high-dosage tutoring programs are seamlessly integrated into the school day without disrupting core instructional time will also be key.

Administrators should also focus on providing ongoing professional development opportunities to help teachers effectively implement and assess the impact of these programs. Teachers, on the other hand, should continue to prioritize personalized instruction, tailoring learning experiences to meet the individual needs of students. By using formative assessments regularly, teachers can track progress and adjust instruction to optimize student outcomes. Creating an engaging learning environment will also be vital in motivating students to take an active role in their learning.

Lastly, parents can play an essential role by supporting their children's learning at home and advocating for their child's educational needs. Regular communication between parents and teachers will ensure that parents are informed of their child's progress and can offer the

necessary support at home. By implementing these recommendations, district leaders, school administrators, teachers, and parents can work together to ensure the continued success of high-dosage tutoring programs and close achievement disparities, particularly for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recommendations for Future Study

Several subjects require further research to build on the findings of this study. Longitudinal studies should examine the consistent impacts of high-dosage tutoring on student reading outcomes over a number of years in order to find long-term benefits and possible areas for improvement. To find out if the benefits hold true for a bigger student body, comparative research may focus on the implementation of similar programs in non-Title I schools. In order to ascertain the level of involvement and potential areas for growth, it is also critical to look into how pupils view and respond to high-dosage tutoring therapies. It's crucial to look at the potential integration of technology into literacy instruction and evaluate the effectiveness of virtual platforms and digital tools in improving reading ability.

Additionally, the school district will get recommendations based on these insights, which will promote sustained and strategic investment in supplemental programs like this one that are financed by Title I. The district can make sure that all children, especially those who are at danger of falling behind, have the chance to achieve academic success by maintaining and improving the use of high-dosage tutoring. While the findings highlight the strengths of the high-dosage tutoring model, additional research is necessary to explore long-term outcomes and scalability.

Future studies should consider examining the longitudinal impact of the program to determine whether students sustain their reading gains over multiple years. Tracking student

progress beyond the duration of the tutoring sessions could provide deeper insights into the long-term effectiveness of individualized literacy interventions. Another area of exploration involves resource allocation strategies. Given the reliance on Title I funding, investigating alternative funding sources—such as state grants or private partnerships—could help ensure program sustainability (GEMSCD Interview, 2025). Understanding how different funding models impact the effectiveness and reach of high-dosage tutoring could inform future policy decisions at the district and state levels.

Parental involvement in virtual tutoring is another critical consideration for future research. Since at-home learning environments can vary significantly, studying how family engagement influences student success in online tutoring sessions could provide valuable insights into improving student outcomes (SmartBrief, 2023). Identifying best practices for involving parents in supporting their child’s reading development may enhance the overall effectiveness of the program.

Conclusions

This study highlights how students from low-income households attending Title I schools have considerably better reading results when they receive high-dosage coaching. The findings highlight the vital need for sustained financing, thoughtful implementation, and ongoing research to enhance and improve these interventions. High-quality literacy instruction may be made available to all students, regardless of their financial situation, provided educational systems adopt data-driven practices, secure consistent financing, and promote collaboration among teachers, administrators, and lawmakers. Recognizing that reading is a basic skill required for academic success, future efforts should focus on expanding and improving high-dosage tutoring methods to maximize their effectiveness. Targeted treatments, such as the High-Dosage Tutorial

Reading Program, continue to be crucial for closing achievement disparities and promoting equitable learning opportunities for all children.

Scholarly Practitioner Reflections on Leadership

This journey to earning my Doctorate in Educational Leadership has been nothing short of transformational. When I first embarked on this path, I was motivated by a deep desire to make a lasting impact in the field of education. I wanted to be a voice for equity, a champion for students, and a leader who understood the value of compassion and excellence in leadership. What I couldn't have anticipated was how much life would test me and, in turn, shape me during this season of academic and personal growth.

From the start, I knew this would not be easy. Doctoral work is challenging by nature, but the trials I would face outside the classroom were far beyond anything I could have imagined. In the midst of juggling coursework, research, and leadership responsibilities, my family; my heart and foundation. I faced a series of life-altering crises that could have easily derailed this dream.

My mother suffered an aneurysm and nearly lost her life. My father, the man who modeled perseverance and strength for me, was diagnosed with cancer and eventually passed away. His loss left an indescribable void. Shortly after, my brother was diagnosed with lymphoma. We faced those uncertain days together, and I'm incredibly thankful that he is now in remission. During this same time, my grandmother, my father's mother and a woman of unwavering love became ill and passed away. Her death was a deep emotional blow, especially knowing how close she and my father were, as she was his only child. On top of that, my nephew lost his mother, and our family stepped in to help raise him, pulling together to ensure he felt surrounded by love and support despite the heartache.

