Student Literature Access in an Online School:

A Program Evaluation

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Laura E. Hibbard

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by

LAURA E. HIBBARD

has been approved for

the Department of Educational Studies

and The Patton College of Education by

Teresa J. Franklin

Professor of Educational Studies

Renée A. Middleton

Dean, The Patton College of Education
Abstract

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Student Literature Access in an Online School: A Program Evaluation

Director of Dissertation: Teresa J. Franklin

School libraries have historically served an important role in students’ access to quality literature. Students who attend schools virtually, or through online schools, are typically not afforded the luxury of borrowing books from classroom libraries or through school libraries. Many students who attend online schools are economically-disadvantaged and access their education through school-provided computers and internet access. Impoverished students often have a lack of literature in their homes and rely on school libraries to fulfill the need.

This study, a program evaluation, followed an online school’s inaugural year in instituting a school library system, replete with both physical books and ebooks. A mixed methods approach was taken, utilizing data from teacher and administrator focus groups, student and parent interviews, student and parent surveys, library use records, and students’ DIBELS, or oral reading fluency scores.

It was found that stakeholders were generally pleased with the libraries and asked for more books and additional genres, such as graphic novels and historical fiction. Stakeholders cited the main goal of the library being to “get books into the hands of the students.” The library in the school study lacked a true leader though, and communication suffered. Teachers requested that Library be considered a special, in ways similar to how physical education and computer classes were offered, primarily to
help lure reluctant readers to use the resources. It was found that students who accessed the libraries most were those who were already motivated readers. Stakeholders requested that the school consider purchasing mobile digital reading devices so that reading ebooks would be easier for the students than reading on their desktop computers.

Conclusions were that it is an essential role for online schools to provide students access to literature. To empower students to fully access library resources, a strong librarian is needed to serve as an instructional partner, an information specialist, a teacher, and a program administrator, following the recommendation of the American Association of School Librarians. The final conclusion was that ebooks can be a valuable literature resource for online schools, but that students report fatigue and difficulty reading from desktop computers, thus hampering reading motivation.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Elementary students across America visit school libraries and have an opportunity to select books solely for reading enjoyment. While many middle-income children undoubtedly enjoy bringing home a variety of books, it is perhaps even more important for low-income students. Impoverished children are often raised in homes that have a limited amount of reading material, resulting in a lack of literary experiences rich in language and vocabulary, and ultimately disadvantaging them educationally (Crowe, Connor, & Petscher, 2009; Hagans, 2008; Hixson & Mcglinchey, 2004; Popp, 2004). In an effort to keep up with No Child Left Behind’s (NCLB) stringent testing requirements, reading curriculums have shifted to a skill-based model and have neglected the importance of students reading for pleasure causing generations of students who see little value in reading (Rasinski, 2009). School libraries have typically been able to fill the void and provide low-income children with regular, high-quality reading material (Hunter, 2004). But what happens when students attend school online? How can literature best be distributed to students when they are geographically diverse?

During the 2009-2010 school year, over 1,800,000 students participated in distance education classes, with an additional 200,000 students attending online schools full-time (International Association for K-12 Online Learning [iNACOL], 2013). Many of these students attended classes on a school-provided computer, met up with friends and teachers in a virtual classroom, and completed their assignments in a flexible, self-paced manner from the convenience of their homes. According to Roblyer (2008), author of “Virtual Schools: Redefining a Place Called School,” attending school online is
among the trends in education that has seen the most growth. Although it may be thought of by many as a place for privileged students, online education has actually attracted a diverse clientele. Many full-time online schools have a large percentage of economically-disadvantaged students (Ohio Department of Education, 2012a; Ohio Department of Education, 2012b; Ohio Department of Education, 2012c; Ohio Department of Education, 2012d; Ohio Department of Education, 2012e; Ohio Department of Education, 2012f; Ohio Department of Education, 2012g).

It was the intent of this study to evaluate a burgeoning school library program in an online elementary school. While school libraries typically serve a variety of roles, one of their primary purposes is to place quality literature into the hands of their students. This specific niche was the focus of this program evaluation: What is the best way to get literature into online students’ homes so that their reading fluency and enjoyment of reading increases?

The goal of this program evaluation was to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate a lending library in an online elementary school in an effort to improve the fluency levels of students and to increase their levels of reading enjoyment. Seventy-five point one percent of the students who attended this school were classified as economically-disadvantaged in the 2011-2012 school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2012c). Low-income students often live in environments with a limited amount of reading materials. It was hoped that this study would elicit ways for online students, either economically-disadvantaged or not, to easily access high-quality literature. Very little research has been published regarding the distribution of books to
students who access their education online, and completely absent from the literature is models on how to distribute literature to online elementary-aged students.

This chapter will begin by providing a context for the reader. The school of study will be described regarding its history, its background, and its current state of operations. Because the researcher works as a teacher in this online school, a personal statement will be presented. The problem statement will then be clearly defined. The purpose statement and research questions will allow readers to understand and appreciate the motivation behind this study and will alert readers to the key questions driving the research. The mixed methods research design will briefly be laid out, with a thorough description presented in Chapter 3. Underlying assumptions will be disclosed so that readers may find basis for future conclusions. The rational and significance section will provide justification for the study and will address the benefits that may originate from the research. Readers will understand the limitations and delimitations impacting this study. Definitions of key terms will conclude this chapter.

**Background and Context**

Like all public schools, online public schools must accept all students and may not refuse enrollment due to a student’s ability, past educational experiences, or family circumstances and online public schools must operate as tuition-free schools (Revenaugh, 2005-2006). According to Rose and Blomeyer (2007), in their report titled “Access and Equity in Online Classes and Virtual Schools,” online schools must provide computers and internet access to students so as to not discriminate against students who are not able
to procure these requirements on their own means. This statement is especially important when it comes to providing online education to economically-disadvantaged students.

This program evaluation took place in an online, public charter school located in the Midwest and focused on the elementary division of the school, specifically grade five. This school is the largest online public school in its state and enrolled more than 12,300 students in the 2011-2012 school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2012c). The school opened its doors in 2000 with 2,200 students (Richards, 2010) and has since graduated more students than any other online school (Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow, 2010). Accreditations are held from AdvancEd and the North Central Association (NCA) (Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow, 2012).

On its most recent annual school report card, the school in this study was awarded the designation of Continuous Improvement (Ohio Department of Education, 2012c). A designation is awarded based on the number of state indicators met, the performance index, whether the school achieved adequate yearly progress, and the school’s value-added measure. The following six hierarchical designations are possible: Excellent with Distinction, Excellent, Effective, Continuous Improvement, Academic Watch, and Academic Emergency.

During the 2011-2012 school year, slightly over a tenth of the students at this school reported being Black (14.9%), and 75.1% reported being White (Ohio Department of Education, 2012c). The majority of the remaining students identified with being Multi-Racial (4.9%) or Hispanic (4.4%), and 19.9% of the students had disabilities. Of particular interest to this study, 75.1% of this school’s students were classified as
economically-disadvantaged in 2011-2012. This statistic qualifies this school as officially being a high poverty school. The status of a high poverty school is designated to institutions whose percentage of economically-disadvantaged students is among the top quartile (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).

Of importance to this study, 50.0% of fifth graders attending this school passed the state assessment in reading in 2012 (Ohio Department of Education, 2012c). Statewide, 76.8% of fifth graders passed reading this same year. This 26.8% discrepancy was part of the concern that drove this study. The state report card compares not only the target school to the performance of all students statewide, but also provides comparisons for similar school districts. When comparing the school in the study to similar schools (seven statewide online schools), the school in focus continues to fall short (Ohio Department of Education, 2012c). Sixty point one percent of students attending comparable schools passed the 2012 state reading test. While not as large a discrepancy as when compared to students statewide, a 10.1% gap persists. It is hypothesized that students who attend the school in this study obtain poor test results in reading partially due to the fact that little time is spent on reading outside of classroom lessons.

Because the school in the study is a Title I school, federal financial resources are available to be spent in an effort to help all children meet state educational standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). One way in which the federal dollars are spent consists of a Title Resource area. This school’s resource area houses textbooks, teacher resource books, manipulatives and consumables, videos, and library books. Of specific concern to this program is the collection of library books. At the beginning of the 2012-
2013 school year, the school’s library had approximately 3,500 volumes of physical books comprising 400 different titles. Ebooks were also available to the students via an online propriety program, Follett Shelf. Through Follett Shelf, the students had access to 1,935 different titles.

In 2010-2011, the lending library program originated in one classroom with a small group of struggling readers. The following school year, this teacher invited her class of 40 students to borrow books. While the library used to consist merely of a spreadsheet of available titles, the summer of 2012 brought changes to the way students view and reserve books. Modeling a Netflix approach, with this upgrade, students were able to click on colored book covers to view information on the book including the author, genre, number of pages, subject, and a summary of the story. If the story appealed to the students, they simply clicked a button labeled Request Book, and the books were on their way to the students’ homes.

The Title Office uses the United Parcel Service of America (UPS) to send books to students. Inside each envelope, students find their book along with a postage-paid United States Postal Service (USPS) return envelope so that exchanging books is both easy and free for the families. A database helps an employee at this school to keep track of books being sent and returned, although if books are not returned, students suffer no penalties. Students typically are permitted to have two books out at a time.

The school also uses Follett Shelf, an online library of ebooks available to students on demand (Follett Corporation, 2009). To read an ebook, students follow a link from their homepages in each class. After providing their login credentials, students are
able to browse the collection of ebooks and may sort books by genre, subject, and reading level. Pictures of the covers of the books are displayed after the search query. Students can click the picture of the book to find detailed information about the book, including items such as the author, publishing date, number of pages, and a summary. If students decide they are interested in reading the book, students can either read it on a temporary basis (such as one may do in a public library) and return it to the shelf when they are finished, or students may check out the book. Students who check out the book will have uninterrupted access to the book for seven days. If students fail to check out a book, it is a possibility that the next time they go to read the book, another student may be reading it or may have checked it out. Follett Shelf allows users to download books to personal digital devices. Downloaded books are only available to users for seven days, although books may be checked out or downloaded again.

The Researcher

As the author of this dissertation, I am also a fifth grade teacher at this school. Officially, I am a Title I teacher who supports students struggling in reading. I collaborate daily with a general education teacher and intervention specialist in support of an inclusion-based classroom. I have held this position for seven school years.

The bulk of my school day is spent instructing students in a synchronous virtual classroom. This school uses the Elluminate Live!® platform to interact with students in real-time. Elluminate offers audio, visual, and text-based conversation tools as well as a whiteboard and application sharing privileges. Elluminate also allows synchronous sessions to be recorded.
Problem Statement

According to the manager of the Title Office, the lending library was vastly underused at this school prior to the 2012-2013 school year. Primarily, teachers only took advantage of the library when sending class sets of books to their students. Materials were sparse and were often not returned. During the 2012-2013 school year, the interactive lending library and Follett Shelf were in their infancy. The interactive library site was created during the summer of 2012 and Follett Shelf was a brand new resource. At the start of the 2012-2013 school year, many teachers had very little knowledge on how the libraries worked and had no model of how to integrate it into their curriculum. While the libraries were officially available, many students were also unaware of the resources and were unsure of the library processes. It took either an inquisitive teacher to seek out additional information regarding these programs, or an adventurous student who stumbled upon the links to make the programs accessible.

Teachers tended to rely solely on Reading Street to meet the literary needs of their students, rather than reading trade books. Reading Street, a Pearson publication, is a leveled set of short stories and activities created with the aim of teaching the Common Core standards (Pearson Education, 2013). Recent research has demonstrated that reading instruction steeped in skill-based curriculums does not foster a love of reading in the students (Rasinski, 2009) and that what is needed is a blended approach. Stauffer (1961) stated that teachers should embrace a reading curriculum that combines skill-based, teacher-directed activities with individual reading options. When students are able to select their own reading material, their motivation to read is increased (Guthrie,

**Statement of Purpose**

Because of the prevalent underuse of the lending library coupled with students’ enjoyment of receiving books during a pilot study (described in Chapter 3), a formative evaluation phase was first conducted to assess the stakeholders’ needs in developing, organizing, and promoting a lending library in an online school. A program evaluation model was selected so that students, parents, teachers, and administrators were included in determining the sphere of options to allow this school’s libraries to grow. Rather than only evaluating our current program, this program evaluation design allowed stakeholders’ views, interests, and ideas to easily be incorporated throughout the year-long, mixed methods study. A summative evaluation phase was also conducted to formally evaluate the first year of the school’s lending library programs.

**Research Questions**

The information gleaned from stakeholders will allow this school and others like it to make data-based decisions to create the end service: a fully functioning online school library. It was the fundamental goal of the formative segment of this program evaluation to determine how best to develop, administer, and promote a lending library in an online school in an effort to improve both students’ fluency and to increase their levels of reading enjoyment.

The following questions guided this program evaluation:
Developmental/Formative questions:

1. To what extent are students in this online elementary school reading for pleasure? What is the baseline and does it relate to socioeconomic class?
2. How well do teachers understand this school’s current lending library system?
3. What are the parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ goals concerning the lending library program?

Summative questions:

4. Have teachers integrated the lending library into their classrooms? How so?
5. To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills?
6. What is the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes?

Conceptual Framework

Attempting to decrease the achievement gap among students from different economic classes was at the heart of this study. For this reason, an emancipatory conceptual framework has been adhered to under a transformative research design. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) described an emancipatory theory as “taking a theoretical stance in favor of underrepresented or marginalized groups” (p. 49). This conceptual framework wove its way into the research questions, the research purpose, the methods, and through validity techniques. The models chosen for formative evaluation stages (client-centered and developmental evaluation) required fervent participation from stakeholders. Guiding questions for focus groups kept equality issues in the forefront of
group discussions, as the program was evaluated with the intent of lessening the achievement gap among social classes.

**Research Approach**

Developmental, formative, and summative program evaluation techniques have been employed as this school’s lending library was created, improved, and evaluated. A mixed method approach was taken, as both qualitative and quantitative approaches were necessary to fully understand the development and impact of the lending library program. An emergent design was selected so that the researcher was free to pursue paths and intricacies of the project as they emerged (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Regarding program evaluation, Chen (2005), evaluation theorist and methodologist, adopted a contingency view. He suggested that there is not one right way to conduct program evaluation and that the design is *contingent* upon the unique aspects of the specific program. Chen argued multiple evaluation approaches must be applied to achieve a level of deep understanding.

Aligned with Chen’s contingency theory, this study used a variety of formative and summative program evaluation techniques. Overarching models included aspects from developmental evaluation, client-centered program evaluation, and theory-driven evaluation. Theory-driven evaluations provide not only an overall summary of the program, but also describe the extent to which different components of the program influenced the results. Careful descriptions are provided, yet causality will not be claimed due to the nature of the research design. Each of the evaluation designs and the rationale for their use are described in depth in Chapter 3.
At the start of the 2012-2013 school year (the year of this study), this school’s lending library was a fragmented program at best. It was unfeasible to evaluate it in a summative manner until it became more established. The previous formative program evaluation models were selected because of their heavy reliance on stakeholders’ input, thus impacting the direction of the program in accordance to stakeholders’ views. An element of client-centered program evaluation was selected so that marginalized groups of students may have a voice. Remembering that a major focus of this formative evaluation was to bring literature into homes without books, it was hoped that client-centered evaluation would hold this focus in the forefront.

Mixed methodology is a suitable approach for bringing issues of power to light. In her article, “Transformative Paradigm: Mixed Methods and Social Justice,” Mertens (2007) wrote, “the transformative paradigm holds that reality is socially constructed, but it does so with a conscious awareness that certain individuals occupy a position of greater power and that individuals with other characteristics may be associated with a higher likelihood of exclusion from decisions about the definition of the research focus, questions, and other methodological aspects of the inquiry” (p. 216). The conceptual framework of this study holds firm to the fact that impoverished children often perform behind their peers in school. While many teachers may believe it is laziness or lack of good parenting skills that hold these children back, this study relied on the framework that other forces contribute to the academic deficit of low-income children, one of which is a lack of available literature in their homes. Mertens (2007) contended that a mixed methods approach is essential when applying a transformational research model. She
said, “The goal is to have research that contributes to sustainable change in a community, hence the need to have a cyclical and mixed methods approach” (Mertens, 2007, p. 218).

A sequential, mixed methods research design has been employed. Nastasi, Hitchcock, and Brown (2010) discussed an iterative model in which one phase influences the next strand of research. Qualitative and quantitative phases have been conducted with each strand informing future data collection techniques. An initial discussion with administrative stakeholders (qualitative) drove the student and parent survey questions (quantitative). Quantitative data gleaned from the surveys steered future focus group discussions with teachers and administrators and impacted program policies. Data from library usage rates influenced the teacher focus group discussions and informed policy decisions. A mixed methods approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of creating the library program as well as its effects on students, if any. Nastasi et al. (2010) stated that “participation of practitioners and community members as partners in the mixed methods research process is intended to enhance the application to real-world problems, the translation of research to practice, and the achievement of transformative goals” (p. 322).

**Stakeholders**

Stakeholders at the school were integral to the evaluation design. Teachers, students, parents, administrators, and support staff were involved in the study. In the year of the study, this school had seven general education teachers, seven Title I teachers, and five intervention specialists in its fifth grade. There were 258 fifth grade students in August 2012. Due to a high transiency rate, only approximately 178 of those students
completed the 2012-2013 school year at this school, often due to the decision to transfer back to their neighborhood schools. The elementary school is led by a principal, and is also supported by a director of intervention. Two additional teachers are classified as TOSAs, or Teachers on Special Assignment, and work to connect data-based results to the curriculum. Additionally, the elementary school is supported by a reading specialist and school librarian. The study also worked with the employee in the Title Office, responsible for the manual shipping of books.

Methods

Participants played an essential role in the evaluation of this school’s lending library, and consequently focus groups were the primary source of data. At the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, separate focus groups were held with administrative stakeholders and teachers with the goals of reviewing current program policies, identifying essential components to improve the library, creating year-long goals, reviewing and revising proposed data collection methods, and approving and modifying a student survey.

In the fall, participating students were surveyed regarding their value of reading and self-efficacy of reading. Open-ended questions were directed to parents and to students to determine their views on the lending library. Stakeholders at this school (administrators, teachers, and support staff) were involved in interpreting and analyzing the student results and directing the future of the program. Students’ oral reading fluency scores were gathered early in the year as well, using DIBELS. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) are a criterion-referenced, research-
based set of reading passages used to determine if a student is at risk for reading below grade level (University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning, 2011).

Mid-year, library usage rates were gathered for both the physical book library and Follett Shelf and focus groups with teachers and administrators reconvened with the goals being to identify problems and to select remedial actions. In spring of the 2012-2013 school year, students and parents were interviewed, students’ DIBELS scores were collected, a second (identical) survey was administered to students and parents, and teacher and administrative focus groups met to discuss the program’s results.

**Analysis**

The nature of this mixed methods study called for a variety of analysis techniques. Responses to open-ended survey questions, focus group transcripts, and interview transcripts were coded using both a priori and inductive coding. A priori codes are those that are developed before the data collection phase, while inductive codes are those that emerge during the coding process (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Since focus groups gathered the brunt of the data, qualitative and quantitative analyses occurred. Besides coding the transcripts, focus groups were analyzed according to the level of consensus or dissent among members. When appropriate, between-group quantitative comparisons will be reported in Chapter 4 so that readers can appreciate the differences elicited between the focus group with administrative stakeholders and the teacher focus group. Descriptive statistics have been created on library records, DIBELS scores, and student survey responses. The individual analyses have been compiled into a final executive
report and disseminated to teachers and administrators involved in the study. Detailed descriptions of these analyses will be presented in future chapters.

Validity

A variety of qualitative validity techniques have been employed during this study. Triangulation was integrated into the study as multiple stakeholders (students, teachers, administrators, and support staff) were members of focus groups, were interview participants, or completed surveys. Method triangulation also occurred because reports from participants were compared against reports from library usage data. Negative case analyses have been conducted when appropriate and examined to determine the issue at hand. Reflexive journaling has been utilized so that unintended biases were attempted to be exposed and alleviated. Reflexivity is the notion that researchers can become aware of biases by critically examining their predispositions, and work to eliminate or control their predispositions (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Second level member checking transpired after each stakeholder and focus group session. Prolonged engagement and thick description occurred, as the study spanned nine months. Each of these validity steps will be explained in further detail in Chapter 3.

Because this is a mixed methods program evaluation, legitimation was also considered. Legitimation has been coined as a term referring to validity in mixed methods studies and encompasses both quantitative and qualitative techniques (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 277). Legitimation includes the rationale behind integrating the qualitative and quantitative data, the etic and emic balance, the sequencing of qualitative and quantitative data, and the perspective that using mixed methods minimizes
weaknesses in either qualitative or quantitative data alone. In this study, the researcher assumed an emic perspective during the formative phase, thus working closely with the other participants, and took an etic viewpoint during the summative phase, or when the data is analyzed from an outsider’s lens. Each of these legitimation techniques will be described in Chapter 3.

**Assumptions**

A number of assumptions impacted this study. Based on the researcher’s seven years of teaching at this online school, it was assumed that not all students are currently reading for pleasure, some of whom due to a lack of access to books. While public libraries are located in virtually every town in this state, it was assumed (from pilot studies and through conversations with students) that many economically-disadvantaged students enrolled in online schools are not visiting their local libraries. When prompted to do so, students have responded that fees are due at the libraries and that their parents are unable to pay those fees. It was also assumed that the amount of literature in the students’ homes is not substantial enough to encourage a love of reading. By supplying books to the students, it may be easier to ascertain if the students were not previously engaged in reading because of a lack of books or if indeed a motivational problem persists.

At the beginning of the 2012 school year, this school’s current lending library model was not as strong as it could be. This assumption was based on the fact that the interactive website was recently developed and Follett Shelf was a new resource. Teachers had only a brief introduction to the interactive website at their back-to-school
meeting in the fall, but were likely overwhelmed with the start of a school year. With organization and promotion, it is assumed that more students will be able to access quality literature. By having a simple to use library system, students should be able to read regularly.

**Rationale and Significance**

Internally, teachers from other grade levels at this school will be interested in this research. Teachers who work with students in reading instruction beyond decoding will find the results from this study pertinent. It has been argued that a deep phonetic based instruction is not successful after grade one (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003). While phonetic instruction in the *early* grades has been shown to be important to eventual reading fluency, more engaging material should enter the curriculum by grade two (Kamps et al., 2004). Grades closest to the grade included in this study will find the results most relevant.

Regarding the scope outside of this school, thick description has been utilized so that readers can determine the extent to which conclusions may be transferred. By describing the context in detail, it is hoped that other online elementary schools may be able to adapt the program recommendations to suit their needs. While qualitative research, in general, is not geared towards generalizing findings, this program evaluation will include a summative aspect so that other online elementary schools looking for a library model may find it useful.
Limitations

There were a number of factors that limited the strength of this study. Among the most important was a heavy reliance on students self-reporting their reading habits. If students inflated their initial perceptions on reading enjoyment during the fall survey, the spring survey may not have shown an accurate depiction of growth. Distributing surveys to students in an online school was also a limitation. Students and parents received an email explaining the study with a consent form as an attachment. Students and parents who were interested in being participants were required to print, sign, and scan the consent form back to the researcher. The sample size may have been limited due to this hurdle. Students at this school are provided with printers and scanners, and low-income students also receive ink. The families involved had the tools to complete this extra step, yet may not have wanted to take the time to do so.

Another limitation derived from the demographics of the sample. In today’s economy, and in this school’s population, many families are exiting the middle class and joining the ranks of the impoverished. With 75% of the students identifying with being economically-disadvantaged, it is difficult to clearly see the impact of the program on underprivileged youth compared to students from families earning middle class wages. There simply were not a lot of non-economically-disadvantaged students willing to participate in the study.

Stufflebeam (2001) noted a few limitations in client-centered program evaluations. Among these limitations is a threat to external credibility because stakeholders direct much of the study. A lack of timeliness may also impact client-
centered evaluations. The inclusion of various stakeholders’ voices can often cause contention and confusion as multiple interpretations are solicited (Stufflebeam, 2001).

Researcher bias may impact this study. Because the researcher is a teacher in the school, she was, in essence, working to purport the findings. As a fifth grade teacher, and the moderator of the focus groups, she not only garnered participants’ feedback, but also answered their questions and encouraged their participation with the libraries. Despite involving multiple stakeholders, teachers, and using reflexive journaling, the researcher was both the researcher and one of the subjects in this study.

**Delimitations**

A few deliberate methodological choices were selected that will limit the extent to which the results may be transferred to other schools. Only *one* public online school was the focus of this program evaluation. This choice was made so that all of the researcher’s effort and time could be dedicated to helping to create a functional school library. Spreading the time of the researcher between multiple schools would have resulted in a study that was certainly broader, yet not nearly as deep as desired. While this may limit the national impact of the study, the researcher felt that the results have the potential to affect thousands of students internally. The study would certainly be more powerful if the research was extended to fourth, sixth, or seventh grades, yet, the researcher felt that the amount of data that potentially could have been collected would not have been easily analyzed and managed.

While the delimitations presented above may stifle the ability to transfer the data to other grades and to other schools, the ultimate choices were made so that a
comprehensive, cohesive program evaluation could ensue. A solid, yet limited, program evaluation will elicit clearer results than a piece-meal program evaluation that touched on many factors, yet explored none of them deeply.

**Definition of Key Terminology Used in This Study**

*Charter Schools.* Public schools funded from tax dollars that have followed the student from their traditional schools. Also called community schools in some states, community members dissatisfied with their neighborhood schools can *charter* their own school model in hopes of improving the quality of education (Lager, 2002).

*DIBELS.* The *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* is a criterion-referenced, research-based set of reading passages used to determine if a student is at risk for reading below grade level (University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning, 2011).

*ebooks.* Short for electronic books, ebooks are books presented in a digital format that are read on a computer or hand-held digital device (Grudzien & Casey, 2008).

*Elluminate Live!* A conferencing program that allows students to meet synchronously in a virtual environment (Blackboard Inc., 2011).

*Follett Shelf.* A proprietary web-based program that allows students to browse ebooks online, check out and read ebooks on their computers for up to a week, or download ebooks to a digital reading device for up to a week.

*Lending Library.* For the purpose of this study, the terms *library* and *lending library* will be used interchangeably. The term *lending library* refers to the physical book library. The ebook library will be denoted by the terms *ebook, Follett Shelf, or digital books.*
Because the study evaluated both the physical book library as well as Follett Shelf’s ebook library, the term libraries is used interchangeably.

*Title I.* A U.S. federal program that provides financial resources to schools with a high percentage of economically-disadvantaged children in an effort to ensure all children may perform up to par on state achievement assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the impetus for developing a lending library in an online elementary school. It demonstrated that online schools attract a variety of students, many of whom are economically-disadvantaged, and that without the support of a school library, these students are unlikely to read for enjoyment.

The chapter began by describing the context of the school in the study. Using this context, it showed that students at this online school face an issue of access to quality children’s literature. The lack of literature led to the purpose of this study: How can this school create a lending library so that students’ fluency levels and levels of reading enjoyment increase?

The chapter then briefly described the research design. A program evaluation model was selected and justification for this decision was presented. The site, participants, data collection methods, types of data, analysis techniques, and validity concerns were introduced. Underlying assumptions affecting the direction of the study were disclosed. The rationale and overarching significance of the study was provided.
Limitations and delimitations, and the factors surrounding them, were expressed. The chapter concluded with definitions of key terms to aid in readers’ understandings.

When asked, many teachers report that they chose the field of education so that they could make a difference in their students’ lives. It could be argued that teachers feel especially indebted to their high-poverty students. This study aims to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate a lending library program in an online school so as to increase all students’ reading fluency and enjoyment of literature.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to determine an effective way to allow elementary students who attend class online to access high quality literature. It was hoped that by providing a lending library, students’ reading fluency and enjoyment of reading will increase. Very little research has been published detailing successful tactics that online schools have used to educate low-income students, and no published studies describe methods for distributing literature to geographically diverse elementary students. To attempt to fill this gap in publications, this program evaluation relied on stakeholders’ suggestions and directives in developing, organizing, promoting, and evaluating a book lending system. Both physical books as well as ebooks were analyzed.

This chapter will provide a framework for understanding the importance of creating a lending library in an online elementary school. It will begin by describing current statistics regarding online education, including the prevalence of online schools, the popular thought surrounding online education, the organization of the schools as determined by state restrictions, and national online programs. Characteristics of online students within the region studied will be presented so as to provide a context for the study. Because a significant opus of the research deals with low-income children, information pertaining to economically-disadvantaged learners and national poverty rates will be offered.

The history of school libraries, often used as a point of access for literature, will be discussed. The chapter will present typical models of book lending as well as the feasibility of using digital books. Prevalent political contexts regarding paradigms of
teaching reading will be cited. Finally, motivation behind children’s reading habits will be described. Taken together, this chapter will attempt to provide a foundation for online education and the need to account for a way to ensure that access to literature is not stifling online students’ motivation to read.

**Resources**

This literature review began in 2010. The bank of resources was located through educational databases such as ERIC and EBSCO. Because many of the peer-reviewed journal articles in this field cited reports, primary sources were consulted. The author acknowledges the biases prevalent in using corporation-funded reports, and attempted to locate alternative sources when available.

Using both educational databases and the Google® internet search engine, the following search terms were most frequently used: online education, virtual schools, socioeconomic status, economically-disadvantaged, low-income, distance education, cyberschools, reading motivation, ebooks, school libraries, librarians, and elementary education.

**The History of Distance Education**

Distance education appears to be a relatively recent concept, although it is actually over a hundred years old. As early as the start of the 20th century, correspondence classes allowed students to remain homebound and to confer with their teachers via mail (Cavanaugh, 2009). As technology progressed, students were able to access their education through radio, television, videoconferencing, and eventually through online courses (Cavanaugh, 2009). In the 1950s and 60s, due to a behaviorist
influence, the emphasis switched from what learners were *watching* to what learners were *doing* and the term *educational technology* came about (Molenda & Boling, 2007). In the 1980s a shift occurred again, as personal computers became commonplace and computer assisted instruction emerged (Molenda & Boling, 2007). Early in the 1990s, the advent of the internet renegotiated technology and education, as learners were able to access the World Wide Web and work collaboratively (Molenda & Boling, 2007). During the mid-1990s, virtual schools, or online schools, began opening (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). Virtual schools can be thought of as schools under a public jurisdiction that conduct education via a computer and the internet, instead of face-to-face. The notion of online schools does not include those schools that rely on a print-based correspondence or schools that rely solely on software to provide instruction (iNACOL, 2011b).

In the United States, the first online schools appeared in the nineties (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). In 1991, California opened the first online high school, Laurel Springs (Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). In 1997, two other schools were founded in the United States. One, the Virtual High School (VHS), was federally funded under a five year, $7.4 million grant, and the other, Florida Virtual School (FLVS), was propelled by an initial $200,000 push from the state legislature (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). By 2000, three states (Florida, New Mexico, and Utah) had statewide virtual schools, and three more states were in the planning phase (Illinois, Kentucky, and Michigan) (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). One year later, in 2001, 14 states either had or were planning virtual schools, with the result of educating 40,000 – 50,000 students online (T. Clark, 2001). Growth continued on a steady progress. By 2007-2008, 1,030,000 K-12 students were receiving
education, either entirely or partially, online (Picciano & Seaman, 2009). Today, more than four million students engage in a type of formal online learning (Staker, 2011). According to Roblyer (2008), online education has evolved over the last century, and is now one of the “fastest growing trends in education” (p. 696).

Part of the rapid growth was due to state mandates. In 2006, Michigan began requiring all graduating seniors to have taken at least one online class before graduation (Barbour & Reeves, 2009; Roblyer, 2008). This initiative was put forth to ensure that graduating seniors are prepared for work in a digital society (Roblyer, 2008).

Online schools hope to see substantial growth due to the acceptance and implementation of Common Core standards. Common Core standards are a federal initiative aimed at ensuring equality among the states and to provide a consistent curriculum across the nation (Turnamian, 2011). When states move towards the Common Core standards, online schools will be able to create a curriculum for use across states nationally (Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gemin, & Rapp, 2011).

In summary, online schools have seen substantial growth since their beginnings in the early-1990s. This section was provided to justify the scope of the study. This program evaluation has been implemented in one online elementary school in the Midwest, yet may have far-reaching impact as online schools grow nationally.

**Online Schools: Popular Thought**

Christensen, Harvard Business School Professor, coined the term “disruptive innovations” to describe cutting-edge practices that work to transform standard, complicated, and often expensive methods with simpler, less expensive models (Staker,
Disruptive innovations are often met with an initial period of resistance, as consumers feel that the new product does not hold up to the previous model, but steadily gain acceptance often by targeting alternative or underserved consumers. In her report, “The Rise of K–12 Blended Learning: Profiles of Emerging Models,” Staker (2011) reported, “Online learning appears to be a classic disruptive innovation with the potential not just to improve the current model of education delivery, but to transform it” (p. 1).

Online education has been criticized for being impersonal (Baggaley, 2010; Kimbrough, 2000; Sikula & Sikula, 2003), expensive (Massoud, Iqbal, & Stockley, 2011; Sikula & Sikula, 2003), and ripe with sluggish, technological difficulties (Massoud et al., 2011; Sikula & Sikula, 2003). Early naysayers attempted to prove its ineffectiveness as compared to traditional educational programs; yet, achievement has been found to be statistically equivalent” between online and classroom-based models (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 29).

As disruptive innovation theory surmises, transformational products and models slowly eke their way into culture until full acceptance is achieved and the new models take over (Staker, 2011). While home-based, full-time online programs are unlikely to educate more than 10% of American children (due to family-structures and economic constraints) it is predicted that mainstream students will increasingly participate in blended models of online learning (described in detail in the following section) (Staker, 2011). National vendors view blended learning as a potentially rich market and, due to advertising and marketing techniques, have given the public the message that online education is a viable education alternative (Staker, 2011). Massoud et al. (2011) reported
that a blended learning model allows learners to reap the benefits of traditional learning and online learning, and mitigates the most-frequently cited limitations, including a lack of personal contact between students and their teachers.

Models of Online Schools

It is not possible to describe a typical online school, as a variety of models have been applied. State virtual schools are created and administered by a state agency and provide online education opportunities statewide (iNACOL, 2011b; Watson et al., 2011). Multi-district schools are typically charter schools that offer full-time educational access across a state (Watson et al., 2011). Single-district online programs are created by a district and are only open to students who reside in that district. They are funded by the district and may serve as full-time educational programs or supplemental programs (Watson et al., 2011). This study evaluated a multi-district online charter school in the Midwest.

In 2008-2009, 27 states had state virtual schools, with Florida home to the largest, Florida Virtual School (Watson, Gemin, Ryan, & Wicks, 2009). Six other states had a state-led online learning initiative. By 2011, forty states had a state-virtual school and began to separate into two categories: those with ample funding, and those without a reliable level of support (Watson et al., 2011). Among the states with ample funding include: Florida, North Carolina, Michigan, Montana, Idaho, and Alabama. States victim of cuts include: Maryland, Missouri, and California. In the 2010-2011 school year, taken together, state virtual schools provided 536,000 students with a semester or more of online coursework (Watson et al., 2011).
Multi-district online charter schools have experienced recent growth as well. As of the 2010-2011 school year, thirty states allow for full-time online schools (Watson et al., 2011). This venue of online schooling accounts for the education of approximately 250,000 students, representing an increase of 25% over the previous year. Delivery in multi-district online schools consists of both asynchronous and synchronous instruction (Watson et al., 2011).

As of late 2011, all fifty states plus the District of Columbia allow for some aspect of online or blended schooling. Blended learning can be defined as students spending a portion of their education learning in a distance environment and part of the time in a brick-and-mortar location (iNACOL, 2011b). Among all versions of online education, blended learning is now the fastest growing segment at the district level (Watson et al., 2011). Schools often house a computer lab where students can connect to online classes to supplement their curriculum. Schools that previously thought that online schooling was not in their repertoire have begun offering online courses for their students.

**Charter Schools**

In contrast to state virtual schools, multi-district online schools are most often a charter school (Watson et al., 2009). Charter schools, either online or in a brick-and-mortar environment, are public schools that are responsible for teaching the same state standards as traditional schools, and often face enhanced accountability (Bulkley, 2011). These schools are issued a charter allowing them the ability to create a mission, program, goals, and assessment measures. They must perform in a manner acceptable by their sponsors (iNACOL, 2011b). Sponsors approve the application and monitor their success.
It is up to the sponsors to maintain academic integrity and to close ill-performing schools. While sponsors are expected to not renew charters of non-performing schools, research has shown that it is unlikely that charters are actually revoked (Bulkley, 2011; Turnamian, 2011). According to each state’s law, sponsors may be local school boards, universities, departments of education, or separate entities (Bulkley, 2011).

The first school law recognizing charter schools was established in Minnesota in 1991 (Bulkley, 2011). Since then, substantial growth has commenced. Charter schools boast that they: provide education for families who feel disenfranchised by their local school districts (primarily low-income neighborhoods), allow schools to operate under their own financial, instructional, and administrative guidelines, are subject to enhanced scrutiny by the families of their students, and allow a high quality of education based on this heightened scrutiny and accountability (Bulkley, 2011). During the 2010-2011 school year, charter schools served a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic students than their district-run counterparts (Bulkley, 2011).

Regarding the performance of charter schools versus traditional schools, Hoxby (2004), a member of Harvard University’s Department of Economics and the National Bureau of Economic Research, studied the reading and mathematics performance of elementary-aged charter school students in comparison to their peers at the nearest neighborhood school. This study was groundbreaking for a few reasons: First, 99% of charter school students were studied. Second, the study compared the students with their peers in the same neighborhood. This facet was of extreme importance because previous studies compared similar aged cohorts without regard to their neighborhoods. Hoxby
discovered that, compared with their neighborhood peers, charter school students are 4% more apt to be successful in reading and 2% more likely to pass mathematic assessments on their state exams. When comparing charter schools with their nearest neighborhood schools with similar racial demographics, charter school students are 5% more likely to show proficiency in reading, and 3% more likely to be successful in math. Hoxby found that the advantage increases in charter schools that are well-established.

Another study, conducted between 2005 and 2008 by the US Department of Education, researched the effect that charter schools have on students in comparison to their peers who attempted to win a seat through a lottery, but who were not successful (Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, & Dwoyer, 2010). This study found that overall there were no significant differences in performance on math or reading state tests between those at charter schools and those in traditional schools. The study did find, however, a significant effect on test scores in math when low-income students were researched. The only overall significant difference resided in student and parent satisfaction. The study found that there was a significant satisfaction positive result for students who attend charter schools.

Charter schools comprise a large percentage of online, multi-district schools, yet most are traditional brick-and-mortar schools. The previous studies were included to give a national snapshot of all charter schools combined, both online and brick-and-mortar. The school in which this study takes place is a multi-district online charter school and has had the same sponsor for over ten years.
National Online Schools

Because they are public schools, online charter schools hire certified teachers, abide by the state curriculum, and require all students to take proctored standardized tests (Revenaugh, 2005-2006). A few online schools supply multi-district, full-time online schools in multiple states. During the 2009-2010 school year, multi-state online schools have educated thousands of students (Connections Academy, 2010). Besides the tuition-free public schools, some national online schools also offer a fully accredited, degree-granting private school option to fill the gap in the states that do not have online public schools (Connections Academy, 2010).

National standards for quality online teaching.

Quality standards consist of benchmarks and indicators created by a governing body and typically aim to regulate programs, teaching, and professional development (iNACOL, 2011b). iNACOL, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, collaborated with over 30 professionals in online education to create the iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Courses with the mission being to “ensure all students have access to a world-class education and quality online learning opportunities that prepare them for a lifetime of success” (iNACOL, 2011a, p. 3). Eleven standards have been created by the Southern Regional Education Board and iNACOL elected to adopt them fully. The standards have a component of what online teachers should know and understand as well as a component of skills that should be demonstrated by online educators. Examples of aims of standards include: effective online instruction, use of technologies, integration of active learning, development of clear expectations, ethical
behavior, awareness of diversity, validity and reliability of assessments, standards-based learning, data-driven instruction, professionalism, and instructional design.

**Daily snapshot of an online learner.**

Although a prevailing view is that students educated online are constantly in front of a computer, many online schools incorporate textbooks and hands-on projects (Revenaugh, 2005-2006). Online schools may adopt a variety of instructional models. Online schools may act primarily as correspondence classes where students view lessons and complete work independently and at their own pace with the computer serving as the mode of correspondence. In this model, students work closely with their parents, and less with their instructors (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). Alternately, classes may be asynchronous. In this regard, students may interact with other students, but not in real time. Asynchronous classes often entail a student submitting work, and a teacher commenting on the work through written feedback (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). Last, classes may be synchronous whereas students and teachers correspond in real time. Online schools may adopt one model exclusively or use a combination of the models.

**Demographics.**

What may be thought of by many as a place for privileged students, online education has attracted a diverse clientele. Some multi-district online schools have a large percentage of economically-disadvantaged students and are classified as high-poverty schools (Ohio Department of Education, 2012c; Ohio Department of Education, 2012g). Online public schools must serve all who enroll with no regard to ability, previous educational history, or family dynamics (Revenaugh, 2005-2006). As with all
public schools, online public schools are always tuition-free. According to Rose and
Blomeyer (2007), in their report titled “Access and Equity in Online Classes and Virtual
Schools,” online schools that operate as public schools must provide computers and
internet access to enrolled students. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this mandate is essential
when educating low-income students in a virtual environment.

Students select online schools for a variety of reasons, and thus, a wide variety of
students make up the demographics of online students. Some enjoy the self-paced
programs; others have enrolled for credit recovery (Roblyer, 2008). Students attend
online schools to take advanced classes, to accelerate their education, to augment their
school’s lack of resources, to achieve a flexible education, or when handicaps prevent
them from attending traditional schools (Roblyer, 2006). Students who were traditionally
homeschooled are frequent consumers of online education (Roblyer, 2006).

Students who attend online schools are often publicly thought of as being highly
motivated, high-achieving, self-directed learners who score well on reading and writing
tests, and who are proficient with technology (Barbour, 2009). According to Barbour
(2009), this is far from the reality of the students who comprise online schools. In their
study, Archambault et al. (2010) surveyed 22 full-time online schools in Canada and the
United States regarding their demographic makeup. The authors asked respondents what
percentage of their students would be considered at risk. After presenting a definition of
at-risk learners (including those with special needs, those of a different race, students
frequently absent, students with below average academic skills, and students with high
mobility) 25% of the surveyed schools reported that over 75% of their student body
would be classified as at risk. A similar percent of the respondents categorized their student body as being 51-75% at risk or 26-50% at risk. Only 8% responded that less than 10% of their student body would be considered at risk.

According to Revenaugh (2005-2006), Vice President for Partnerships and Outreach at Connections Academy, schools affiliated with Connections Academy have more than 40% of their student body classified as economically-disadvantaged, have 20% of their student body reporting as a minority, and work with 15% of their students under an individualized education plan (IEP). Additionally, 39% of Connections Academy students identify as being rural and 14% report living in an urban setting. Revenaugh credits this diversity to creating a rich student body and exposing the students to encounters that previously would have been highly unlikely.

**Achievement gap: Online schools.**

Despite online education’s initial drive of increasing equity among demographically different students, equity has been hard to achieve in an online environment. Students are often hampered by their lack of technology skills and weak writing skills (Martinez & Peterson, 2008). Access alone, does not equate with equity. Because online classes are typically text-heavy, students with lower literacy levels may be doomed to struggle (Roblyer, 2008).

According to Oliver, Osborne, Patel, and Kleiman (2009), in their study of student learning characteristics at the North Carolina Virtual Public School, significant discrepancies were reported between students taking credit recovery classes compared to accelerated students. Accelerated students were significantly more likely to rate the
quality of their course as high. Accelerated students were more likely to have a high interest in taking additional online classes compared to those students who took credit recovery courses. Students were asked to self-assess their technology skills. Students in credit recovery classes were significantly more likely to report lower technological skills compared to accelerated students. These students with inferior technology skills reported twice as many technical difficulties when attempting coursework compared with their peers taking accelerated courses. This shows that despite equitable access, at-risk students enter online school environments from an initial disadvantage.

Students who are successful in the online environment tend to be highly motivated, are self-directed, have strong technological skills, and are risk-takers (Roblyer, 2008). Because a student is successful in a traditional classroom does not always mean that he or she will be strong in an online classroom. To be successful in an online environment takes an extra set of skills. To create equitable online environments, all students ideally must be brought up to par prior to the class (Roblyer, 2008).

**Social opportunities.**

A major point of contention for virtual school critics lies in the lack of social opportunities (Revenaugh, 2005-2006). According to Revenaugh (2005-2006), high quality virtual schools account for this shortcoming by arranging field trips or connecting families in close proximity with one another. Community based activities are also highly encouraged. Occasionally, online schools require participation in a local sport or activity to help fulfill physical education requirements (Revenaugh, 2005-2006).
Besides socializing outside the school context, online schools often develop online communities. Students may join online clubs or groups because of common interests, not because of their close proximity to one another. Revenaugh (2005-2006) writes, “Students-only message boards sprout threads about everything from horses to Harry Potter, with posts from all over the United States” (p. 63).

**Online teachers.**

According to Barbour (2009), universities have only just recently begun incorporating online teaching pedagogy in their teacher preparation programs. Despite the lack of distance learning pedagogy, online teachers tend to be more experienced, often have stronger technology skills, and feel that their skills as educators are able to carry them through technological constraints (Archambault & Crippen, 2009).

Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares (2009), Canadian researchers in educational technology, studied ways online teachers could improve their students’ motivation. They found that by developing personal relationships with their students, and allowing students to interact with each other, motivation was heightened. Zapalska and Brozik (2006) emphasized the need to understand students’ learning styles. The authors recommended examining students’ preferences and then incorporating a variety of learning styles in each class.

When educating at-risk learners online, data has shown that meaningful relationships are motivating, just as they are in traditional schools (Archambault et al., 2010). White, Lare, Mueller, Smeaton, and Waters (2007), faculty members of East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, researched the Teaching Personal and Social
Responsibility Model, a model designed to teach at-risk students in an online environment. Rather than just teaching the curriculum, this model emphasizes rights, feelings, self-direction, and community service, along with traditional high school courses.

Because equitable access is more than just providing computers and internet connections to at-risk students, teachers must work to ensure that their classrooms are free from biases. Peterson and Martinez (2008) suggested that the best ways to fight prejudices in an online classroom stems from the instructor. Since learners are often judged on writing skills, these authors contended that teachers must realize that a student’s written skills are not a direct reflection of their cognitive skills. Teachers must establish a safe online classroom. Students must be able to share without facing ridicule from classmates. Those students who make others feel insecure must be guided so that they are aware of their insensitivities and coached in how to create constructive comments. By encouraging students to reflect on one another’s posts and comments constructively, Peterson and Marinez contend that teachers elicit critical thinking skills in their students.

Online teachers need not only excellent teaching skills, but additional technical qualities (Roblyer, 2008). According to Easton (2003), the skills needed by online teachers are similar to traditional teachers; however, online teachers must find unique ways to engage their students. Universities with teacher education programs are beginning to recognize this diverse set of skills needed by distance learning educators (Roblyer, 2008). In 2004, the U.S. Department of Education provided funding for pre-
service education programs to develop a model for integrating online teaching skills into their instruction (Davis & Roblyer, 2005).

In their report, “Going Virtual! 2010: The Status of Professional Development and Unique Needs of K-12 Online Teachers,” Dawley, Rice, and Hinck (2010) recognized state initiatives in preparing future educators for an online environment. Pre-service teachers in some states have integrated online learning into their coursework by participating in online field placements. In Idaho, an online teaching endorsement for K-12 teachers is being proposed (Dawley et al., 2010). Citing the exponential growth on online education, CEO for iNACOL, Patrick, called for universities to include pedagogical components of online education into their coursework for pre-service teachers (Patrick & Dawley, 2009). Teacher education programs in the U.S. rarely include online teaching pedagogy in their curriculum; therefore, future employers are left with the bulk of the training. It has been argued that teacher education programs should acquaint pre-service teachers with iNACOL’s adoption of the National Standards for Online Teaching (Oliver, Kellogg, Townsend, & Brady, 2010).

**Characteristics of successful online schools.**

Roblyer (2006) found that successful online schools have distinct qualities. To begin with, these schools spend time preparing their students to succeed. They present the students with checklists of attributes that embody successful online students and precourse orientation sessions. It should be noted that precourse orientation sessions must not be used to steer students away from online schools; to do so would be disrespectful to the students as well as illegal (Rose & Blomeyer, 2007). Interaction is
another key feature. Rather than just posting lessons, successful online schools require the teachers and the students to interact extensively (Cavanaugh, 2001; Roblyer, 2006; Roblyer, 2008). Another characteristic, according to Roblyer (2006), of a successful virtual school is to provide adequate teacher training and ongoing professional development. Student success should be at the forefront of online programs. Ensuring that the students are working to mastery aids in the development of a successful online school.

This section aimed to cover national trends, statistics, and demographics in online schools. It attempted to highlight the high percentage of low-income students who are attending school in a virtual environment. It reported that the general public erroneously believes that online schools are for privileged students, and showed that income level cannot disqualify students from enrolling in online schools. Computers, internet connections, and needed supplies are provided for all students who enroll in online schools. Because the study took place in a high-poverty online school, this section intended to show that the school of focus is demographically comparable to online schools nation-wide.

**Midwest Online Charter Schools**

Although no new online charter schools have been established in the region of the study since 2005, the enrollment has continued to grow (Richards, 2010). In the 2008-2009 school year, over 27,000 students in this state attended an online charter school, which was a 13% increase from the previous year (Watson et al., 2009). The state in which this study focuses offers seven multi-district, full-time, online schools.
Collapsed together, the seven multi-district, full-time online schools in this state accounted for the education of almost 32,000 students in the 2011-2012 school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2012a; Ohio Department of Education, 2012b; Ohio Department of Education, 2012c; Ohio Department of Education, 2012d; Ohio Department of Education, 2012e; Ohio Department of Education, 2012f; Ohio Department of Education, 2012g). Of these seven schools, two are classified as high poverty schools. The status of a high poverty school is presented to institutions whose percentage of economically-disadvantaged students is among the top quartile (Ohio Department of Education, 2012c; Ohio Department of Education, 2012g).

Because the study focused on reading achievement in the fifth grade, taken together, 60.1% of fifth graders attending an online charter school in this Midwest state passed the reading state achievement test in the 2011-2012 school year (Ohio Department of Education, 2012a; Ohio Department of Education, 2012b; Ohio Department of Education, 2012c; Ohio Department of Education, 2012d; Ohio Department of Education, 2012e; Ohio Department of Education, 2012f; Ohio Department of Education, 2012g). In comparison, of all fifth graders in this state who took the achievement test in reading, 76.8% passed. Statistics specific to the school of study were presented in Chapter 1, yet this shows that collectively, fifth grade students who attend online schools in this state fall short on the state achievement tests in reading.

**Economically-disadvantaged Learners**

It is indeed newsworthy when a high-poverty school achieves academic success. Media and researchers alike focus on these schools, hoping to find trends, practices, and
characteristics that may be applied in schools with similar demographics. In his 2010 State of the Union speech, President Obama said, “In the 21st century, the best anti-poverty program around is a world-class education” (Obama, 2010). This section begins with a description of current poverty statistics in the United States, describes the achievement gap between low-income learners compared with middle and high-income students, and details characteristics of high-performing, high-poverty brick-and-mortar schools.

**Prevalence of poverty in United States.**

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, poverty rates are steadily increasing. In 2009-2010, the median household income was down by 2.3% and, consequently, poverty rates increased (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2011). In 2010, the United States poverty rate was 15.1%, up nearly a point from 2009, and representing the third consecutive increase. This amounted to 46.2 million people living in poverty, the fourth consecutive increase. These figures represent the highest percentage of Americans living in poverty since 1993.

**Achievement gap.**

There is a prevailing achievement gap between low-income learners and their subsequent mid and high-level counterparts (Hagans, 2008). Reeves (2005) found that the correlation between the amount of students in poverty and student achievement ranges from -.60 to -.90. While not a perfect negative correlation, this research shows that the more low socio-economic students a school has, the more overall achievement decreases. Although the impact of extraneous variables on learners certainly plays a role
in education, evidence persists that “specific teaching, leadership, and curriculum strategies will mitigate the impact of poverty” (Reeves, 2005, p. 202).

Impoverished children are often raised in homes that have a limited amount of reading materials, and as a result, lack literary experiences rich in language and vocabulary (Crowe et al., 2009; Hagans, 2008; Hixson & Mcglinchey, 2004; Popp, 2004). Besides a difference at their doorsteps, impoverished children are also more likely to attend schools with large class sizes and inferior or unqualified teachers who attempt to educate students with a one-size-fits-all curriculum (Crowe et al., 2009; Hagans, 2008). In general, the student’s family income level is a good predictor of how the student will eventually perform on state achievement tests (Hixson & Mcglinchey, 2004).

**High-performing, high-poverty schools.**

Much research has commenced on high-performing, high-poverty schools in a traditional school setting. Reeves (2005) coined the term 90/90/90 schools in defining specific high-performing, high-poverty schools. The significance of the phrase 90/90/90 entails 90% or more of the student body being classified as economically-disadvantaged, 90% or more of the students of an ethnic minority, and 90% or more of the students passing one or more sections of their state achievement tests. Other authors have dubbed these high-performing, high-poverty schools as *HP2 schools* (Bell, 2001).

Despite the name, some qualities and characteristics frequently arise when studying high-performing, high-poverty brick-and-mortar schools. Schools of this nature emphasize that a panacea, or curriculum package, does not exist (Chenoweth, 2007; Reeves, 2005). Rather, these schools incorporate methods, assessments, leadership
styles, and a caring culture that is replicable in any high-poverty school. Common characteristics include: A strong academic focus, high expectations, a teacher locus of control, curricular rearrangement with a primary focus on reading and mathematics, an emphasis on higher-order thinking skills, regular assessments, frequent opportunities for students to write, targeted professional development, and teacher collaboration (Reeves, 2005).

Of direct interest to this study, high-performing, high-poverty schools spend a significant time on teaching reading because literacy is looked at as the key to success across the curriculum (Cudeiro, Palumbo, & Leight, 2005; Reeves, 2005). These schools often spend less time on other subjects and may dedicate up to three hours daily on reading and writing (Ohio Department of Education, 2006; Reeves, 2005). Successful low-income schools do not spend much time in phonics instruction. The descriptions of these high-performing, high-poverty schools certainly paints a picture of rigor and discipline, however, it has been argued that a deep phonetic based instruction is not successful after grade one (Taylor et al., 2003). Phonetic instruction in the early grades has been shown to be a precursor to eventual reading fluency, but should switch to more engaging material by grade two (Kamps et al., 2004).

This section on high-performing, high-poverty schools was included to provide fodder for the creation of a lending library in an online school. While the data above was presented for brick-and-mortar schools, the authors argued that the tactics can be replicated in any high-poverty school. Of specific interest is the focus on reading.
Online schools have the ability and obligation to meet the literary needs of students, and lending libraries allow students access to engaging material.

**Online schools and low-income students.**

Very little research has been produced regarding online schools successful in educating low-income learners. What has been reported details online *high schools*, with little regard to online elementary schools. The majority of the research has focused on credit recovery programs for at-risk high school students. Watson and Gemin (2008), in their report “Promising Practices in Online Learning: Using Online Learning for At-Risk Students and Credit Recovery,” researched online programs nationally, and presented aspects of the most encouraging models. Rather than labeling their report *best practices*, the authors selected *promising practices* because they felt there were many successful models yet no “single approach that comprehensively addresses the needs of all at-risk students” (Watson & Gemin, 2008, p. 7).

Several key characteristics were identified by Watson and Gemin (2008) in their study of successful online schools. First, at-risk students need to be motivated. Often the strikingly different structure of online schools was a motivating factor. Second, individualized instruction proved to be essential. Rigorous courses that ensure mastery and focus on deficit skills aided engagement. Online schools that integrated service learning, or real-world opportunities, increased motivation. Finally, the most successful online programs incorporated an element of face-to-face contact, thereby giving students additional support.
It is hoped that this study will add to the literature regarding educating low-income students in an online elementary school setting. While Watson and Gemin’s (2008) study elicited important findings for online high school students at risk of failing, a gap persists in the literature regarding at-risk elementary-aged children in this learning environment.

**Libraries and Reading Motivation**

The content of this chapter has so far described online schools including their history, their organization, national trends of online schools and students, and economically-disadvantaged learners. Because the driving force behind the study is to incorporate a lending library into an online school, the focus of the remaining parts of the chapter highlights current trends in reading instruction, school libraries, and students’ reading motivation. Regarding school libraries, research will be presented on the importance of free reading, including the impact of students reading voluntarily, and traditional ways that students access books for free reading. The history of school libraries will be discussed and models in online high schools will be covered.

Because this study is not limited to strictly traditional library models, the use of ebooks will be explored in both public libraries as well as school libraries. Classroom applications of ebooks will also be shared.

For students to freely elect to read as a hobby, research on reading motivation will also be presented. Teachers often unintentionally structure their reading lessons in ways that decrease students’ motivation to read. These stifling tactics will be described as well
as ways that teachers can work to instill a love of reading in their students. Ebooks will be explored again in regards to their effect on students’ motivation to read.

**Reading instruction: Whole language or skill-based?**

Since 1897, reading instruction has vacillated between a skill-based curriculum and a naturalistic approach (Guenther, 2005). Skill-based approaches treat reading as a technical skill acquired through instruction based on attacking words phonetically (Mills, 2005). Naturalistic, or whole language, approaches are driven from the premise that reading is acquired primarily through immersion and exposure to print (Moats, 2007). The following paragraphs will highlight the major trends in this reading debate.

The term *whole language* became popular in the early 1980s (Moats, 2007) yet has its roots in programs developed throughout the 20th century. In 1908, the notion of surrounding children with stories and immersing them in print activities was known as the “natural method of teaching reading” (Guenther, 2005, p. 87). Its name morphed to the “activity movement” in the 1920s (Guenther, 2005, p. 87) and to the “experience method” in the mid-1930s (Guenther, 2005, p. 88). While the names have changed, the fundamental theory remained the same: Children best learn to read in an incidental manner, much in the same manner as oral language acquisition (Mills, 2005).

Proponents of skill-based reading instruction began to site problems with the naturalistic techniques. In 1933, a study showed that students who practiced a naturalistic method of reading instruction did not read as well as students who were instructed in a skill-based curriculum (J. Lee, 1933). Follow-up studies criticized the
1933 study, citing its lack of rigor and argued that more thorough studies showed support for schools using the activity method (Guenther, 2005).

Not all researchers aimed to prove one side of the reading dichotomy as superior. In his 1961 article “Breaking the Basal Reader Lock Step,” Stauffer (1961) suggested that teachers augment basal readers with literature that children self-select. In allowing children to self-select stories, Stauffer felt that motivation is heightened and students develop positive attitudes towards reading. Stauffer contended that “love for reading is not taught; it is created” and that children need both teacher-directed, group activities and individual activities when learning to read (1961, p. 271-272).

Despite Stauffer’s call for a blended model, the behavioristic, skill-based approach to teaching reading was prominent in the 1960s and persisted until the 1980s (Mills, 2005). The pendulum began to swing back towards the side of whole language in the early 1980s (Mills, 2005; Moats, 2007). The focus of reading again turned to whole texts, reigning in children’s prior knowledge, and treating reading as a skill to be learned through immersion (Mills, 2005). Goodman and Goodman, early proponents of the modern day model of whole language, argued that reading is a holistic endeavor and that it is much more than simply decoding words (Guenther, 2005).

The reading war was once again at its height. To settle the score, a National Reading Panel was created in 1997 by the National Institutes of Health (Moats, 2007). The panel recommended five essential components in reading programs: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. Moats (2007) considered this a win for the advocates of a skill-based
curriculum; however, researchers continue to stress a balanced approach to teaching reading (Mills, 2005).

In his article, “The Lost Art of Teaching Reading,” professor of literacy and author of over 150 articles on reading education, Rasinski (2009) argued for reading instruction to be treated as the art that it is. Rasinski claimed that the aforementioned report from the National Reading Panel is turning reading education into “a scientific problem solved through employment of scientific methods” (2009, p. 67). Rasinski agreed that empirical studies have elicited important research for the study of teaching reading, but have caused teachers to neglect the art in language arts. This model of scientific-based reading instruction causes defeated students who see little joy in reading and can be considered “flawed instruction” (Rasinski, 2009, p. 69). Continuing on this path, Rasinski warned, will create readers who may be able to read proficiently (as measured in scientific ways), but who will not find value in reading.

This section was included to provide a political and historical context for reading instruction in the United States. It aimed to show that currently, reading programs are thought to be most effective with a skill-based curriculum, yet cautioned that teaching in this manner is likely to create readers who see little value in reading. In the following sections, this chapter will continue to show that curriculums that focus primarily on skills lack the power to motivate students to read for enjoyment and fail to create critical readers and thinkers.
Free reading and access to literature.

“Free voluntary reading” can be thought of as someone engaging with a book not because of an assignment, not because they have to, not because of a reward, but because the reader simply wants to read a book (Krashen, 2006, p. 43). Schools tend to call this sustained silent reading time, or SSR, and allow students to devote ten or fifteen minutes each day reading material of their choice. Assignments, grades, and reports typically are not tied into SSR time and little feedback is provided from the teacher (Krashen, 2006; T. White & Kim, 2008). So why bother having students read simply for fun, without skills explicitly integrated? According to Krashen (2006), author and reading researcher, “Children become better readers by reading” (p. 43). The more children read, the higher their reading achievement (Rasinski & Padak, 2011). In engaging in SSR time, students develop rich vocabularies, begin to comprehend at a higher level, and begin writing proficiently (Krashen, 2006; T. White & Kim, 2008).

In order for children to begin reading voluntarily, they must have access to high quality books (Hunter, 2004; Krashen, 2006). In most schools, access to literature is not an issue. Students typically have a litany of books from which to choose in both their classroom libraries as well as their school libraries. Access to literature is perhaps most important in schools in which a high percentage of the children come from impoverished families (Hunter, 2004). While the recipe for success may seem rather simple, Krashen (2006) reported that low-income children often have less or diminished access to literature. Children who attend high-poverty schools often have meager classroom and school libraries (Hunter, 2004; Krashen, 2006), and low-income neighborhoods tend to
have libraries with limited operating hours (Krashen, 2006). Krashen (2006) appealed for high-poverty schools to make school libraries a priority stating, “For children of poverty, libraries are their only chance” (p. 45).

Not all researchers agree that encouraging children to read on their own produces a higher level of reading achievement. In a recent study, Harlaar, Deater-Deckard, Thompson, DeThorne, and Petrill (2011) found that while reading achievement in ten year olds can predict the amount of time they are likely to spend reading independently at age eleven, the reverse was not true. The authors agreed that much research has pointed to a correlation between reading achievement and independent reading, however, the causality from independent reading to reading achievement has not been empirically demonstrated. Using twins, the authors determined that children have a genetic disposition in both reading achievement and independent reading and that by engaging in independent reading, students will not necessarily improve in reading achievement.

Harlaar et al. (2011) cautioned readers from wholeheartedly adopting their results as the study listed numerous limitations. The measure of independent reading was based on self-reported child and parent surveys. The authors felt that the responses were likely skewed in a socially desirable direction. Also, the types of books that students engaged in during independent reading may not have been at the correct reading level. If books are too easy or too difficult, learning growth is unlikely. Regarding their findings on a genetic predisposition to reading ability, Harlaar et al. felt that economically-disadvantaged children are unlikely to meet their natural trajectory without opportunities
for independent reading and for this reason, low-income schools must incorporate an opportunity for students to read independently so that they may reach their full potential. Harlaar et al.’s study was included in this literature review for the primary reason that even if independent reading does not increase reading achievement, economically-disadvantaged children are unlikely to be successful without having the opportunity to engage in free reading. This chapter will continue by focusing on the role that school libraries hold in providing literature to students.

**History of school libraries.**

For the past one hundred years, public school libraries have been an essential component of children’s education. School libraries can be thought of as places where children can enjoy recreational reading, but also as places where teachers can support the curriculum and prepare their learners for the 21st century (De Groot & Branch, 2009). In the early 1900s, most elementary and secondary schools contracted with a local community library to service their students (Wiegand, 2007). However, Heney (1912) wrote that a school library “occupies a unique position and its work therefore cannot be duplicated by the larger and more resourceful libraries open to the general public” (p. 474). Teachers, Heney wrote, must ask their students intriguing questions that will inspire them to access the library. By the end of WWI, the National Education Association (NEA) encouraged schools to create a space of their own for their libraries so that the curriculum could be supported (Wiegand, 2007).

In the 1920s, the NEA created standards for the school libraries, and the librarians were often funded locally or by the state (Wiegand, 2007). As with many economic
downturns, less emphasis was placed on the school library during the Depression and WWII, but by the mid-20th century, school libraries saw an expansion and began including non-print materials (Wiegand, 2007). As a result, the notion of a school library morphed into a school media center (Wiegand, 2007). In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provided additional funding to school libraries allowing for more schools to have a media center. In 1958, only 50% of schools had a library, but by 1985, 93% of schools had an in-house library (Wiegand, 2007).

In recent years, school libraries have hosted 1.5 billion classroom visits annually and during those visits billions of books have been checked out and read (Wiegand, 2007). It is imperative that children have books to read at school and at home, and school libraries aim to fill this role (De Groot & Branch, 2009). De Groot and Branch (2009) wrote that in an ideal situation, public school libraries and community libraries would come together to ensure recreational reading material is always available.

Hunter (2004), an international reading consultant, reasoned that libraries in classrooms and schools support students to be the best readers they can. Through access to quality fiction and nonfiction books, students can increase their fluency and foster a love of reading (Hunter, 2004). In 2009, C. Clark (2010) and colleagues surveyed over 17,000 students regarding their perceptions of school libraries. According to the students, libraries were thought of as friendly places to easily access good books. Students felt that the school libraries helped them to do well in school. Concerning demographics, girls are significantly more likely to visit school libraries than boys (70.8% vs. 66.5%, respectively) (C. Clark, 2010).
School libraries in online schools.

In his article, “School Libraries are Essential: Meeting the Virtual Access and Collaboration Needs of the 21st-Century Learner and Teacher,” Darrow (2009) emphasized the need for online schools to reconceptualize the notion of a school library from a physical presence to a virtual presence. He argued that online schools must find a way to meet the library needs of its students despite the geographical distance. One way to accomplish this is by creating a website with links to subjects of interest. In order for students to feel as if they have ownership with the library, Darrow encourages virtual school students to create book reviews, videos, and polls.

Darrow’s article centered primarily on online high school students using their libraries for research related tasks. Online learners at the university level have also been acknowledged by researchers regarding access to books and materials. Through the use of Document Delivery services, online students are able to access digital versions of articles (Raraigh-Hopper, 2010). For items that are unable to be delivered in a digital format, Document Delivery mails materials free of charge to enrolled university students. Students are responsible for return postage, but are encouraged to return using a low cost book rate (Raraigh-Hopper, 2010).

This section showed the need for impoverished students to be able to easily access books for free reading opportunities. Historically, school libraries have been here to fill this niche. With the advent of online elementary schools, providing students the opportunity to check out books has been neglected in research. Completely absent is any model on how to deliver literature to elementary students in an online environment. A
few articles have researched this phenomenon from the high school and university perspective, but a gap persists regarding elementary online students. This gap was the impetus for this study.

Ebooks.

In his book, *From Gutenberg to Google*, Shillingsburg (2006) stated that “What Gutenberg did to democratize books and other texts, the World Wide Web has done to democratize information” (p. 2). He compared today’s digital revolution to the invention of the printing press and alerted readers that today’s revolution is moving at an even quicker pace. A variety of e-readers (produced by Apple, Sony, Amazon, and Barnes and Noble) are available to quell readers’ instant needs for books and information (Lichtenberg, 2011). Publishers have responded to the demand and have increasingly made books available digitally. In February of 2011, it was reported that 8 out of the 10 bestsellers sold more than 50% of their books in a digital format (Lichtenberg, 2011).

Public libraries have begun reconfiguring their lending process. The era of checking out books is slowly morphing into a digital environment where browsing can occur online at the customer’s convenience. Platt (2011), employee at the New York Public Library (NYPL), reported that the NYPL’s ebook collection is the most used in the United States. Platt said that they have over 38,000 titles in a digital format, comprising both fiction and non-fiction selections. Books for adults lead the drive with tens of thousands of choices, while children’s titles number in the thousands. Young adults only have slightly over 1,000 titles to choose from. Ebooks at the NYPL are
available in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian. As of May 2011, the NYPL has loaned out over 400,000 ebooks.

Much promise in store for ebooks in an educational context regarding children’s literature. Two sites are linked to the NYPL’s portal; Tumblebooks and BookFlix (Platt, 2011). While Tumblebooks is not downloadable, it allows kids to read popular stories straight from their website. BookFlix, a Scholastic endeavor, joins book with video formats. Both Tumblebooks and BookFlix allow students to read along with an audio clip. Teachers feel that Scholastic’s BookFlix is easily integrated with the curriculum (Platt, 2011).

Bringing digital readers into the classroom has the potential to revolutionize reading as children know it. Digital readers, like the Kindle, allow students to fully customize their reading experience, including the size of the font, the ability to bookmark and post notes, the capacity to look up difficult words in an integrated dictionary and the ability to have the devices navigate through difficult passages by reading aloud (Engel-Unruh, 2010; Larson, 2009a; Larson, 2010). Concerning constructivist pedagogy in elementary education, reading and responding to posts asynchronously online allows students to collaborate with each other while reading a book (Larson, 2009b).

In 2009, Cushing Academy, a private secondary school located in Massachusetts, decided to transform its school library into a digital media center (Medeiros, 2010; Wetschler, 2011). In the process, 20,000 books were given away and 200 iRiver Story and Kindles were purchased instead. Digital readers allow students to check out books at any time (Grudzien & Casey, 2008; Wetschler, 2011), and ebooks are delivered
instantaneously. The implication for distance learners in that when print books are
shipped to students, a week may pass before the student can access the book, but with
ebooks, there are no lost books, and books cannot be damaged in transit as traditional
books can (Grudzien & Casey, 2008). Shipping traditional books through the mail can be
a costly venture, and by switching to ebooks, libraries can defray the shipping costs
(Grudzien & Casey, 2008).

School libraries may use Digital Rights Management software, or DRMs, that
would enable the school to keep track of ebooks as they are circulated to students’ e-
readers (Pelikan, 2009). A system such as this would notify students that a book is
already checked out, and would allow readers to see how much time remained until the
book would be automatically removed from their device. Engel-Unruh (2010) reported
that if the school purchases one copy of a book, the school is able to share that book with
up to five additional Kindles linked to the same account. Besides a cost-saving
 Technique, this benefit allows students to easily recommend books to one another and
fosters a community-based sense of learning.

School libraries that are considering switching to ebooks should be aware of some
limitations. Technical problems may persist, including drained batteries when the book
needs to be accessed (Wetschler, 2011). Damage to ebook readers will result in a higher
fee to a family than if a traditional book was ruined. Some schools have incorporated
insurance into the use of e-readers. In this case, families can elect to spend $20 per
device which will cover damages and losses (Wetschler, 2011).
In their study on university students’ use of e-readers to access literature, Grudzien and Casey (2008) researched whether an investment in e-readers would be beneficial to students in an online university. Data from the study showed that the students wholeheartedly embraced ebooks. The group studied (students accessing education from a remote location) used e-readers at a much higher percentage than traditional students. Regrettably, a similar study with elementary-aged students attending an online school has not been published.

Medeiros (2010), author of “Books, Books Everywhere, But Nary a One in Print” maintained that completely eliminating print books from its collection may not be in a school library’s best interest. While acknowledging that electronic materials are crucial in a school’s library, Medeiros felt that school libraries need a hefty supply of print resources as well. He asked, “Can one acquire a lifelong love of reading on a laptop or even a Kindle” (p. 6)? Even if some students can adapt, does this mean all will? Medeiros suggested ebooks be used to complement print books, not to replace them.

**Reading Motivation: Killing the Drive to Read**

While access to books is an obvious starting point in encouraging children to become avid readers, teachers must do more than simply provide books in order to promote a love of reading. In his article “How to Create Nonreaders: Reflections on Motivation, Learning, and Sharing Power” progressive education expert Kohn (2010) listed seven ways to *kill* the love of reading in students. He began by stating that teachers cannot motivate their students to read. Motivation, according to Kohn, must come from within a student. Teachers can, however, effectively diminish a child’s likelihood of
enjoying books. Kohn argued that the best way to kill the joy of free reading is to *quantify* reading assignments. Unfortunately, teachers do this regularly in classrooms across America. By requiring detailed reading logs with an account of minutes and pages read, Kohn argued that students are likely to meet the daily goal and then quit reading -- even if they are at the climax of the story.

Another way to effectively stifle a child’s capacity to become a pleasure reader, claimed Kohn, is to require written reports. In quoting reading specialist Routman, Kohn (2010) invited readers to “think about the last time you read a book you loved. Imagine how you would have felt if you had been required to write a book report or a summary that had to include the main idea and supporting details” (p. 21). Kohn suggested that teachers who focus too heavily on skills lose students’ interests as well. In preparing students for annual state exams, teachers fall victim to working simply towards a means to an end (Kohn, 2010). Test preparation that focuses on the memorization of facts and skills, Kohn stated, are sure to create a “roomful of nonreaders” (2010, p. 18).

As students age, reading instruction shifts from teaching children to read to teaching children how to access information through books (Kelley & Decker, 2009). Known as the “fourth grade slump,” this skill-based focus does nothing to increase students’ motivation to read (Kelley & Decker, 2009, p. 467). Gallagher (2010), high school teacher and author of “Readicide,” reasoned that today’s college freshmen have spent nearly their entire school careers under NCLB, and consequently were forced to absorb facts rather than having an opportunity to read critically. Is it not a coincidence that ACT scores have dropped to their lowest points in a decade (Gallagher, 2010)?
Gallagher stated that “A curriculum steeped in test preparation drives shallow teaching and learning” (2010, p. 37). Teachers must work to cover the lengthy list of standards, rather than spend time teaching children to read and think critically.

Certainly skills and an enjoyment of literature can occur together, but in an effort to cover standards, teachers are now likely to break books into segments. Students who are exposed to bits and pieces of segmented books are unlikely to find engaging stories that will foster their love of reading (Gallagher, 2010). Researchers Applegate and Applegate (2010) insisted:

The widespread use of programs that encourage children to recall but not think about what they read may succeed in producing sizable numbers of children who appear technically proficient in reading. But if the children who pass through these programs are not engaged in thoughtful response to what they read, we run the risk of producing huge numbers of children who see no use for reading in their lives (p. 233).

In revisiting Kohn’s (2010) seven ways to create nonreaders, intrinsic verses extrinsic motivation is important. Kohn warned teachers against using extrinsic motivators to persuade students to read. He referred to the very popular Book-It program put forth by Pizza Hut. In this program, teachers set reading goals for their students and reward students who meet the goal with a coupon for a free Pizza Hut personal pan pizza. Creating incentives such as this, Kohn insisted, “may be the most efficient way to teach kids that reading isn’t pleasurable in its own right” (2010, p. 17). By receiving rewards,
students are apt to feel as if there is an external control over their reading, and, in turn, are likely to decrease their internal motivation regarding reading (Komiyama, 2009).

It is no wonder that students are less likely to read for pleasure as they mature (Gallagher, 2010; Ülper, 2011). In “Teaching Toward Freedom,” Ayers (2005) shared a famous thought from Lillian Weber, professor of early childhood education. She claimed that children enter school like question marks or exclamation points. But as they march through grades, they exit as periods. Ayres blamed this deflating environment on our current system of testing and grading, saying that these tests serve more as “autopsies than diagnostics” (p. 41).

**Supporting students’ internal motivation to read.**

Intrinsic motivation comes from within an individual. Extrinsic motivation is when another person or outside force influences an individual (Kelley & Decker, 2009). A negative correlation has been found between external motivators and the amount of time a student spends reading (Retelsdorf, Köller, & Möller, 2011). Conversely, when students read to quell their interests (an internally motivated charge), they reap high levels of reading growth (Gallagher, 2010; Retelsdorf et al., 2011).

So how can teachers foster a love of reading? Allowing students to select their reading material aids in supporting their intrinsic motivation to read (Guthrie et al., 2009; Jenkins, 2009; Kohn, 2010; Komiyama, 2009; Loera et al., 2011; Putman & Walker, 2010; Ülper, 2011). By having students choose their own reading materials they are likely to find interesting books that are enjoyable to read, and consequently, devote more time to reading (Komiyama, 2009; Ülper, 2011). Another strategy to get students
interested in reading is to lure students in through stimulating introductions. Gallagher (2010) suggested that teachers spend additional time front-loading books. She emphasized the need for teachers to hook the students’ interests in a book prior to reading the first page. Students need to fully understand the context in which the book was written, key vocabulary terms in the story, and also “what they will gain from reading a text” (Gallagher, 2010, p. 40). By connecting classics to modern day issues, Gallagher strives to connect relevance to the students’ lives. When teachers slow down and allow students to critically think about the stories they are reading, the books become more enjoyable (Applegate & Applegate, 2010). If teachers can make the text relevant to students’ lives, children are more likely to engage in reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2010; Guthrie et al., 2009).

In the aforementioned article, Kohn (2010) did more than just list ways to kill students’ motivation to read. He concluded his article by suggesting ways to engage children in reading and writing. Central to his ideas are creating student-centered classrooms. Kohn noted that teachers should allow students to compose their own discussion questions while reading a text, to brainstorm collaboratively before writing reflection papers, and to choose the format of their responses. Students may want to present a speech, write a play, or create an opinion piece. When it is time to assess students, Kohn invited his readers to turn to the students to generate alternative assignments in opposition to traditional tests.

Contrary to conventional, lecture-based classrooms, allowing students to critically discuss books with one another aids in comprehension and encourages students to read.
more (Komiyama, 2009). Komiyama (2009), professor and ESL teacher, asserted that “compared to students who feel isolated, those who feel related to their classroom community find it easier to accept the importance placed on sharing reading materials with classmates” (p. 34). Komiyama suggested the jigsaw technique where groups of students read different segments of a related material, then present their segment to the rest of the group. Allowing students to interact with text this way allows students to serve as an expert in at least one area during class discussions. Classrooms should serve as communities of respect. Creating a sense of competition among students can often create a disruption in learning (Komiyama, 2009). In their recent study, Retelsdorf et al. (2011) found that competition in reading was negatively correlated with performance.

**Digital devices and reading motivation.**

During their free time, students are often watching a screen of some sort. Whether it is a television show, a movie at the local theater, a Nintendo DS, texting with friends, or checking for Facebook updates, screens are all around us. It takes a very motivated student to turn off the screen and pick up a book instead. Teachers and researchers alike felt compelled to battle this discrepancy by turning to digital books, or ebooks, in the classroom so as to develop congruence with what students are naturally attracted to outside the classroom (Larson, 2009a).

In her article “ReKindling an interest in Reading with At-Risk Students,” Engel-Unruh (2010) felt that “by giving the students a ‘gadget’ like the Kindle, [she] could spark their interest and get them to read in a format that gadget-centric teens could appreciate” (p. 54). Through support from a grant, Engel-Unruh purchased eleven
Kindles and a gift card for purchasing ebooks. It was her hope that her struggling, unmotivated high school students would find the pleasure in reading. She described her students as “aliterate.” That is, they were able to read, they just chose not to read (Engel-Unruh, 2010, p. 54).

Engle-Unruh formed a Kindle Club at her high school. Beginning on the first Friday of the school year, students selected for the program learned how to use the Kindles, learned how to download books, and spent class time reading self-selected stories. Engle-Unruh reported that the students engaged in the Kindle Club began to read for pleasure, thoroughly enjoyed reading on Kindles, and sustained this enthusiasm for the duration of the school year. Self-reported student surveys showed a 12.1% increase in time spent reading, and a 31.2% increase in the number of books read throughout the school year.

Other researchers have reported similar success stories with elementary students. Larson (2009b), a professor at Kansas State University, worked with fifth grade students in an effort to gauge their reading motivation and attitudes following reading on laptops. After reading award-winning literature available online, students in the qualitative study participated in asynchronous online message board discussions. Students read one of two books and posted personal feelings and thoughts on a discussion board (Larson, 2009b). Larson (2009b) commented that because the students were reading online, the transition to the discussion boards was seamless. A typical session consisted of 30 minutes of reading time and 15-20 minutes dedicated to the written response (Larson, 2009b).
Students involved in Larson’s (2009b) study initially responded to teacher-created prompts. After learning the ins and outs of the discussion board as well as what makes an intriguing prompt, students began creating their own prompts and responding to questions created by peers. As a consequence of this instructional design, students were encouraged to engage with one another as they communicated thoughts about the stories. Larson (2009b) described how this format allowed learning to be socially constructed. Braun (2011) reported that in an effort to promote students’ reading in a digital environment, social networks can be used. She suggested using Twitter or Facebook to hook young readers and as a way for students to discuss ebooks with each other.

Along with high school students and middle school students, primary school students have also interacted with ebooks in novel ways. In a separate publication, Larson (2010) described a case study in which a teacher allowed two second-graders to read on Kindles. The teacher gave a brief lesson to her students regarding the use of a Kindle (Larson, 2010). She explained how to manipulate the text size, access the built-in dictionary, use the text-to-speech feature, and post notes. Students were encouraged to use the tools as they desired and were not required to use them at any time (Larson, 2010). On their own accord, one student added 43 personal notes and the other inserted 33 notes. Larson (2010) stated, “The note tool provided them with a literature-response mechanism that suited their individual needs and purposes as readers” (p. 18). The teacher was able to use the notes as measures of comprehension as well as to provide “a unique glimpse into the minds of individual readers” (p. 19).
Besides the use of the note tool, the students used the text-to-speech feature in clever ways (Larson, 2010). After learning of the feature, both girls decided to listen to a portion of the story for about ten minutes. After those ten minutes, the girls decided to read on their own because, in listening to the Kindle voice, one girl stated that “he just didn’t sound the way the story reads in my head” (Larson, 2010, p. 20). Throughout the rest of the story, one student accessed the text-to-speech feature when encountering difficult passages (Larson, 2010).