One of the most unexpected and painful losses was that of my aunt, who passed away suddenly. She was not only a beloved member of our family but also a fellow educator, someone who had walked the road I was on and encouraged me every step of the way. Her wisdom, passion for teaching, and faith in my potential were sources of strength for me throughout my educational journey. Losing her left a silence that echoed through many long nights of writing and reflection.

So many of the people who stood beside me at the start of this journey are no longer here to see its end. Their physical absence weighs heavily on my heart, but their love, encouragement, and belief in me are etched into every page of my dissertation. In the quiet moments of writing, I often felt their presence. They were, and still are, a part of this accomplishment.

Despite the tears, the sleepless nights, and the overwhelming grief, I never gave up even when I wanted to. There were moments when the weight of it all felt like too much to carry. But I kept going. I kept writing. I kept leading. I kept showing up. And every time I felt like I couldn't take another step, my family, my faith, and my purpose reminded me that this was bigger than me.

I am profoundly grateful to East Carolina University, my professors, and my cohort of colleagues who rallied around me during the darkest days. They offered understanding, encouragement, and support that went beyond academics. They became an extended family pushing me, believing in me, and helping me stay the course. Their compassion made this journey not only bearable but meaningful.

Now, as I reach the end of this chapter, I do so with a heart full of gratitude and a spirit fortified by everything I've endured. I am not the same person who began this journey. I am

stronger. I am wiser. And I am more committed than ever to being the kind of leader who leads with empathy, courage, and resilience.

This doctorate is more than a degree. It is a symbol of perseverance, of honoring those I've lost, and of the strength of a family that refuses to let each other fall. I stand at the finish line not alone, but with the love and memory of those who carried me through. This has been the hardest and most rewarding journey of my life, and I am forever changed because of it.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB

To: Arrica DuBose

CC: Marjorie Ringler

Date: 2/14/2025

UMCIRB 25-000212

Re: MAXIMIZING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF TITLE I
FUNDING ON READING ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH A HIGH DOSAGE READING
TUTORIAL PROGRAM IN A NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL DISTRICT

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) occurred on 2/14/2025. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 5, 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

As the Principal Investigator you are explicitly responsible for the conduct of all aspects of this study and must adhere to all reporting requirements for the study. Your responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Ensuring changes to the approved research (including the UMCIRB approved consent document) are initiated only after UMCIRB review and approval except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All changes (e.g., a change in procedure, number of participants, personnel, study locations, new recruitment materials, study instruments, etc.) must be prospectively reviewed and approved by the UMCIRB before they are implemented;
2. Where informed consent has not been waived by the UMCIRB, ensuring that only valid versions of the UMCIRB approved, date-stamped informed consent document(s) are used for obtaining informed consent (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the ePIRATE study workspace);
3. Promptly reporting to the UMCIRB all unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others;

4. Submission of a final report application to the UMICRB prior to the expected end date provided in the IRB application in order to document human research activity has ended and to provide a timepoint in which to base document retention; and
5. Submission of an amendment to extend the expected end date if the study is not expected to be completed by that date. The amendment should be submitted 30 days prior to the UMICRB approved expected end date or as soon as the Investigator is aware that the study will not be completed by that date.

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Consent Form	Consent Forms
Dissertation Proposal	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Dissertation Proposal	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Educator Interview Protocol	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Educator Interview Protocol	Surveys and Questionnaires
Educator Survey Protocol	Surveys and Questionnaires
Educator Survey Protocol	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Letter of Support	Dataset Use Approval/Permission
Research Protocol	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Updated Email	Recruitment Documents/Scripts

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: MAXIMIZING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF TITLE I FUNDING ON READING ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH A HIGH DOSAGE READING TUTORIAL PROGRAM IN A NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL

Principal Investigator: Arrica Moseley DuBose
Institution, Department or Division School of Education; Educational Leadership
Address: East 5th Street Greenville, NC 27858-4353
Telephone 252-328-4260
Study Coordinator
Telephone 919-827-2339 (my number)

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

Your participation in this research is vital as it seeks to evaluate how Title I funding impacts reading achievement through a high-dosage tutorial program and how this approach can strengthen student literacy outcomes. The study aims to collect data that will contribute to a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of such interventions and inform future educational practices and policies. By taking part in this research, you will provide valuable insights into the impact of targeted reading support on student performance, help assess the effectiveness of Title I funding allocations in improving literacy outcomes, contribute to identifying best practices for high-dosage reading interventions, and support the development of data-driven strategies that can enhance future educational programs.