While both girls in this case study were reading at or above grade level, the use of text-to-speech features on portable reading devices certainly holds promise for struggling readers. When reflecting on her Kindle Club, Engle-Unruh (2010) wrote that she found her at-risk high school students accessed this feature regularly, reporting that they often read while they listened. The built-in dictionary aided comprehension and the development of a rich vocabulary.

In concluding her article, Larson (2010) called for further research on the integration of ebooks in schools. She claimed, “Teachers must explore the potential of digital readers, as one device can potentially take the place of hundreds of printed books and allow for unique transactions between the reader and the text” (p. 22). Concerning demographic populations, ebooks hold promise for readers with special needs due to the ability to individualize a book to suit the needs of the reader (Larson, 2010).

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this program evaluation was to develop a lending library in an online elementary school. This chapter has shown that a high percentage of
economically-disadvantaged children attend online schools and that often, underprivileged families lack reading materials. In order for these children to reach their full potential, they must have access to high-quality children’s literature.

The chapter began by framing online education in an historical lens. It showed that distance education has expanded from the early days of correspondence classes to a variety of models of online education today, including state virtual schools, multi-district schools, single-district schools, and blended learning. Charter schools were described in terms of their history, demographics, and performance.

A vast amount of literature was presented regarding national online K-12 schools. Standards for Quality Online Teaching were discussed, demographics of students were presented, and the achievement gap between low-income and mid-income students was shown. Online teachers, including their role in motivating students and their lack of preparation for teaching in a virtual environment, were described.

Because the study took place in an online elementary school in the Midwest, similar online schools in this region were described in terms of enrollment, poverty statistics, and reading achievement. Economically-disadvantaged learners in general were also discussed. National poverty rates were presented along with characteristics of high-poverty, high-performing schools.

The chapter then described school libraries regarding their roles in providing access to books so that students may engage in free reading. The history of school libraries was offered so as to provide a context for the study. In the few cases where online schools were researched regarding their ability to provide books to students, their
methods were examined. The chapter demonstrated a gap in published research regarding delivering books to elementary students attending online schools.

Ebooks were discussed in terms of their potential in an educational context. Public libraries utilizing this technology were described and classroom applications of ebooks were presented. Motivational factors impacting the likelihood for students to engage in reading was covered. It was demonstrated that schools typically kill students’ capacity to develop a love of reading by stressing skill-based curriculums over showing students the relevance, importance, and joy of reading. Ways to support students’ internal motivation to read were suggested and the role of digital devices on motivation was described.

By integrating the key components presented, it is hoped that readers understand that a lending library in an online elementary school is far-reaching. The ultimate goal behind this study was to improve students’ fluency levels and to increase their enjoyment of reading. By providing books, whether in print form or digitally, students are able to engage in reading high-quality literature when they typically may have been steeped in a strictly test-focused curriculum.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of a lending library system in an online, public elementary school and to use formative findings to guide decisions to improve both students’ reading fluency and to increase their levels of reading enjoyment. A mixed methods program evaluation model has been employed for this study utilizing both qualitative and quantitative measures. Data was collected from: fifth grade teachers, administrators, parents, and students. A mixed methods model was selected because to fully understand the development and analysis of the library, both qualitative and quantitative data were needed. This is because qualitative methods were best suited for exploring stakeholder perceptions in an emerging design and quantitative methods were more efficient for gathering data from larger groups.

This chapter provides readers with a definition of program evaluation. Several different definitions by leading program evaluation theorists will be discussed. These include developmental evaluation, client-centered evaluation, and theory-driven evaluation. The research questions driving this study will then be described. A pilot study, conducted in early 2011, will be presented so as to provide a context for how the questions in this study came to be.

The chapter continues by describing participants and data collection phases. Focus groups with both teachers and administrators served as the primary data collection method and drove the other methodological decisions. Students and parents participated through the use of surveys and interviews. Documents analyzed included students’ DIBELS scores and library usage rates. Library records, DIBELS results, and survey
analyses will center on descriptive statistics. Since the entire population of fifth graders is included in the study, there will be no inference to a larger population.

Because this study was a mixed methods study, data will be analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively with the strengths of one design compensating for the weaknesses of the other (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This chapter will allow readers to understand qualitative coding techniques that have been used and will demonstrate ways in which focus groups may be analyzed on individual levels.

This chapter will then discuss methods in which a summative evaluation, or executive report, will be produced. Rather than simply presenting the results, this report will delve into the intricacies involved in the study. In doing so, readers will clearly understand which factors played heavily into the results. This theory-driven summative phase will assist readers in determining the degree to which the results may be transferred to other settings. Credibility and validity techniques will also be presented to aid in readers’ understandings of the methodological decisions.

**Definition of Program Evaluation**

Before defining program evaluation, the concept of a program must first be described. Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey (1994) described a program as “a set of resources and activities directed toward one or more common goals, typically under the direction of a single manager or management team” (p. 3). This school’s lending library is the program of interest and can be construed as a set of books available by request from students and teachers as well as access to ebooks accessible through Follett Shelf.
These same authors, Newcomer et al. (1994), described program evaluation as “the systematic assessment of program results and, to the extent feasible, systematic assessment of the extent to which the program caused those results” (p. 3). Stufflebeam (2001) defined evaluation as “a study designed and conducted to assist some audience to assess an object’s merit and worth” (p. 11). Chen (2005), a contributor to the development of both evaluation theory and methodology, defined program evaluation as “the application of evaluation approaches, techniques, and knowledge to systematically assess and improve the planning, implementation, and effectiveness of programs” (p. 3).

A systematic view of a program includes inputs, a transformation, outputs, the environment, and feedback (Chen, 2005). Inputs include items from the environment, such as financial support, technology, support staff, equipment or materials, and clients. Outputs are simply the program’s results. The transformation is the process of using the inputs to produce the outputs. The environment includes extraneous factors in support of or working against transformation. Feedback includes an evaluation of the inputs, the outputs, a transformation or lack thereof, and the environment. It is the goal of program evaluation to complete the feedback step. Using a similar model, Wholey (1994) described this process as “the measurement of program performance – resource expenditures, program activities, and program outcomes – and the testing of causal assumptions linking these three elements” (p. 15).

**Evaluation Approaches**

Regarding program evaluation, Chen (2005) adopted a contingency view. He suggested that there is not one right way to conduct program evaluation; rather, the
design is *contingent* upon the unique aspects of the specific program. Deep understanding, Chen argued, is obtained through multiple evaluation approaches.

In pace with Chen’s contingency theory, this study used multiple formative and summative program evaluation techniques. The researcher drew from: developmental evaluation, client-centered program evaluation, and theory-driven evaluation. Each of these components and the rationale for their use will be described in depth in the following paragraphs.

**Developmental/formative evaluation.**

Because this school’s lending library was in its infancy, a developmental programming design was the initial methodology driving this study. Developmental programming relies on input from both stakeholders and the researcher to determine future developmental stages and therefore is not a model that can be rigidly followed (Patton, 1994). According to Patton (1994), developmental programming relies on the evaluator joining the evaluation team to help observe what is happening and to react to the feedback and change as details emerge. Patton’s developmental programming model relies heavily on formative assessment. In doing so, stakeholders play an integral role in setting the goals of the program. Patton (1994) officially defined developmental evaluation as:

> Evaluation processes and activities that support program, project, product, personnel and/or organizational development (usually the latter). The evaluator is part of a team whose members collaborate to conceptualize, design, and test new approaches in a long-term on-going process of continuous improvement,
adaptation, and intentional change. The evaluator’s primary function in the team is to elucidate team discussions with evaluative data and logic, and to facilitate data-based decision-making in the developmental process (p. 317).

In his book *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*, Patton (2011) borrowed a metaphor from Stake, evaluation theorist and practitioner, relating evaluation to cooking. The analogy likens formative evaluation to the notion of a cook tasting soup while preparing it for guests. Perhaps it needs more salt? More basil? Formative evaluation allows program evaluators (or cooks) to tweak a program (or recipe) as it is being developed. Summative evaluation, on the other hand, is the final rating of the approved project. In following Stake’s analogy, summative evaluation occurs when guests taste the soup. While many researchers use a strictly formative – summative model of program evaluation, Patton suggests yet another component: developmental evaluation. In his own words, developmental evaluation is “designed to be congruent with and to nurture developmental, emergent, innovative, and transformative processes” (Patton, 2011, p. 7). Here, the chef heads to the market to select the perfect ingredients specific to the particular guests of the evening. Additionally, in the developmental model, guests help the chef prepare the soup; tailoring it to their very needs.

Similar to Patton’s developmental evaluation, Stufflebeam (2001) described the process of working with stakeholders as client-centered program evaluation. In this model, the evaluator aids stakeholders in understanding the program in an effort for improvement. Client-centered program evaluation relies on continuous conversations
between the evaluator and the stakeholders so to allow marginalized voices to be heard in an attempt to promote equity and fairness (Stufflebeam, 2001). Evaluators engaging in client-centered program evaluation rely more heavily on stakeholders’ views and clients’ voices than their own expertise. While much time is spent listening to various perspectives, a summative statement is created by the evaluator in an effort to document the program’s successes and failures. Client-centered program evaluation relies on triangulation of stakeholders to achieve validity. Triangulation is a term that refers to obtaining data points from a variety of stakeholders, methods, and/or theories to corroborate the results and to increase credibility of the findings (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Chen (2005) stated that formative evaluation works to identify obstacles in implementations and relies on stakeholder input to remedy the barriers. Program evaluators assess stakeholders’ needs, determine an ideal program, consider financial boundaries, and evaluate a sphere of options. Chen said that formative evaluation must meet two needs: timeliness and relevancy. Regarding timeliness, program evaluators must adhere to the time frame dictated by stakeholders. Relevancy refers to the manner in which the program evaluator identifies implementation issues that may affect the integrity of the program. Chen recommended using formative methods such as focus groups and small scale surveys to determine necessary changes or revisions during the initial program implementation phase. Formative evaluation allows relatively easy alterations in the beginning stages of program development (Chen, 2005). The following six steps, identified by Chen, have been implemented in this program evaluation:
1. Review Program Documents and Note Underlying Assumptions
2. Identify the Program Elements Crucial to Successful Implementation and Determine Which May Be Vulnerable
3. Select Well-Suited Data-Collection Methods
4. Identify Problems
5. Probe for Sources of Problems to Help Stakeholders Choose Remedial Action

Chen’s six steps listed above have been integrated into the data collection techniques and will be described below.

**Summative evaluation.**

This program evaluation relied on theory-driven evaluation (also called process evaluation) for the production of a summative report. Theory-driven evaluation aims to expose the *black box* in program development (Scheirer, 1994). In examining the black box, it looks closely at how the program can be improved by describing the transformation processes (Chen, 2005). While some models clearly describe only inputs and outputs, theory-driven evaluation uses empirical data to describe, in detail, the program delivery and attempts to expose the components directly related to the results, thus opening the black box (Scheirer, 1994). Internal validity is increased in theory-driven evaluation because it is clearer to understand the degree to which the program supported individual improvement (Chen, 2005). Programs neglecting to mention the transformation stage risk committing a Type III error, or the conclusion that results were
directly impacted by the program when in fact other circumstances may have been at play (Scheirer, 1994).

Theory-driven evaluation frequently relies on mixed methodology to go beyond an intervention-to-outcome model. Both qualitative and quantitative information is often required to open up the black box and to obtain a holistic view of the program’s happenings (Chen, 2005). At the conclusion of the project, theory-driven program evaluation gives stakeholders a view of the program as a whole. Chen (2005) reported that the summative report should include detailed explanations of the key parts of the program and how those components contributed to or hindered the success of the program.

**Research Questions**

As mentioned in the introduction, this mixed methods study aimed to evaluate this school’s lending library using both formative and summative research questions with the purpose to generate a library system for an online public elementary school in an effort to ultimately improve students’ fluency and level of reading enjoyment. The questions were as follows:

**Developmental/Formative questions:**

1. To what extent are students in this online elementary school reading for pleasure? What is the baseline and does it relate to socioeconomic class?
2. How well do teachers understand this school’s current lending library system?
3. What are the parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ goals concerning the lending library program?
Summative questions:

4. Have teachers integrated the lending library into their classrooms? How so?

5. To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills?

6. What is the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes?

Pilot Study

In February, 2011, I embarked in a pilot study in an effort to determine if I could motivate my fifth grade students to read independently. Synchronous sessions in this online school are limited to ninety minutes for reading instruction. Research suggests that students who are below grade level in reading ought to engage in a language arts curriculum for three hours a day (Ohio Department of Education, 2006; Reeves, 2005). To make up the time gap, I required my students to read books of their choice independently. In the past, I have attempted to work through parents to ensure that children spend time reading each day. Although sympathetic to my plight, families did not make quiet reading time a priority, and students were most often not engaged in serious reading habits. The reasons why the students did not spend time reading independently were not clear at the time, yet throughout the pilot program, it became clear that the students did not have access to high quality children’s literature.

Based on data from an earlier study, I learned that teachers in high performing, high poverty schools assume a teacher locus of control. That is, teachers assume responsibility for their students’ learning. Educators at my online school doubted that a
teacher locus of control could be possible when the students remain with their parents all
day long. I had to agree, and formulated the initial question, “Can an online teacher
assume a teacher locus of control despite the distance between the teacher and the
students and motivate students to read independently?”

During this pilot study, I worked with nine students for approximately one month.
I began by explaining the importance of daily reading. The students with whom I work
are aware that they are reading below grade level. As a group, we discussed the necessity
of extra practice to help bring them up to grade level. I told the students that I wanted
them to select a book, spend time reading it each day, and while in class the next day,
share a few details about that book. Because I had a feeling that students may not have
books available, I asked which students would like me to send them a book from the
school’s lending library. At the onset of the project, approximately half of the students
were interested in receiving a book. The other half reported that they had books available
for this project at their homes.

For the first week or so, I called this our “Reading Project” for a lack of a better
name. The enthusiasm from the students encouraged me to come up with a more creative
title. Rather than renaming it myself, the class and I spent time brainstorming new name
possibilities. As a class, we decided to call it our “Read 4 Fun” project. The name fit
beautifully, as this project was neither an assignment nor homework; rather it was
designed to instill a love of reading within the children.

Often, students who took advantage of receiving a book in the mail from the
school participated more regularly in our book conversations. It was around this time
that I realized that my project took on a different spin: *I was less interested in the effect of a teacher locus of control, and more interested in the fact that students who received a book became my star readers.* My initial, simple question: “Do you need the school to send you a book?” became the crux of the project, as students previously unlikely to read for pleasure began engaging in reading. The initial pilot question regarding the possibility of online teachers assuming a locus of control became irrelevant to the project, as I noticed that motivation was less of an issue than access to literature. This pilot study became the impetus for this dissertation.

**Procedures**

This program evaluation occurred throughout the 2012-2013 school year. An action plan was developed to serve as an advanced organizer and timeline and can be viewed in Appendix A. The action plan format was selected because administrators and teachers at this school frequently map projects, goals, and tasks using an action plan template. Each component (participants, instrumentation, research design, and procedure) will be described in detail in the following sections.

**Participants**

**Students and parents.**

Two-hundred fifty-eight fifth grade students and their parents were invited to participate. This number comprised the entire fifth grade student body at the start of the school year. Due to the student phase being a quantitative survey, the researcher decided to survey the entire population of fifth graders rather than collecting a representative sample. Only students who have been enrolled for the entire school year will be included
in the findings. Attrition and mid-year enrollment are common at this online school. In the 2012-2013 school year, in April, only 69% of the students were enrolled since the beginning of the year. Since this program evaluation occurred in a natural setting, attrition rates should not skew results. Students who withdrew are those who have withdrawn from the school, or those who have decided not to complete the second survey. It was hoped that at least 20% of the students and parents who attended the school for the entire year would agree to participate.

Of the 258 students, approximately one fifth had an individualized education plan (IEP). According to this school’s 2011-2012 state report card, 19.9% of the school’s population has identified disabilities (Ohio Department of Education, 2012c). Of the remaining students without an IEP, approximately 60 students received Title I services in reading. Students are selected for Title I services if they have failed a portion of the previous year’s state assessment or if teachers notice a skill deficit in reading. Approximately one third of the students in each class receive supplemental instruction through the Title I program.

The school-wide status of economically-disadvantaged students was approximately three-fourths (75.1%) (Ohio Department of Education, 2012c). Since a goal of the study was to determine if libraries in online schools may help close the achievement gap, surveys (described below) were coded according to economic level. Because student survey responses have been stratified according to economic levels, it was essential to recruit students from both low-income and mid-income homes.
In October of 2012, parents and students received an email explaining the goal of the research project (Appendix B) and asking for their consent and participation (Appendix C). Parents were asked to provide consent for their child to complete the survey and for the researcher to access their child’s DIBELS scores and library usage records. The researcher provided a link to the survey to students and parents who have accepted the request. Further details regarding the survey will be presented later in this chapter.

Another component to student data resides in DIBELS scores. This school routinely collects DIBELS benchmarks three times a year for all students. Permission was granted from the school to access student DIBELS scores in both the fall and the spring for the students whose parents have consented to the research, and data was entered into SPSS as it was made available. A letter of support from the school regarding collection of data is presented in Appendix D.

Due to the nature of the emergent design of this study, the researcher decided to leave the option of student interviews open. At the time of the proposal, it was unclear the extent to which students’ and parents’ voices would emerge through the surveys and through the teachers’ input. Because of a response rate that was lower than anticipated (described in Chapter 4), the researcher employed stratified purposeful sampling (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) based on class membership to better understand the students’ and parents’ perspectives on the library program. Twelve students and their parents were interviewed. Further details regarding student surveys, DIBELS analyses, and interviews will be presented below.
Administrative stakeholders.

The administrative stakeholders consist of school employees who have expressed an interest in taking part in this project. When proposing the initial meeting date, a snowball sampling approach (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012) was conducted to ensure that any key stakeholders were not being excluded. In September of 2012, those who have shown interest were contacted and asked for names of additional people who may be integral to the study (Appendix E). Seven administrators and office staff members agreed to participate. Participants included the elementary principal, the director of intervention, the assistant director of intervention, the school librarian, the elementary reading specialist, a teacher on special assignment who works on curriculum development, and the manager of the Title office. Consent for participation was gathered prior to the focus group sessions. The consent forms can be viewed in Appendix F.

Teachers.

Another focus group consisted of fifth grade teachers at this school. In the 2012-2013 school year, there were nineteen teachers in the fifth grade. This school year brought a change to how classrooms were created in that teachers were departmentalized into reading/social studies teachers or math/science teachers. Only those teachers who taught reading were invited to participate in the study (Appendix G). Nine out of twelve teachers agreed to take part in the focus group.

Qualitative researchers typically continue in collecting data from participants until saturation is achieved. The term saturation refers to the point when findings become redundant and discrepancies are resolved (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005), although it is
always an assumption. Because of the timeframe of this study, saturation became a limitation. It should be noted that additional viewpoints would occur, from students, parents, and teachers, if the study were to span across several school years instead of the nine month data collection phase described below.

**Research Design and Data Collection Methods**

**Surveys.**

Small-scale surveys are useful in program evaluations to determine how programs are perceived and to determine what is or is not working (T. Miller, 1994). Nastasi and Schensul (2005) defined surveys as being “highly structured and used to gather specific information from a larger and more representative group of individual participants” (p. 184). Stakeholders should be involved in the construction of the survey, as ideas will likely be presented that will not have been created by the program evaluator alone (T. Miller, 1994). Involving stakeholders in survey construction will also ensure that the results will be meaningful. Chen (2005) reasoned that surveys are an appropriate research method during formative program evaluation.

In their book, *Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method,* Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009), provided numerous suggestions when creating a web-based survey. During the design phase, the authors suggested beginning with an opening screen that explains the instructions and descriptions of the survey. This screen should be welcoming and encouraging. When considering how many questions to include on one screen, the authors pointed out that if all the questions are on one page, the instrument will more closely approximate a paper survey, yet if respondents exit the
survey early, no data will have been gathered. Grouping similar questions together on separate pages alerts respondents as to where their attention should be focused, yet takes them longer to complete the survey. The authors contended that longer surveys should certainly be spread across a few pages.

Dillman et al. (2009) mentioned good practices in web-based survey design. One good practice is to allow the respondents to exit the survey and then resume it at a later time. This is respectful of the respondents’ time and accounts for emergencies. The survey administrator also ought to test the survey’s appearance on a variety of browsers, platforms, and under various user-controlled settings. Ensuring readability and uniformity among respondents is essential. Screen shots of the survey should be captured using a variety of these settings as well so that people interested in the survey results can see how the survey looked to respondents.

Open-response questions deserve special attention in a web-based survey. Dillman et al. (2009) recommended that survey designers create a clear and explicit stem, detailing the message they wish respondents to respond to. If more than one answer is desired, more than one answer box should be presented. Analyzing open-ended response questions takes additional time and money so it is essential to ask questions that will yield meaningful responses. The open-ended response questions not only take additional time to analyze, but also require respondents to exert more time and effort as well. Dillman et al. suggested that open-response questions be kept to a minimum to keep respondents’ motivation to answer them high. Larger response boxes send the message
to respondents that a detailed, lengthier response is desired as compared to smaller response boxes.

IRB approved surveys were administered to participating students and their parents at two distinct points: the beginning of the year and at the conclusion of the school year in an effort to aid in comparability measures (Gersten et al., 2005). The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) is a survey in the public domain that measures both students’ self-concept as a reader and the degree to which they value reading. Appendix H includes an author-provided description of this public domain instrument. This study utilized the quantitative component of the MRP and was adapted according to directives gleaned from the administrative focus group. The MRP survey can be viewed in Appendix I.

The survey consisted of twenty-two items with a four-point scale for responses (Gambrell et al., 1996) and two additional open-ended questions. Ten of the questions measured a student’s self-concept as a reader (including his or her perceived ability and performance compared to peers) and ten questions measured the value students place on reading (including frequency of reading engagement). The four-point scale was chosen because elementary children have been found to have trouble when five or more responses are available for selection (Gambrell et al., 1996) and to avoid a neutral response category. Item answers varied from a positive to negative response pattern to a negative to positive response pattern so as to prevent students attempting to answer the same way for each question (Gambrell et al., 1996). The authors of the measure calculated Cronbach’s alpha on both subscales of the MRP and showed that self-concept
yielded a .75 and value of reading yielded a .82 (Gambrell et al., 1996). Regardless of the published findings, the researcher calculated the Cronbach alpha during this study to measure the reliability of the survey, and reported it in Chapter 4. Two final multiple-choice questions asked students to estimate the number of books or ebooks read in the previous thirty days.

Authors of the MRP suggested that the instrument be administered either to a group or to students individually, but asserted that it is essential for it to be read aloud to the students. By reading the survey aloud to the students, students’ reading abilities will not skew the results. The authors have created a script for the administrator which assures the students that there are not any right or wrong answers and that the teacher simply wants to understand how the students feel about reading. A scoring sheet is provided with the survey and instructs the researcher when recoding is necessary. Raw scores may be converted to percentages by dividing the raw score by the total score (80). The scoring sheet is available in Appendix J.

Upon receipt of signed parental consent, students and parents received a link to the survey via email. To administer the survey, the researcher instructed the parents to help the students access the survey through the url and to read the survey aloud to their children. Because of the nature of the school being online, parents were accustomed to working with their children in a similar manner to access and complete assignments. Qualtrics, an online survey tool, was used to house and administer the survey. The survey in this study has been replicated as closely as possible to the original MRP survey, with the addition of four questions at the end. Students selected their responses while the
survey was read to them, and students and parents had the opportunity to each answer an open response question relating to their thoughts on the lending library. Prior suggestions concerning open-ended responses in web-based surveys from Dillman et al. (2009) were implemented.

The MRP is an appropriate instrument to measure changes in students’ self-concepts as readers and the value they place on reading (Gambrell et al., 1996). In this study, the MRP was given in the fall, prior to full implementation of the lending library, and again in the spring, after the students have had access to books for one school year. Scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine changes among individual students. Surveys were coded according to students’ economic levels, and differences between the two subgroups (low-income or non-low-income) were calculated. Surveys were also clustered by class so as to determine if differences in self-concept or value of reading was dependent on teachers. Data detailing demographic and instructor differences were used to steer focus group conversations so that discrepancies may be attempted to be understood. Results of the student and parent surveys are presented in Chapter 4.

Limitations in using the MRP include: a reliance on self-reporting, no differentiation in the survey between self-selected reading materials versus content-area materials, and that it must be used in conjunction with other measures of reading enjoyment and self-concept to gain a full understanding (Gambrell et al., 1996).
Focus groups.

Krueger (1988) identified a focus group as “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment” (p. 18). While interviews can yield an in depth perspective from one participant at a time, focus groups capitalize on group discussions to make sense of a phenomenon (Morgan, 1988; Morgan, 1993; Redmond & Curtis, 2009). It is desirable for participants to probe each other as the discussion unfolds (Redmond & Curtis, 2009), with the hope that through the discussion, all participants will have the opportunity to share their viewpoints on the topic (Shoaf & Shoaf, 2006). It has been argued that when given the opportunity to interact with each other and when focusing on a single topic, focus groups elicit material that would not have surfaced in other research methods (Morgan, 1988). An advantage of a focus group compared to multiple interviews includes the ability to gather substantial knowledge in a short period of time (Morgan, 1988).

Researchers conducting program evaluations have often relied on focus groups as data points (Redmond & Curtis, 2009) as the methodology is well-suited to evaluating educational programs (Shoaf & Shoaf, 2006). Scheirer (1994) described a focus group in program evaluation as a “small group discussion . . . held among program delivery staff or recipients, focused on their reactions to a proposed intervention or their experiences during pilot delivery” (p. 49). Focus groups are well-attuned for formative evaluation (Chen, 2005). Krueger and Casey (2000) reported that focus groups are appropriate for planning and goal setting and that “listening to others with differing expertise and
allowing focus group participants an opportunity to interact can foster new insights and solutions not available by traditional strategies” (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 16). A well-designed focus group is an adequate method to determine “red flags” if problems are indeed part of the program (Chen, 2005, p. 135). Focus groups assume a semi-structured format and are designed to elicit shared perspectives regarding the program (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

Focus groups should have between 6-10 participants (Morgan, 1988). When groups are too small, the onus of discussion is too heavy on each participant, yet when groups are too large, individuals may feel that their opinion is less important, and the discussion may be difficult for the moderator to manage. It is recommended to over-recruit group members by 20% (Morgan, 1988). The participants should be selected systematically, as homogeneous groups encourage participation (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Morgan, 1988; Redmond & Curtis, 2009; Shoaf & Shoaf, 2006).

Researchers must conduct more than one focus group to get a clear picture of the phenomenon at hand (Morgan, 1988). When conducting focus groups, sample size refers to the number of groups conducted rather than the number of participants in each group (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011; Morgan, 1988). Qualitative research projects attempt depth over breadth in discussing a phenomenon (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011) so it is imperative that multiple groups are conducted and that saturation is taken into account. Although saturation is a grey area, it is recommended to hold two-to-five (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011) or three-to-four (Krueger & Casey, 2000) focus groups per demographically
similar focus group. Morgan (1988) stated that if the focus is on “getting someone’s perspective” only a few groups may be needed (p. 42).

Focus groups with both administrative stakeholders and with teachers were the primary sources of data in this program evaluation. The researcher served as the moderator for all focus group sessions. In line with the research presented above, each homogenous focus group (administrators or teachers) met three times over the course of the study. An assistant moderator was present during the administrative focus group sessions and recorded response patterns and level of consensus or dissent. More details regarding the role of the assistant moderator will be presented in the section covering analysis techniques.

In September of 2012, the researcher met with the administrative stakeholders at this school’s headquarters to review current program documents and proceedings, to identify crucial elements for improving the lending library, to generate goals pertaining to the library, to revise proposed data collection methods, and to approve a student survey. Successful focus groups have approximately ten questions (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Shoaf & Shoaf, 2006) and begin with general questions and proceed to more difficult questions as the session progresses (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Krueger, 1988; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Redmond & Curtis, 2009; Shoaf & Shoaf, 2006). Good questions are open-ended and avoid dichotomous answers (Krueger, 1988). Questions for the initial focus group with administrative stakeholders can be found in Appendix K.
Like the administrative stakeholders, the teachers met early in the year to determine current perceptions and use of the lending library. Teachers identified elements and goals of the program that are crucial to their needs. Teacher focus groups were conducted online using the Elluminate virtual meeting platform. Over the past two decades, researchers have turned to the internet to gather qualitative and quantitative data (Tates et al., 2009). Conducting focus groups online provides a method to conduct research with participants who are either not able to attend a traditional session or who are unwilling to speak candidly in a face-to-face format (Fox, Morris, & Rumsey, 2007). While it has been argued that focus groups do not take place in natural settings (Morgan, 1988), teachers in this school are fully trained regarding Elluminate software and it was hoped that in conducting a virtual meeting in this manner, teachers would feel more comfortable in sharing their perspectives.

Elluminate software consists of a whiteboard (or space to share a PowerPoint or a document), a real-time chat box for textual conversations, and a participant window that denotes who is speaking, who is present in the meeting, and emoticons such as smiles, thumbs down, applause, and a disapproving face. Elluminate allows the moderator to record the sessions, including video, audio, and the chat box. Privacy remained at the forefront and teachers were assured that the recording would not be shared with superiors. The questioning protocol for the initial focus group with the teachers can be found in Appendix L.
Subsequent focus group sessions.

Both the administrative stakeholder focus group and the teacher focus group met again in January and then again in April. Protocol questions for these subsequent sessions were dictated from data gathered in earlier research phases and can be found in Appendices M, N, O, and P. This iterative plan allowed the stakeholders to drive the study. Speaking in a general sense, and in following Chen’s (2005) six recommended steps in program evaluation (presented earlier), in January the questions focused on identifying problems with the lending library program and selecting remedial actions. A report was generated with each focus group (administrators and teachers) and shared with the other focus group members so that a cohesive direction can be sought for the duration of the school year. In April, the focus groups reconvened to discuss the results of the program. Teachers were probed as to changes in their behavior regarding the lending library as well as changes in their students’ reading habits. Both the administrative focus group and the teacher focus group discussed problems and remedial actions to be considered the following school year. Another cohesive report was generated to share with all stakeholders.

Document analyses.

Document analyses are compatible with program evaluation. Examining documents related to the program can provide information whether one form of data supports another (Caudle, 1994). Incorporating documents into the study will aid in method-triangulation. Organizational records are an ideal way to measure the extent of program implementation. Scheirer (1994) described organizational records as “data
collection forms routinely kept by an organization for purposes other than for the evaluation” (p. 55).

This study examined documents pertaining to the library as well as students’ DIBELS scores. Students’ library use rates were collected mid-year and again at the end of the year. The number of books available during peak library times and the return rate were included in the document analysis.

**Library records.**

During this study, student library records were accessed to determine circulation rates among students. Besides stratifying usage rates among economic classes and between teachers, the researcher also included data on the numbers of books returned as well as books requested by grade and genre. Permission to access student library records was included in the parental consent form administered at the start of the project.

**DIBELS – The dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills.**

DIBELS has been shown to be both a valid and reliable assessment by providing teachers with a word count correlating with a students’ fluency rate (Hagans, 2008). A research-based criterion-referenced reading measure, DIBELS is used to gauge the reading progress of students (University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning, 2011). Benchmarks are provided to determine the minimum performance level necessary for a student to achieve to be considered reading at grade level (University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning, 2011). In September, students’ oral reading fluency (ORF) scores were gathered using the 5th Grade Benchmark 1 – Beginning/Fall assessment. ORF scores were gathered again at the end of the school year, using the 5th
Grade Benchmark 3 – End/Spring assessment so that a general pattern of reading growth could be described.

To gather a benchmark score, teachers instructed students individually to read aloud a passage for one minute (Cummings, Kennedy, Otterstedt, Baker, & Kame'enui, 2011). Scores were tabulated according to the amount of words read correctly during the one minute time frame. Each student read three distinct passages and the median score was recorded as the benchmark score (Cummings et al., 2011). Research has supported the use of DIBELS to serve as a predictor instrument for state assessments (Salzman, Clay, Brown, Rosemary, & Lenhart, 2005). According to Salzman, Clay, Brown, Rosemary, and Lenhart (2005), the third DIBELS benchmark administration is positively correlated ($r=.644$) with the Ohio Achievement Test given in spring (now known as the Ohio Achievement Assessment). The same authors found that DIBELS is able to be used to predict students’ success on nationally-normed assessments as well.

The school in this study already routinely collects DIBELS benchmark scores for students. Teachers have been trained on administration procedures. Following each benchmark DIBELS administration, teachers entered the students’ scores electronically on a shared drive.

**Interviews.**

Maintaining the iterative nature of this program evaluation, interviews were deemed necessary due to a low survey response rate. In remembering the goal of client-centered program evaluation, researchers must not neglect marginalized voices. The crux of the study was providing a method of getting quality children’s literature into the homes
of economically-disadvantaged children who attend an online school. Because only 14% of the students agreed to participate in the surveys (described fully in Chapter 4) twelve students and their parents were interviewed in the spring.

Patton (2002), in *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, pointed out that “we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions” (p. 340) and that through interviews, we can begin to understand these factors. Glesne (2006) deemed this skill of eliciting meaningful responses as “getting words to fly” (p. 79). She emphasized that interviewers must develop questions ahead of time, yet shape them during the interview based on the responses yielded. While heavily dependent on the researcher, interviews are inherently thought of as an accurate portrayal of the interviewees’ lives and thoughts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Patton (2002) referred to a prewritten list of questions as a “standardized open-ended interview” (p. 344). To garner deep understanding, Patton suggested questions be open-ended, clear, and specific. In an effort to expand insight on the reading program from a child’s perspective, interview questions centered on students’ use of and impression of the lending library. Parents were asked the extent to which their students have used the library and were also asked for suggestions and goals. The question protocol for the parent and student interviews can be seen in Appendix Q. Chapter 4 describes the responses.
Data Analysis and Synthesis

Coding: Student survey open responses, focus groups, and interviews.

Data was gathered and analyzed simultaneously, so that each phase of data collection could impact the following phase. Known as interim analysis, collecting and analyzing data in this manner allows the researcher to deeply understand the topic and guide further segments of data collection (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Open responses to survey questions, focus group transcripts, and interview transcripts were coded according to the themes that emerge. Based on the literature review and prior knowledge of this organization’s lending library, a priori codes have been developed (Appendix R). Inductive coding, or codes that emerge from the data (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012) were added to the a priori codes as new categories developed.

Representing individual voices: Focus groups.

Most researchers who utilize focus groups rely solely on the textual transcript as a point of analysis (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). Typically researchers will create transcripts that are 50 to 70 pages long per focus group and, coupled with their notes from the session, generate a finding relative to the topic being discussed (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Qualitative researchers create a coding system when analyzing data (Rothwell, 2010). Focus group transcripts are usually read thoroughly and the codes emerge as the researcher absorbs and analyzes the data (Rothwell, 2010; Shoaf & Shoaf, 2006).

When research progresses this way, the point of analysis is at the group level, although not all focus group theorists agree that this is the appropriate focus of analysis
(Goodwin & Happell, 2009; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Tomkins & Eatough, 2010). The problem with using the group as the area of analysis, Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, and Zoran (2009) contended, is that readers will not be privy to what happened during the focus group. While the general theme is likely to be reported, it is unlikely that researchers will parse out individual opinions, and it is unlikely that the level of consensus or dissent will be presented (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2010; Tomkins & Eatough, 2010). Goodwin and Happell (2009) refer to this problem as being “unable to see the trees for the forest” (p. 65). Researchers who focus on a group level analysis risk marginalizing participants who are reluctant to speak (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010).

In their article, “A Qualitative Framework for Collecting and Analyzing Data in Focus Group Research,” Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) suggested micro-interlocutor analysis to help decipher which participants responded to which questions, to describe the order of participant responses, to illustrate the formality of the responses (casual or focused), and to incorporate non-verbal responses into the analysis. It is hoped that by analyzing focus group data on a variety of levels, this research technique can increase its rigor.

Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) suggested, through the use of micro-interlocutor analysis, that researchers begin to include the individual opinions when analyzing focus group data. The use of this strategy not only identifies outspoken participants, but, perhaps even more important, identifies those who are reluctant to speak. The authors claimed that when reporting focus group data, a level of consensus should be presented.
Instead of just presenting a *common theme* supported by direct quotes, researchers ought to provide the figure representing the number of participants who agreed with the theme, the number of participants who dissented, and the number of members who lacked a view at all. Onwuegbuzie et al. recommended explicitly stating these statistics in the final report.

Keeping track of the information presented above would be near impossible if a researcher relied solely on written text. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) recommended the use of a matrix for recording the level of consensus. The authors suggested that the assistant moderator use a table in which the number of the focus group question is listed in the first column, and each member is listed across the first row. This method of note-keeping allows an assistant moderator to insert simple notations in the cells to document which participant agreed with, disagreed with, or did not respond to each question. Using a mixed methods approach to focus groups (qualitative descriptions as well as frequency counts) allows for a richer analysis than either method alone (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009).

Focus groups often concentrate on group consensus and ignore individual contributions, dissents, and omissions (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010; Tomkins & Eatough, 2010). So that this generalization did not occur in this study, Onwuegbuzie et al.’s (2009) matrix for determining the consensus level was adhered to. Through the use of an assistant moderator who took notes during the focus groups, each question has been analyzed to determine which members agreed with the consensus, which members dissented, and which members did not contribute to the question. By partaking in this *micro-interlocutor analysis*, the researcher was able to determine
whether future questions should be directed to a participant who was reluctant to answer.

The micro-interlocutor analysis also provided mixed method data that was essential when describing the results of the program evaluation. Table 1 is provided below so that the readers can understand the role of an analysis matrix. The data is purely illustrative, and is in no way indicative of actual focus group responses.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Focus Group Question</th>
<th>Participant A</th>
<th>Participant B</th>
<th>Participant C</th>
<th>Participant D</th>
<th>Participant E</th>
<th>Participant F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Smiled, nodded</td>
<td>Answered Q first</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>Agreed with Participant B</td>
<td>No comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Answered Q first</td>
<td>Shook head</td>
<td>Verbally disagreed</td>
<td>Answered Q second</td>
<td>Agreed with Participant B</td>
<td>No comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>Nodded, laughed</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>Answered Q first</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
<td>No comment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the matrix provided above (Table 1), it is easy to see which participants answered each question, which participants were in agreement with the initial answerer, and which participants remained quiet. A quick glance from an astute moderator allows future questions to be directed towards reluctant speakers.

The micro-interlocutor matrix presented above has been applied during both the administrative stakeholder and the teacher focus group sessions. Levels of consensus and dissent have been entered into the cells below the participants’ names. During the face-
to-face focus groups with the administrative stakeholders, the assistant moderator recorded gestures such as nods, shrugged shoulders, or even a lack of a response. Teacher focus groups conducted online were also able to be analyzed in this regard. While the moderator may not be privy to nodding heads, Elluminate allows participants to send emoticons such as smilies, frowns, clapping hands, and thumbs down in the chat box. Teachers also regularly used text speech such as *lol*. Utilizing both the emoticons and responses in the chat box allowed the researcher to capture emotional responses and consensus levels despite being in a virtual environment. Chapter 4 presents micro-interlocutor analyses at the conclusion of each focus group discussion.

Kjellin (2008) suggested analyzing focus group data by comparing themes that were brought up across focus groups. By creating a line graph, researchers may compare the amount of time dedicated in discussing various themes. Distinct themes can be listed on the x-axis, while the y-axis can specify the number of times each theme was discussed in a session. Each focus group can be plotted (differentiated by color) so it is easy for the researcher and readers to compare which group spent the most or least time per theme (Kjellin, 2008). Kjellin warned researchers against reporting all focus groups as a cohesive group, if in fact different groups spent different amounts of time on each theme.

To compare responses between the administrative and teacher focus groups, Kjellin’s (2008) method of creating a line graph dictating the time spent on each theme has been used for inspiration, however, the data gleaned in this project was more suitably displayed in a bar graph. In creating a model after each section of focus groups (September, January, and April) the researcher was able to easily compare the most
important aspects to each group of stakeholders. If one stakeholder group spent
additional time discussing a theme, that theme was integrated into subsequent focus
groups with the other stakeholders. For example, if the administrative stakeholders spent
a significant amount of time discussing a lack of books being returned, a question was
able to be framed to the teachers to determine what efforts, if any, they were making to
help ensure that books were returned in a timely manner. To aid in readers’
understanding of this technique, Figure 1 is provided. (Figure 1 data is purely
hypothetical and is used solely for illustrative purposes.)

![Figure 1](image)

*Figure 1.* Representing themes in focus groups; inspired by Kjellin’s graphs.

Onwuegbuzie et al. (2010) cautioned researchers against a heavy reliance on
quantitative data. They argued that quantitative *counts* ought to be combined with
qualitative data so that a richer analysis may be developed. Mixed methods analyses of
focus groups are rare (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). Onwuegbuzie et al. (2010) appealed for a mixed method approach so that researchers may get “the most out of their data” (p. 267) and created the frameworks described above to aid researchers in this endeavor.

**Descriptive statistics: Student surveys, DIBELS, library use records.**

**Fall.**

Descriptive statistics were a primary method for analyzing quantitative data that emerged from students’ survey results, DIBELS scores, and library use records. Descriptive statistics describe and summarize data sets (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012). After receiving the fall survey results, mean percentages and standard deviations were calculated. Because the MRP evaluated two subsets of reading; task value and self-efficacy, results were calculated in three ways: combined score, task value, and self-efficacy. By parsing the scores into their subsets, the researcher was able to understand the value students placed on reading; one of the main goals of this study. Results were stratified according to student economic level as well.

Initial DIBELS benchmarks were also calculated using descriptive statistics. Students’ mean scores and standard deviations were used to show the average amount of words students read in one minute and the variability in scores. A correlational scatter plot has been created (using SPSS software) to determine if students’ DIBELS scores were correlated to their survey results (combined subsets, perceived value of reading, and self-efficacy of reading). Scatter plots are ways to visually represent the relationship (or lack thereof) between two variables (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Results from the fall survey and DIBELS scores will be presented in Chapter 4.
Mid-year.

Mid-year, library usage rates were available. The researcher collected the library usage rates and analyzed them as a whole, by classes, and individually. When interpreting the mid-year results as an entire population, data has been displayed graphically. This allowed in-house stakeholders to see general trends in library usage. A graph has been created to show the numbers of books checked out each month. Data was also presented graphically to compare use between the four teachers. Presented as a bar graph, the data showed differences in usage rates between classes. It was hoped that by presenting data this way, subsequent focus group sessions could discuss any discrepancies. Finally, library use data was analyzed on an individual level. By viewing library use data individually, usage rates were linked with students’ economic status. This mid-year analysis allowed the researcher and the stakeholders to determine if low-income students were borrowing at different rates compared to their mid-income peers.

Besides simply analyzing library usage rates, the researcher presented request and return rates. This data was also presented graphically to focus groups so that they could easily see trends and work to implement policies and/or changes so that the selection of books did not hamper students’ access to books.

Spring.

Similar data analyses took place in the spring. Descriptive statistics were used to compare the fall administration of the survey to the spring administration in an effort to see changes in the value students place on reading, their self-efficacy of reading, and the
combined subsets. As in the fall, results were compiled for the whole population and parsed according to economic levels.

Changes in DIBELS from the fall to the spring were also explored quantitatively. Tables were created showing mean comparison changes as a whole group and by teacher. DIBELS mean comparison changes stratified by economic status were also created.

Library use data was analyzed in the spring and was described by the whole group, by class, and individually. Graphs showed library use data combined with DIBELS results and with survey responses. Taken together, the quantitative analyses aimed to show what effect, if any, the library system had on students’ oral reading fluency (DIBELS) and enjoyment of reading (MRP survey).

While quantitative data is often collected in situations to prove causality, it should be recognized that this study has not been designed to show causality. The results of the descriptive statistics were included merely as data points in support of the project, and were not used to claim that the lending library caused any changes in either the survey results or oral reading fluency scores. Qualitative data was used to corroborate findings and validity techniques (described later) were employed so that readers may understand the extent to which findings may be applied in other settings.

**Summative evaluation: Executive report.**

Summative evaluation uses program evaluation to judge the merit, or accountability, of a program (Chen, 2005). For the purpose of this program evaluation, the summative evaluation attempted to answer if the model is working. In other words,
did this school’s lending library change teacher’s behaviors, effect students’ reading habits, or impact the achievement gap?

In early summer of 2013, a period of outcome monitoring commenced. Chen (2005) defined the purpose of outcome monitoring as being to “acquire data to increase understanding of whether clients are better off for having received services” (p. 184). As the theory-driven evaluation model explained earlier, program evaluation goes beyond accountability. Understanding the transformative component will expose the black box to explain the inner workings of the program. This phase of the program evaluation explained not only if a lending library affected the students, but how and why it affected or did not affect the students of various economic levels.

Chen (2005) suggested conducting a summative data analysis. By using library records, this study attempted to answer the following three questions:

1. How many clients were served by the program during a specific period?
2. How many of the clients served come from the target population?
3. Does the number of clients served justify the program’s existence? (Chen, 2005, pp. 170-171)

Students’ DIBELS scores were analyzed during this summative phase and compared to their scores at the beginning of the year. While a number of factors can and certainly will contribute to a spike in reading levels over the course of a year, a focus group of teachers has been conducted to determine the teachers’ thoughts regarding the impact the lending library had on students’ oral reading fluency scores. Many of the teachers involved in the focus group have taught at this school for multiple years, so they were
informally able to compare the growth of their 2012-2013 students to student growth in prior years.

**Transferability**

Brantlinger et al. (2005) stated that:

Qualitative research is not done for purposes of generalization but rather to produce *evidence* based on the exploration of specific contexts and particular individuals. It is expected that readers will see similarities to their situations and judge the relevance of the information produced to their own circumstances (p. 203).

Rather than accounting for generalization, this study utilized thick description so that readers may determine the practicality of transferability (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

Notes on demographics, library usage, and characteristics specific to online education (synchronous components pertaining directly to the project) are described in detail and are supported by direct quotes throughout Chapter 4. With components such as these clearly accentuated, it is anticipated that other online elementary teachers may determine if the findings may be useful to their practice. Caudle (1994) emphasized that in order to generalize findings, the contexts must be similar. It is the role of the program evaluator to help the readers understand the context in depth so that it can be determined the degree to which transferability may occur (Caudle, 1994).
Credibility and Validity

Chen (2005) discussed two types of credibility that surfaces in program evaluation: scientific credibility and stakeholder credibility. Among the two, Chen suggested achieving stakeholder credibility in the initial stages of the project by interacting with the program’s stakeholders. This can be achieved by evaluators gaining insight from the stakeholders’ perspectives and then using that insight to steer the research focus and design. Scientific credibility, Chen asserted, “reflects the extent to which that evaluation was governed by scientific principles” (2005, p. 8). This study adhered to the program evaluation designs previously mentioned, with an emphasis on stakeholder interaction, to achieve both stakeholder and scientific credibility.

In drawing conclusions from program evaluations, Caudle (1994) spoke of internal validity. She likened this to credibility, in much the same manner as Chen’s definition of stakeholder credibility described above. Caudle (1994) suggested that internal validity “asks evaluators to establish confidence in the truth of the evaluation findings, as viewed through the eyes of those being observed or interviewed, and the context in which the evaluation was carried out” (p. 85).

Below, Table 2 (adapted from Brantlinger et al., 2005) provides qualitative validity techniques that were conducted in this study in an effort to accurately represent the findings of the program evaluation:
Table 2.

**Qualitative Validity Techniques**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Validity Technique</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>Multiple data sources were examined (surveys, focus groups, document analyses, interviews); Multiple methods were used (qualitative and quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconfirming Evidence</td>
<td>Negative case analysis were explored via teacher focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Reflexivity</td>
<td>Reflexive notes were maintained throughout the years of the study and notes were compared to findings to examine the potential of researcher bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Checks</td>
<td>Second level member checks were conducted after each focus group (with both teachers and administrators) and with the executive report to check for accuracy of analysis and interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Debriefing</td>
<td>The data was discussed with colleagues and feedback was solicited regarding analysis and results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit Trail</td>
<td>Notes and recordings from focus groups and library records were maintained to support sufficient time spent on the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prolonged Field Engagement</td>
<td>The nine month study elicited in-depth focus group transcripts, and thick description documented sufficient time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick, Detailed Description</td>
<td>Detailed quotations were used to draw forth emotions, stories, and experiences of stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particularizability</td>
<td>Thick description allowed readers to judge the extent to which findings may be generalized to other studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As reflected in Table 2, a variety of validity techniques were conducted to validate the study’s findings. Both stakeholder triangulation and method triangulation were a central theme during this study. The iterative mixed methods approach kept this in the forefront. Focus groups allowed for detailed negative case analyses if one or more teachers appeared to be struggling with the lending library. Through discussions, discrepant data attempted to be identified and explained. In Chapter 4, thick description will aid readers in determining the applicability to their context. The aforementioned techniques also interacted together to provide a sense of trustworthiness to readers. Member checks were used to examine disconfirming evidence, and the reflexive journal combined with the audit trail shows the extent to which the phenomenon has been documented (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). By using a variety of credibility techniques, the researcher attempted to ensure that the results generated in the program evaluation provide an accurate perception of the experiences of the participants (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

Although the qualitative validity techniques are perhaps the most important due to the primary role that the qualitative data played in this study, quantitative validity issues were also explored. Student surveys, library records, and DIBELS comprised the quantitative components in this study. Threats to internal validity are integrated into this project; however, the aim of this study was not to determine causality. Among potential threats to internal validity included: history, maturation, and instrumentation (with DIBELS benchmarks).
Mixed methods researchers use the term *legitimation* when discussing validity concerns (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; R. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Integrating both quantitative and qualitative data helps to alleviate the faults of either type of research alone (R. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For example, analyzing library records can corroborate or contradict student self-reporting on surveys. Also, both emic (insider) and etic (outsider) views are considered in mixed methods research. Similar to Chen’s (2005) notion of stakeholder and scientific credibility, this study began by incorporating an emic perspective and then transitioned to an etic perspective as the researcher analyzed the results during the summative phase.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter began by describing theories of program evaluation. Developmental, client-centered, and theory-driven models were shown to be supportive of this study. Formative evaluation strategies focused on the input of stakeholders, and a summative evaluation strategy was selected so that readers could clearly see the extent to which each component of the lending library played a role in the results.

The research questions were presented, delineating those which were most important during the formative phase, and those which were indicative of the summative phase. Participants in the study were described next. It was shown that students, their parents, teachers, and administrators are key stakeholders in the development of, implementation of, and analysis of this school’s lending library. Surveys, focus groups, document analyses, and interviews were laid out as the primary data collection methods.
A rationale for each choice was presented as well as current literature reviews of each method.

Planned methods of analyses were provided in this chapter. It was shown that coding, both a priori and inductive, would occur simultaneously with data collection phases and would be used to drive future data collection methods. Because focus groups are at the pinnacle of the data collection methods, novel ways to analyze focus group data were presented. Manners in which individual voices can be elicited within a group setting were demonstrated.

Descriptive statistical procedures were explained to analyze initial and end of the year DIBELS scores and survey results. Graphs will be used in a summative nature so that readers can understand the effect that the library program had on students’ value of reading and oral reading fluency rates. Readers were cautioned against drawing causal assumptions from the results and were reminded that other factors could certainly play a role in increasing students’ fluency rates and levels of reading enjoyment.

The chapter concluded by describing the extent to which results could be transferred to similar school settings. Credibility and validity techniques were presented to assist readers in deciding the degree that the program results could be attributed to changes in students’ reading behaviors and abilities.
Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this program evaluation was to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate a lending library in an online school so as to promote increased levels of reading fluency and reading enjoyment. This chapter presents the findings from focus groups conducted with administrators and teachers, student and parent surveys, student and parent interviews, and document analyses of library records and students’ DIBELS scores. The results of the credibility techniques used in the context of the program evaluation are presented in this chapter, as they emerged throughout data collection. The following six major findings emerged through the nine months of data collection:

1. Parents, students, teachers, and administrators were generally happy to have access to the libraries. Stakeholders described the libraries as a great addition to the school. Parents and students frequently asked for more titles and an expanded genre.

2. The major goal of the library was similar across stakeholders: To get books into the hands of the students.

3. The library lacked a true director; therefore communication suffered and many stakeholders were ill-informed.

4. Teachers found it difficult to integrate the library into live class sessions. They requested the students be able to have regular trips to the library, supported by a school librarian.

5. Students who accessed the library most were those who were already motivated readers.
6. Stakeholders agreed that reading ebooks on a desktop computer lacks the comfort of reading on a digital reader or of reading a book.

This chapter will follow a chronological path as each data collection phase influenced subsequent phases. Key findings from each segment of data collection will be presented and their relevance to the research questions will be explained. Following the iterative nature of this research’s emergent design, each of the key findings will be enveloped into further data collection phases. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the six findings presented above.

**Fall Focus Groups**

Focus groups were held in the fall of 2012 with both administrators and teachers. During the week after each session, the researcher transcribed the focus group discussions. An example of a portion of the transcription of the fall administrative focus group is presented in Appendix S. The transcriptions were coded according to the a priori codes presented earlier. Inductive coding was also used as unanticipated themes emerged. The inductive codes can be seen below the a priori codes, in Appendix R. Near the end of this chapter, emerging themes are discussed in regards to their connection to reflexivity. Findings from each fall focus group are presented below.

**Administrators.**

The researcher began her data collection phase by meeting with a group of administrative stakeholders. The tasks of the focus group were to create goals of the program (including specific goals targeted to the low-income student population), to identify crucial elements and resources for implementation of the lending library, to
review program documents and policies, to discuss the program’s main problems, to revise the proposed data collection methods, and to approve and/or amend the student and parent survey.

The administrative focus group consisted of nine employees from the school who self-identified with having at least a moderate knowledge of the lending library currently in place. Six of the participants worked the previous spring to create a more visually appealing lending library website that provided visitors with book covers and information about the books. The other participants had utilized the lending library in classrooms of their own during prior school years. Three participants reported being familiar with Follett Shelf, an ebook library program recently adopted by the school.

**Goals.**

When discussing the goals of the lending library program, six of the nine participants mentioned that the primary goal is to get books into the hands of students. Remembering that 75.1% of the school’s students are classified as economically-disadvantaged, the researcher asked participants what the desired effect of the lending library program would be on the low-income students. Again, providing access was mentioned as the primary goal. In responding to the prompt, Elizabeth explained that a goal for the low-income students is “to get books into their homes, because unfortunately, I think a lot of the low-income students do not take advantage of public libraries. And some don’t live in places where the library is regularly accessible.” Louise agreed in saying, “Parents don’t see the value of the library even though it’s free.” Daniella
commented that sometimes parents and students may wish to visit public libraries, but are prohibited from doing so due to fines.

Establishing a love of reading was also discussed as a goal of the lending library. When asked about goals, Louise said, “I think long term too, to provide a love of reading. To enjoy it and not to only think of it as an academic pastime or whatever, but to actually want to read for the sake of reading.” Two other participants agreed with this statement by nodding approvingly towards Louise.

The conversation shifted next to goals specifically tied to the interactive library website created by the school during the summer of 2012. As reported in Chapter 1, the interactive library website is accessible from the students’ classrooms. After clicking the link and entering their student credentials, students can view available books, read summaries, and click a *Request Book* button to request books to be sent to their homes. In thinking of goals relating to this website, Daniella commented, “Kids may be apprehensive if they hear certain titles but [a goal is] to make it visually attractive as well. And that may engage them in a different way. We all like seeing book covers.” One participant mentioned that, in thinking of the interactive website, a goal would be to understand circulation patterns via data reporting systems built into this program. Using this data would allow the school to more accurately select books that would be of interest to students.

In thinking of integrating the library within classrooms, a few participants mentioned a goal as being students interacting with one another through discussions with books. Daniella mentioned enjoying hearing students talk about books they have read...
and then other kids wanting to read that same book. In reflecting on this, the researcher said, “And I think that’s what happens in a traditional school library. That’s a big part. Your best friend had a book and they tell you a snippet or show you a picture.” Louise mentioned how these interactions encouraged students to explore different genres. She said, “I think even just talking about [the books] among the class did this. We had some kids who would not check out a book on realistic fiction or whatever but because a classmate had talked about it, kids were willing to take that risk.” The researcher piggybacked on this by saying, “Kids got interested in the Bermuda Triangle because there was a book in the library and so they all wanted that book.” Kellie felt that by interacting with books in this manner, students’ self-esteem was heightened. She said, “The kids would have their cameras on and share. I watched a lot of the kids and they were so proud of themselves. Kids in our school don’t typically have an opportunity to get up and share…. I think that is an asset for the kids.”

Besides heightening self-esteem, teaching life skills to students emerged as a goal of the lending library program. In discussing the low-income population, Daniella said this program gives students the responsibility to borrow, respect, and return books. She felt that in a system that functions well, students can demonstrate these skills very easily.

**Resources.**

Due to a large order of books purchased this summer, the library had over 3,500 books inventoried and barcoded by early fall. One staff member had been allocated to work on the manual shipping, inventorying, and cleaning of books. While the lending library takes up a large percentage of this employee’s time, this person also has other
duties to perform in this office and cannot dedicate as much time as is needed. A temporary employee had been hired to assist with barcoding and inventorying new books. Another employee was willing to continue providing details on each book for the interactive library site.

    Concerning the budget, Destiny said, “Part of it depends on what funds are available when you ask. If you can verify how it will be used to benefit students of low-income, [then] if there is money you can get it.” Daniella added, “You can place a proposal out there with data to make it worth the need and how it benefits students and they will do anything they can to support it.” In using Title money to pay for projects, no payment may be distributed until the project is fully complete. It was for this reason that the library needed to be completed by the end of the fiscal year. Destiny stated, “You cannot have anything paid for by Title funds until it is completed. That’s why this library had to be completed over the summer. That’s why levels [of books] were not added to it. It had to be finished in order to be paid for… It had to be spent by August 1.” The only source of funds for the lending library program is the Title budget.

    Documents and policies.

At the time of the fall focus group meeting, formal documents and policies concerning the lending library did not exist, although the participants had an idea of what the policies and procedures should entail. Because the aforementioned goal of the library was to “get books into the hands of students,” the focus group participants did not want the school’s library to mirror a traditional public library. Destiny asked the group, “What do we do when students lose books? We don’t have a specific plan. Some books will
come back destroyed, not able to be used again… What do we do when things are abused? At what point do we say you have to take a month off?” To this, Daniella added, “Yeah, maybe they’ll only be able to use Follett Shelf [ebooks] for a while.” Destiny agreed, stating:

Those are some things that may need to be addressed. We don’t want to be a traditional library where we say ‘No, you can’t check a book out.’ We want them to be honest. We want that to be a part of it… We don’t want to become too policy orientated. Part of this we won’t know until we get further.

Program problems and recommendations.

Among the liveliest of discussions during this focus group was discussing current problems and issues with the lending library. Elizabeth started the discussion by saying that the employee in the Title office is “absolutely overwhelmed with the initial response and [that] she would like the library to not be open yet.” This employee received over 400 book orders from students over the summer before the program was officially introduced. The students, in looking around their virtual classroom prior to classes began, noticed a new icon on their login screens. Available to just kindergarten through fifth graders, this button was the student’s portal to the interactive library site. As described earlier, students simply had to click Request Book to select books to be delivered to their homes. After this initial, overwhelming order, that icon was temporarily removed at the start of the school year from the students’ screens.

But the orders kept coming. During the focus group, it was discovered that a link to the interactive library site also existed on each teacher’s homepage within their
classrooms in grades K-12. To illustrate this, imagine a universal school wide webpage that pops up on students’ computers every time they enter one of their teachers’ classrooms. This universal page is a template that houses general school information, such as principals’ contact information, teachers’ office hours, commonly accessed educational links, and educational resources. Under the Resources section there is a link to the interactive library as well as a link to Follett Shelf, the ebook platform.

The link to the interactive library was available on all 12,000 students’ computers, although the library was only intended to be available to elementary students this first year. The result? An influx of orders. While the Title office employee was not sure what grade levels were ordering books, it was clear that the initial response to the library was overwhelming.

Daniella commented that she thought that teachers were trying to access Follett Shelf, but were accidentally clicking on the interactive library link. She said, “I think there is some confusion on the resources.” Elizabeth replied

There IS confusion. There is one teacher who thought she was accessing [an ebook] and was mixed up. Even though there is text beside each name under resources, the teacher was confused as to what was the ebook library and what was the physical book library. And we were toying around with-- maybe there should be a more distinctive name for each or an identifiable icon. [The website designer] said he cannot do that kind of thing until he does a full upgrade to the teacher webpage template.
To which Daniella replied that an upgrade of that caliber is not possible until next summer.

With an overburdened library, Kaylie felt that teachers and students should be notified of a temporary closure. She said, “It sounds as if the teachers need to be immediately notified. ‘Listen, the library is on hold. Please add a note on your template that says the library is on hold.’” Elizabeth agreed. She suggested that elementary teachers edit the template to create a notice that the library is currently on hold, and that middle and high school teachers remove the link altogether. Kaylie added, “We need to stop pushing it. [Teachers] are telling kids to order a book and then weeks and weeks go by and then no books come.”

This discussion led to perhaps an even more pertinent issue. Elizabeth stated, “Can I just throw out one more thing on the problems? We don’t know who is in charge. And maybe no one is.” To which Destiny responded, “That is correct.” Approximately one week before the fall administrative focus group convened, the director of Title services left this school. While a successor has been appointed, this new person is busy learning the responsibilities of the new job and has had little to no time to invest in the lending library. Destiny continued, “And because this has been so successful, there is a plan to buy new books, like soon. Like right now. But there is no one here right now to do this.”

In continuing the discussion on a lack of a director for the program, Elizabeth asked, “I guess when we find out eventually who is in charge, that person would be the one who says, ‘Ooh, we need to order new books.’” That’s who the proposal would come
from?” Destiny didn’t feel that the Title director would be the person to initiate the proposal. She felt that the employee in the Title office would have to let us know. She added, “I don’t know if there is a good workflow.” She felt that it would possibly be the principals. She reiterated that the plan is to grow the library. Daniella added that data is needed to make it effective.

The above mentioned problems, compiled with the earlier discussion on a lack of policies and procedures, led to the recommendations from the group to:

1. Temporarily close the library until the inventory of new books is completed.
2. Notify teachers in grades K-5 that the library is currently on hold.
3. Inform teachers about the differences between the physical book library and the ebook library.
4. Notify teachers in grades 6-12 of the template issue and ask that they remove the link to the interactive library site (physical library).
5. Determine who will direct the Lending Library Program.
6. Create policies/workflow regarding the process to go through when deciding to order and inventory/describe new books.
7. Create policies regarding how to communicate with students who have mistreated a number of books.
8. Collect data to determine the effectiveness of program.

Data collection.

The researcher spent time during the administrative focus group session to review proposed data collection phases. Focus groups, student and parent surveys, DIBELS
rates, and analysis of library documents were discussed. Participants were then asked for additional ideas regarding data collection. Destiny mentioned a specific employee to whom the researcher can turn with questions pertaining to the cost of the project. This employee oversees the entire Title budget and accounts for what has been spent already regarding the lending library. Elizabeth asked, “Are you going to be interested in knowing what types of books are most popular and circulate? For instance, would we want to beef up the non-fiction? Or are the easy readers the biggest thrust – where we would want to put the most dollars.” The researcher agreed that Elizabeth’s suggestion would be vital information that can be used to steer the program during this year.

**Approval of the student survey.**

The final task of the administrative focus group was to formally amend and/or approve the proposed MRP student survey. The researcher passed out copies of both the goals of the survey as well as the survey itself. She introduced the goals of the survey as being to measure the value students place in reading as well as their self-efficacy of reading. It was explained that the survey would be given to students at the beginning of the year as well as at the end to measure what changes, if any, occur. The researcher was also quick to note that because a myriad of instructional changes have occurred or will occur this year, any perceived changes in students’ reading habits will not be causally connected to the library. While changes will be documented and explained qualitatively in their regards to the lending library program, participants were alerted to the fact that the study’s design could not warrant a causal analysis.

The researcher then highlighted a few questions directly from the MRP. Both
questions that measure value of reading and questions that measure self-efficacy of reading were pointed out. Participants were then instructed to look at the open-ended questions. Because the survey relied on input from the focus group, the researcher asked for help in refining the open-ended questions for both parents and students. She explained to the group how one of her research questions centers on parents’ goals for the library. She mentioned asking the parents, “What are your goals concerning this lending library? What would you like out of it?” Focus group participants felt that an open-ended question such as that would be appropriate and suggested wording a similar question for the students. No other comments or concerns were raised concerning the proposed student survey. Because the MRP was not amended (only the additional open-ended questions), the psychometric properties were not affected.

After transcribing and coding the data, the researcher typed up a bulleted list of findings and sent it via email to the participants. Titled *Highlights*, the participants were asked to review the information and to let the researcher know of any discrepancies in the data. The *Highlights* served as both a second-level member check and also as a written recap of the conversation’s most salient points. The administrative version of the *Highlights* can be seen in Appendix T.

*Micro-interlocutor analysis.*

As mentioned in Chapter 3, focus groups are typically analyzed as a cohesive group. Common themes are reported and readers are typically not privy to what happened during the meeting on an individual level. By adopting a micro-interlocutor strategy of analyzing the sessions, focus group data is able to be presented on an
individual level as well. The fall focus group with administrators used a micro-interlocutor analysis. The findings, delineated by each question, are presented below.

Question one asked participants to provide their names, their position, and their current knowledge of the program. Because this question took a *round robin* approach, all participants responded. Louise began and offered the least amount of information. She simply stated her name, her position, and listed her current knowledge as “moderate.” As participants continued around the circle, more and more details were provided. Elizabeth smiled and nodded to each participant as they introduced themselves. Abby verbally agreed with Elizabeth when she said, “I worked there a number of days inputting all that information… [for] the interactive site which looks really nice!”

Question two asked the participants to consider goals of the lending library. Abby spoke first, followed by Kellie, Louise, and Elizabeth. Elizabeth and Daniella showed signs of approval towards Louise’s response. When asked about the desired effect on low-income students, Elizabeth responded first, followed by Louise, Daniella, Abby, and Daniella again. Daniella, Abby, and Kaylie nodded in agreement to Elizabeth when she commented about students interacting together over popular library books. Regarding the accomplishments likely in the next year, the response pattern was similar.

The micro-interlocutor analysis showed a change during the fifth question. This question asked participants to consider the main problems of the lending library. Elizabeth began and was followed by Abby and Daniella. Elizabeth spoke again, followed by the researcher, Kellie, Daniella, and Destiny. Destiny entered the room at
this time due to a schedule conflict. Throughout the responses to question five, Kellie, Daniella, Abby, and Elizabeth took notes. This was the first time participants felt that notes should be taken.

What is perhaps most striking about the following three questions is that Destiny and Daniella primarily answered them and the rest of the participants offered very little. When discussing the resources available, the response pattern was: Destiny, Elizabeth, the researcher, Destiny, Daniella, Destiny, Daniella, Destiny, Daniella, Elizabeth, Destiny, Daniella. Destiny and Daniella primarily answered the final questions on the budget and the survey input. As the discussion continued, Daniella and Destiny were also the only participants who nodded in agreement.

Relevance to research questions.

The data presented above directly relate to formative research question number three: What are the parents’, teachers’, and administrator’s goals concerning the lending library program? Administrator’s goals were gathered and presented. Additional data was collected in support of the fundamental goal of the formative segment of this program evaluation: How best can this school develop, administer, and promote a lending library in an online school so that student’s fluency and enjoyment of reading is increased?

Teachers

One week after the administrative focus group, a focus group was held with a group of fifth grade teachers. Teachers were invited if they taught at least one section of language arts each day. While twelve teachers were invited to participate, nine agreed to
take part. Goals of the focus group session included assessing the participants’ prior experiences with the library, understanding teachers’ requirements concerning daily reading for their students, eliciting teachers’ goals for the library, and discussing current problems with the library. Recommendations for improvement were gathered from the focus group.

Of the nine attendees, only two teachers had used the library with their students in the previous school years. When asked why they had not utilized the library before, the remaining participants reported that they had not received any information on the library, that it was inaccessible, or that they simply had no knowledge of the lending library program at their school. Carol commented, “I’ve never used it before. It just seemed so inaccessible that I just – I never had the time to figure it out.”

**Requirements for daily reading.**

Half of the participants (five out of nine) reported requiring their students to read for an additional 20-30 minutes a day, outside of reading assigned for school work, but do not require a signed reading log. Candy said:

I talk to their parents on the phone. I want them reading out loud to the parents or sibling or grandparent 20 minutes a day to help with fluency. I don’t have a log. I don’t keep track of it. So whether they follow through, I don’t really know.

Of the remaining four participants, two require daily reading and assign a reading log for parents to sign to verify the time spent reading.
Goals.

As in the administrative focus group, teachers cited the number one goal of the lending library as being to get books in the students’ hands. Michelle started off the conversation by stating, “Given our population of students, they’re trying to get exposure to real books in our students’ hands.” Theresa agreed, commenting:

If we look at our students’ background, what they have and don’t have, I see this as a way to actually expose them to books. I would guess that most of them do not have access to books and do not go to a regular library. So this is a great way to get something out to them.

When asked to elaborate on goals specifically geared to our low-income students, the conversation again steered towards problems with relying on students’ local libraries to supply the students with books. In thinking of the lending library program and its advantages over public libraries, participants felt strongly that the lending library fulfills an important gap:

I think this gives them a chance to get something that otherwise they wouldn’t get. They may not have parents who will take them to the library. Or, if they can, they may have fees that are so high that they can’t check out any more books. I think there’s also a fear of the library. I mean, I grew up in [a poor town]. There are families that [feel that] school is an uncomfortable place for them and the library is like school. It’s filled with books and things you have to read, and probably, I’m just saying, like what I know growing up, I had family members who felt that way and I had friends’ families who felt that way. It was a place for
smart people. There was, like a stigma attached to it. And bringing [the lending library] to them is like meeting them where they are and that’s what’s kind of cool about it. It levels the playing field. (Carol)

Another participant questioned whether parents of students in virtual schools feel the need to go to a library:

I also feel like, you know with how virtual– I mean these kids are in a virtual school and with how virtual our world has gone, I don’t think people go to libraries like they used to. When we used to have projects and things at school, the first thing my parents did was take me to the library. Well now, I don’t know if these parents think, “Oh, these kids go to school online, and anything they need to research or anything they need to learn, they can find online, so why would I even go to a library?” I think, outside of [our school] even, it is hard to even get kids into libraries today. So, like Carol said, this gives them a chance to get a real book in their hands and otherwise they wouldn’t have that opportunity. (Candy)

Besides simply providing access to books, other goals of the lending library that teachers mentioned included giving students a choice in what they read, to show students that books can be fun, and to get students to enjoy reading. One participant brought ebooks into the conversation, stating that the digital resource available for students at this school allows students to insert comments while they are reading. She felt that this connects what is being taught in class to reading in the real world.
**Program problems and recommendations.**

Teachers felt that accessibility was the largest, initial problem. The lending library was formally presented to teachers as a new and promising program at their first professional development meeting of the school year. The excitement extolled by administrators regarding this program gave teachers renewed energy from which to begin the school year. Teachers left feeling excited about the program and planned on encouraging their students to utilize this new resource extensively. That in-service day was the first and last time teachers have received information about this program.

Because of the lack of communication, teachers were left feeling unsure if the program was fully functioning. Mary commented, “We introduced it to our students, they were all excited, and then we found it wasn’t really open and available and so–communication about the accessibility [is what is needed].” Candy added:

We were all excited as teachers when they said, “Look what we have this year! We created this database, kids can read a summary, and they can see the book cover.” You know, we got really excited about it ourselves and you know, now nothing.

Michaela added to the list of potential problems by voicing concern over lost envelopes and missing books. She said, “I think returning books will be a big problem. Just like someone else said when they used it last year. The kids all lost their envelopes. So I have a feeling a lot of books will go unreturned just because people lose their envelopes.”
The conversation next turned to recommendations to improve the program. Formal communication between administrators and teachers about key information that teachers can pass on to students was discussed. Carol also suggested that teachers be provided with clearer details as to the differences between the ebook program and the physical library. She admitted to thinking that they were one in the same, and only discovered the differences while in the midst of showing her students the resources. She also suggested that the school wait to push programs until they are ready to function at full capacity. At that time, she felt it would be appropriate to have a grand opening and to present it as a big deal to students. She commented:

I think too often we just jump the gun and throw things out before they had a chance to be-- Like did anyone check with the library to make sure the library was ready to go? Or before all these things start going, because then we lose the excitement that we just created. We look crazy, like we don’t know what we’re doing and we have to back up. So it kind of takes away from that big bang that you get at the beginning. And it would have been better had we just held off then make it huge. Maybe it’s [the librarian]? Our actual librarian. Do our kids know that we actually have a librarian? Maybe she has a video and she shows it and it’s on our homepage. Something that can make it a big deal. (Carol)

As with the administrative focus group, key points garnered from the teacher focus group were compiled and typed in a bulleted list to be used both as a second-level member check and as a recap of the conversation for the participants. The *Highlights*
from the teacher focus group were emailed to participants three days after the meeting and can be viewed in Appendix U.

**Micro-interlocutor analysis.**

Unlike the administrative focus group that met face to face, the teacher focus group was held online using the Elluminate whiteboard program. As presented in Chapter 3, Elluminate allows participants to meet virtually and provides capabilities for participants to communicate orally as well as through chat. Elluminate has the ability to transmit video, although the teachers did not use their webcams during this focus group. While micro-interlocutor analysis primarily relies on response patterns and non-verbal gestures, it is also possible to analyze these patterns and gestures in a virtual meeting. The researcher combined both chat responses and oral responses and took notes when participants sent emoticons, such as smiles and clapping hands to each other. The teachers in this focus group were well-versed in Elluminate and the options available to show agreement or dissent.

Questions were presented to the teachers using a PowerPoint that was loaded into Elluminate, providing all attendees the opportunity to view the questions as they were asked. In contrast to the administrative focus group, all of the teachers already were familiar with each other and did not need time to introduce themselves. All questions were open to the group and participants were invited to respond freely, in no particular order. The following paragraphs will present the order of responses as well as signs of agreement or opposition as expressed by the participants.
The first question asked attendees to describe their prior use of the library. Seven participants elected to verbally share their experience, while one, Kristy, typed her response in the chat box. Kristy’s typed response agreed with Mary stating, “I never used it as well…. Didn’t know about it until later, like Mary said.” Theresa came late to the focus group and did not get a chance to answer this question. The next question probed the participants on their requirements for daily reading. Michaela responded first, followed by Carol in the chat box. Candy commented third, followed by Kristy typing in the chat box. Michelle spoke fifth about planning on having her students start a sustained silent reading time in class, and Judy asked Michelle a clarifying question on her response. Michelle replied to Judy and Judy responded with a clapping hands emoticon, denoting her appreciation and agreement to the response.

The third question asked participants to consider the goals of the program. Michelle started the round of responses. Her comment that the major goal was to get books into the hands of our students was met with the clapping hands emoticon by Candy. Carol responded next, in chat, followed by Michaela in chat. Both of those responses also reiterated the importance of giving students access to books. Carol and Mary continued using the chat box to provide further goals of the program, including showing students the value and enjoyment of reading.

Participants were next asked about likely accomplishments in the next year. Responses were generally goal-based, so the responses were combined earlier with the previous question. Here, some clarifying questions were asked to the researcher. Carol asked, “Just to clarify, you’re talking solely about the lending library where the kids are
actually getting real books. You’re not talking about Follett Shelf at all?” The researcher responded that discussions about ebooks are also appropriate for this focus group. To this response, Carol sent a smiley emoticon and proceeded to list benefits of ebooks. As in question two when Judy clapped during Michelle’s response to her, this shows that when participating in a virtual meeting, participants are likely ask a question to another member, and when the response is given, the participant who asked the question often shows confirmation of a response by using an emoticon.

When discussing the potential impact of the program on low-income students, Carol began the responses by mentioning that many families are unwilling or unable to access public libraries. This response was met by smiles from the researcher as well as from Theresa. Candy responded second, with her comment on how virtual our world has become and how families feel that most information can be found online instead of visiting a library. Theresa, Michaela, and Carol showed agreement by sending a smiley emoticon.

Many emoticons were used when discussing the main problems of the lending library. Theresa started the responses by listing accessibility as an issue. To reiterate the importance of this response, Theresa used a smiley emoticon towards herself. Michaela followed suit and smiled to Theresa as well. Judy responded second regarding the need for teachers to be educated in the program. Mary responded third highlighting the accessibility problem to which Theresa responded with a smile. Candy responded fourth, mentioning the initial excitement toward the program, and Judy and Michaela agreed
with her by sending smiles. Michaela answered fifth listing lost books as a potential problem and Candy smiled back at her.

The final question asked teachers to provide suggestions so that the library could be easier for both teachers and students. Carol asked a clarifying question, “Can we as teachers see what students have checked out?” Michaela supplied the answer, “I thought… they said we could.” Carol then provided the answer that perhaps the lending library program should have waited to be launched until the staff was ready. This was met by smiles in agreement by Michaela and Judy.

Relevance to research questions.

Two formative research questions were addressed during this focus group. The first being question number two: How well do teachers understand this school’s current lending library system? Much data was presented above delineating that prior to this school year, little to no information was provided to teachers regarding the program. This current year, administrators dedicated a segment of a professional development session to formally introduce the program, yet it was shown that teachers are still confused and ill-informed about the program.

Teachers also provided data for the third research question: What are the parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ goals concerning the lending library program? Six specific goals were presented above to satisfy the teachers’ input to this research question.
Administrators and teachers: Theme comparison.

Along with analyzing data within each focus group using a micro-interlocutor analysis, data from the focus groups was also analyzed by comparing themes that were brought up across groups. As presented in Chapter 3, graphs can be created to compare the amount of instances each theme was discussed per group. In Figure 2 below, a graph is presented to show the most prevalent themes that emerged during the discussions of goals of the lending library (x axis), and the amount of times each focus group discussed those themes (y axis).

**Figure 2.** Fall focus groups’ comparisons of goals of the library.

Figure 2 illustrates that teachers more frequently listed access to books as the most prevalent goal of the library. While it was important to administrators that students have
an opportunity to discuss books with each other, teachers spent less time on this theme. Both groups equally mentioned that a goal of the library is to provide an alternative to public libraries, and only administrators mentioned a goal being to teach life skills to students.

So that the administrative focus group members could understand the goals, problems, and thoughts of the teacher focus group, and vice versa, after each group completed their second-level member checks, the Highlights were sent to members of the other focus group. To protect confidentiality, no names were used in the Highlights.

**Fall Student and Parent Surveys**

Throughout the month of October, students and parents had the opportunity to take the MRP survey (Appendix I). In early October, 2012, the researcher sent a recruitment email to 258 fifth graders and their parents (Appendix B). While the response rate was hoped to be at least 20%, only 14% agreed to participate (N=35). In an attempt to recruit more participants, reminder emails were sent, yet the response rate remained low. Because multiple data points were used in this mixed methods study, the low response rate did not hinder the results.

In an effort to fully understand students’ and parents’ perceptions of the library, the optional spring interviews were deemed necessary at this time and the researcher began crafting questions and obtaining IRB approval. The parent and student interviews added additional support in understanding the library from the students’ and parents’ views. Survey responses are provided below, and interview findings will be presented
later in this chapter. Taken together, the surveys and interviews gave the researcher baseline data regarding students’ reading habits and the value placed on reading.

Students and parents who agreed to participate in the survey phase returned signed consent and assent forms via email. Students and their parents were instructed to print, sign, and scan completed forms back to the researcher if they elected to participate. Upon receipt of the signed forms, the researcher sent students a link to the online survey. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Qualtrics housed the survey. Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5 show screen shots of the survey as it appeared on a variety of browsers.

Figure 3. Screenshot of Qualtrics survey as shown using the Chrome web browser.
Reading a book is something I like to do
- Never
- Not very often
- Sometimes
- Often

I read ________
- not as well as my friends.
- about the same as my friends.
- a little better than my friends.
- a lot better than my friends.

Figure 4. Screenshot of Qualtrics survey as shown using the Firefox web browser.

Question for Students: What are some of your goals concerning our lending library program?

Question for Parents: What are some of your goals concerning our lending library program?

Figure 5. Screenshot of Qualtrics survey as shown using the Internet Explorer web browser.

Although the screenshots shown above detail different questions, the presentation on all three web browsers was practically identical. On Figure 5, directly above, the open-ended question prompts are displayed. When creating the survey, the researcher...
used the *Essay Text Box* option so that respondents could write as much as they desired. In Chapter 3, it was reported that the size of respondents’ boxes often subconsciously dictates the extent to which respondents should write. By selecting the *Essay Text Box* option, it was hoped that students and parents would provide detailed answers. While the room was available for lengthy answers, the majority of students and parents (83%) wrote single sentences. More detailed descriptions of open ended responses will be presented below.

**Demographics of survey respondents.**

While the response rate was weak, demographics of those who did respond closely approximated the school population as a whole. Remembering from Chapter 1, 75.1% of the students at this school identify with being economically-disadvantaged. Among survey respondents, 80% were economically-disadvantaged. Fifty-one percent of the respondents were males, leaving 49% as females. Fourteen percent of the survey respondents had an individualized education plan (IEP), which is slightly lower than the school wide population as 19.9% characterized as having special needs. Regarding language arts teachers, a slight majority (34%) came from the researcher’s homeroom, 29% were from Teacher B’s class, 31% were from Teacher C’s class, and the remaining 6% were from Teacher D’s class. The percentage of survey respondents from Teacher D’s class is smaller than the others because Teacher D only has one section of language arts, while the other three teachers hold two sections. Still, the percentage of students from Teacher D is disproportionately small. Because of this, the researcher attempted to
interview more students and parents from this class so that a clearer snapshot of this group could be seen.

Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) survey results – fall.

The survey response window closed on November 10, 2012. Data was then exported from Qualtrics to SPSS, or the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Each student was coded by economic status and by language arts teacher. Students’ DIBELS results were also added to SPSS, and labeled according to whether they were at-risk, some-risk, or low-risk for developing reading difficulties. More information regarding DIBELS cut-off and DIBELS findings will be presented later in this section.

The MRP survey required recoding of several response items so that all responses were listed from the least positive response to the most positive response. The researcher completed this task using the SPSS software. MRP items also needed to be parsed into even and odd numbered groups. Odd numbered items referred to self-concept as readers, and even numbered items referred to the value students place on reading.