You are being invited to participate because the study seeks individuals with relevant experience, background, or knowledge in this area. Your participation is essential, as your responses will provide critical perspectives on the research questions being explored. Participation is voluntary, and you may choose whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, your contribution will help advance knowledge in this field, potentially leading to improved educational practices that benefit students in the future.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

There are certain reasons why you might not be eligible to participate in this research. You should not take part in this study if you:

- Are under the age of 18 (if this study is intended for adults).

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research? You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?

The research will be conducted virtually or in person within the GEM (GEM) City Schools. If in person it will be conducted in my office at the Sheryl Mar building within GEM (GEM) City Schools.

You will be asked to participate in an interview that will last 25-30 minutes one time during the study. Additionally, you will complete a survey that will take 20 minutes. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately 60 minutes.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to do the following:

Complete a survey: You will be asked to fill out a brief survey, which will help collect information about your experiences and opinions. This survey will be conducted virtually.

1. **Participate in a virtual interview:** You will be asked to log in to a virtual interview that will last approximately 25-30 minutes. During this interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences related to the study. The interview will be audio and/or video recorded for research purposes.
2. **Audio/Video Recording:** The interview will be audio and/or video recorded. These recordings will be used solely for research purposes and will be kept confidential. Only members of the research team will have access to the recordings. These recordings will be securely stored and destroyed after a certain period once they are no longer needed for the study. You have the opportunity to opt in or out of the section.

☐ **Opt-in** ☐ **Opt-out**

3. **Duration and Participation:** The total amount of time required for your participation will be around 60 minutes.
4. I will collect de-identified student reading achievement data that was collected from the **23-24 school year.**

These procedures will help gather valuable insights for the study and are only conducted for research purposes. You will be given the opportunity to ask any questions throughout the process.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?

We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you, but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer to be in this study. Participation is entirely voluntary, and there are no monetary compensation or reimbursements for parking, travel, childcare, or time away from work associated with this study. However, your time and effort are appreciated, and we encourage you to contact the research team if you have any questions or concerns about your involvement.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- The GEM School District research team and staff..
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at East Carolina University, which is responsible for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to review research records that identify you.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?

The information collected about you during this research study will be kept secure to protect your privacy. Both physical and electronic data will be stored in secure systems and facilities. Identifiable information will be handled with the utmost care and kept confidential.

- **Physical data:** Any physical documents, including consent forms and surveys, will be stored in a locked, secure location.
- **Electronic data:** Electronic records will be stored in password-protected databases and will only be accessible to authorized research personnel.

If any audio or video recordings are made, they will be stored securely in a manner that protects your confidentiality. These recordings will only be used for the purposes of this study, and once the study is completed, they will be destroyed. If the recordings are to be used for other purposes, such as teaching or presentations we will make sure identity remains protected.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop, and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be available to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. If you have questions about this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Arrica DuBose, at 919-827-2339 during the day or 919-827-2339 on nights and weekends.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you may contact the ECU

University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at 252-744-2914 (during the day). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may contact the Director for Human Research Protections at 252-744-2914.

Is there anything else I should know?

Your information or biospecimens collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future studies

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

Participant's Name (PRINT)

Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C: EDUCATOR SURVEY PROTOCOL

Demographic Information (Optional)

1. Grade Level(s) Taught:
 - ☐ 2nd Grade
 - ☐ 3rd Grade
 - ☐ Other: _____
2. Role:
 - ☐ Classroom Teacher
 - ☐ Reading Specialist
 - ☐ Instructional Coach
 - ☐ Other: _____

Section 1: Program Implementation

1. How familiar are you with the high-dosage reading tutorial program? (Select one)
 - ☐ Very familiar
 - ☐ Somewhat familiar
 - ☐ Not familiar
2. How effectively was the high-dosage reading tutorial program implemented at your school? (Select one)
 - ☐ Very effectively
 - ☐ Somewhat effectively
 - ☐ Not effectively
 - ☐ Not sure
3. To what extent did you receive adequate training and support to implement the program effectively? (Select one)
 - ☐ Very adequate
 - ☐ Somewhat adequate
 - ☐ Inadequate
 - ☐ No training/support received
 - ☐
4. How easy was it to integrate the high-dosage reading tutorial program into your existing teaching schedule? (Select one)
 - ☐ Very easy
 - ☐ Somewhat easy
 - ☐ Difficult
 - ☐ Very difficult