Raw scores were calculated for each subset (xx/40) and for the total survey (xx/80). Higher scores (for both total scores and the individual subsets) indicate a higher value of reading and a higher self-concept of reading. That is, higher scores are desirable. The mean total score was 61.63 or 77%. The standard deviation for the total survey score was 7.11. The minimum total score was 43 and the maximum was 76. The mean score for the subset of self-concept was 29.51 or 74%. The minimum score for this subset was 21 and the maximum was 37. Regarding the subset of value of reading, the mean was 32.11 or 80%, with the minimum score being 22 and the maximum being 39.
The standard deviation for self-concept scores and value of reading scores was 4.31 and 3.91, respectively. Table 3 below elucidates this data.

Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. Deviation</th>
<th>Min. Score</th>
<th>Max. Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Score (Out of 80)</td>
<td>61.63</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Subset (Out of 40)</td>
<td>29.51</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Reading Subset (Out of 40)</td>
<td>32.11</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for each subset on the survey. As presented in Chapter 3, published results for Cronbach’s alpha were .75 for self-concept and .82 for value of reading. The participants in this study yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .69 for self-concept and .69 for value of reading. The researcher used SPSS to calculate Cronbach’s alpha scores if specific items were deleted. In analyzing the change in Cronbach’s alpha scores in the subset of self-concept, the Cronbach’s alpha increased to .81 without the use of the item: “I worry about what other kids think about my reading _________ (never, once in a while, almost every day, every day).” Considering student’s value placed on reading, the Cronbach’s alpha increases to .76 without the use of the question: “I would like for my teacher to read books out loud to the class _________ (never, once in a while, almost every day, every day).” The response choices presented above are listed from least-positive to most-positive, as reported in the published survey. It is likely that the Cronbach’s alpha scores increased with these two
items deleted because there is no clear positive answer choice for each of these questions. Readers with a high self-concept of reading may continue to worry what others think of them despite their reading ability. Regarding the value of reading subset, students may value reading to a great degree, yet prefer to read the story themselves.

**Survey results stratified by economic status – fall.**

Students’ total survey scores were calculated for both the economically-disadvantaged students (n= 28; 80%) and for non-economically-disadvantaged students (n= 7; 20%). Figure 6 below shows the dispersion of total scores for both economically-disadvantaged students, and non-economically-disadvantaged students.

![Figure 6. Dispersion of fall MRP total scores based on economic status.](image)
As presented in Figure 6 above, those students who identify with being economically-disadvantaged have total scores from 43-76, a range of 33. These students have a broader range of scores than those who are not economically-disadvantaged, whose scores vary from 58-74, a range of 16, although keep in mind the difference in groups sizes. The non-economically-disadvantaged students’ scores are also grouped towards the upper half of total scores. Note that while 28 students are economically-disadvantaged, less data points are plotted on the graph. This is because some total scores (57, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, and 69) were awarded to more than one student. If you look closely at Figure 6 above, you will see that the data points representing these scores are slightly darkened, thus showing that this score was earned by more than one student.

This same information is also presented for each subset of reading (self-efficacy and value of reading) as grouped by economic status. Regarding students’ self-concept of reading, the economically-disadvantaged students also had a wider-range of scores. Figure 7, below, displays results based on economic status and self-concept of reading.
As in the prior figure, Figure 7 uses darkened circles to represent multiple responses. Four students who are economically-disadvantaged yielded a score of 25 on the self-concept subset, three yielded a 28, and four earned a 29. Among the non-economically-disadvantaged group, two students earned a 26, two earned a 33, and two earned a 36.

The value students place on reading was analyzed regarding the differences between economically-disadvantaged students and those who are not economically-disadvantaged. Figure 8, below, shows the dispersion of scores comparing these two variables.

*Figure 7.* Dispersion of fall MRP self-concept scores based on economic status.
As shown in the figure above, students who are not economically-disadvantaged have scores on the value of reading subset that are in the upper half of the possible scores. It is prudent to remember that only seven students who took the survey identified with not being economically-disadvantaged. Accuracy of results would improve with more students in this subgroup. In looking at the crosstabulation provided by SPSS, four students who are economically-disadvantaged earned a 31 and four earned a 34. The circles representing these scores are shown darkened in the figure above. A score of 32 was earned by three non-economically-disadvantaged students.

Figure 8. Dispersion of fall MRP value of reading scores based on economic status.
Survey results stratified by language arts teacher – fall.

Four different teacher teams teach language arts to fifth graders in this school. Teachers A, B, and C each hold two sections of language arts per day, and Teacher D holds one language arts section per day. Results are presented for each teacher by full survey scores and for each subset.

The researcher is one of three language arts teachers who teaches reading to Class A. Twelve students from this class participated in the survey. Their mean score was 61.67 out of a total possible score of 80. The total scores ranged from 53-69 with a standard deviation of 4.14. Regarding the scores for the self-concept subset, the mean score was 29.08 out of a possible 40. The minimum score was 24 and the maximum was 37. The standard deviation for this subset was 3.61. Students’ scores in Class A averaged 32.58 for the subset of value of reading. The minimum score was 25 and the maximum was 37. The standard deviation was 3.20.

Ten students participated from Class B. Their mean score was 64.80 with a range from 52-76. The standard deviation for total scores was 7.05. For the subset self-concept, the mean score was 31.30 with a range from 25-37. The standard deviation for self-concept in Class B was 4.47. Concerning the value of reading, students in this class averaged a score of 33.50 with a minimum score being 27 and a maximum being 39. The standard deviation for this subset was calculated as 3.75.

In Class C, eleven students elected to participate in the study. Their mean total score was 60.06 with a standard deviation of 9.06 and scores ranging from 43-74. Regarding the self-concept subset, students in Class C averaged 29.09 with a range from
21-36. The standard deviation for self-concept was 4.93. When answering questions that dealt with the value placed on reading, students in Class C averaged a score of 31.00 with a standard deviation of 4.41 and a range from 22-38.

Regrettably, only two students participated from Class D. Their mean score was 54 with a standard deviation of 4.24. The scores were 51 and 57. The self-concept subset yielded a mean of 25.50 with a very small standard deviation of .71. The scores for this subset were 25 and 26. The value of reading subset mean was 28.5, with a standard deviation of 4.96. The scores for this subset were 25 and 32.

Table 4 below details the total mean scores per teacher as well as the mean scores for each subset. In looking at the comparison, the three classes with the most respondents (Class A, Class B, and Class C) have more similar scores. Class D has lower scores, however only two students participated from this class.

Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Total Score (Out of 80)</th>
<th>Mean Self-Concept Score (Out of 40)</th>
<th>Mean Value of Reading Score (Out of 40)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class A (Two Sections)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>61.67</td>
<td>29.08</td>
<td>32.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B (Two Sections)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>64.80</td>
<td>31.30</td>
<td>33.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class C (Two Sections)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>60.06</td>
<td>29.09</td>
<td>31.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class D (One Section)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>54.00</td>
<td>25.50</td>
<td>28.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student baselines: To what extent are students reading for pleasure?

Two questions aimed to determine the extent to which students are reading for pleasure as measured in the fall. The first question asked students, “How many books have you read by your own choice in the last 30 days?” Response categories included: 0-1, 2-3, 4-5, and More than 5. When looking at the survey respondents as a whole, 40% (n=14) of students selected 2-3 books. Thirty-four percent (n=12) of respondents selected More than 5 books as their response. Six students, or 17% selected 4-5 books, and only three students, or 9% selected 0-1 books.

The data above was parsed according the students’ economic status. A crosstabulation was run using SPSS and compared the number of books read by both economically-disadvantaged students and students not classified as economically-disadvantaged. The crosstabulation is presented as Figure 9 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many books have you read by your own choice in the last 30 days?</th>
<th>Econ_Dis Crosstabulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Econ_Dis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many books have you read by your own choice in the last 30 days?</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 9. Crosstabulation of baseline reading habits (books read) and economic status.*
Figure 9 shows that among the non-economically-disadvantaged students, most have read more than five books in the past 30 days. A few have read four-to-five and a few have read two-to-three. None of the non-economically-disadvantaged students selected 0-1 books. Among the economically-disadvantaged students, most have read two-to-three books in the past 30 days. The response chosen by the next highest percentage of students is the More than 5 category. Three economically-disadvantaged students admitted to reading zero-to-one books on their own will over the past 30 days.

A similar question was posed again to the students, except was geared towards measuring the amount of ebooks students have read. The question was written as: “How many ebooks (books read on the computer or another digital device) have you read by your own choice in the last 30 days?” As in the previous question, the majority of students (n=12, 34%) selected 2-3 books as their response. The second most selected response was 0-1, with 11 students, or 31% selecting this option. Nine students (26%) selected More than 5 as their response, and only three students (9%) selected 4-5 books.

SPSS was again used to create a crosstabulation between the amount of ebooks read and students’ economic status. The crosstabulation is presented as Figure 10, below.
The results in the crosstabulation above show that among the non-economically-disadvantaged students, most are reading zero or few ebooks. Students who are economically-disadvantaged have turned to ebooks more frequently. Thirty-nine percent have read two-to-three ebooks over the past thirty days, and 29% have read more than five ebooks. If you compare the two groups of students by percentages, only 14% of non-economically-disadvantaged students have read more than five ebooks. It is hypothesized that low-income students have a lack of available literature and therefore turn to ebooks when desiring to read. As mentioned previously, only seven students who are not economically-disadvantaged took the survey, so results may be different if a larger number of students from this group participated.

**Open-ended survey responses – fall.**

Both students and parents were asked one open-ended question each. The students’ question read as follows: What are some of your goals concerning our lending library program? Responses were coded in accordance to the a priori codes developed
prior to the data collection phase. Of the thirty-five respondents, thirty-four elected to respond to this question. All but two responses yielded usable data. (The other two responses were “don’t know” and “yes”.)

The most common student response included book recommendations (n=10).

One student wrote:

I actually think the [school] library should have the following books: Bone, by Jeff Smith – Great book for teens but their parents may allow them to read it. Trust me, you don’t like the book until you try it. The Hardy Boys – A good, old classic. This one is great. The Ranger’s Apprentice, by John Flanagan – Also on audio. He does amazing voices. I suggest all of his ten books. This is my favorite book ever. As you can see in the title, they are rangers who have bows, knives, striker, and more. If anything, get this one! I also think that the [school] library should have some comics. Sometimes kids don’t like books until they read comics, then they start to like reading books after that.

The other responses that suggested books were not as lengthy, but specific book titles were mentioned. One student wrote, “I think they should bring in more mystery books, like Chet Gecko.” Another mentioned, “I would like to see more books on there. Maybe some series books like The Chronicles of Narnia or The Dork Diaries – things like that.”

One student mentioned the book The Diary of a Wimpy Kid as a book suggestion.

Besides specific titles, a student suggested that the library house more history books.

Two other goals from students were mentioned an equal amount of times. One was to read more and the other was to improve reading skills. Both goals were
mentioned six times. Regarding the goal of reading more, some students set a number of books they aspired to read. One response was, “My goal is to read 25 books.” Another response was, “I want to use the library to read 100+ books this year!” Someone else wrote, “Reading over 30 books in 3 weeks.” Responses that fell within the realm of students who wished to improve their reading included, “I want to get way better at reading so I don’t have trouble reading.” A similar response was, “I hope to read better and bigger books and words.”

Five students mentioned that a goal of theirs is to enjoy reading or to help others to enjoy books. One student wrote, “I think it is important for kids to know how to read and how to enjoy what they are reading. I want to be able to help some people that have a hard time reading or just don’t like reading to tell them that not every book is bad and not every book is good so just enjoy the book while it lasts!!! :)” Another added, “To try and find books that will be fun to read.”

A few students mentioned ways to improve the library. One wrote, “My goal for this library is to receive books faster. It takes two weeks to receive books.” Another felt that the library needs to increase their supply, writing, “More books to loan out. Some of the books I wanted were out.”

Parents were asked to answer the same open-ended question regarding their goals, but had a separate response box in which to do so. The most prevalent goal listed by parents was to encourage their children to read more. Ten out of thirty-one responses (32%) mentioned that parents would like the library to encourage, or inspire, their children to read more. In reflecting on goals of the library, one respondent listed a goal
as being to “promote more reading due to the easy access of checking out a book. Having a book delivered to you, that you choose, seems awesome!” Another parent would like the library to “get [my child] even more interested in reading.” Other parents related reading to learning by stating, “My goals are to ensure that my grandchildren learn as much as they can for later on in life.” One parent said, “To read more books and learn more things!!:)” (Smiley-face emoticons were entered on three separate occasions in the open-ended response questions, and have been reported as they have been received.)

Parents used this question prompt to encourage the library to grow. Seven parents hoped that the library would expand by stating comments such as, “I think it’s great so far, easy to access and read. Maybe add more different kinds of books.” Similarly, a different parent responded, “I am happy that this is now available for the kids and I hope the library continues to grow.” Another parent cautioned that the library needs to be built according to students’ needs, stating, “My goal as a parent is to make sure that this library is built in a student’s eye. Meaning the way a student may want it built. Such as book selections.” Finally, an additional parent responded that a variety of reading levels needs to be incorporated in the growth in saying, “More books for all reading levels. Maybe allowing more than one book at a time. Everything seems pretty good about the library program.”

Besides simply offering a variety of levels, another parent commented that students need to be reading books at appropriate levels and hoped that levels would be monitored. This parent wrote:
I’d like to see a wide range of books for my children to choose from. I see this as a great opportunity for my daughters to expand their learning resources. My main concern would be that there may be no overseeing of whether the books selected by her are progressive with her abilities… challenging her to higher levels.

Just as students hoped that access to the library would increase their reading abilities, parents also hoped that their children’s reading levels would increase. Three parents wrote about this as their goal for the library. One parent stated, “My goal is for my child to increase their reading level by reading specific books.” Another, when asked about goals, wrote, “Making sure my child can read good.”

Parents hoped that their children would learn to enjoy reading. A parent said, “I am hoping that my kids will find it fun to see more books to read. If they have good choices they will find something that interests them and hopefully they will see how fun reading can be.” Another wrote, “I would like the program to help my daughter get to the level of reading that she is comfortable at and to where she would enjoy picking up a book and read it on her own without being forced to.”

While no comments were negative, a few comments showed that some parents are not familiar with the library at all, or are facing organizational issues. One student, in answering for his parent, wrote, “My mom has never seen it.” Another parent’s goal was, “To keep [my son] from losing the books.” Two of the 31 responses did not add information at all. One comment referring to goals was, “None” and one was “I don’t really have any.” The remaining comments showed general praise such as, “I couldn’t
ask for anything better” and “I did not even know that we had a library, so I am very excited to be able to utilize it. I love to read to my kids and I’m an avid reader myself.”

**Fall DIBELS results.**

The DIBELS risk classifications are determined by a cut-off number. The cut-offs increase as students progress through the school year. For the fall fifth grade benchmark, students are *at-risk* if they read below 81 words per minute, they are at *some-risk* if they read between 81 and 103 words per minute, and they are considered *low-risk* if they read more than 103 words per minute. Among the participants, 26% (n=9) students are classified *at-risk*, 23% (n=8) are *some-risk*, and 51% (n=18) are *low-risk*. Regrettably, data for the entire fifth grade was not easily made available, so it cannot be determined if the percentages presented above mirror the school population. What can be concluded is that among survey respondents, slightly over half are reading at grade level. The mean DIBELS score of respondents was 102 words per minute with a minimum score of 14 and a maximum score of 183.

Using SPSS, correlational scatterplots were created to show the relationship, if any, that DIBELS scores had with survey results. When comparing DIBELS with the total survey score (combined subsets), the Pearson’s $r = .60$. In reporting the proportion of variance accounted for, $r^2$ is .36. This scatterplot is presented as Figure 11 below.
Figure 11. Correlational scatterplot comparing fall MRP total scores with DIBELS scores.

A general positive linear relationship is shown above and the relationship between total survey scores and DIBELS scores was shown to be significant. This means that, in general, the higher number of words students read per minute (DIBELS), the higher their total MRP survey score.

Correlating DIBELS scores to the value of reading subset yielded an $r$ of .34. The proportion of variance accounted for, $r^2$ is .16. This scatterplot is presented in Figure 12 below.
Figure 12. Correlational scatterplot comparing fall MRP value of reading scores with DIBELS scores.

The relationship between DIBELS scores and students’ value of reading was significant, yet not as strongly correlated as DIBELS and total scores. Students may value reading, yet not be strong readers themselves as measured by DIBELS.

A correlation was computed comparing DIBELS scores to students’ self-efficacy of reading. When correlating these two variables, an $r$ of .67 was yielded, with a proportion of variance accounted for, $r^2$, of .45. This was the strongest relationship between DIBELS and survey scores, including total scores and parsed scores, and therefore was also shown to be significant. Below, Figure 13 highlights this relationship.
Figure 13. Correlational scatterplot comparing fall MRP self-concept scores with DIBELS scores.

In looking at the three scatterplots presented above comparing DIBELS to survey total scores and survey subsets, the greatest relationship occurred with DIBELS and self-concept of reading. This shows that students who read well, as measured by DIBELS, also have a higher self-concept of reading. Overall, students generally understand how they perform as readers.

Students’ DIBELS results were analyzed according to economic status. The mean score for students who are economically-disadvantaged was 96.25 words per minute. The mean score for mid-income students was 125.29. The difference between the two groups was 29.04 words.
The results from the fall survey presented above were sent to focus group participants. In early December, the researcher created *Highlights* that reviewed the main findings (Appendix V). Focus group participants had the opportunity to read over the *Highlights* prior to the next focus group meeting. The key findings were used to create the winter focus group question protocols (Appendices M and N).

**Relevance to research questions.**

The fall student and parent surveys addressed two formative research questions and gathered data that will be used for the summative research question: “To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills?” Data from the fall survey will be compared with data from the spring survey to answer this question, and will be presented later in Chapter 4.

In considering the formative questions supported by this research strand, research question number one was answered. The question was, “To what extent are students in this online elementary school reading for pleasure? What is the baseline and does it relate to socioeconomic status?” Data was presented to show that among physical books, students who are not economically-disadvantaged are reading at least two books on their own free will each month. Most students are reading more than five. Students who are economically-disadvantaged are also reading physical books, with the majority responding that they are reading two-to-three books a month. Concerning ebooks, it was shown that students who are economically-disadvantaged take advantage of ebooks at a higher rate than non-economically-disadvantaged students.
As has been mentioned a few times, the survey response rate was less than desirable, so an additional research strand has been conducted in the spring to address this issue. Students and parents have been interviewed to help determine if access to the library has increased the amount of reading by students in each economic group. Data results from the interview phase are presented later in this chapter.

Another formative research question, “What are the parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ goals concerning the lending library program?” has been addressed through the fall student and parent surveys, specifically regarding the parents’ views. Thirty-one parents responded to this question and their views were presented above. While all three participant groups have been addressed so far in this study in respect to this question, goals will continue to be addressed as the project continues. The formative nature of this program evaluation allows (and expects) new goals to emerge as the program becomes more settled into the school’s culture.

**Mid-Year Library Usage Rates**

Library usage rates were available mid-year for both the physical lending library as well as the ebook library. Results for both resources were pulled at the end of December, 2012 and were analyzed in early January of 2013. Mid-year, the researcher requested a budget update regarding the amount of money spent on the physical book library and Follett Shelf’s ebook platform, as well as shipping expenditures. Regrettably, the employee at the school responsible for answering this request recently left the position and a new employee had not yet been assigned. Budget data, therefore, was unavailable mid-year.
**Mid-year library usage rates: Lending library.**

Data gathered mid-year on the physical lending library included: total library requests, requests parsed by month, requests by genre, requests by grade level, rate of borrowing according to student’s economic status, and requests by fifth grade teacher. Graphs were created from the data so that communicating the data to future focus groups was clear. In reflecting back to the fall administrative focus group, requests by genre was created because a focus group member felt that data on popular genres would be instrumental in deciding what book orders should be placed in the future.

One caveat arose with the mid-year usage data with the physical library: The data that the researcher received from the programming department did not match up correctly. The total number of books loaned did not match the sum of the monthly breakdown of books lent. The researcher notified the programmer of the errors and asked for a revised report. An updated report was received in early January, however some errors persisted. The programmers acknowledged that since the lending library interactive website was so new, the ability to pull data from it was still in construction.

The total library request data presented below was created from the monthly breakdown of books, and included books from the beginning of the school year until early January. The researcher felt that this was an accurate depiction of usage rates because when cross-checking it with individual student requests, a similar amount of requests was shown.
Total library requests.

Until early January, 6,202 books were requested. Remember, the total population of students in the school was approximately 14,000 at this point in the year. Among these requests, 1,301 were cancelled. Book requests may be cancelled if students have more than two books out or if a book is not available. Students can cancel requests as well. Two thousand, four hundred seven books were checked out. One thousand, four hundred twenty-seven books were returned. Three books came back damaged and needed to be pulled from the library. Figure 14 below is a graphical representation of the above data.

Figure 14: Total lending library usage statistics; mid-year.
Library requests by month.

A monthly breakdown of library requests was available for August, 2012 until December, 2012. Students ordered books within days of the link being available. In August, almost 900 books were requested. At this time, the library was not ready to distribute books and zero books were checked out. In September, slightly over 1,000 additional books were requested and the librarian was able to fill almost 700 orders. A little over 100 books were returned in September. In October, almost 2,000 additional orders were placed. Six hundred books were checked out in October, and over 400 books came back in. In November, almost 1,800 books were requested. Over 700 books were sent to students and over 500 books were returned. In December, there was a decrease in library activity, likely because students had winter break. Also in December, almost 700 books were requested, over 300 were shipped, and over 300 were returned. Figure 15 below represents this data.

Figure 15. Lending library usage statistics parsed by month; mid-year.
Library requests by genre.

Listed in order from most requests to least requests, the top four genres were: informational (1,044 requests), realistic fiction (938 requests), easy reader (644 requests), and picture book (454 requests). That data is slightly misleading because fiction has been broken down into a variety of categories including realistic fiction, fiction, science fiction, historical fiction, and animal fiction. Taken together, fiction requests of any type totaled 1,881 books. Of these, realistic fiction was the most requested type. Figure 16 below shows all of the books requested, parsed by genre.

Figure 16: Lending library usage statistics parsed by genre; mid-year.
Library requests by grade.

The 2012-2013 school year was intended to be a pilot year for the school’s lending library. Elementary teachers were told at the beginning of the year that the program would be limited to students in kindergarten to fifth grade. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a link to the library was erroneously placed on all students’ homeroom pages in each of their classrooms. Removing the link proved to be too difficult after teachers already personalized the rest of the home page. To remove the link on a global basis, all information entered by teachers would be overwritten. For this reason, all students in grades K-12 had access to the library. While middle school and high school teachers were not introduced to the library formally (and therefore could not pass on details to their students), the older students discovered the links on their own. An administrator reported that perhaps older students had siblings in the elementary grades and learned about the library link from them.

In looking at the data on book requests parsed by grade level, students in the fifth grade are borrowing at a much higher rate than the other grades. Over 160 unique fifth graders have placed a request for at least one book. This was nearly twice as much as the next closest grades. In grades two, three, four, seven, and twelve, between 85 and 91 different students requested books.

Why are fifth graders requesting books at a much higher rate? This question was posed to the fifth grade teachers during the winter focus group, and interpretations will be presented later in this chapter. In Figure 17 below, a graph represents student book requests across grade levels.
Remembering that a major objective of the lending library is to “put books into the hands” of economically-disadvantaged students, library requests were analyzed according to students’ economic status. Among the requests, 742, or 76% came from economically-disadvantaged students. Two hundred thirty-five, or 24% came from students not classified as economically-disadvantaged. As reported in Chapter 1, 75.1% of the students enrolled at this school are economically-disadvantaged. Comparing the request rate to the actual school demographics, students who are economically-disadvantaged are borrowing books at an equal rate as their mid and upper-income counterparts.
Library requests by fifth grade teacher.

Because this program evaluation focused on fifth grade students, library requests by fifth grade language arts teacher were also accessed. Four teachers (Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, and Teacher D) instruct seven distinct classes of students for language arts. Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher C each instruct two sections of language arts, and Teacher D instructs one section. It can be assumed that Teachers A, B, and C each have twice as many language arts students as Teacher D.

In looking at the data parsed by language arts teacher, Teacher A had 50 unique students who have requested at least one book. Teacher B had 53 students and Teacher C had 36 students who had placed at least one order in the library. Teacher D had 27 students who had requested at least one book. In accounting for teaching only one section of language arts, doubling the data for Teacher D (assuming the fictional second class borrowed at the same rate as Teacher D’s first class) yields 54 unique students. Teachers A, B, and D all had approximately 50 students who requested books. Teacher C’s class requested books at a lower rate. As mentioned in a previous section, the four fifth grade teachers will interpret the data, and discrepancies will be addressed in the section titled Winter Focus Group; Teachers. Figure 18, below represents this data.
**Mid-year library usage rates: ebook library.**

Data was also made available for Follett Shelf, this online school’s digital library. Because Follett Shelf is a proprietary program (compared to the in-house-built lending library), less detailed data was readily available. Available data included a school wide total of books checked out and read online, data parsed by grade level, and a fifth grade breakdown of books checked out and books read online, including titles and dates read. The dates used for Follett Shelf data were similar to the physical book library data. Usage rates reflect access from the beginning of the school year until mid-December.

Follett Shelf allows users to read a book online, which means the student virtually pulls a book from a shelf, reads all of it or a portion in a sitting, and then returns the book to the shelf. The school only has a fixed amount of copies of each book, so once all copies are in use, access is denied to other students. Alternatively, students can elect to check a book out. In this case, students have unobstructed access to the book for seven
days. Little instruction was presented to teachers and to students as to the difference of checking out a book versus reading a book online, so it is unclear if students actually realize the difference between the two choices. Students can download a book, which refers to borrowing and installing a book on a digital reading device other than a desktop or laptop. Book downloads remain on the digital reading device for seven days. Data was also made available for the amount of times a book was accessed. Follett Shelf uses this term to represent those books that were clicked on, but not opened.

**ebook requests: Total.**

In grades K-12, 13,790 ebooks were selected from the beginning of the year until mid-year. Among this total, 11,194 were read online and 2,596 were checked out. It is imperative to note that these figures do not relate directly to number of ebooks read. These numbers refer to the amount of times books were clicked on and opened. So if a student decided to read *Because of Winn-Dixie* and elected to read the book online (instead of checking it out), each time the student sat down for a reading session, a new request would be logged. *Because of Winn-Dixie* has 26 chapters, so if a student read a chapter during each sitting, this book would elicit 26 hits for being read online. Figure 19 below illustrates the ebook request data.
**Figure 19.** Total Follett Shelf ebook usage statistics; mid-year.

**ebook requests: Grade level breakdown.**

While the above graph shows Follett Shelf usage by the entire school, data was also available showing the breakdown of how usage differed by grade level. Among ebook users, students in sixth and seventh grades used the resource at a far greater rate than the other grades. As in the total usage reported above, students in all grades are reading books online at a higher rate than checking them out for a seven day period. Teachers of sixth and seventh graders are not part of the teacher focus group for this program evaluation, but administrators will be asked why the rate may be so high for these grades during their winter focus group session. Figure 20 below shows the grade level breakdown for Follett Shelf from August to December, 2012.
**ebook requests: Fifth grade.**

Follett Shelf ebook requests were made available based on use of fifth graders. Since this program evaluation is focusing on the fifth grade students, Figure 21 below shows a detailed snapshot of fifth graders’ usage. In all, 1,057 book requests were made. Of these, 844 were read online and 213 were checked out.

*Figure 20. Follett Shelf usage statistics parsed by grade; mid-year.*
A deeper analysis of fifth grade students’ ebook usage patterns was also conducted. The available data included a 46-page access log of all fifth grade students who have used the program from the beginning of the school year until December 20, 2012. Included in the log is the student’s name, the title of the book read, the date read, and whether the book was read online or checked out. In order to understand a particular student’s usage, one must simply locate the student on an alphabetical list to see all ebooks read on Follett Shelf.

In tracking the majority of the students’ usage, it appears that students are doing more casual reading, or browsing of books rather than reading a book from beginning until end. Several students appear to read multiple titles in one sitting (many of which are lengthy chapter books) so it can be assumed that the book is being looked at, but not finished. For example, one student’s log shows that *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay* (both books in the *Hunger Games* series) were read on November 9, 2012. While many a

*Figure 21.* Follett Shelf usage statistics for fifth grade; mid-year.
reader has raved about these books and “not being able to put them down,” it is doubtful that a fifth grader read them both on one day. This student’s name does not appear in the usage report again until November 16 where he accessed *Mockingjay, Catching Fire, Titanic*, and *Mockingjay* again, all in the same day. The usage report does not detail time spent on each book or number of pages read.

A few students have accessed the same book on subsequent visits to the site. One student began *Judy Moody* on December 10, then accessed it twice again on December 11. Another student accessed *Inkheart* on November 27 (twice), November 28, November 29 (four times), and then *Inkdeath* (written by the same author) on November 29, (twice), November 30, December 1 (five times), and December 2. It is likely that these students are reading most of or all of the chapter book but data from Follett Shelf does not display page numbers read. Remember also that students who *check out* a book on Follett Shelf will not show multiple logins under the same book, so it is possible that books that are checked out are also being read in their entirety. In order to ascertain the extent to which students are reading ebooks to completion, subsequent student interviews will ask students about this phenomenon.

**Relevance to research questions.**

The mid-year analysis of the lending library and the ebook library did not directly address any research questions, but the data provided by the analysis will impact the winter focus groups with both teachers and administrators. The teacher focus group will address research question number four, “Have teachers integrated the lending library into their classrooms? How so?” The usage data presented in this section will show how
integrating (or not integrating) the library into the classes affects usage rates. The administrative focus group will be presented with the data so that necessary changes can be implemented with the libraries. Also, research question number five, “To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills?” relies on usage reports. Students need to show access to the libraries before it can be determined if the libraries have had an effect.

**Winter Focus Groups**

Focus groups were held in January with both teachers and administrators. For this round of focus groups, the teacher group convened first. By meeting with the teachers first, the researcher was able to take problems and recommendations noted by the teachers to the administrative focus group held two weeks later. As in the fall focus group phase, meetings were recorded, transcribed, and coded according to a priori codes and inductive codes established in the fall. Both the teacher focus group and the administrative focus group were held on Elluminate. The administrative focus group was switched from a face to face format in the fall to an online meeting in the winter due to time constraints and weather concerns. Participants were emailed asking if they preferred a face to face format over an Elluminate format and the responses were overwhelmingly in favor of an online meeting.

**Teachers.**

The teacher focus group was held during the second week of January, 2013. All nine teachers participated, however, due to scheduling conflicts a few teachers came late, and two left early. The question protocol was developed and approved by the IRB in
December, 2012 (Appendix N). The goals of the focus group were to ascertain teachers’ current understanding of the library (both the lending library and the ebook library), to discover how teachers have integrated the library into their classes, and to understand what students were saying about the library. Teachers were asked to identify current problems and to provide suggestions for remedying the issues. Because library usage data was available, teachers spent time interpreting the data and speculating on the trends.

**Current understanding of the library.**

Teachers reported a mixed understanding when asked about the lending library and Follett Shelf, the ebook library. Regarding the physical book lending library, two teachers felt comfortable with checking out and returning books. Both of those teachers had used the library themselves. Kristy stated:

I’ve checked out a book just to try it and it’s really easy. I did have a question of – I didn’t get a return envelope. I know students are supposed to get return envelopes. So, I’m wondering if that is true? They get a return envelope so when they’re done with their book they can send it back?

The researcher answered this by responding, “Yeah, they should. I’m surprised you didn’t get one!” The remaining teachers either did not respond to this question or admitted to still being confused. Judy said, “It’s still confusing for me.”

Concerning Follett Shelf, teachers had a higher comfort level with using this ebook resource, primarily because it is used as an educational resource during class time. Michaela stated, “I’ve used Follett Shelf a couple of times just to bring up a book to read with the kids, but nothing specific.” She added, “I feel comfortable using Follett Shelf. I
don’t know if I would even know how to check out a book from the [lending] library.”

Mary uses Follett Shelf when providing reading interventions to students struggling in reading. Carol said, “I use it a bit more with my smaller group than we do with the whole general education class.”

**Integration of the library into classes.**

Teachers were next asked: “Have you integrated the lending library or Follett Shelf into your classroom? How so? If not, are there reasons why?” The first concern that was brought up was an issue of time. Candy felt that on her team of teachers, the library was underused. Michaela responded, saying:

I would have to agree. We don’t have… I know when they set up schedules at the beginning of the year there was supposed to be a set library day. We really don’t do anything with the set library day. There really isn’t time.

Kristy, using the chat box, commented that she agreed with Michaela. The group continued by discussing the issue of not having time to squeeze the library into an already busy schedule:

Like, we have a set library time on Fridays, but it doesn’t get used for that. It gets used for…. I just feel like by Fridays we’re always trying to get caught up and the kids are going to specials and coming from specials. (Candy)

Michelle added, “I wish we had more time to spend to give the kids more reminders.”

Michaela mentioned that her team conducts sustained silent reading time on Fridays and encourages students to access Follett Shelf for reading material. Carol also uses class time to push out the links to the library resources. During this time, her class
discusses books that have been checked out and students recommend books to other students.

Candy felt that teachers can push out links to the libraries, but barriers still exist. She said:

I mean, I guess that we can push it out all we want, we can show them the link all that we want and I guess it’s like anything else at [this school]. It’s the follow through. You know you have that barrier with these kids of getting them to log in and check out a book and read the book. We don’t have that control and we’re not sitting there in that room looking over their shoulder watching them do it.

Michelle also cited barriers with getting the students to actually read. She mentioned that she worried that the children do not have the support at home to encourage them to read and return the books.

Students’ comments to teachers about libraries.

Teachers were asked what, if anything, their students were saying about the library. Theresa, though the chat box, typed that the students who are using the library resources seem to be happy with them. Kristy typed that her students like the on-demand access afforded by Follett Shelf. When probed about this comment, Kristy said, “They definitely like the ability to access Follett Shelf. The ones who use it definitely love it. And they like having the access and exploring the different options that they do have.”

Regarding negative comments, Carol said that her students complain about the time it takes to actually receive the physical book. She reported that her students say that the titles they want are not available. Theresa said her students are still confused with
returning books. She said, “Their confusion lies with how … [to] return them and we have to remind them that they should have come with an envelope.”

Program’s main problems – teacher viewpoint.

Drawing from a previous response, the researcher began by stating that the time to receive books was lengthy. Carol commented during the first question, “I know my kids are a little frustrated with the delay – how long it takes to get the books.”

The next problem that was brought up was also by Carol. She commented that the library resources are missing some really great authors. She said, “We’re missing Patricia Polacco, Cynthia Rylant, Byrd Baylor. So to go and do an author study……” She and Michaela both mentioned that they wished Follett Shelf was larger. Michelle stated that she wished both libraries would be expanded. Judy agreed, saying, “I think there should be a wider range of books. I don’t think they’re leveled are they?” The researcher responded that Follett Shelf provides levels, but the lending library does not. Judy responded, “Well, if I can’t find it, the kids can’t. If we can give the kids the level at which they should be working, I think that would be beneficial.”

Organizational problems were also brought up. Teachers reported that it would be helpful to see which books were checked out. If teachers could see accounts, students could be reminded what is due. A few teachers commented that the login procedure is difficult. Both programs require additional logins when the links are clicked. Kristy, through chat, typed that the students have trouble remembering the usernames and passwords. Theresa piggy-backed on this saying, “I was going to agree with what Kristy
said in the chat. There’s a different username, different password for everything. It’s very, very difficult. I think it makes everything here at [this school] difficult.”

**Suggestions to remedy the problems.**

The problems discussed by the teachers were reviewed and teachers were asked to suggest ways to remedy the problems. When asked about solutions for the length of time it takes to receive books, Theresa said, “I think it is a lot for one person to handle…. It seems like the amount of students we have…. I can imagine it would take me a while if it was me doing all of that.” The researcher responded that this problem and solution suggestion will be brought to the administrative group, and specifically to the person in charge of the manual shipping and receiving of books.

The focus group then discussed ideas on getting new books and/or different authors. Carol said:

I don’t know, but just from previous experience at other schools, we would take the top books each year, the top children’s books and constantly be monitoring those lists and pulling from that each year and definitely, like, your Newberry and your Caldecott. All of those award winners too.

Mary suggested that when it is time to order books that teachers are asked and that grade level lists be developed. Michelle suggested that series of books be purchased, saying, “I’m a big series person myself.”

The organizational problems presented by teachers were considered next by the researcher asking, “Is there any way to make this program easier to kids? Can you think of any suggestions?” Concerning the username and password issue, Theresa felt that
logging on to the libraries should consist of a simple click. She said, “It would be much easier if things were set up for them in a way that was user-friendly for the age of children we teach. We teach elementary children.” A final suggestion regarding making the library more accessible to students came from Kristy. She suggested that students be taught how to make the links to the libraries favorites on their tool bar. This would allow the students to be able to get to the libraries quickly.

Remembering that incorporating the library resources into the classrooms was difficult due to time constraints, one participant mentioned that perhaps a library time should be built into the students’ schedules:

I would love to see our library be like a special where we have a gym teacher and a computer teacher. I would love to send my kids to library. And the librarian is there to read them a story, to show them new books that are available – Our kids, in my opinion, can’t get enough exposure to books, and all different people exposing them to books. (Carol)

While this thought was expressed, three other participants agreed by sending smiling faces.

**Teachers’ interpretation of library usage rates data.**

Teachers were next asked to look at graphs and spreadsheets presenting library usage rates. They were told that their thoughts on trends, abnormalities, and patterns would be useful in analyzing the data. The first graph was library usage (from the physical book library) by month. The researcher explained the graph and asked for comments. Carol wondered when the Read at Home program was introduced. This
incentive-based program was presented to students in kindergarten thru fifth grade during the month of October. Carol noted that perhaps there was a large increase in book requests due to this initiative.

In looking at the monthly usage rate, teachers wondered why the amount of book requests was high, yet the amount of books checked out was much lower. This triangulation of data backed up the teachers’ comments on how the students have reported that they have requested a book, but didn’t receive it in a timely manner. Carol said, “That’s like less than half of them that were requested that were actually checked out. In October. Wow!” The researcher was unable to answer this question at the time, but told participants that the question would be posed to the administrative focus group.

Teachers were presented with the lending library usage rates broken down by grade. They were overjoyed by the fifth grade statistics. After the group spent time sending clapping hands and smiles, the researcher asked, “What do you make of this? Why do you think the fifth grade is practically twice as high as the next highest grades?” Michaela jumped on the microphone, laughing, and said, “Because we’re awesome! I just saw Kristy put the same thing!” (In chat). Kristy responded by saying, “We promote it more maybe?” The teachers agreed that by virtue of being in a group that is studying the libraries, they are likely promoting it more. Michelle said that we are possibly higher because we push it out and encourage its use. Kristy said that her class really stressed the importance of the libraries for a while.

In looking at the other grades, the teachers commented that we don’t have many kindergarten students, so the data will obviously show fewer students in this grade
accessing the library resources. Theresa said, “So maybe it’s percentage then [that is needed]. If kindergarten only has 40 kids and 38 are using it….. Maybe it needs to be analyzed a little differently that would make more sense.” Carol wrapped up the conversation by stating, “It will be really interesting to see this data over a couple years. I mean if our kids are really reading this much, I can’t imagine our scores won’t change.”

Teachers were presented with a breakdown of how many students have accessed the lending library in each of their classes, and asked to explain their thoughts. The teachers were shocked to see how many of their students have requested at least one book! Kristy sent a smile emoticon when she saw that her class was using the library more than any other class. She responded:

We really promoted it early on. We advertised it a lot the first few months. We threw it in their face, we sent them messages, we definitely promoted it early on. This past month we have been a little lax about it, so that’s really good that they’re actually listening! Really good to know!

Carol, who only has one section of language arts students (and thus far less students accessing the program), was also pleased with the data. She stated:

I was just thinking about that. You said we were at 27. That’s about even a little less than that what our average Elluminate attendance is. I’m actually surprised by that data – pleasantly. I thought it would be less than that, I really did.

One class of students, Teacher C’s class, had much fewer students accessing books. When asked about this, Judy (a teacher from this class) felt that their class did not really take much time to talk about the physical book library. She admitted that she was
still confused on how it all worked. She also stated that her class relies much more on Follett Shelf as opposed to the lending library. This triangulation of data (usage rates compiled with focus group responses) helped to explain the discrepancy among classes.

The group concluded this conversation about teacher-specific data by noting that many students have been in the system, have navigated the tricky passwords, and have requested at least one book. They felt that their efforts, though initially seeming fruitless, have been paying off.

Follett Shelf data was shared next with the teachers. They were shown that 14,000 ebooks were accessed by students from August to December. The researcher explained that each time a student logs in to read a portion of a book, that query is logged. Teachers were presented with the breakdown of how many books were read online, and how many were checked out. Teachers showed much confusion with the difference between reading an ebook online and checking an ebook out. The researcher explained the difference between the two methods of reading an ebook. (Reading it online is like pulling a book off a shelf temporarily, and checking out an ebook affords the user the ability to access the book at any time over a seven-day period. If students just read it online, there may be instances where they go to read the book and no copies are available. Checking out an ebook eliminates this risk.)

Students in this school are reading a book online (as opposed to checking out the ebooks) at a much higher rate. When asked to explain their thoughts on this data, Theresa said, “I thought at one point we told our kids not to bother checking them out because it confused them. They don’t really come to you. I think that may be part of the
problem.” Carol added, “And couldn’t they only have them for a couple days at first? I didn’t even know that it was two weeks so that’s not something I have told my kids. I’m glad to hear that now.” Confusion persisted in the group on the amount of time books that have been checkout out remain on a student’s computer. The researcher checked with the librarian, and students have books for seven days, while teachers have them for 14 days.

Fifth grade usage of Follett Shelf was presented to the focus group of teachers by the researcher application-sharing a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet listed all fifth graders, arranged alphabetically by last name, who accessed books. Students who accessed books on multiple occasions were listed each time they accessed a book. As presented in the prior section, teachers were shown how the vast majority of students are using Follett Shelf to browse books, rather than to follow a book over a period of days and actually read it to completion. The researcher asked the participants to speculate on this phenomenon.

Upon pointing out one student’s access log, a team of fifth grade teachers erupted in laughter. The student who was randomly chosen has read approximately twenty books on Follett Shelf. A teacher of his, Theresa, commented, “[This student] has never been to class!” The researcher responded, “Well, he’s pretty active in Follett Shelf!” Carol, another one of this student’s teachers, said, “Wow! No wonder why Mom says ‘Well, I see him on the computer!’”

Reining the group back to the task at hand, the researcher asked, “So I’m really curious. Why are these students not able to just sit down and read the whole book?”
Carol said, “They’ve probably never had to do that. Are our kids used to actually sitting down and reading a book?” Candy responded to her comment, saying:

I think it’s hard to sit down and read a whole book on Follett Shelf when you sit in front of your computer all day long in class. I don’t know about you guys, but the last thing I want to do at night… I don’t want to sit in front of my computer all night. Like when I work I’ll even take it to another spot just ‘cause I’m sick of sitting in my office. These poor kids, they don’t have a laptop so they don’t have that luxury. That’s why I like the lending library because they can get a real book and they can curl up, lay in bed, and read. I think it’s hard for them to sit in front of their computer to read a chapter book on Follett Shelf. I think they need a break from their computers in my opinion.

In response to Candy’s comment, the researcher asked, “Do you think this is a problem or is this okay? Is Follett Shelf letting us down?” A few participants commented on this thought. Candy responded:

If they have no access to books this is far better than nothing. Maybe because they’re in the digital age that doesn’t bother them like it bothers us. If they’ve never had access to books, they don’t miss or crave that feeling of curling up with a book, so maybe this is normal to them.

Another member agreed:

I know some of them get so excited to even be in a place that has all these books for choice. They want to see it all, they want to click around and find it all. I mean, we did say to them, “You start reading a book and you don’t like it, you
stop.” So I don’t know if we can really say good or bad. I think we just celebrate that they’re in there at this point. Because next year if we have these same students… not in fifth grade… (laughs), but maybe they will have grown enough, that now they know kind of what they like. And maybe they can go from there. (Carol)

Members also related browsing to what typically happens when students have access to multiple books. One stated:

They’re just looking and browsing. I don’t think it’s ever a bad thing. We’re giving them exposure to what we grew up doing. We went to book fairs and things like that. We could improve it to the next level – looking at books. Can we make this a goal? Some kids need more guidance on the level of books. Maybe we can help them – give them more parameters. Like we can let them look for ten minutes, then tell them levels to look at. You know, they don’t have anyone saying “I read this when I was little” so they may need time to browse, to look around. It’s probably a good idea to give them more direction than we do now. We can let them start broad – then after ten minutes, they may decide it’s not for me. (Michelle)

Candy asked if all teachers have access to the report that was presented. The researcher said, “No, but do you want it?” The teachers agreed that the data was useful and requested to be emailed the report. Carol felt that the data would be useful in conferencing with kids. She suggested we ask students, “I see that you’ve checked out this and this. What were you thinking? Why did you choose to do that? What are you
finding out about yourself as a reader? What are you noticing your habits are?” Candy added that the spreadsheet also shows teachers which students are not accessing the resources at all. She thought that perhaps these students could be pulled aside and shown how to log in again.

Because the students’ Follett Shelf records were initially displayed in a confidential forum (the winter teacher focus group), the researcher held a discussion with the librarian to gain permission to distribute the spreadsheet on fifth grade students’ usage patterns. The librarian felt that the data would be beneficial to teachers and encouraged the researcher to share it via email with teachers. Research study aside, the librarian felt that Follett Shelf usage data is an important component in children’s education and should be shared just as other curriculum data is shared with teachers.

Highlights from the winter teacher focus group were sent to participants after the data was analyzed and can be viewed in Appendix W. The Highlights were used as a second-level member check as well as a recap of the session for participants’ records.

**Micro-interlocutor analysis.**

Conducting a micro-interlocutor analysis of the winter session of the teacher focus group based on response pattern is less enlightening than the fall focus group sessions. Remembering that a micro-interlocutor analysis attempts to explain individual opinions while traditional focus group analyses focus on cohesive responses, the winter session of the teacher focus groups had participants come late, and others leave early. This instability interfered with a natural question/response pattern analysis. The micro-
interlocutor analysis for this teacher focus group session will focus more on participants’ individual attitudes and the way those attitudes changed as the session progressed.

At the beginning of the session, only four participants were present; Carol, Kristy, Michaela, and Mary. Others had emailed the researcher stating that they would be a little late. The researcher decided to start in spite of the absences, primarily because other participants mentioned that they would need to leave early and because all four language arts teams were represented. Another time to hold the focus group could not be created because teachers’ days are filled with live teaching sessions with the students.

With four participants available to answer the first question, an extremely casual atmosphere ensued. The first question attempted to determine participants’ current knowledge levels with the library resources. All four participants answered the question, many building off of Candy’s initial response of the library being underused on her team. She answered, “Honestly, probably on our team, it’s underused. I’m being completely honest.” Towards the end of the conversation on this first topic, another participant, Carol arrived. The researcher directed the question to Carol immediately. Despite not hearing the others’ responses, she answered in a similar manner, stating that she only uses the libraries in smaller group settings.

At this point in the focus group session, the majority of the participants appeared defeated by the library. Four of the five members, Candy, Michaela, Mary, and Carol maintained a lackluster attitude throughout the first three questions. Only Kristy answered positively from the start of the session. Candy’s initial responses seemed to set the tone, causing other respondents to reply unenthusiastically. Kristy wrote that she
agreed that finding time to explore the library with her class was a problem, but then later
chatted that she has students in her class that definitely use both [libraries] and like [them]. Kristy’s second response was the first positive statement of the session. During this small group, no participants sent smiley faces or clapping hands emoticons. Their halfhearted responses seemed not to warrant enthusiasm of any type – be it verbal, or through emoticons.

Michelle and Judy both came late. The researcher circled back to the first question for each of them individually. Michelle, though not hearing the earlier conversation, also mentioned a lack of time to fully implementing the library. Judy simply stated that the library processes of ordering and returning books were still confusing to her, thereby also relating a mediocre response at best.

Question two built on the first responses by asking participants how, if at all, the libraries were integrated into their classrooms. Our first emoticon appeared during this discussion, ironically by Kristy, the only participant who answered question one in a positive manner. Carol mentioned that she uses the libraries as a springboard for discussions about books, and Kristy sent a smile emoticon. Two more smiles appeared in the discussion on question number two, yet both were sent as smiles of understanding or agreement rather than joy. In talking about doubting if her students follow through on ordering books, Candy said, “I’m really struggling with them with that this year. There’s zero follow through on anything.” It was after this comment that Michaela and Theresa (who arrived during this question) sent the smiles of sympathy and understanding. It is almost as if these teachers had a rough day and were not feeling very positive. Carol
commented after Candy saying, “We have a really, really tough group this year.” The discussion continued to veer off topic by Michaela talking about the differences in her morning and afternoon classes at this point.

The third question was met with continued comments of frustration by all participants except Kristy and Theresa. Theresa appeared to be the only participant who had both negative and positive things to relate about the library, while Kristy maintained her positive attitude. The question asked participants what their students were saying about the libraries. Theresa answered first, in chat, that the ones who are using it appear to be happy with it. Kristy chatted that the students like the on-demand access to Follett Shelf. Carol turned the conversation less positive by stating that her students felt it took a while to get a book, and Candy piggybacked stating that there is a lack of titles. The researcher pulled Kristy’s comment about Follett Shelf from the chat box and directed a verbal question to her. The researcher said, “So, Kristy, yours are liking access to Follett Shelf at any time?” Kristy responded verbally this time, explaining her answer.

When asking participants about the program’s main problems, Carol responded first, mentioning the lack of authors. Theresa agreed with Carol and added to her comment. Carol then mentioned that she still got the links confused. Everyone but Candy responded to this question, and no emoticons were displayed. The following question asked for solutions to the stated problems. When Theresa mentioned that the program may be too large for one person to handle (while addressing the issue of lengthy delivery times) Carol smiled in sympathy.
The majority of the participants finally took an upbeat attitude when discussing how teachers may be involved when ordering books. In response to Carol’s comment about obtaining award-winning books, Theresa and Kristy sent smiles. When Carol mentioned that it would be nice to have library time as a special (like gym or computers) two teachers sent smiles in agreement.

The positive, enthusiastic responses grew even more when library use data was shared with the participants. When it was mentioned that over 1,800 books have been requested, Michaela smiled. Participants next viewed the data by grade level and saw the bar graph delineating the fifth grade being the grade that is using the library at a much higher rate than the rest of the school. To this data, Kristy clapped, Michaela smiled. When asked if this phenomenon was “by chance”, Carol sent a thumbs down emoticon. The comments answering why fifth grade may be accessing books at a higher rate were lighthearted (“Because we’re awesome!”) and the group appeared eager to discuss the data. It was as if they had been awoken.

Remembering earlier questions, where the majority of participants complained that they were not able to spend time on the libraries and where they doubted students’ follow through, participants now admitted to pushing out the library links. The disconfirming evidence presented to the group (usage data) actually created a change of perspective in the respondents! The teachers began to take credit for the success of fifth graders’ usage rates, while earlier they were far more likely to complain about not having enough time to integrate the libraries. While Kristy maintained a positive attitude
throughout the session, Carol, Candy, and Theresa developed a positive attitude after this data was shown.

The upbeat demeanors continued when looking at Follett Shelf data. While discussing the fifth grade usage of Follett Shelf, eleven positive emoticons were shared. This time, the smiling emoticons appeared to be more cheerful and celebratory, than sympathetic. In discussing whether teachers could access the spreadsheet, Candy said, “I think it’s interesting. I think that’s good data for us to know.” To this comment, Carol smiled. Carol then discussed using the data to conference with students, and Theresa smiled.

During the fall focus groups, micro-interlocutor analysis was used primarily to show the pattern of responses. During the winter focus group with teachers, understanding the pattern of responses was less pertinent, since the group remained small while participants joined late and left early. The micro-interlocutor analysis presented in the proceeding paragraphs attempted to analyze individual participants’ attitudes in a virtual environment as they morphed during the session, as this data seemed more prevalent than the order of responses. When presented with library use data showing an enthusiastic response to the libraries by fifth grade students, the fifth grade teachers’ enthusiasm to the libraries appeared to explode as well.

Relevance to research questions.

The winter teacher focus group addressed the second and fourth research questions: How well do teachers understand this school’s current lending library system? And, have teachers integrated the lending library into their classrooms? How so? While
the question pertaining to teachers’ understanding of the library was posed also in the fall focus group, an updated knowledge base was assessed. Teachers appeared to have grown in their understanding of the library, but as shown above, a few teachers were still confused.

Much of the focus group centered on ways teachers have (or have not) integrated the libraries into their classrooms. As was demonstrated above, teachers initially felt that integration was minimal due to time constraints, but when shown access data to both libraries by fifth graders, teachers admitted to pushing out links to the library resources and encouraging students to utilize them. Teachers also reported to using the ebook library in small intervention groups.

**Administrators.**

A winter focus group session was held with administrators. Conducted two weeks after the teacher focus group, the aim of the administrative focus group session was to garner information on the administrative side of the libraries and also to react to problems discussed by the teachers. The question protocol can be viewed in Appendix M. All members were present at the meeting, although one, Abby, had to leave early. As with all focus group sessions, a transcript was created from a recording and coded according to a priori and inductive codes.

The administrative focus group consists of members who work in the internal office of this school plus participants who work from their residences. In fall, all members attended a focus group in person at the school’s headquarters. As described earlier, the format of the winter focus group was moved to an online platform due to time
and weather constraints. An in-depth analysis of the effect of transitioning this group to an online setting will be presented in the micro-interlocutor analysis portion of this section.

**Current understanding of the library.**

The initial question to the administrators was the same question posed to the teachers: At this point in the year, how well do you understand the library? The administrators were asked to first consider the physical lending library. Louise responded first, via chat, that she did not have much experience. Kellie also gave a thumbs down when asked if participants would be able to answer students’ questions regarding placing an order. Abby mentioned that she would need to direct a student to a teacher for assistance in placing an order, and Destiny related that she knew the general operation and could probably guide a student through it if she played with it.

While Daniella and Bethany did not respond to this question, it is likely that Bethany knows the operation quite well, as she is in charge with the manual shipping and receiving of books. Elizabeth responded last, provided the most succinct answer, stating:

The book library, because of having interaction with Bethany, I know that through the resources link in the classroom the kids can go to that and they can browse through and they can click on what they want to order and that shows up in some way, shape, or form on Bethany’s computer. And she fulfills the order, sends it out, with a return envelope. And then, when the kids - there is no due date - but when the kids are done reading the book, the idea is that they would put it in the return envelope and mail it back.
Participants were next directed to answer the same question pertaining to Follett Shelf. Again, the majority of the participants do not feel comfortable with the system. Destiny, when asked about her comfort level with the ebook platform, responded with the thumbs down emoticon. Louise admitted to having no experience with checking out a book, but knew the general overview. Abby and Daniella only responded with the fact that they knew teachers used it for intervention sessions.

Kellie and Elizabeth were the administrators who knew the most about Follett Shelf. Kellie runs Elluminate sessions with students and often uses it for reading lessons, so she has a high comfort level with it. Elizabeth is in charge of placing digital book orders through Follett Shelf, so also is familiar with the platform.

**Administrators’ interpretation of library usage rates data.**

Administrators were next shown library usage rates from the first half of the year. As in the teacher focus group, the researcher created graphs from the data and used a PowerPoint to share the information with the participants. The first graph presented was usage rates parsed by month. The researcher spent time explaining the key components of the graph and then allowed the group time to conjecture over the findings. Like the teachers, the administrators were impressed with the usage. In the chat box, Abby typed, “Wow!” She also used the clapping emoticon when shown the numbers of books that were sent out. Louise said, “It’s amazing to me how many requests there are. Seems like it’s fulfilling a real need.” Abby responded, “I am glad to see that so many students are able to have the books they are interested in. [Although I have] an iPad to read on… I do like holding the book too.”
Because some data received from the developers of the system was inaccurate and clarification had not yet been provided (total amounts of books requested, checked out, and returned was not matching the monthly breakdown), Bethany (who manually fills the orders and organizes the collection of books) was asked for her impression on the chart. She responded, “Since I can’t run reports, I only see the requests that are able to be filled. I have no clue how many sit in the queue.”

Louise, in observing the monthly breakdown, asked, “So [there were] more requests before it was actually running than in December?” Louise had noticed that more students requested books in August, than in December. Why had the number dropped after the library had already been established? No members had any comments on this question, but in looking at end of the year usage rates, further trends of requests will be analyzed.

Abby asked about the status of the book supply. Bethany, again because she fills orders and works in the same area as the shelves of books, responded that, at this time, the supply is adequate because students are limited to only having two books out at a time. General questions about the library also emerged during the presentation of this graph. Louise asked if the library was limited to just K-5. The researcher told her that, while this was the intent, students across grade levels had access to the library due to it appearing on their homepages. Kellie asked if the library now shows the level of the book. The researcher responded that as far as she knew, it did not. Daniella clarified that the library does not show book level or number of copies.
Because of the discrepancy between number of requests, and number of orders filled, the researcher asked Bethany earlier via email if she is unable to fill books due to feeling overwhelmed with orders, or if books were cancelled for other reasons (such as students cancelling books, no available copies, or students having two books out already). Bethany emailed back that she is not feeling overwhelmed and that she is able to keep up with the requests. This information was relayed to the rest of the members.

Participants next viewed the usage rates based on genre. While informational books appear at first glance to be the most requested, the researcher explained that fiction books had been classified into categories of their own. Historical fiction, realistic fiction, fantasy, and animal fiction were broken into separate areas on the graph. Kellie, who focuses much of her time working with students below third grade, was pleased to see that easy readers were highly requested. Daniella wondered if informational book requests were high due to assignments that required students to research non-fiction subjects. Because the researcher was the only teacher present, she answered Daniella saying that the fifth grade had not yet worked on informational reports.

Kellie asked if students who are participating in the incentive-based Read at Home program may benefit from the libraries. I explained to her and the group that a teacher had also wondered if the usage rate was up in October due to the introduction to this program. To this comment, Abby clapped and Kellie sent a smile emoticon.

Library usage separated by grade was presented next. The researcher explained that, rather than number of requests, this graph represents the number of individual students who have requested at least one book in each grade. The researcher also
commented that the teacher focus group suggested that usage by fifth graders is likely high due to the fact that the fifth grade teachers participate in a focus group on the library. Destiny asked Louise if elementary teachers put library information on their lesson pages in the learning management system. Louise responded that she did not recall seeing the library integrated into asynchronous lessons.

Kellie suggested that the researcher use time at an upcoming professional development session to present the ways the library could be integrated into class time in the live sessions. To this, the researcher responded, “Yeah, I guess the question that comes from that comment is a question to Bethany. Bethany, are you ready for people to push it more?” Bethany responded that the library needs to grow slowly so that she is able to keep up with filling requests.

Student requests by economic status were presented next to the group. Just as when it was shown to the teacher focus group, the researcher explained that the graph closely mirrors the demographics of the school population as a whole. She reiterated that no group was borrowing at a disproportionately higher rate.

The participants were told next to focus on Follett Shelf, or the digital, ebook library. They began by looking at usage rate by grades. Again, the components of the graph were presented to the group. Group members were asked if they knew the difference between reading a book online, and checking a book out. All participants responded that they were aware of the difference. Because the sixth and seventh grades appear to be using the resource at a much greater rate than the other grades, participants were asked to speculate on this trend. Kellie said, “I can tell you, just from the
experience of looking for books, most of the books – not most – a lot of the books are for older readers than younger.”

Data from one typical fifth grade Follett Shelf user was presented to the group. As discussed earlier, fifth graders who access Follett Shelf appear to spend more time browsing books rather than reading books from beginning to end. The researcher asked if the group members felt that this was either a positive or negative finding. Abby felt that this phenomenon was like being in a real library. Destiny stated:

If - they might be more – if, they can step away from the computer and read somewhere else, they might stick with it. I just think sometimes they’re at the computer so much already it may be - they don’t use it quite so much for enjoyment as they could. Whereas I like to take my iPad, my nook, or my book in a corner and curl up with a blanket. I just don’t know for enjoyment if I would stick to my computer.

Another participant brought up the possibility of students downloading ebooks to portable reading devices:

I just wanted to say, um, we’re going to be looking more at the - the downloading is a possibility. And I think as we deal with this more, we could help those students who do have an iPad or something that it can be downloaded on to. Helping them learn how to do that and manipulate that, uh we really haven’t gone too far with - well we haven’t gone far with that at all at this point. But I agree, I looked at that data and I thought, “Yikes!” It just seems to me like with the *Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*. These are not being read through. They’re
just browsing, and I think teachers probably would want to see this data, and talk to individual students about that, encouraging them to go ahead and check out a book, and if we need to have check out for students be two or three weeks, so that they would be encouraged to read a book from beginning to end, then maybe we need to do that. (Elizabeth)

Daniella wondered if Follett Shelf could be more like Netflix, where possible titles of interest could be recommended to students by intuitive software. Elizabeth, because she works directly with Follett Shelf employees, said that she would bring it up next time she attends a focus group with that company.

**Program’s main problems – administrative viewpoint.**

At the conclusion of viewing usage data, the participants were asked, “From an administrative view, what are the program’s main problems?” Destiny responded first, via chat, “I haven’t heard of any major issues with either program.” Elizabeth used this time to mention that new books orders were in the process of being placed, so that if anyone had book suggestions, to send them to her. Louise stated that elementary teachers were also recently asked to submit title suggestions. Daniella felt that more awareness on how to access books on Follett Shelf needed to be sent to high school students and for teachers because professional materials are available for checkout to teachers.

**Administrative responses to problems discussed by teachers.**

Because teachers were asked to discuss problems with the library as well, these issues were shown to administrators and asked if an administrative initiative could remedy any of the problems. The first issue was one of teacher confusion. The
researcher explained that some teachers, even those who are part of the focus group, are still unsure of how to order books or how to assist their students in using the library. While a solution was not posed by the administrators, Daniella wondered if teacher mentors (employees at the school charged with assisting teachers to perform at high levels) might be able to assist struggling teachers. Destiny said that the mentors likely are not versed in the program and that new teachers do not receive training on the library. She said, “I bet the teachers are the most schooled in this, just through trial and error.” She stated that a tutorial would likely need to be added to the list of requests from the developers instead of by someone like her.

Because teachers brought up the issue of not having enough time in their live sessions to fully implement library time, the administrators were asked about the possibility of having library become a special as gym and computers are. To this request, Elizabeth, the school librarian, expressed, “I’m loving it! It’s back to school again! Actually, there’s some poss—I think that’s not such a bad idea, truthfully. I don’t know what everybody would think.” Destiny responded via chat, “I would love that to happen if you are interested next year, Elizabeth!!!” She also commented that they should work with another school employee to make that happen. Elizabeth responded:

And I was going through some workshops with Follett, well, I’ve only done one of the three part thing, but having to do with Common Core, and especially dealing with non-fiction readings, and how cool would that be to bring in a lot of the non-fiction titles, in that way, as kind of a special? I love it, I’m willing to
work with it - with somebody else or whatever. But I would be willing to be a part of putting something together.

Elizabeth’s comments drew smiles from Kellie and a response in chat mentioning that a plan like that would be great.

Another teacher-issue was directed to Bethany. Students occasionally say that the time to receive books in the mail in lengthy, so Bethany was asked to explain why delays sometimes occur. She stated that sometimes she has orders to fill for equipment like digital cameras or Bamboo pens, but that orders should never take too long. She encouraged teachers who encounter an issue like this to call her directly to check on the order.

The final issue brought up by teachers was that Follett Shelf and the lending library are missing some really great authors. Between the time of the teacher focus group and the administrative focus group, teachers were already asked to request titles due to new orders being placed. The orders, provided to Elizabeth, would be placed in early February. Elizabeth commented further on this issue, saying:

I would just like to mention, in my sense, [on how] Follett Shelf is missing out on some great authors. Part of the issue is that there are a number of authors/publishers who have not given the license to provide their book in ebook format for Follett Shelf. For instance, like Gary Paulsen, I’d love to see some Gary Paulsen in there but a lot of what I would want, we can’t get, at least, not yet. So some of it goes back to publishers not granting rights.
Louise commented that the students are missing out, and the researcher suggested that we augment the digital library with paper versions of unavailable titles.

As with all previous focus groups, *Highlights* from the meeting were created and sent to participants via email. Members were asked to correct discrepancies, serving as a second-level member check. The Highlights from the winter administrative focus group can be viewed in Appendix X.

**Micro-interlocutor analysis.**

As in the teacher winter focus group, analyzing by response patterns is not justified for this focus group. While the teacher’s group had participants come and go throughout the session, the issue with the administrative focus group was a lack of willingness to use the microphone. The administrative group preferred to respond via chat. The researcher reminded participants that they “don’t have to type”, yet approximately 50% of the responses came in written form. For the micro-interlocutor analysis of the winter administrative focus group, the researcher will explore how using Elluminate for a virtual meeting may have affected individual responses. Both levels of experience and familiarity to Elluminate will be presented on a person-by-person basis.

*Kellie.*

Kellie, a reading specialist who works with students via Elluminate regularly, had the most experience with online meetings. Kellie was the first participant to use the microphone to respond to a question. All of her responses for the first question were verbal. It wasn’t until the second question where she used the chat box. Kellie has a bubbly personality and has no trouble presenting in front of large groups of people.
Throughout the meeting, she freely accessed the microphone to question other participants or to respond to questions.

Louise.

Louise, a former teacher well versed in Elluminate, preferred to use the chat feature over the microphone. The only time she responded verbally was when the researcher asked her to reflect on a comment in the chat box. All questions thereafter, whether from the moderator or from other participants, were answered in the chat box. While she appeared engaged throughout the meeting, Louise did not ask any participants questions. Louise is an introvert. She has expressed difficulty speaking in front of groups of people. This aspect of her personality emerges in both face-to-face meetings as well as online meetings.

Destiny.

Destiny, the elementary school principal, uses Elluminate a few times a month to conduct staff meetings with teachers. While likely not as familiar as teachers with the features of Elluminate, she is versed in going on the microphone, and is used to speaking in front of groups of people. Her position of authority has given her lots of practice in presenting to staff in both face-to-face settings and well as in virtual meetings. She responded verbally during the focus group when she had lengthy comments, and typed shorter comments in the chat box.

Elizabeth.

Elizabeth is the school librarian. Because she does not work with students in a synchronous setting, she is rather unfamiliar with Elluminate but has used it before. Her
natural outgoing personality encouraged her to respond entirely verbally, both to researcher questions and to questions from participants. At one point, she used the microphone to respond to a question directed to her in the chat box. No emoticons were sent by Elizabeth, likely because of her unfamiliarity with Elluminate.

_Abby._

Abby is a former teacher and now is an assistant director of intervention. She has much experience with Elluminate, but did not use the microphone even one time during the focus group. During the face-to-face focus group in the fall, Abby was one of the participants who responded regularly, but during the winter online focus group, her typed comments were brief. Her personality is outgoing, and her experience level with the program is high, yet on this day she kept her comments to a minimum.

_Daniella and Bethany._

Daniella and Bethany shared one computer to attend the online focus group. Bethany, the employee in charge of the manual shipping and receiving of books, had never used Elluminate before. When asked about the possibility of an online meeting, she said, “I have never used Elluminate before but I can certainly try.” It was arranged that she would sit in with another member, Daniella, so that her unfamiliarity would not hamper her responses.

Rather than share a headset, Daniella and Bethany decided that all comments would be supplied via the chat box. This severely limited the amount of information they were able (or willing) to relay. Because they were on Daniella’s computer, and logged in under her name, all comments appeared to come from Daniella, and it was only through
clarification from the moderator that it could be determined whose view it was. Neither Daniella nor Bethany would be classified as extroverts, and likely their quiet dispositions prevented them from deeply communicating their thoughts and feelings.

The winter focus group with administrators yielded useful data, yet the researcher feels that richer responses would likely have been expressed in a face-to-face meeting. The spring focus group with administrators will occur at headquarters in a face-to-face format, so responses are not hampered due to experience level with Elluminate or with personalities unwilling to speak in a virtual environment. It is the aim of a micro-interlocutor analysis to prevent focus group findings from being presented as cohesive group thoughts. While this micro-interlocutor analysis did not provide levels of consensus or dissent, it did show that, had the meeting been held in a face-to-face format, some participants may have had more expressive viewpoints. The results presented in this section were primarily from those participants who well well-versed in Elluminate and those who had personalities willing to speak in front of others in a virtual environment.

**Relevance to research questions.**

While no research questions were directly answered in the winter administrative focus group, the information gathered allows the researcher to understand problems and to choose remedial actions. Chen, in his six steps of program evaluation (described in Chapter 3) listed his forth step as identifying problems, and his fifth step as probing for solutions (Chen, 2005). Because the winter focus groups were part of the formative evaluation, identifying problems and recommending solutions allowed the school to
implement changes that may impact other research questions; namely the effect the library program has on students’ reading habits and skills (research question number 5). A program ripe with problems is less likely to impact students’ achievement than a program running smoothly.

**Administrators and teachers: Theme comparison.**

Administrators and teacher focus groups had some similar questions, but questions were primarily targeted to their different roles. The first question posed, “At this point in the year, how well do you understand the libraries?” was asked to both focus groups. The teacher focus group had nine participants and the administrative focus group had seven participants. The comfort levels of both teachers and administrators to both the lending library and to Follett Shelf are presented in the Figure 22 below.

![Mid-Year Familiarity with Library](image)

*Figure 22. Winter focus groups’ comparisons of familiarity of the library.*
Regarding the physical lending library, less than half of the respondents in each group expressed feeling comfortable with using the library. Only three teachers felt that they would be able to sufficiently answer student questions, and only three administrators felt this way. Considering Follett Shelf, seven out of nine teachers felt comfortable using the resource, likely because it is integrated into classroom lessons. Two administrators (less than one-third of respondents) felt prepared to assist students in using this resource.

So that the teachers could understand comments elicited from the administrator’s focus group, and vice versa, each group’s Highlights were sent to the other participants. Because the administrative focus group answered some of the questions from teachers, teachers were instructed to read it and ask any further questions. No teachers asked further questions, but a few thanked the researcher for finding answers to problems. For example, after reading the administrative focus group’s Highlights, teachers learned that if students report not having received a book, teachers now had a contact person with whom the request could be discussed. Highlights were sent after each group had time to view their own session’s notes and to correct misunderstandings.

**Spring Parent and Student Interviews**

Interviews with parents and students were held in March of 2013. The interview phase was included due to the poor response rate on the fall surveys and to more accurately answer three research questions. Research question number one aimed to acquire a baseline on students’ reading habits prior to exposure to the library. Research question number three relied on parents’ input concerning the goals of the lending library. The intent of the fifth research question was to understand the degree that the library
program became a factor in students’ reading habits and skills. The survey phase alone (due to the poor response rate) was not able to address these research questions. Utilizing rapid reconnaissance, a qualitative research term referring to a method of gathering information quickly as a response to emerging issues (Patton, 2002), the researcher conducted twelve student and parent interviews.

As presented earlier in Chapter 4, the fall survey phase only elicited views from approximately 14% of the fifth grade student body. To adequately answer the above research questions, a target of 20% of the fifth grade student population was set. In keeping with the emergent research design, the student and parent interviews were established to fill in the knowledge gap, thereby using a multimodal approach to reach the 20% target. Stratified purposeful sampling was used based on class membership.

In their article, “A Call for Qualitative Power Analyses,” Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) argued that in order to have a realistic chance of achieving saturation, qualitative researchers must carefully consider their sample. The authors stated that while qualitative research is not designed to generalize findings to a larger population, these generalizations are often made. Because the researcher designed the student and parent data collection phases to gain a perspective on the students’ and parents’ viewpoints, it was essential that participants were selected in a manner that was representative of the larger target group of interest.

The tables below show the selection process of students to interview. In Table 5, the survey response rate has been separated by language arts teacher. The first column lists the teacher, the second lists the amount of fall surveys gleaned from each teacher,
column three lists the total number of year-long students enrolled in each class, and the last column calculates the number of interviews needed to reach 20% of each class.

Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Responses from Surveys</th>
<th>Total # of Year-Long Students (as of March)</th>
<th>Interviews Needed to Reach 20% of Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A (2 classes)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B (2 classes)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C (2 classes)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher D (only 1 class)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 6 below, demographic characteristics are presented as school-wide percentages, as percentages of survey respondents, and as the amount of students needed during the interview phase to match the school-wide characteristics.
Table 6.

Target Demographics for Student Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>52% M/48% F</td>
<td>5 M/7 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Low-income (LI)</td>
<td>75.1%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>9 LI/3 Non-LI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Disabilities</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4 with IEP/8 without</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the data above, and after IRB approval, the researcher recruited students who most closely approximated the needed demographics. Students and parents were recruited via phone calls and the recruitment script can be viewed in Appendix Y. A perfect match was not achieved, as some students proved difficult to contact. The actual demographics matched the targeted demographics regarding gender and economic status, but had one less student with an IEP, and had one less student from Teacher D. Table 7, below, displays the demographics of the students who were able to be interviewed.
Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Target Interview Demographics</th>
<th>Actual Interview Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>5 M/7 F</td>
<td>5 M/7 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Low-income (LI)</td>
<td>9 LI/3 Non-LI</td>
<td>9 LI/3 Non-LI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Disabilities</td>
<td>4 with IEP/8 without</td>
<td>3 with IEP/9 without</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher A-2</td>
<td>Teacher A-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher B-4</td>
<td>Teacher B-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher C-2</td>
<td>Teacher C-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher D-4</td>
<td>Teacher D-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents.

Upon receipt of signed consent and assent forms (Appendix Z), eleven parents were interviewed during the spring interview phase. While twelve students were interviewed, a set of twins participated, thereby, leaving eleven parents. Parents began the interviews and were asked two questions. Each question also had one probe. The question protocol for the student and parent interviews can be seen in Appendix Q.

Lending library – parents’ goals.

Parents were first asked if their child has borrowed books from the lending library. Six parents responded, “Yes.” One parent stated, “Yes, I believe he has. I have seen them come in the envelopes, and then they put them back in the envelopes [to] go back.” The parents who responded “Yes” were then asked if they had any suggestions to improve the library. A father replied, “From what I’ve seen as a parent, we have never
seen a list of the books. Perhaps a printed list of titles, genres, or so forth, or even access to a list online that we can see [and say] ‘Okay this is something….’ I haven’t seen it.”

Another parent added that incorrect titles have been sent, but other than that, there have been no problems. A mother stated:

The books come really quickly, she has a wide selection. The only thing that she said to me, and I agree with her, [is that] there are a few books that she has been wanting to check out for a while and the library hadn’t had them yet. So that was the only thing we could come up with that we thought would help to improve. Because it’s already so great anyway. I mean, like I said, she’s been really happy with the books.

Another parent agreed, asking for a larger selection, primarily more comics, and one parent replied that the library is “good” and had no suggestions or goals.

In answering the first question about use of the lending library, one parent stated that he was unsure if his child has used it, and four others replied that their child has not used the library. In probing as to the reasons their children have not borrowed books, all six parents stated that they did not know about this resource. Responses included: “Never heard of it,” and “I didn’t know about it,” “I’m not too sure. We haven’t had too much experience with it.” After explaining the library to a father, he stated, “We’d definitely do something like that!” One parent responded that her daughter would borrow books if she knew how to get there. She suggested making the library easier to access.
Follett Shelf – parents’ goals.

Parents were next asked a similar question, although question two pertained to Follett Shelf, the school’s ebook resource. Only two parents responded that their child has used this program. One of these parents stated that her daughter, “likes the programs, but [she] has hundreds of books at home.” Three parents admitted to being unsure if their children use Follett Shelf. One of these parents stated, “I don’t think he has, but he can do it. He needs to read more anyway.” The remaining six parents said that their children are not using Follett Shelf as a resource to get reading material. Three of the six mentioned that there is enough reading material at home stating comments such as, “She gets books physically that she can read”, and three were unaware of the resource. One parent stated, “I think she just never knew about it. She likes to read so I’m sure if she knew how to get there, she would use it.” One father was particularly interested in the ebook resource stating:

I know that he showed me the program online to sign on, a profile and so forth. I don’t think we’ve followed through. But they do have devices so I don’t know why we’re not doing more online books. My son did look this up …. But we got a bit intrepid toward the end and didn’t know how much for each download, over who paid for this. We’d love to have an online borrowing program and I’ll look at that again through Follett.

For both the lending library and for Follett Shelf, the researcher asked parents how best to get the word out about the resources. Parents suggested newsletters as well as emails. For families who were unaware of the resources, the researcher asked if they
were interested in being shown how to access the libraries. At the conclusion of the interviews, the researcher application-shared the libraries, went over usernames and passwords, and answered questions so that families could immediately access the libraries. To the father who was weary that he was being charged for ebooks, the researcher explained that the app is free to download and that because the school pays for the Follett Shelf account, he would not be charged.

**Relevance to research questions.**

The above responses from parents addressed research question number three: What are the parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ goals concerning the lending library program. Because many parents were under-informed about the library, research question number five (To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills?) was also researched.

Concerning parents’ goals, parents were generally just pleased to hear about the libraries and praised the programs. As mentioned above, a few parents wished there was a larger selection or an expansion of genres. The most frequently mentioned suggestion was to provide more information to parents about these resources. Regarding the impact the library has had on students’ reading habits and skills, the parent interviews elicited the finding that, had parents known about the libraries, they would have encouraged their children to access the resources.

**Students.**

Twelve students took part in the interviews, the demographics of which were presented above. Students were asked four to five questions each (five questions if they
answered that they have accessed one or both of the libraries) and students and parents were able to ask final questions at the conclusion of the interviews. The following sections report on the findings of the student interviews.

**Rate of pleasure reading prior to library exposure.**

In an attempt to gain a baseline of students’ reading prior to exposure to the libraries, students were asked to think back to their time spent reading before fifth grade. They were asked to state how many books they read for fun in a month. One student reported reading seven to eight books per month, one estimated reading about five books per month, one said about three or four, two read two to three books a month, five admitted to reading only one or two books a month, and two replied that they didn’t read much at all. One student who admitted to not reading stated, “Um… probably not for fun. I mean I wouldn’t read a book.” One student stated that she read the same book over and over again, and another student said that while he wasn’t reading books, he had read the magazines he received in the mail.

**Current rate of pleasure reading.**

Students were next asked if they were currently reading a book in their free time. Responses were varied. Six students stated that they were currently reading a book. Titles mentioned included the *Hunger Games* (two students), *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (two students) and *Superfudge*. These students were asked where they acquired these books. Two students mentioned stores, “Barnes and Noble,” “Half-Price Books,” one student mentioned the lending library, one student mentioned a book fair, and one student mentioned Follett Shelf. Another student replied that she has books at home. One child
stated, “I’ve been thinking about getting books from the regular library, but my mom never has time to take me there so….”

Three students said that they try to read books, but were not currently reading. These students stated that they get magazines from their church, books from the school’s Family Nights, and through the local libraries. Three other students simply replied “no.”

**Lending library – students’ use.**

Just as the parents were asked, students were also asked if they have borrowed books through the lending library. Disconfirming evidence was obtained in that two students reported that they have received books when their parents stated that they have not. In both cases, the parents and students had background conversations about the discrepancy and the students explained to the parents how books had been received in the mail. By using stakeholder triangulation, the disconfirming evidence was resolved.

Four students reported that they have never borrowed a book through the lending library. One student said that she didn’t know how to get there and another stated that she has “not told her mom” so she does not go to it.

The eight remaining students have used the library. These students were asked to estimate how many books they have received this year. Two stated eight to eleven books, two stated three to four books, and two replied one to two books.

**Follett Shelf – students’ use.**

Students were next asked if they read books on Follett Shelf. The results were split: Five students responded “yes,” three responded “a little” or “not very much,” and four responded “no.” Students who responded positively were probed whether they read
the whole book or if they just browsed through the books. One student replied, “I did do that with one book. I can’t remember what it was called. I think it was *Judy Moody and the Not Bummer Summer*. I didn’t want to read it anymore so I looked up the *Hunger Games*.” Another student stated, “I read a little, then we had to go somewhere.”

A boy said, “I think I read one book, then I thought it wasn’t cool. I like to have a book in my hand, sort of.” He was asked if it was too hard to read on the computer and he replied, “It is kind of complicated to find the book that you read the day before. And turning the pages! It takes forever to turn pages!” Another boy was asked if he had trouble reading on the computer and he said that he sometimes “gets lost in the words.” A girl agreed stating, “A lot of times I don’t like looking at the screen a whole bunch. It hurts my eyes sometimes.”

Among the four students who answered that they did not use Follett Shelf, one student stated “I prefer to read a physical book. Because it’s easier for me. I mean, I can read online but I prefer a physical book.” Another student said, “I don’t like to sit at my computer more than I have to.” A girl, when asked about reading on Follett Shelf, said, “I usually just order it. I don’t really read that much online. I like to sit on the couch to read it.”

An unanticipated response came from three of the twelve students. These students, without being probed, answered the Follett Shelf question by bringing up Tumblebooks. Tumblebooks is an online book program to which this school subscribes. These three students mentioned that when they read books online, they prefer Tumblebooks to Follett Shelf. One of these students told the researcher, “If you read on
Tumblebooks, you can play games after. Like, first read the book, then do a game about it, or take a quiz on it.” Because the researcher felt that this resource was geared towards younger children, she asked if there are chapter books on Tumblebooks. The student said that she did not think so.

**Impact of library on students’ reading habits**

Students who answered that they have borrowed books either through the lending library or through Follett Shelf were asked if these resources encouraged them to read books more often. Seven students simply replied “Yes.” One student stated that her reading habits are basically the same as they were before having access to these resources. One boy stated, “I wouldn’t say yes, because I find it hard to get by with my schooling and also try to read books.”

**Parents’ and students’ questions for the researcher.**

The final question asked parents and students if they had any questions or comments for the researcher. Five parent and student teams replied, “No.” Among the six other teams, one parent commented:

For that there Follett reading thing; if it was more like on a small screen, something you can carry around, she might be interested in it that way because she likes to relax in the evening and just read. But if she’s on a computer, she’s not relaxing.