Section 2: Program Effectiveness

5. How would you rate the impact of the high-dosage reading tutorial program on student reading proficiency? (Select one)
 - ☐ Very positive impact
 - ☐ Somewhat positive impact
 - ☐ No impact
 - ☐ Negative impact
6. To what extent have students shown improvement in reading fluency as a result of the high-dosage tutorial program? (Select one)
 - ☐ Significant improvement
 - ☐ Moderate improvement
 - ☐ Little or no improvement
 - ☐ Decline in fluency
7. How effective do you think the high-dosage reading tutorial program is at addressing the diverse learning needs of students in your classroom? (Select one)
 - ☐ Very effective
 - ☐ Somewhat effective
 - ☐ Not effective
 - ☐ Not sure
8. How well do the instructional materials and resources support the high-dosage reading tutorial program? (Select one)
 - ☐ Very well
 - ☐ Somewhat well
 - ☐ Not well
 - ☐ Not sure

Section 3: Student Engagement and Motivation

9. How engaged are students in the high-dosage reading tutorial sessions? (Select one)
 - ☐ Highly engaged
 - ☐ Moderately engaged
 - ☐ Not very engaged
 - ☐ Not engaged at all
10. To what extent do you think the high-dosage reading tutorial program has increased students' interest in reading? (Select one)
 - ☐ Strongly increased
 - ☐ Somewhat increased
 - ☐ No change
 - ☐ Decreased interest

11. How would you describe students' motivation to participate in the high-dosage reading tutorial program? (Select one)
- ☐ Highly motivated
 - ☐ Moderately motivated
 - ☐ Unmotivated
 - ☐ Not sure

Section 4: Program Challenges

12. What challenges have you encountered while implementing the high-dosage reading tutorial program? (Select all that apply)
- ☐ Lack of time to meet with students
 - ☐ Inadequate training or resources
 - ☐ Difficulty in managing student participation
 - ☐ Insufficient support from administration
 - ☐ Challenges related to student behavior or engagement
 - ☐ Other (please specify): ____
13. How well do you feel the program has addressed the specific needs of struggling readers? (Select one)
- ☐ Very well
 - ☐ Somewhat well
 - ☐ Not well
 - ☐ Not sure
14. What improvements, if any, would you suggest for the high-dosage reading tutorial program? (Open-ended response)

Section 5: Overall Program Assessment

15. Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the high-dosage reading tutorial program in improving student reading outcomes? (Select one)
- ☐ Very effective
 - ☐ Somewhat effective
 - ☐ Not effective
 - ☐ Not sure
16. Would you recommend continuing the high-dosage reading tutorial program in the future? (Select one)
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not sure

Section 6: Open-Ended Questions

17. What aspects of the high-dosage reading tutorial program do you think work particularly well for students? (Open-ended response)
18. Do you have any additional feedback or suggestions about the high-dosage reading tutorial program that could help improve its implementation or effectiveness? (Open-ended response)

APPENDIX D: EDUCATOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Your insights are valuable to this study, which aims to understand the impact of Title I funding on reading achievement through high-dosage tutoring programs. The questions I'll ask today are designed to gather your thoughts and experiences with the program, and how you believe it has affected students, particularly in terms of reading proficiency. There are no right or wrong answers; we're just interested in your honest feedback. The interview will take approximately [insert time] and will be recorded for transcription purposes.

Background

1. Can you please describe your role within the school and your experience with Title I funding?
2. How long have you been involved with Title I-funded programs, particularly in relation to reading interventions?
3. Can you describe the high-dosage tutoring program you've been involved in or observed? What are its main features?

Perceptions of the High-Dosage Tutoring Program

4. In your view, what has been the most significant impact of the high-dosage tutoring program on student reading achievement?
5. How do you think Title I funding has contributed to the success or challenges of the tutoring program?
6. Have you noticed any changes in student engagement, motivation, or performance since the introduction of the tutoring program?
7. What challenges, if any, have you encountered while implementing or participating in the tutoring program?

Program Implementation

8. How would you describe the implementation of the high-dosage tutoring program at your school? Were there any barriers to implementation?
9. To what extent do you think teachers and staff have been adequately trained to implement the tutoring program effectively?
10. How are students selected to participate in the tutoring program? Do you feel this process ensures that the students most in need are prioritized?

Student Outcomes and Impact:

11. Based on your experience, how has the tutoring program affected the reading proficiency of students, especially those from low-income backgrounds?
12. Are there specific student groups (e.g., English learners, students with disabilities) that have shown notable progress or faced challenges in the tutoring program?
13. What measurable outcomes, if any, have you seen in student achievement as a result of the tutoring program (e.g., test scores, classroom performance)?

Program Sustainability

14. Do you believe that the high-dosage tutoring program is sustainable with current Title I funding? Why or why not?
15. If you could suggest improvements to the tutoring program or its implementation, what would they be?
16. What recommendations would you have for other schools or districts that are considering implementing a similar high-dosage tutoring program funded by Title I?
17. Is there anything else you think is important to share about the impact of Title I funding on reading achievement?