To this comment, the researcher discussed the idea of purchasing digital reading devices for the students. The parent thought that a device such as that would “make it more appetizing.”
One parent asked if the libraries were also accessible for her daughter in seventh grade. The researcher responded that indeed they were. Two parents questioned whether the library would be accessible over the summer. The researcher stated that she believed they were, but would check into it as we approach the end of the school year. After the interviews, the researched checked on the availability of the library over the summer. The manager of the Title office said that books would not be shipped over the summer, as she uses that time to inventory the books. The librarian stated that Follett Shelf would be accessible by students over the summer.

A parent took the time to comment that he intends to explore the libraries with his son. He stated, “We will follow up on it more. I’ve seen several books started, but as far as finishing--.” Another parent praised the library. She stated, “This is really neat! I wish I could have that! I’m going to be looking at it with her from now on. Hopefully help her choose.”

Students also praised the libraries, stating, “Well, I think the library at our school is really cool because you can get more books than at my old school. I like the books there.” Another student praised the search engines within the libraries, saying, “If you know the name of the author, you can look it up and see if there are any more books.”

Two students used the final open-ended question to request genres. One said, “They should add in, like books that are plays. More that people can share and can read together.” Another added, “I think they should add in magazines so you can read articles and stuff about it.” The researcher asked this student what types of magazines she would like and the student responded that she would like to see magazines with cartoons in it.
Relevance to research questions.

The student interviews were geared towards a few research questions. Research question number one, “To what extent are students in this online school reading for pleasure? What is the baseline and does it relate to socioeconomic class?” was answered when the researcher questioned the students on the amount of time spent reading before fifth grade. Eight of the respondents were economically-disadvantaged. Among the students of the mid or upper-income range, all four admitted to reading multiple titles over the summer and were able to name specific books and/or magazines. Of the eight who are low-income, responses were varied. Four students stated that they read one to two books per month, one said he read magazines, one stated that she reread the same book three times, one estimated reading five books per month, and one read seven to eight books per month.

In comparing the responses from the student interviews with the responses from the fall student surveys, a similar response pattern emerged. Low-income students from both data sources had varied responses; some read books on their own, some did not. Regarding students who were not economically-disadvantaged, all admitted to engaging in pleasure reading.

The student interviews also intended to answer research question number five: To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills? As mentioned above, the majority of the students felt that by having access to the libraries, they were encouraged to read more. This self-reported statement refers more towards reading habits than skills. Further research from teachers and DIBELS scores
will be reported further on in Chapter 4 to ascertain the effect the libraries had on students’ reading skills.

The final research question targeted through student interviews was, “What is the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes?” Regarding usage and comments, there was not a distinct difference between the students from the two economic groups. One of the four students who were not economically-disadvantaged had no knowledge of the libraries, and the other two reported using the libraries in similar rates as their economically-disadvantaged counterparts. Had parents and students all been equally informed about the libraries, a clearer response may have emerged for this question.

**Spring Focus Groups**

Focus groups met for a final time in April of 2013. The researcher met with the teachers first via Elluminate and then with the administrators in a face to face setting. By meeting with the teachers first, the researcher was able to take recommendations from them to the administrators in hope that changes could be considered. As with all focus groups, the meetings were recorded, transcribed, and coded according to both a priori and inductive coding.

**Teachers.**

The purpose of the spring focus group with teachers was to discuss results of the program including changes in teachers’ behaviors or students’ reading habits and to identify problems and to recommend changes for future years. All nine teachers were present for the spring focus group. The question protocol can be viewed in Appendix P.
Integration of library into classrooms.

As during the winter focus group, teachers were asked if they have integrated the lending library or Follett Shelf into their classrooms. There were very few changes from when the teachers answered this question in the winter. The primary response (stated by four participants) was that there is a lack of time to fully implement the library during live class sessions with students. Teachers took the time to bring up the fact that students are complaining that their books have not arrived in a timely manner. Michelle said, “One thing I would say is there seems to be a terrible wait time. I don’t know if that’s student error on the ordering end of it or if there is just a long wait.” Michaela and Candy reiterated these sentiments.

Teachers stated that they are continuing to push out links to the libraries, but that they are not sure if students follow through and order a book. Carol stated, “We sent [the links] during class time the weeks prior to spring break to get books to read over break.” Michelle mentioned that she feels that kids are using the system because she has been fielding lots of questions from students regarding the libraries.

Students’ comments on the library.

The researcher next asked the teachers if their students are saying anything about the library to them. Because teachers emphasized that students are complaining that it is taking a long time to get books (during the previous question) the researcher instructed the group to contact the person in the Title office if there are questions by specific students. The researcher also told the group that students should have more than one book in their queue so that if one is not available, another book can be sent.
Kristy was the only participant to address this question further. She stated that the students “like having access to [the library] and being able to browse through books and have a choice in their reading.” She mentioned that students need consistent reminders on how to get to the libraries, how to check out books, and return books.

**Library’s effect on students’ reading habits and skills.**

The prior two questions elicited little discussion likely because they were part of the winter focus group and little has changed. The third question brought forth new data. The participants were asked, “From your perspective, to what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills?” Michelle answered first, stating, “I would say that it is a way for them to just get excited about a book. Just to have that feeling of excitement about a book arriving.” She then reiterated that in order for this effect to occur, there needs to be a quick follow through from order to delivery.

Candy agreed with Michelle in stating:

I feel like we tried to get them enthusiastic about it and push it really hard in the beginning of the year. But then, when it took so long to get their books, and when they didn’t see a title they wanted, they lost their enthusiasm for it. And so I think then we stopped really pushing it as much as we had in the beginning of the year.

In response to Candy’s comment, Theresa sent a smile emoticon and Judy clapped.

Carol added that the libraries are likely being used primarily by students who are not struggling readers. She said:

I see that our top readers, or not necessarily our top readers, but our kids who enjoy reading the most still visit it the most. And I still see some of the kids down
there who are hard to motivate, aren’t necessarily self-motivated readers—

They’re not taking advantage of it.

The conversation continued discussing motivational factors. Michelle stated that when she taught in a brick-and-mortar class, she read books to students that were part of a series. She felt that, “they would have a little bit more enthusiasm about reading the rest of the series once they had a relationship with the characters.”

The researcher recapped this conversation by stating:

When I started thinking about this dissertation, I was thinking about how we could motivate our kids to be readers. That’s where it really started. And then I saw that, before we can motivate them to actually read, we had to have a way for them to get books. I think just the fact of us talking about motivation is good. I would say it’s positive because now we are able to work more on that. Like we’re maybe getting over one of our hurdles.

**Impact of the library program on low-income students.**

Teachers were next asked, “One of the goals mentioned in the fall was to ‘get books into the hands of students,’ particularly our low-income students. What is the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes?” The researcher acknowledged that answering this question may prove difficult, and rephrased it in a more general sense, asking participants if they have noticed anything about their low-income students and their use of the library.

Michelle answered first, stating, “Well, I think a negative that I’ve noticed with our lower economic kiddos is obviously a lot of disorganization in their homes. They
don’t know where there books are, they tend to move a lot.” Carol answered next and related a story about one of her low-income students. She said:

He’s kind of on the lower end of my guided reading group. He talks about looking through Follett Shelf and looking through the library ordering a book or something, and I think the difference is, he is on the lower economic status, but his dad is there. And his dad is involved and is really trying to help his child in the importance of education. So this child is in that class that you’re talking about, but he has someone at home who is encouraging him.

The other participants felt that they were unable to answer this question. Theresa said, “I know that one student in particular is a low-income student. And he has mentioned using the library a couple times. And I guess I just don’t know for sure.”

**Suggestions to improve the library for next school year.**

Teachers were asked to discuss ways the library can be used next year. The conversation immediately turned to creating *Library* as a special. *Specials* refer to classes taught by teachers who hold a license in a specialty area, such as physical education or computers. Carol brought the idea up first, likely to reiterate her suggestion of a library special first discussed in the winter focus group. She said:

I would love to see-- I mean, I’ll be the librarian! I would love to see kids come to the special and a teacher reading them a book, like a picture book or maybe a shorter-- Read some teaser chapters of chapter books. Get them interested in that. Introduce them to different authors, highlighting books. Getting them to be—Just showing them that you can love books and it’s interesting.
While Carol was speaking, four other teachers showed agreement by sending emoticons of clapping hands or smiles. Michaela added that it would be nice for a librarian to show the students how to use the library at the beginning of the year and for the librarian to do fun activities with books.

Other participants built off of Carol’s suggestion of library as a special:

I agree. I think it needs to be super guided for most of our kids. You almost need to lead them to the water as far as the books go. Show them books that are on or just a little below their level that they can easily read independently and are really exciting. (Michelle)

Kristy suggested the librarian use pre-made book trailer videos to hook kids in and then give the students time to explore the selection of books.

Because it was unclear at the time if administrators were planning on instituting Library as a special, the researcher probed the group for other suggestions regarding improvement of the library. Michaela suggested that, if classes cannot come individually, a weekly time be set for optional visits to the library. She felt it would be beneficial if the weekly time had a theme, such as sports books or comics. Judy added to this, saying, “And if we weren’t going to do, like an actual special—if they didn’t let us do that, we could do the lunch library. Just over lunchtime someone could be reading. I think that would be fun and maybe get the kids interested.”

In prior data collection phases (survey responses and student and parent interviews) it was shown that many parents are unaware of the libraries. The researcher asked the group for suggestions on how to get the word out to families. Kristy responded
first stating that the links need to be more noticeable. She felt that they are currently buried at the bottom of the homepages. Michelle responded, “I definitely think if it was a special, it would get out pretty quickly. If it was a mandatory special just like all the others and I think it should be.”

The group continued to steer the conversation back to the possibility of Library becoming a special. Judy added:

Also, it would save us lots of time. There are new students all the time. Where we’re trying to explain to them how they get in and how they check it out. If it were a special maybe someone else would take care of it. It would be a little easier for us.

Michelle agreed with Judy by typing “NO DOUBT!!!” in the chat box. Mary used the chat box to add that perhaps more support staff could be added to the library, so that students can all visit it as a special at least once per week.

In discussing other ways to improve the library, Carol suggested that the lending library incorporate a place for students to review books, like Follett Shelf. Mary added that if Library as a special is not possible, perhaps the librarian can at least visit classes once per month, in much the same manner as how the guidance counselor visits classes monthly.

Carol felt that the school’s video segments can be used to encourage students to use the library. The school creates two videos a week, highlighting student and staff accomplishments and providing information on resources and events. Carol suggested
that a snippet be added each week that may highlight a reader or types of books.

Michelle added, “That’s a great idea! How about author visits too? “

This conversation ended by considering the possibility of having authors visit classes:

Is that something where we could have people like that come into Elluminate? And what would that look like? I don’t know, I think we just need to show kids that reading is more than—It’s not what’s in Reading Street. It’s not activities for every book you read… You can find something you enjoy and it’s rewarding. Like inside you. For you. You know, we’re not going to motivate them to read by giving them a diorama after a book or stuff like that. That’s not what it’s about. So I think some of the things we are suggestions along the lines, we would see more of an impact. (Carol)

During Carol’s comments, four focus group members sent emoticons suggesting they were in agreement with her thoughts. The researcher responded:

Yeah. I totally agree. I think everything up here [referring to the white board with notes] is how do we make reading more motivating, now that we have this resource. I don’t feel like this year has been a waste, just because we haven’t done those things. This has been our pilot year.

The focus group session concluded with the researcher asking the group if anyone had any further thoughts. Michelle and Candy both responded that the library needs to more cohesive. Michelle said:
It would be so cool if it could be all-in-one you know… Kind of like a real library where you could download virtual books and open them and look at them online. Of course, having digital readers would be fantastic!

Candy agreed that the library should be easier to use, stating:

If there’s any way we can make it more comprehensive, like we have the library, we have Follett Shelf, we have Little Bird Tales [a program used to create book reports], we have Reading Street. We have all of these resources and they all have different logins, they have different purposes. I just think sometimes it might be too much or overwhelming. I don’t know how we streamline or what the answer is to that. But I do think it’s a bit of a barrier, personally, to using some of the better resources.

The focus group session ended with a discussion on digital reading devices. Carol and Candy shared a story about how one of their students taught another student how to access Follett Shelf on their iPads. Candy shared:

Sadly, the kids that have iPads are probably not the ones that need the access to the you know— It seems that the kids that can afford the iPads are the ones who have the supportive parents, have been exposed to books their whole life. But the kids who would really benefit from that are the kids who can’t afford the iPads and who haven’t really been exposed to books, don’t have supportive parents, aren’t good readers, and interested and enthusiastic about reading. It’s tough.
**Micro-interlocutor analysis.**

In comparison to the administrative focus group held in the winter, it is clear that online meetings work better when the participants are not only well-versed in the online meeting software, but when participants are used to working and communicating in a virtual environment on a daily basis. The teachers were much more willing to use their microphones instead of solely relying on chat. The discussion appeared almost seamless as participants used both the microphone and the available emoticons. The micro-interlocutor analysis for the teacher spring focus group session will highlight the conversational patterns and also point out those participants less willing to use the microphone.

In answering the first few questions, the group relied both on verbal as well as written comments. Kristy preferred to answer via the chat, but was actively involved in sending emoticons to show approval or agreement. Carol used the chat if she wanted to insert a comment into someone else’s verbal response. For example, Michelle began the focus group by verbally responding to question one. Carol inserted chat comments in support of what Michelle was saying. When Michelle stated that the students are using the library because they’re asking questions, Carol chatted that her class has been encouraging the students to access the library outside of class time.

Michelle continued in her verbal response in stating that there has been a terrible wait time for books. While she elaborated on this statement, Michaela typed, “I have had a couple of students complain they haven’t got their book.” Candy typed “I’m hearing that too.” It is almost as if when in a face to face format, people insert small interruptions
into conversations to show the speaker that they are in agreement. The chat box seemed to work in much the same manner during this focus group. Michelle stayed on the air and read and responded to the chat. The chat even encouraged her to elaborate in more depth. In reading Michaela’s and Candy’s comments, she said, “I know. It’s kind of a bummer. I feel bad when they tell me that.”

Emoticons were used frequently during this thirty-minute focus group. A total of 37 emoticons were displayed. Emoticons were primarily used as a sign of agreement. In a face to face meeting, participants nod their heads to relay non-verbal approval to a speaker. Since the teachers were not able to nod their heads to each other, they sent either a smile emoticon or a hands clapping emoticon. When Carol first suggested having Library as a special, Judy clapped and Kristy and Mary smiled. The researcher commented back to Carol (verbally) stating that she would bring it up at the administrative focus group, Carol clapped. As mentioned during the fall teacher focus group, emoticons are frequently used when one participant asks another a question and then receives a response. It is a way to demonstrate a form of thanks for someone having taken the time to address the issue.

Emoticons were also used during this focus group when someone made a joke. In face to face conversations, jokes and sarcasm are accepted into a conversation by a smile or a nod. This way the speaker knows he or she was not taken seriously. The teachers displayed emoticons in this manner as well. Theresa joked that if a teacher holds a book reading session over lunchtime, he or she should receive a stipend for running the club. To this, Judy smiled and Theresa smiled back. While Theresa may feel that a stipend is
warranted, the way she stated it made it appear that this is obviously not the sole purpose of running a lunchtime club.

While most participants used an equal combination of verbal responses and chat responses, two participants relied much more heavily on the chat box. Kristy and Mary provided all of their responses via written responses. Both appeared to be fully active in the conversation though. Mary provided three typed comments, and displayed emoticons four times. Kristy typed seven comments and sent three emoticons.

Relevance to research questions.

The spring teacher focus group addressed all three summative research questions: (1) Have teachers integrated the lending library into their classrooms? How so? (2) To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills? (3) What is the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes? Each of the above questions will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

Regarding integration of the library into the teachers’ classrooms, it was shown that teachers felt that they have a lack of time to fully implement it into synchronous class time. As was mentioned in the winter teacher focus group, the teachers pushed out links to the library resources but do not know if students follow through and order books. Teachers felt that that the students should be introduced to books so as to increase their motivation to read, but felt that this is primarily a role for the librarian.

In addressing the degree that the library has been a factor in students’ reading habits and skills, the majority of the teachers were unsure. One teacher commented that her student utilizes the libraries regularly, but that the student has a parent who values
education. Teachers felt there were too many variables to accurately state the degree that the libraries have helped their students.

In thinking of the effect of the library on low-income students, teachers also felt ill-prepared to answer the question completely. They felt that the libraries are likely drawing students who are already motivated to read, but are probably not encouraging reluctant readers to develop a love of reading. Teachers felt that by instituting Library as a special, the school would help to motivate more students to take advantage of the resources.

After the researcher transcribed, coded, and analyzed the transcript from the teacher spring focus group session, Highlights were created and can be seen in Appendix AA. Teachers were sent the Highlights and asked to correct errors if any were noted.

Administrators.

A second focus group commenced in the spring with administrative and staff employees. Held face to face, seven focus group members attended. One prior focus group participant was unable to attend. She submitted written comments to the questions and asked that her replies be integrated with the group’s answers. The focus group lasted just under an hour and was transcribed the following week. The transcript was then coded according to the a priori and inductive coding schemata presented in Appendix R. Interview questions posed to the administrative focus group can be viewed in Appendix O.
**Teacher integration of library into class.**

The first question asked, “How, if at all, would teachers ideally integrate the libraries into their classes?” Administrators were asked to consider both the lending library as well as Follett Shelf. The responses were split between sharing the joy of reading and using the libraries as a resource for research activities. Abby responded first, stating, “I think just showing the importance of reading and the enjoyment of reading is one thing I would like to see right away.” She added that classes should hold lively discussions on books and recommended alternative assignments other than simply using reading logs as accountability measures. In thinking of the book *The Outsiders*, Abby thought an interesting activity would be to divide the students into *the socials or the greasers* (two groups represented in the story) prior to reading and asking students to adopt the perspective from their assigned group.

Destiny and Daniella both commented that teachers ought to model use of the libraries for their students. Destiny thought that perhaps the reading specialists can read to students during their lunchtime. She suggested that the teachers initiate a quick survey with the students and then model on how to do a subject search to find an appropriate book. Daniella replied:

I think, like Destiny said, if you open it up to kind of modeling how to use it, and piggyback[ing] on what Abby said, just reading for pleasure as well, and giving them the opportunities to be able to—if they’re going to do a project or something. And give them—versus it always being an A,B,C assessment. Maybe a project-based option.
Elizabeth recommended that teachers in other subjects, like science or social studies, integrate the library into their classes as well. She thought an effective practice would be for the teachers to model how to do a subject search within the libraries’ databases and to bring queried books to the students’ attention.

*Actions to support teachers to implement the suggestions.*

As a follow-up to question number one, administrators were asked what actions needed to be taken in the 2013-2014 school year to help teachers to implement their suggestions. Kellie felt that additional training and reminders needed to be presented to the teachers during a professional development session. Louise, Destiny, and Daniella agreed that teachers should be encouraged to incorporate use of the libraries into their assessment maps. (This school uses assessment maps for all units which denote learning activities and performance tasks.) This way, libraries are integrated into the structure of the class and are not solely something *extra* that needs to be squeezed into an already jam-packed curriculum. Regarding this, Daniella said, “I think some type of a goal or within mapping. There is some type of goal to access this versus just saying it’s there.”

Because of the talk of growth, a question was directed to Bethany, the manager of materials in the lending library office. The researcher asked her:

I think in the winter it was mentioned that the supply was really good. And we had talked about maybe getting the word out more, but you were like, ‘This is good’ as far as the demand coming in. Do you feel—Can it grow yet? Bethany responded, “It can definitely grow, but if every teacher starts pushing this all at once, that’s too much.” She also added:
Keep in mind, I think that brick and mortar schools might have like three or four times the books that they have students. We have like one-fourth books as we have students. So you push it too hard, and we just won’t have a library anymore. So there’s that consideration too.

Bethany said that the current supply is constantly changing. Books come in and some come back. Not as many books come back as being sent, and she did not have specific circulation rates during the meeting, but she felt that the supply is dwindling and new books would need to be ordered. Destiny asked Bethany if the books are coming back in good condition and Bethany felt that for the most part, they were. Destiny thought it would be worthwhile to push teachers to remind students to send books back, especially as the end of the year approached.

The online school in which this study took place has a helpdesk available for students to call in the event technological issues are experienced. Bethany reminded the focus group that if students have issues with the library (not receiving a book, needing a return envelope, etc.) students could turn to the helpdesk for support. She said, “If [the students] call the helpdesk, they’re guaranteed to get a person on the phone” and that person will contact Bethany to aid in answering the student’s question.

**Encouraging low-income students’ use of the library.**

Because a major goal of the program, as noted by stakeholders in the fall, was to “get books into the hands of students,” administrators were asked what steps could be taken in the 2013-2014 school year to encourage our low-income students to use the libraries. Destiny responded first stating, “Isn’t that our entire school? If we push it even
more next year…” Kellie, Elizabeth, and Abby all wondered if an account could be established so that if a student requests a particular book that neither the lending library nor Follett Shelf had in stock, that book could be purchased and sent to the child as either a gift or as a loaned item. The group felt that it was important to address specific literary needs so that access to books did not hamper the amount of time a student spent reading. Only Bethany felt that meeting the needs of individual students might not be cost or time-effective. She stated, “How much effort are you going to put into getting one student one thing?”

The researcher suggested having an area on the interactive library website where teachers and students could enter book requests, and then the school could consider the suggestion when new book orders were placed. Bethany felt that a list from teachers and students would be beneficial. Louise asked Bethany if the library could take teacher donations. Bethany replied:

Imagine the organization with that with a school this big. I have a student who is constantly sending me stuff and saying, “Please give this to other kids” and I will hold on to it and on Family Nights I’ll say “Take these and give it away” but for me to inventory it, that would be a lot.

Because a finding from the spring teacher focus group was that students who are accessing the libraries are those who are already motivated readers, the researcher asked the group if they had any suggestions on strategies on how to motivate the kids who are reluctant readers. Destiny asked if this was unique to this school, to which Elizabeth replied that it likely is not. Bethany stated:
I don’t want to be a Debby Downer, but if you just want to get books into the hands of students, that’s kind of a disaster. Each kid can only get two books. So you get books in their hands and they never turn them back in. And you wipe out my library. We have kids not reading books, not returning them. So you can’t just make that a blanket goal, to get books into the hands of kids. That’s not going to work effectively.

In response to Bethany’s statement, the focus group conversation turned, once again, to the need to motivate students to read. Destiny replied:

I think by doing the modeling or doing the fun things that you guys do in class, getting their attention with a fun book, makes them want to actually go read the book. And that may be the way you motivate a reluctant reader. I don’t think my son really liked reading until he read Hatchet. Believe me, every Gary Paulsen book he could find after that, he was getting. So just exposing them to good things and reminding them that we have this library.

Another participant discussed using interest inventories to discover books that may interest students. She said:

What if you did, like the interest inventory? Find out what they like to read and the level, and maybe it is the graphic novel that you purchase then specifically for that kid, that doesn’t get returned. So you don’t have to do the check in, check out. . . . But it’s geared towards something they may read based on what we know about them versus what they’re assigned. (Daniella)
Administrators’ reactions to teachers’ suggestions.

During their spring focus group meeting, teachers created a list of suggestions for improving the library. The administrators were then asked to describe the level of administrative support they were able to provide to accommodate the suggestions. The group first mentioned the need to spread the word about the library to parents. Elizabeth said, “We’ve had conversations with [the school’s director of communication] about doing trailers and book recommendations through [the school’s] TV, and he was very enthusiastic about that.” Elizabeth continued:

And these would be actual teasers, book advertisements. Maybe starting out with doing some of them myself… but ultimately getting kids to recommend to kids…

The other thing we talked about that impacted him was having it in the newspaper/newsletter thing that goes out.

The researcher suggested using Facebook to promote books, being that the school has over 50,000 followers. Elizabeth and Destiny felt that would be a good idea, but Bethany said, “Oh my word! I am alarmed about what would happen if you just threw it on Facebook. ‘[This school] has a lending library! Go check it out.’”

Because teachers overwhelmingly felt that Library should be a special such as physical education or computers, the researcher asked the administrative focus group to express their thoughts on a weekly or bi-weekly session facilitated by the librarian. As in the winter focus group, the librarian, Elizabeth, said, “I would personally love to get back to doing that. I miss that kid interaction and all that kind of stuff because I love all that.” She added, though, that her job description must be rewritten because she currently
would not have time for these additional duties. Because of her enthusiasm for the possibility of holding live sessions for the students to explore books, Elizabeth mentioned that she would have a conversation about this with her boss.

Teachers expressed an interest in the libraries (both the lending library and Follett Shelf) to acquire more series of books. They felt that once a student is hooked on a good book, they’re likely to seek out similar stories. To this, Elizabeth commented, “In terms of Follett Shelf, that’s often a challenge because not everything is released in ebook at any point in time.” She added that this would be an easier goal for the lending library to tackle. Bethany responded:

It would be easier to purchase them, but I think you need to keep in mind—Each kid can only have two books at a time. So say they get the first Harry Potter book and then they send it back, well they’re not going to get the second one until one, I have it, and two, they have a space open to get it. They may get the fourth Harry Potter book instead of the second Harry Potter book. So in theory it sounds great, but I don’t know that it would work out.

The group agreed with both Elizabeth and Bethany’s comments and stated that the phenomenon of waiting for books is a part of all libraries – public or virtual. Bethany said that the best way for students to get a constant supply of books is to have many books in their queue. She emphasized that students “need to request several at a time, because if they have two and I don’t have a book, then they don’t get a book. But if they have 20, then they’re going to constantly have books.”
The researcher brought up the teachers’ wish that all the reading/library sources be consolidated. Destiny agreed, stating “That would be awesome.” Elizabeth replied, “I put a circle around that one (on her list of requests).” Elizabeth felt that the links to the libraries could easily be put in one spot and told the group that she would talk to the designer of the template. The template is that which students view on the homepage of each of their classrooms. Destiny replied, “And maybe we need to ask [the designer] if some of those things in the elementary template can be moved higher that are more important to us, those things that we use more often.”

The teachers felt that it would be appropriate (and timely) to teach students how to download books on to digital readers, such as iPads and iPhones. Elizabeth stated, “We need to work on that because they can now do that.” Daniella asked Elizabeth, “Is there some sort of tutorial or something out there that teachers can give to students?” Elizabeth said she thought so, and both the researcher and Elizabeth emphasized that the process is not intuitive.

The last comment brought up by teachers and discussed during the administrative focus group was the wish for students to have digital readers. As has been mentioned by teachers, parents, students, and administrators earlier, it is not pleasurable for students to read books on their computers after accessing their school work and live sessions for hours each day via their computers. Destiny, in reflecting as her days as an elementary student, said, “I mean the best part about being in your classroom during reading time was, if I want to go sit on the beanbag chair, I could do whatever I wanted wherever I wanted as long as I was reading!”
The final question posed to the administrators asked them to add any additional comments to the lending library program. The conversation turned, again, to the issue of motivating kids to read. Bethany felt that an incentive program is needed, but Abby felt that students need to be pared with books that interest them. She stated:

You know, back to my son, and, of course, I learn more from him than any book or anyone, but at the beginning of the year, they read *To Kill a Mockingbird*. My son hated it. I had to practically tie him down to get him to read it so he could get through the test. Why did he hate it? Because it wasn’t a book he chose. And you know what he chose? *No Easy Day* which was written by a Navy Seal about – let’s just say what has happened in recent history. He read it from front cover to back cover with no problems. I never had to prompt him once. And he was telling me about it every time he read one page… I think, all because he was interested in what he chose.

Abby’s anecdote drew comments from the rest of the participants. Bethany asked if any of our teachers currently give out questionnaires. Daniella suggested giving students interest inventories, and Destiny felt that these surveys need to be given out multiple times a year due to the influx of students throughout the term.

Showcasing books was suggested as a way to get students interested in reading. Elizabeth brought up the educational book written for teachers, *The Book Whisperer*, which invites teachers to allow students to self-select literature. The teacher, according to the book, serves as a guide to recommend and discuss books with students. Destiny
asked if this author was like Nancy Atwell. When the group commented that they were not familiar with Nancy Atwell’s philosophy, Destiny explained:

When I taught, Nancy Atwell wrote *In the Middle*. But it’s exactly the same thing (referring to *The Book Whisperer*). When I taught middle school, one of the ways that we taught, was that every lesson started with a different read aloud and you never covered the same book. I start you on a book and either you like it or not. It gives you an idea of what you may want to choose. So every book was a different chapter book. And you read it with expression. We do a theme. We might relate that to Reading Street (the reading curriculum currently utilized by the school)…. So you’re still exposing [the students] to different themes, etc. and relating it to actual contact in the classroom too, so it’s not just fluff.

*Micro-interlocutor analysis.*

As in the fall administrative focus group, an assistant moderator was employed to chart the order of responses and non-verbal gestures. Regarding the first question that elicited administrators’ responses on how teachers should integrate the libraries, a total of four participants responded. Abby responded first, Elizabeth responded second, and Destiny added to Abby’s comment. Elizabeth and Daniella nodded in agreement when Destiny suggested teachers model how to use Follett Shelf. Louise and Bethany did not respond verbally or non-verbally to the first question.

The second question asked administrators what support they were willing to provide to teachers so that they may implement the suggestions from question number one. All participants responded verbally to this question. Bethany did not respond until
the researcher asked her a direct question pertaining to the supply of books. Once
Bethany answered that question, she continued to add to the conversation for the duration
of the focus group. Two comments elicited total agreement from the group: There
should be a fund readily available from which books could be purchased; and students
should utilize the helpdesk if they have questions regarding their book order.

The group next discussed how low-income students could be encouraged to use
the library. Destiny’s comment, “Isn’t that our entire school?” elicited nods of agreement
from the panel. The group was somewhat split on how funds should be used to support
economically-disadvantaged students. Elizabeth felt that principals should have a budget
to buy a book (either as a gift or as an addition to the library) for a student who really
wants a specific title, but who does not have access to it. Destiny replied that the
principals do not necessarily have a place in their budget for this type of expense.
Bethany asked Elizabeth, “How much effort are you going to put into getting one student
one thing?” Elizabeth appeared to be taken a little off-guard by this comment and simply
replied, “I know.” Abby pondered whether an Amazon gift card could be purchased for
sporadic book purchases, but Kaylie and Destiny reminded her that the school’s auditor
banned the use of gift cards. Bethany felt that using Title funds for individual books was
not feasible due to the large amount of paperwork. Destiny agreed with Bethany stating,
“And you can’t pay for it until we actually have it. So we have to have the product in
hand before we can give them money for it in Title.” Bethany added (to Elizabeth), “I
don’t think what you’re talking about is doable, honestly. I hate to say it.”
When the group discussed administrative support for suggestions brought forth by teachers, 49 comments ensued. Kaylie, Elizabeth, Destiny, Daniella, and Abby all had instances of nodding in agreement and laughing casually. Bethany did not have any non-verbal gestures but had five verbal comments, and Louise sat with her arms crossed and did not have any verbal comments.

In comparing the winter administrative focus group to the spring administrative focus group, some participants responded in a similar manner, while others were involved much more in the spring group. As was presented in the previous section discussing the winter administrative focus group, individual accounts of participation will now be discussed.

**Kellie.**

Due to time constraints, Kellie was not able to attend the face-to-face focus group. She submitted typed responses to the questions. Her comments were brief, but targeted and have been incorporated into the responses as appropriate. Because she elected to type her responses for the researcher (and declined a phone interview) it is reasonable to believe that, had Kellie been part of the group, much more data would have incorporated her perspective.

**Louise.**

As mentioned in the winter section, Louise is an introvert. During the focus group in the winter conducted via Elluminate, Louise did not use the microphone at all. She put all of her comments in the chat box. Bringing the focus group back to a physical location did not draw forth much more data from Louise. She only commented twice
during the hour-long meeting, and nodded to others twice as well. While her shyness may have held her back, Louise’s position as a teacher on special assignment likely prevents her from using the library regularly in any regards.

*Destiny.*

Destiny was equally as responsive via Elluminate or in a face-to-face situation. Comfortable with technology, and comfortable meeting with others, Destiny did not hesitate to share her thoughts. She made a total of 29 comments during the spring focus group session. One thing to note: Destiny is the elementary principal, so it is likely that she is more involved with the library and was able to respond to questions from other participants.

*Elizabeth.*

Elizabeth is the school’s librarian and has an outgoing personality. Despite having a very low level of familiarity with Elluminate, Elizabeth participated regularly in both the virtual and face-to-face settings. Because her role in the school ties her closely to the libraries, it is likely that Elizabeth had a lot to say and felt comfortable expressing her comments.

*Abby.*

While in the winter focus group session, Abby did not use the microphone at all and relied entirely on the chat box to submit comments. The face-to-face setting was completely different. Abby could be described as an introspective person. That is, she may not have responded as frequently as other participants, but when she did respond, her
comments were often lengthy, heartfelt, personal comments. It was clear that the face-to-face setting allowed Abby the comfort level she needed to express her thoughts.

Daniella.

Daniella responded through the chat box during the winter focus group. While meeting face to face, Daniella spoke regularly, answering every question. She was fully engaged, laughing and nodding her head in agreement often. Daniella is acquainted with Elluminate, but had Bethany sitting in with her during the winter session, so it is likely that she used her chat box instead of the microphone because she could not wear a headset. Without a headset, Bethany was able to hear the session, but this stifled Daniella’s ability to participate vocally in the winter.

Bethany.

Bethany attended the winter focus group session by sharing Daniella’s computer. She made very few comments, and as reported above, was unable to respond verbally. She did not respond verbally in the spring focus group session until the researcher asked her a specific question. After that, it was as if the flood gates had been opened! Bethany felt free to provide comments regularly, even if they were in opposition to the rest of the group’s position. She told the group that purchasing books for low-income students individually was going to take too much effort both in time and with securing funds. She also challenged the group when the goal of the libraries was brought up. Remembering that a goal sited from the fall was to “get books into the hands of students,” Bethany called out the group saying that this goal was “not going to work effectively” if there is no motivation to read.
Relevance to research questions.

A few research questions were addressed in the spring administrative focus group. Regarding teacher integration of the library, the administrators discussed what they thought would be appropriate and provided ways that they could support this integration. Administrators felt that use of the libraries needed to be integrated into class assignments, rather than just being an extra resource that was available if desired. Administrators also suggested that teachers model use of the library programs for their students.

The group was asked to consider the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes. While it was brought up that most of the students can be classified as low-income, it was also discussed how simply providing access to books does not equate with the motivation needed to inspire these students to read.

Besides addressing the two issues above, the spring administrative focus group also provided fodder for Chen’s six steps of program evaluation, as explained in Chapter 3. Chen’s fifth step was to look for sources of problems and to choose remedial actions. The administrators were able to use time during this focus group to respond to some suggestions from the teachers so that changes may be implemented in the 2013-2014 school year.

Administrators and teachers: Theme comparison.

After each seasonal series of focus groups (fall, winter, and spring) a theme comparison was created to show how much time each group (teacher or administrator) spent discussing prevalent themes. For the spring comparison, the researcher decided to compare the amount of times comments were brought up regarding the need to motivate
students to read. The aspect of motivation seemed to eek its way into both focus groups, despite the fact that no questions directly related to this issue.

The researcher reread both transcripts (the spring teacher focus group and the spring administrative focus group.) A tally mark was made each time an issue of motivation was discussed. For the teacher focus group, issues surrounding Library as a special, reading to students, incorporating fun book extensions, helping students select the right level, showing book trailers to students, creating book clubs, allowing students to review books, utilizing the school’s TV channel, and author visits all elicited tally marks. For the administrative focus group, tally marks were issued for motivational statements regarding classroom integration strategies, assessment mapping, utilizing interest inventories, using the school’s TV channel, allowing a venue for students to recommend books to other students, creating a column in the school’s digital newspaper, using Facebook to promote books, starting book clubs, having Library as a special, allowing students to read materials they are interested in, and accessing professional books based on research-based initiatives.

In counting individual responses, the teacher focus group brought up issues of motivational strategies to encourage students to read a total of 24 times. During the administrative focus group, motivational strategies were discussed 22 times. Again, no question directly asked teachers or administrators to discuss ways to motivate students to read, however both groups were asked to consider ways to encourage our low-income students to use the libraries. Both groups took the term use further than just considering the access of books.
After transcribing, coding, and analyzing the spring administrative focus group, the researcher created another version of *Highlights*. As in the past, this newsletter was distributed to administrative focus group participants in an effort to recap the discussion and to serve as a member check to check for discrepancies. *Highlights* for the administrative spring focus group can be seen in Appendix BB.

**Spring Student and Parent Surveys**

In April, 2013, students and parents who took the fall Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) survey were invited to take the survey again. The same survey was used for comparison purposes. Students were asked to self-report their library usage rates, and parents and students each answered one open-ended question regarding their suggestions for improving the libraries.

Thirty-five families (student and parent dyads) took the fall survey. Of these, six students withdrew from the school leaving 29 families able to participate in the spring survey. All but three families decided to participate in the spring survey. Twenty-four students took the survey in the time required to be included in the MRP calculations, and the other two students responded in time only to be included in the open-ended response questions. The researcher gathered consent and assent forms as in the fall and sent the link to the survey upon receipt of the forms. Qualtrics was used again to deliver the survey. The results are presented below.

**Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) survey results – spring.**

The survey responses were exported from Qualtrics to SPSS. Twenty-four students participated in this research strand, representing 80% of eligible students.
Scores were computed based on total scores (out of 80) and subsets (self-concept of reading and value of reading). Each subset score was out of a total of 40 points. Table 8 below highlights the results of the spring survey. Mean scores, the standard deviation, minimum scores and maximum scores are reported.

Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results from Spring MRP Survey</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. Deviation</th>
<th>Min. Score</th>
<th>Max. Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Score (Out of 80)</td>
<td>62.08</td>
<td>6.76</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Subset (Out of 40)</td>
<td>30.33</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Reading Subset (Out of 40)</td>
<td>31.75</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparing the results of the fall survey to the spring survey, very few changes occurred. Regarding the total scores, students showed a growth of less than a half a point. The standard deviation was slightly smaller (0.35 less). The minimum score increased by four points, but the maximum score decreased by one. Similar results occurred when looking at the subsets. Concerning the self-concept subset, students’ scores increased, but by less than a point (0.82). For the value of reading subset, the mean score actually decreased by 0.36. In both subsets, the minimum score increased by two points, yet the maximum scores decreased by one point for self-concept and increased by a point for value of reading. Of course, had significant growth been demonstrated, this was not a causal study and the growth could not have been attributed solely to the library. This data is presented below in Table 9.
Table 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. Deviation</th>
<th>Min. Score</th>
<th>Max. Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Score (Out of 80)</td>
<td>+0.45</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Subset (Out of 40)</td>
<td>+0.82</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Reading Subset (Out of 40)</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>+0.27</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in the fall, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated on the spring survey results. Concerning students’ self-concept of reading, the reliability was .57. This was lower than the fall results (.69) and lower than the published results (.75). If one question was deleted (“I worry about what other kids think about my reading….”), the reliability of the spring survey increases to .71. As reported in the fall, the most positive response is “every day,” yet students likely felt that by not worrying, they were answering as strong readers would answer.

For value of reading, Cronbach’s alpha results yielded a .76 on the spring survey. This was higher than in the fall (.69), yet still lower than published results (.82). There were no items that could be deleted in the survey to drastically improve the reliability rating, yet deleting the item that proved unstable in the fall (I would like for my teacher to read books out loud…) increased the reliability rating to .79.

Survey results stratified by economic status – spring.

The spring survey results were analyzed based on how students from low-income students answered questions compared to students from mid- or upper-income homes.
Results were similar to the fall surveys, in that students from low-income families had a wider variety of total scores (range of 47-71 out of a possible 80) and students who were not economically-disadvantaged had scores that clustered in the higher range (range of 64-75). Figure 23 below shows the scatterplot of total scores based on economic status. On the y axis, “1” refers to those students who are economically-disadvantaged and “0” refers to those who are not.

*Figure 23. Dispersion of spring MRP total scores based on economic status (1=yes, 0=no).*
While all five students who are not economically-disadvantaged are represented on the graph, a few low-income students scored the same total score and are thus represented by darker circles (total scores of 56, 60, 61, 63, and 65).

The subset of self-concept of reading was also analyzed according to students’ economic status. Scores for economically-disadvantaged students ranged from 23-36 (out of a possible 40) and scores for students who do not identify with being economically-disadvantaged ranged from 28-35. Figure 24 below shows this distribution of scores in a scatterplot. Again, darker circles represent multiple students with the same score. Among students not economically-disadvantaged, two students yielded a score of 35.
Figure 24. Dispersion of spring MRP self-concept scores based on economic status (1=yes, 0=no).

Regarding the value of reading subset, results were similar. Students who are economically-disadvantaged had scores ranging from 24-40, and students from mid- to upper-income homes had scores ranging from 31-40. Figure 25 below shows the scatterplot of scores.
Figure 25. Dispersion of spring MRP value of reading scores based on economic status (1=yes, 0=no).

Survey results stratified by language arts teacher – spring.

In an effort to determine if survey scores changed based on which language arts teacher a student had, survey results were also analyzed according to teacher. Table 10 below shows mean total survey scores as well as mean survey scores parsed by subset.
Table 10.

**MRP Mean Total Scores and Mean Subset Scores by Teacher-Spring Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Total Score (Out of 80)</th>
<th>Mean Self-Concept Score (Out of 40)</th>
<th>Mean Value of Reading Score (Out of 40)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class A (Two Sections)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61.00</td>
<td>30.13</td>
<td>30.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B (Two Sections)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>62.57</td>
<td>30.14</td>
<td>32.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class C (Two Sections)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62.88</td>
<td>30.88</td>
<td>32.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class D (One Section)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61.00</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>32.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparing the results parsed by teacher in the spring to the fall results, there were very few changes. The only teacher whose scores changed dramatically was Teacher D, but only because spring results were based on one student’s answers. There were no other significant changes based on language arts teacher.

**Students’ self-reported use of libraries.**

The last two multiple-choice survey questions asked students to report how many books and ebooks they borrowed from the lending library and Follett Shelf this year. Answer choices included: 0-1, 2-3, 4-5, and More than 5. SPSS was used to differentiate responses between students classified as economically-disadvantaged and non-economically-disadvantaged. Regarding physical books from the lending library, the majority of economically-disadvantaged students (n=7) selected 0-1. Five low-income students selected 4-5 books, followed by four low-income students selecting More than 5, and three low-income students selecting 2-3. Among students not classified as
economically-disadvantaged, two students each selected *More than 5*, and 2-3. One student selected 0-1 and no students selected 4-5.

The same answer choices were available regarding students’ use of Follett Shelf, or e books. Low-income students selected *More than 5* and 2-3 an even amount of times (n= 6 for each). Five selected 0-1, and two selected 4-5. For students who are not from low-income families, three selected 2-3 and two selected *More than 5*. None selected 0-1 or 4-5.

**Open-ended survey responses – spring.**

Students and parents were each asked one open-ended question on the spring survey. Students were asked: How can we make the lending library and Follett Shelf better? The question for the parents was: In what ways can the lending library and/or Follett Shelf be improved. Twenty-five students answered the question, while one student left it blank. The most prevalent response from students was a recommendation to “get more interesting books.” This response was elicited from seven students. Of these seven, one student replied:

I think we can make it better by adding books that are books kids might’ve seen in a book store and is a popular book. Those books really grab a person to read even if he don’t really like reading. :) (Smile emoticon added by student.)

The second most common response from students was a general comment about the libraries being fine as they are. Six students mentioned that the libraries were good or perfect and did not suggest improvements. Five students suggested specific topics on which books should be acquired. Recommended topics included planets and space, the
Ranger’s Apprentice books, history books, ninja and jujitsu books, and books on military and aircraft. Three students suggested getting newer books, or books that are “up-to-date”.

There were some general comments that garnered one suggestion each. These comments included: the ability to write reviews in the lending library, the ability to request books to be purchased, an ebook checkout of longer than a week, obtaining series of books, books in other languages, to “never run out” of books, more books for students my age, and audio books.

Responses from parents were similar to student responses. Twenty-three parents responded, while two parents left the question blank. The leading response from parents was that the library is “fine,” “good,” “perfect,” or “awesome” as it is. Seven parents typed a response that was coded to fit this category. Responses included, “They are perfect for my daughter!” and “I think your (sic) doing a great job.”

The next most common response from parents was to have a larger selection of books. Two of these parents suggested incorporating more non-fiction titles into the libraries. Another wrote, “I would like to see a larger selection of books, especially the classics.” A different parent wrote a similar response, stating, “I would like to see a wider selection. I thought it was kind of limited.”

Two parents each suggested adding audio books to the libraries, and two felt that the physical books should come quicker. All the other responses from parents were only listed one time. They included: getting age-appropriate books, more series, being able to download Follett Shelf books to digital reading devices other than iPads, having teachers
read the books out loud in class, having the school sell books, adding a place for the students to write reviews (as in a blog form), having books for parents (specific title requested: Catherine Coulter’s *FBI Thrillers*), adding an area for students to request new books to be purchased, getting newer books, never running out of books, and working towards ways to get students interested in reading.

**Spring DIBELS results.**

Spring DIBELS scores were available for 25 students who took the survey. One student’s scores were not available because the student advanced to sixth grade mid-year. Scores were grouped according to students’ risk levels. For the spring benchmark, students who read less than 103 words per minute are considered *at risk* of reading difficulties that may impact their educational experience. Students reading between 103 and 124 words fell within the category of *some risk*. Students reading greater than 124 words per minute are classified as *low risk*. Among the 25 scores, 28% of the students were classified *at risk*. (Fall scores had 26% within this category.) Sixteen percent of students were at *some risk*. This compared to 23% of respondents in the fall. Fifty-six percent of respondents were considered *low risk*. This was similar to results in the fall. (51% *low risk*).

The mean DIBELS score in the spring was 125.61. This compared to a fall mean of 102. The minimum spring score was 55 and the maximum was 189. DIBELS scores were analyzed with students’ total scores on the MRP survey. Figure 26 below shows the scatterplot of this relationship. Pearson’s *r* was .44, a significant correlation. In reporting
the proportion of variance accounted for, $r^2$ is .19. This was slightly lower than the fall, where the relationship between DIBELS and total survey score was .60.

\[ Figure\ 26.\ Correlational\ scatterplot\ comparing\ spring\ MRP\ total\ scores\ with\ DIBELS\ scores. \]

As in the fall, DIBELS scores were compared to each subset of the survey; value of reading and self-concept of reading. When comparing DIBELS scores to students’ value of reading scores (as measured by the MRP survey), a Pearson’s $r$ of .19 (proportion of variance accounted for, $r^2$, .04) was calculated. This was a weak correlation, showing that some students value reading even if they are a struggling reader,
while others show little value in reading despite being a strong reader. In the fall, these two variables were significantly correlated. Figure 27 below shows the scatterplot of these two variables.

*Figure 27.* Correlational scatterplot comparing spring MRP value of reading scores with DIBELS scores.

When comparing spring DIBELS scores to students’ self-concept of reading, a significant correlation existed. Pearson’s $r$ was calculated as .59, just slightly lower than the fall calculation of .67. The spring DIBELS to students’ self-concept proportion of
variance accounted for, $r^2$, was .35. As in the fall, students were quite accurate in assessing their reading ability. Figure 28 below dictates this relationship in a scatterplot.

![Figure 28. Correlational scatterplot comparing spring MRP self-concept scores with DIBELS scores.](image)

Mean DIBELS scores were available based on language arts teacher. Teacher A had a mean DIBELS score of 135.63, Teacher B had a mean of 107.5, Teacher C had a mean of 130.13, and Teacher D had a mean of 118. Teachers A, B, and C all had between six and eight students in their calculation of DIBELS means, but teacher D only had one student.
Spring DIBELS scores were calculated based on students’ economic statuses. The mean score for students who are not classified as economically-disadvantaged was 153. Among low-income students, the mean was 119.84. The difference between the spring scores was 33.16 words. In the fall, the mean difference between the two groups was 29.04. After a year’s exposure to the libraries, the achievement gap between the two economic groups has increased by approximately four words per minute. It must be noted, however, that the group of students who participated in the survey was very small, so results may be different had more students participated.

**Relevance to research questions.**

The spring survey and DIBELS results were used to compare the changes, if any, in students’ value of reading and oral reading fluency after having a year’s worth of access to the library resources. This directly related to research question number five: To what degree has the library program become a factor in student’ reading habits and skills? Descriptive statistics showed very few changes in students’ total MRP scores, self-concept of reading, and value of reading from the fall to the spring surveys. The mean value of reading even decreased slightly. Regarding oral reading fluency, or DIBELS scores, it was shown above that the mean scores improved, yet because this was not a causal study, it cannot be stated that access to the library was responsible for this growth.

Research question number six was addressed in this data phase: What is the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes? In comparing the ways economically-disadvantaged students answered the MRP survey in
the fall to the spring, there were, again, very few changes. DIBELS scores showed that students who are economically-disadvantaged gained less growth throughout the year than their non-economically-disadvantaged peers.

**End of the Year Library Usage Rates**

Library usage statistics were available at the end of the 2012-2013 school year for both the physical book library as well as Follett Shelf. The following sections detail usage rates for both of the resources.

**End of the year library usage rates: Lending library.**

At the end of the 2012-2013 school year, the physical book lending library had 4,211 copies of 765 different titles. Library usage data was available and spanned from August, 2012 until the end of April, 2013. Total library requests, requests by month, and requests by genre were available to be included in this program evaluation. The researcher requested data parsed by grade, by economic-status, and by fifth grade teacher but that data was not made available.

**Total library requests.**

According to the data received, 10,072 books were requested from August until the end of April. Not all of those requests could be filled. At times, students requested books that were not in stock or students requested more books than the two book limit. Also students sometimes cancelled requests. Among the requests, 4,399 books were checked out. The data the researcher received showed that 6,082 books were returned. The researcher asked the programmer why more books were showing that they had been returned than checked out. The discrepancy was acknowledged by the programmer, but
not explained. It should be noted that the lending library interactive website is in its first year and pulling reports has shown conflicting data. The school is working on remedying this problem, but accurate reports were not available at the time of this project. Figure 29 below shows the total library usage data for the 2012-2013 school year.

![2012-2013 Total Library Use](image)

*Figure 29. Total lending library usage statistics; end of year.*

**Library requests by month.**

Book requests peaked in October with 1,859 requests then dropped off slowly for the duration of the school year. December’s requests were low, likely due to the holiday season. As previously mentioned, teachers reported that October saw the start of the Read at Home program, and likely contributed to a spike in requests. Figure 30 below shows library usage rates by month.
Figure 30. Lending library usage statistics parsed by month; end of year.

Library requests by genre.

Spring library usage data included requests parsed by genre. The trend was similar to the genre requests in the fall. Again, at first glance it appears that informational texts were the most requested genre, but only because fiction was separated into varying types of fiction, including realistic fiction, fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction, and a category simply called fiction. Figure 31 below shows library requests by genre.
End of the year library usage rates: ebook library.

Follett Shelf ebook usage data was available at the end of the school year. Reports were run from the beginning of the school year (August 1, 2012) until April 30, 2013. A school wide total usage report was created, along with a grade level breakdown. Because the focus of this study was on the fifth grade, a closer look at fifth grade students’ usage was made available and will be presented below. Remember, Follett Shelf differentiates between whether a student reads a book on his or her computer as a one-time access (“read online”) or whether a student checked the book out for a one week time span. Data was available to see how many times books were downloaded. Downloading a book refers to a student who uses a digital reader to read the book.

**ebook requests: Total.**

A total of 25,483 ebooks were read during the 2012-2013 school year. Among this total, 21,376 books were read online. This refers to students and teachers who have
selected a book from the virtual bookshelf, read it, and returned it after one sitting. A total of 4,081 ebooks were checked out during this same timeframe. This means that students selected these books and had unlimited access to them for one week. In looking at this data, students and teachers are more often reading a book online rather than checking a book out by a rate of 4:1. Twenty-six books were downloaded during this same time period. Figure 32 below represents this data as a graph.

**Figure 32.** Total Follett Shelf ebook usage statistics; end of year.

**ebook requests: Grade level breakdown.**

In looking at Follett Shelf data for the year based on grade level, the 6th grade students used it the most (5,100 ebooks read), followed by 7th grade (3,894 ebooks read) and 8th grade (2,558 books read). These figures comprise books read online, books
checked out, and books downloaded. Of course, one cannot be sure that the entire book was read, or if students just browsed through books. These numbers reflect the numbers of times that students were in the program and, at a minimum, opened up a digital book. Figure 33, below, represents this data in graphical form.

![Follett Shelf - Total Usage for 2012-2013 by Grade](image)

*Figure 33. Follett Shelf usage statistics parsed by grade; end of year.*

**ebook requests: Fifth grade.**

Fifth graders at this school read (or browsed) ebooks a total of 1,965 times from the beginning of the school year until the end of April. Among this total, 1,599 books were read online and 365 were checked out. Only one book was downloaded. Figure 34 below details this data for the fifth grade.
As in the fall, the researcher requested a list of book titles accessed by fifth grade students. In analyzing this data, it could be shown whether students are more often to browse through the books or if they are accessing the same title over multiple days. For books that are read online, this strategy allows the researcher to make an assumption if students are reading entire chapter books online. Unfortunately for books that are checked out for a period of one week, data is not available to determine whether the book was read or ignored.

While students are certainly showing evidence of browsing through books, data for dates in the spring shows that students are more likely to follow a book over multiple days. In comparison to the mid-year Follett Shelf usage data, students have selected books and are returning to their computers another day and selecting the same book. Another difference also emerged since looking at mid-year rates: Students are selecting a book to read online and then, after browsing through it or reading a bit, students are
checking that book out. This shows that students are navigating through the Follett Shelf program in a more systematic manner than in January. In comparing this trend to a brick-and-mortar library, it is as if a child selects a book off the shelf, peruses through it, and then decides to check it out. In Follett Shelf, this enables the child to have full access to the book for a week.

Relevance to research questions.

End of the year library usage statistics aimed to support research question number five: To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills? While this question is not directly answered through the library use statistics, the data presented showed the usage patterns displayed by students. In general, over 10,000 physical books were requested and almost 25,000 ebooks were accessed. Some grades used the resources more than others, and a variety of genres were explored.

Budget

A request for the amount of money spent on the library, including the initial cost of the website development, money spent on the purchase of physical books, money spent on Follett Shelf, and the amount spent on shipping books to students was posed to the employee who works in the Title office, as all of these expenditures were paid from the federal funds budget. Initially, the researcher was told that the amount would be presented in a few days. After a week had passed, the researcher was told that this information was not easily accessible, and therefore, the budget request was denied.
Key Findings

Six key findings were presented at the beginning of this chapter. Data collection phases were described individually and provided details to support those findings. This section serves to tie the key findings with the data presented, in a concise, summative manner.

Finding 1.

Parents, students, teachers, and administrators were generally happy to have access to the libraries. Stakeholders described the libraries as a great addition to the school. Parents and students frequently asked for more titles and expanded genres.

Through teacher focus groups, it was demonstrated that students showed enjoyment towards the libraries. Students had commented to their teachers that they appreciated the on-demand access of Follett Shelf, and expressed true joy when receiving books in the mail. Students and parents conveyed a similar sentiment during their interviews. While for some parents the interviews were the first time they had heard of the library, they were very pleased to have access to these resources. No major complaints regarding the libraries emerged during the data collection phase, from any of the stakeholders. Administrators reported that they had received no criticism or grievances of the library whatsoever. On the student and parent survey, a preponderance of respondents wrote that the library is “fine the way it is” on their open ended response questions.

Many students and parents recommended that the library grow. Specific titles were requested, genres were suggested (comic books, history books, etc.), and in general,
Finding 2.

The major goal of the library was similar across stakeholders: To get books into the hands of the students.

The goal for the inaugural year of the library matched the title of this dissertation: Student Literature Access in an Online School. During their focus groups, both teachers and administrators talked at great length about the need for the online students to have access to children’s books. Parents and students also reported this goal on their open-ended survey questions. Through usage reports from both the physical lending library as well as from the school’s ebook library, Follett Shelf, this goal has been achieved. As presented earlier in this chapter, over 10,000 physical books were checked out and almost 25,000 ebooks were accessed.

Finding 3.

The library lacked a true director; therefore communication suffered and many stakeholders were ill-informed.

Approximately one week before the administrative focus group convened, the director of federal funds left the school of study. A replacement was selected in November, but only worked in the department until January. At that time he accepted a position directing another department in the school. The position remained unfilled for the duration of the 2012-2013 school year.
Many stakeholders have a claim towards the library. The employee in the title office who is responsible for the manual shipping and receiving of books has referred to the library as hers in saying:

I don’t want to be a Debby Downer, but if you just want to get books into the hands of students, that’s kind of a disaster. . . So you get books in their hands and they never turn them back in. And you wipe out my library.

While this employee is displaying ownership of the library, she does not have the authority to purchase items nor does she regularly communicate with teachers. During the fall administrative focus group, this employee requested that the library be put on hold, due to an overwhelming initial request for books. Because a director was not identified, no formal announcements were made regarding the back-load of books and students simply had to wait up to a month to receive their initial book requests.

The librarian, while she expressed a desire to adopt a traditional school librarian’s role, also did not have the power to engage in this role during the school year. She mentioned that this would have to be a conversation that she had with her supervisor.

At the fall administrative focus group, the researcher asked the group who a contact person would be for the library, especially because it was anticipated that suggestions for improvements would emerge. No name was given, and the principal admitted that, “I don’t know if there is a good workflow.” Without a true director, no school employee stepped up to communicate regularly with teachers and students. This left teachers confused about the process of borrowing books and ill at ease to answer questions from their students.
The lack of communication directly affected the students. Some families never knew the library existed this year, as evidenced by survey open-responses and through parent interviews. Some parents, in asking about goals or improvements for the library commented, “Never seen it” or “Didn’t know about it”.

Without a director, the library budget was not made accessible. When the researcher requested a breakdown of the library budget (once mid-year, once in May), the employee responsible for federal funds agreed to provide the information to the researcher. A subsequent email from this employee, however, addressed the issue that gathering the requested budgetary data would be too time consuming and difficult.

**Finding 4.**

*Teachers found it difficult to integrate the library into live class sessions. They requested the students be able to have regular trips to the library, supported by a school librarian.*

Teachers regularly commented that there was little time to fully integrate the libraries into their already packed live sessions. While they understood the importance of students visiting the library, they often felt that they ran out of time. This thought was expressed in both the winter and spring teacher focus groups. Piggy-backing from this discussion, the need for a school librarian and *Library* time to be a separate class garnered much enthusiasm from the teachers. Students and parents also reported that help was needed to find and select books at an appropriate level. An analysis of library records, specifically fifth grade Follett Shelf usage patterns, demonstrated that students tend to use the ebook library to browse, rather than read, complete books. This
corroborates the fact that students likely had a troublesome time finding an appropriate book. Teachers felt that with the addition of a school librarian available during dedicated library times, the librarian could aid the students in selecting books.

Finding 5.

Students who accessed the library most were those who were already motivated readers.

While the main goal was to provide access to books, students who utilized the library the most were those who were already active readers. Data from the student interviews showed that students who read a lot during the summer of 2012 also used the library more. Students who had not already developed a love of reading were unlikely to be inspired to read simply by having access to the libraries. A teacher, Carol verified this in saying,

I see that our top readers, or not necessarily our top readers, but our kids who enjoy reading the most still visit it the most. And I still see some of the kids down there who are hard to motivate, aren’t necessarily self-motivated readers—They’re not taking advantage of it.

Administrators noted that this phenomenon is likely not unique to their school. The conversation then morphed to an issue of motivation. Administrators discussed ways to lure the students to the libraries. Hooking students to books was also a common theme in the teacher focus groups and through parent comments.
**Finding 6.**

*Stakeholders agreed that reading ebooks on a desktop computer lacks the comfort of reading on a digital reader or of reading a book.*

Administrators, teachers, students, and parents all commented that it may not be feasible to expect that students would choose to read a book solely for pleasure on their desktop computers. In light of the fact that students at an online school are on their computers for a large portion of the school day, administrators and teachers agreed that even they need a break from their desktop screens each evening. Parents and teachers suggested providing digital readers for the students. The librarian mentioned that students ought to be taught how to download Follett Shelf books onto digital readers, as some families have these devices in their homes.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented findings from the various data collection phases. Data was presented chronologically, as this project adopted an emergent, iterative research design. Findings from fall focus groups with administrators and teachers were presented first. Students’ and parents’ survey results were discussed next. Mid-year, library usage rates were available. Both the physical book library and Follett Shelf statistics were shared. Winter focus groups with teachers and administrators were included as well. In the spring, data was presented from teacher and administrator focus groups, from student and parent interviews, from student and parent surveys, and from library usage data. The researcher presented the relevance of each research phase to the research questions. Six
major findings were drawn from the data, and were reviewed at the conclusion of the chapter.

Throughout the data collection phase, unanticipated themes emerged, and thus created the necessity of inductive coding. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the project so as to examine for biases. A balance between the emic and etic perspectives was sought, as it took systemic familiarity to recognize the program evaluation topic (and to achieve prolonged engagement), yet fervent stakeholder participation was solicited in an effort to minimize researcher bias.
Chapter 5: Analysis, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The title of this dissertation, Student Literature Access in an Online School: A Program Evaluation, was chosen because many students attending the school in this study had limited access to quality children’s literature. Teachers and administrators agreed that the major goal of the library was to “get books into the hands of students.” The library presented in this paper achieved that goal: Students were now able to requests physical books to be mailed to their homes, or they could achieve on-demand access of digital books from Follett Shelf. But access to books does not automatically create readers. It takes a motivated student to independently decide to pick up a book and read it.

The introduction to each chapter reiterated the primary goals of this study: To develop, organize, promote, and evaluate a library in an online school so that students’ fluency levels and enjoyment of reading increase. Each of the italicized words in the prior sentence represents key components of the study. Develop: A method of distributing books has been achieved. In Chapter 3, it was reported that Chen (2005) noted that program evaluations consider the inputs available for the program. The ability to ship and receive physical books along with Follett Shelf provided a bare-bones library available to this school’s students. Organize: Findings from Chapter 4 demonstrated that, without a director, communication about the library suffered. Students, parents, teachers, and administrators had varying levels of knowledge regarding the library. Promote: A lack of formal organization left teachers ill-equipped to fully integrate the library into their classes. Students who were already motivated readers utilized the
libraries, yet those students who perhaps needed the library resources most did not.

*Evaluate:* It is the researcher’s ultimate goal to present the findings from this study to the school so that improvements can be incorporated into their library program.

The conceptual framework presented in Chapter 1 maintained that a transformative, emancipatory approach would be taken so that students would be empowered as readers and so that the prevalent achievement gap between low-income learners and their mid-income counterparts could be lessened. Adopting a mixed methods transformative research design allowed the researcher to view the data from the lens of marginalized students (Mertens, 2007). Without all four previous goals being met; to *develop, organize, promote, and evaluate* the library, it was not possible to fully empower the students. One could argue, however, that a transformative program takes time, and that this school is already well on its way to having a strong, impactful library program.

This chapter will provide an analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of the findings presented in Chapter 4. The six key findings included: a general sense of happiness regarding the libraries including a wish for more titles to be added, a cohesive goal from stakeholders being to provide access to children’s literature, a lack of a director, thereby stifling communication, a need for a school librarian to serve in a traditional librarian’s role, the trend of primarily only motivated readers accessing the libraries, and a need for digital reading devices other than students’ desktop computers.
The findings listed above will be evaluated in terms of their connections to the six research questions guiding this study. As presented in Chapter 1, the driving questions were:

**Developmental/Formative questions:**

1. To what extent are students in this online elementary school reading for pleasure? What is the baseline and does it relate to socioeconomic class?
2. How well do teachers understand this school’s current lending library system?
3. What are the parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ goals concerning the lending library program?

**Summative questions:**

4. Have teachers integrated the lending library into their classrooms? How so?
5. To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills?
6. What is the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes?

The findings above were linked with the research questions to create four analytical categories, around which this chapter will be arranged. The analytic categories are:

1. Access to library resources alone is unlikely to close the achievement gap. (Research Questions 1, 5, and 6)
2. Leadership strength relates to the effectiveness of programs. (Research Questions 2, 4, and 5)
3. Exceptional libraries are led by a strong librarian. (Research Questions 4, 5, and 6)

4. Portable, digital readers may ease the discomfort of reading from a desktop computer. (Research Questions 3 and 5)

The analytical categories presented above will be discussed both with evidence from this study as well as with evidence from published literature. Conclusions and recommendations will be developed from these analyses. Assumptions stated in Chapter 1 will be revisited and analyzed for accuracy. This chapter, and dissertation, will conclude with a reflection by the researcher.

**Analytic Category 1: Access to library resources alone is unlikely to close the achievement gap.**

Providing access to books involves more than simply having them in the environment. Classrooms and libraries nationwide are lined with unused books. For availability to be effective, students must know how to locate books, how to choose them, how to read them, and how to interact with text and illustrations (McTague & Abrams, 2011, p. 3).

The above quote delineates that, while access to books is critical, teachers and administrators must do more than immerse students with books. The literature review for this study supported this theme in its section on motivating students to be readers. It parallels with discussions centered around the digital divide; whereas access to books, or technology, is an important first step, but not a panacea to remediating the achievement gap based on social class.
The digital divide is commonly thought of as the break between those who have access to technology, and those who do not, however it has been argued that this definition is too shallow (Lebens, Graff, & Mayer, 2009; Martinez & Peterson, 2008). Thinking of the digital divide as solely a “hardware divide” does not adequately explain the usage discrepancy between social classes (Hohlfeld, Ritzhaupt, Barron, & Kemker, 2008, p. 256). Hohlfeld, Ritzhaupt, Barron, and Kemker (2008) created a framework to describe the different levels of the digital divide. The first hierarchical level details the school infrastructure. This level is based on access, including student-to-computer ratios, internet availability, and technical support. The second level concerns the amount of time students spend using technology and the purposes for their use. The third level of their framework analyzes to what degree the technology is used to empower the students. In their study, Hohlfeld et al. found that low-income schools typically use technology for content delivery and that students at high SES schools use technology in a production role.

When considering the lending library interactive website and Follett Shelf, the school in this study currently resides in level 1 of Hohlfeld et al.’s digital divide hierarchy. Students have access to the resources, but are not given a purpose (level 2) to utilize them and are not being empowered (level 3) by the available technology. When asked how, if at all, they are integrating the library into their classes, teachers in the focus group cited that they either do not have time to advocate for the library, or that they simply push out the links and hope for the best. This was best elucidated through Candy’s comment:
I mean, I guess that we can push it out all we want, we can show them the link all that we want and I guess it’s like anything else at [this school]. It’s the follow through. You know you have that barrier with these kids of getting them to log in and check out a book and read the book. We don’t have that control and we’re not sitting there in that room looking over their shoulder watching them do it.

Through focus groups, administrators discussed the need for the library resources to be integrated into lessons. Daniella stated that there should be a goal built in to the assessment mapping (lesson planning) for the students to access the resources, “versus just saying it’s there.” By integrating the library resources into the lessons, this school would increase to level 2 in Hohlfeld et al.’s digital divide hierarchy.

Lebens (2009) contended that economically-disadvantaged children require additional attention when technology is integrated into the classroom, and that merely having the resources will not close the digital divide. Students empowered by technology (level 3) are able to access the resources to make independent decisions on how to select and use the technology to accomplish “personally valuable objectives in efficient ways” (Hohlfeld et al., 2008, p. 1650). What is needed is support from teachers and administrators to fully utilize technological resources. Hohlfeld et al. stated that teachers can learn how to incorporate effective use of technology through professional development.

Research questions 1, 5, and 6 were related. They attempted to understand the extent to which students at this school were reading for pleasure at the beginning of the year (Research Question 1) and then compared that figure with students’ reading habits at
the end of the school year (Research Question 5). Both question 1 and question 6 compared the differences from the beginning of the year to the end of the year when considering economic classes. Because the school remained in level 1 of Hohlfeld et al.’s taxonomy, a big effect on learners from the lower socioeconomic classes was not demonstrated.

**Analytic Category 2: Leadership strength relates to the effectiveness of programs.**

In his article, “Insights from Successful and Unsuccessful Implementation of School Reform Programs,” Guhn (2009) argued, through support of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory (P. Miller, 2011) that the success of school reform efforts lies not solely with students, teachers, the school context, or leaders, but as a combination of factors. Essential to the mission, though, is the school principal and/or district leaders (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011; Guhn, 2009). It is unlikely a school reform effort will take a firm footing in a school without the expressed interest of the school leader. Guhn stated, “The greatest barrier to [the] success factor was found to be a lack of administrative support that was either caused by a lack of interest or awareness of the principal or by a mismatch between school district goals…and the program goals…” (2009, p. 352).

Organizational learning theory purports that schools show gains when leaders gather knowledge through prior data and research, when leaders share that knowledge with teachers and staff, and when leaders plan actions, collect program data, incorporate objectives into teacher evaluations, and recognize best practices (Epstein et al., 2011). School leadership thus impacts the core missions of the school: instruction and student
learning (Mulford & Moreno, 2006). Leadership need not be individual though. Since 2000, leadership has been viewed less as a solo endeavor, and more as distributed leadership (Crawford, 2012). Distributed leadership recognizes that organizations are often directed by groups of people due to the fact that varying levels of expertise are often found across an organization.

In this study, throughout the 2012-2013 school year, a leader or director of the school library program did not emerge. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the director of federal funds had left the school and had not been replaced. While a school librarian was employed, her duties primarily revolved around curriculum support for students and teachers. A staff member had taken ownership of the library in talking about “my books” and “my library”, yet she was not in a position to communicate with teachers.

While a form of distributed leadership was evident, roles were not assigned. Administrators and teachers freely picked and chose what information should be passed along to teachers, which resulted in little communication. Through focus groups, teachers expressed an interest in having the school librarian adopt a more traditional role in the school:

I would love to see our library be like a special where we have a gym teacher and a computer teacher. I would love to send my kids to library. And the librarian is there to read them a story, to show them new books that are available – Our kids, in my opinion, can’t get enough exposure to books, and all different people exposing them to books. (Carol)

Another participant agreed, stating:
I think it needs to be super guided for most of our kids. You almost need to lead them to the water as far as the books go. Show them books that are on or just a little below their level that they can easily read independently and are really exciting. (Michelle)

Upon bringing this recommendation to the winter administrative focus group, the librarian replied, “I’m loving it! It’s back to school again! Actually, there’s some poss—I think that’s not such a bad idea, truthfully. I don’t know what everybody would think.”

When the same topic was discussed in the spring administrative focus group, no progress had been made in transitioning the librarian’s role to that of a typical school librarian.

The librarian stated:

My job description has to change a bit, which I would be more than willing to talk about. So, I think that would be great. I don’t know whether it could happen… I think that’s worth-definitely worth-having a discussion about with my boss.

(Elizabeth)

This analytical category directly relates to Research Questions 2, 4, and 5. The second research question asked, “How well do teachers understand this school’s current lending library system?” The answer, in short, would be: To varying degrees. Teachers who were part of the focus group in this study likely understood the library to a greater degree than other teachers, by virtue of being a group studying it. Yet many reported that they felt confused about the ordering process and the differences between the ebook library and the physical library. The library has no formal written policies and
procedures, therefore what information the teachers have gleaned has been from a brief professional development session at the beginning of the year or from asking colleagues.

Research Question 4 concerned the manner in which teachers have integrated the library into their classes. It has been shown that teachers reported running out of time to fully implement the library. This lack of time provided the impetus for the comment on how the school needs a librarian to work with students. Alternately, a strong school leader may provide professional development on ways to integrate the library into classroom lessons. This would provide a reason to access the libraries, rather than just assume students would stumble in on their own.

The fifth research question asked to what degree the library program became a factor in students’ reading habits and skills. As mentioned earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 4, little effect was seen. Compiled with analytical category number one (access alone will not close the achievement gap), a director-less program is unlikely to provide sweeping school changes.

**Analytic Category 3: Exceptional libraries are led by a strong librarian.**

The bulk of this chapter will be dedicated to analytic category number three: Exceptional libraries are led by a strong librarian. This statement is perhaps the heart of the study, as it ties the previous two analytic categories together and expands on that union.

In their article, “Against the Flow: A Continuum for Evaluating and Revitalizing School Libraries,” Lee and Klinger (2011) created a taxonomy, similar to the aforementioned digital divide taxonomy, centered on school libraries. Comprising four
levels, the library taxonomy is hierarchical, each level being necessary to advance to the next. Lee and Klinger’s lowest, or initial school library level, is that of a library as a source of materials. The school in this study currently resides in this level. This level has “a general lack of teacher and administrator support” (E. Lee & Klinger, 2011, p. 28).

Level 2 in the school library taxonomy comprises schools that integrate library usage into classroom lessons, but whose library programs are not viewed as an integral curriculum component. Administrators are more involved in level 2 than level 1 libraries, but may allocate varying levels of funding to support the school libraries. Librarians at this level work to encourage students to visit the libraries and work with teachers to supplement instruction.

A more empowering library environment exists at level 3. Schools at this level consider their libraries to be essential to students’ learning. The library is viewed as the center of the school, a hub run by an enthusiastic librarian who lures both students and staff into the library regularly. Level 3 libraries reap strong administrative support. The librarian is viewed as “a key teaching member of their staff and part of the school leadership team” (E. Lee & Klinger, 2011, p. 31).

The highest level of school libraries is level 4. These school libraries embody the benefits from the prior three levels, and are supported financially and through policy by both administrators and the school board. These libraries are viewed as exemplary and ideal school libraries and face no risk of losing funding.

Students who attend schools with high levels of low-income students are likely to have a school library residing in level 1 of Lee and Klinger’s library taxonomy. These
schools are more likely to have a librarian who only works part-time, libraries with limited hours, and fewer books added each year than schools in mid-income neighborhoods (Pribesh, Gavigan, & Dickinson, 2011). Schools faced with these challenges limit “students’ access to reading materials and to teacher-librarians who are vitally important resources for motivating students to read” (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009, p. 69).

This analytic category states that “exceptional libraries are led by a strong librarian”. But what makes a strong, school librarian? What characteristics does this employee exemplify? Much research has attempted to answer these questions. According to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), in their 2009 guidelines, school librarians have five roles, all of which are needed to empower students (Moreillon, Cahill, & McKee, 2012). These roles include: the librarian as a leader, the librarian as an instructional partner, the librarian as a specialist in information, the librarian as a teacher, and the librarian as a program administrator. The AASL considers the role as a leader to be incorporated into the other four roles. Each of the four additional roles will be explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

**Librarian as an instructional partner.**

Because librarians work with the entire school community, classroom teachers know their students more deeply. Strong librarians work with classroom teachers to best meet the needs of the students (Braxton, 2004; Braxton, 2008). This may entail the librarian joining classroom teachers to co-plan, co-teach, and co-evaluate students’ work (Church, 2011). School librarians may pull library resources, including fiction and non-
fiction books, to augment the current classroom unit. The librarian must also work to aid classroom teachers’ understandings of the library, including how best to use the library resources to enhance their teaching (Lo & Tsang, 2009). Unfortunately, because of many school libraries operating under level 1 of Lee and Klinger’s library taxonomy, deep collaboration between librarians and teachers is absent in many schools resulting in “teacher librarians being under-utilized instructionally and needing to continually justify their place in education” (E. Lee & Klinger, 2011, p. 33).

**Librarian as a specialist in information.**

As an information specialist, school librarians both acquire and assess information through an array of media and share the information with the school community (Braxton, 2008; Church, 2011). School libraries house books, ebooks, online resources, audio books, and other resources to support students’ learning. It is a role of the school librarian to link staff and students to the available resources (Lo & Tsang, 2009). To increase their knowledge of technological skills to fulfill the role of information specialist, school librarians can attend school library association conferences, as these opportunities often address this role of librarians (Moreillon et al., 2012).

**Librarian as a teacher.**

As reported earlier in the taxonomy of school libraries, libraries in which the librarian is thought of as a teacher are exemplary (E. Lee & Klinger, 2011). Librarians serving in the teaching role both teach students how to access information as well as teach students how to enjoy literature. In doing so, they promote critical thinking skills, literacy skills, research skills, and promote pleasure reading (Moreillon et al., 2012).
Many school librarians would argue that their main role, above all other roles, is to promote a passion for reading within their students. They work tirelessly to match book titles to students’ interests, share the joy of books through read alouds, and create a reading-friendly environment (Braxton, 2008). By promoting free, voluntary reading, librarians aim for higher reading achievement among their students (Lo & Tsang, 2009). Chapter 2 described, in detail, motivational factors behind students’ drive to read. Strong school librarians utilize those motivational factors to encourage students to select books based on their interests.

In her article, “Encouraging Students to Read for Pleasure,” Braxton (2004) agreed that librarians have a responsibility to encourage reading among their students. She reasoned that librarians have likely selected their occupation due to the fact that they are avid readers themselves. She cautioned readers, however, that not all students are able to be swayed into being ravenous readers and suggested instead that librarians work to share the joy, but not be discouraged when students select alternate hobbies.

**Librarian as a program administrator.**

As the program administrator of a school library, librarians need to be careful not to fall into the trap of creating the opinion that the library belongs to them. They need to serve as the custodian, but not owner of the library (Braxton, 2008). In their program administrator role, strong school librarians: manage the collection of resources, create the program’s missions, plans, and policies, manage the library staff, create and manage the budget, organize the physical and virtual space, and partner with professional library organizations (Moreillon et al., 2012).
The four roles mentioned above, librarian as instructional partner, librarian as informational specialist, librarian as teacher, and librarian as program administrator work together to create a librarian as a school leader. As one of the few school employees to work with all students, librarians have the ability and responsibility to create a cohesive program to both enhance the school curriculum and to motivate students as readers. The school in which this study took place had varying levels of involvement within each role of the librarian. The following paragraphs serve to highlight aspects of each role that has already been incorporated into the school of focus.

The librarian at the school studied in this paper had a primarily behind-the-scenes role. In a teacher focus group, Carol, in talking about having the librarian promote the library, stated, “Do our kids know that we actually have a librarian?” The likely answer is no. Among the librarian roles recommended by AASL, the school’s librarian currently serves as a specialist in information. Her supervisor, in fact, is not a principal, but the director of curriculum. In this role, the librarian primarily works to find curricular materials to support instruction. She spends a large portion of her day approving websites for use on student computers. She also serves as the school liaison with Follett Shelf. Lately, one of the librarian’s roles is to select titles to be purchased for both the physical book library and Follett Shelf.

The librarian works somewhat in the role of instructional partner; however, the initiating person is often the classroom teacher. The librarian spends little time actively reaching out to teachers, offering unsolicited support. Two roles the librarian is not currently serving in are the librarian as teacher role, or as the program administrator of
the library. Through teacher and administrator focus groups, it has been determined that staff members crave a more hands-on librarian, one who reaches out not only to teachers, but to students and parents as well.

In the spring focus groups, much conversation centered on the need to motivate students to use the library. Teachers suggested the librarian hold weekly Library time as a special, incorporating read alouds and fun activities based on books. Teachers also suggested the librarian organize book discussions and utilize the weekly school video system to highlight books. Administrators also discussed ways to lure students to the libraries. Their suggestions included: the use of interest inventories to aid in matching readers to books, the librarian or teacher reading books or chapters out loud, and utilizing the school’s video system and digital newspaper to highlight books.

In Chapter 4, it was demonstrated that the library lacked a true director, or administrator of the program. Budget requests were unavailable and many teachers, administrators, students, and parents were ill-informed on the library’s happenings and policies. Student use of the library was hampered. Because students had to primarily discover the resources on their own, and be self-motivated to check out a book, the target audience for the libraries had not been reached.

**Analytic Category 4: Portable, digital readers may ease the discomfort of reading from a desktop computer.**

In their study on increasing readers’ stamina, Reis and Fogarty (2006) found that students read for longer durations when they had the ability to move around and choose where to read. Students at the school of study who elected to read an ebook on Follett
Shelf primarily needed to access the books from their desktop computer. Data from administrators, teachers, parents, and students confirmed that reading via a desktop computer is uncomfortable, straining to the eyes, and makes for a long day for students who attend school online.

Portable reading devices may provide a solution to the problems incurred on reading on a stationary desktop computer. In a small study (N=9), it was found that mobile digital readers create no disadvantages when compared to reading printed books (Grzeschik, Krupa, Marti, & Donner, 2011). In a slightly larger study of fifth grade students (N=20), researchers found no significant differences in reading speed or comprehension when using tablet digital readers versus reading text on paper (Dundar & Akcayır, 2012).

Benefits have been cited to using digital reading devices, specifically the ability to manipulate text size (Dundar & Akcayır, 2012). Chapter 2 highlighted additional advantages of digital reading devices including the ability to look up word meanings, the ability to activate a text to speech feature, and the ability to take digital notes while reading. While the above study mentioned no significant differences in reading speed or comprehension, the researchers did find a significantly positive relationship when studying students’ opinions on portable digital readers (Dundar & Akcayır, 2012). Students appreciated the ergonomics afforded by the digital devices and reported that reading books on them was enjoyable.
Revisiting Assumptions from Chapter 1

Two major assumptions were presented in Chapter 1: Not all students were currently reading for pleasure, and the library was not as strong as it could be. The first assumption was true. Research question number one attempted to ascertain the extent to which students were reading for pleasure prior to exposure to the libraries. It was found that some students had been reading before obtaining access to the library, while others had not. Administrators, teachers, parents, and students confirmed the speculation that public libraries were not being fully utilized to bring books into the homes of students, for a variety of reasons.

In revisiting the section on assumptions in Chapter 1, one particular sentence stood out:  *By supplying books to the students, it may be easier to ascertain if the students were not previously engaged in reading because of a lack of books or if indeed a motivational problem persists.* While delineating the specific reason why all students are not utilizing the libraries is not simple to establish, the issue of motivation was repetitively discussed in the spring focus groups, and thus became a focus of the analytic categories presented in this chapter.

The second assumption (the library not being as strong as it could be) proved true. It was posited that with the interactive website and Follett Shelf both being new resources, and with teachers only getting a brief introduction to the library in the beginning of the year, that teachers were not fully knowledgeable on integrating the resources into their classes. A sentence from this assumption is also worth revisiting:  
*With organization and promotion, it is assumed that more students will be able to access*
quality literature. This is still a current assumption, as it has not been proved nor disproved. The organizational and promotional component was not fully achieved in this initial year of the library.

Conclusions

Three main conclusions, stemming from the research questions, the findings, and the analytic categories were drafted from this study. They are:

1. Providing access to literature is an essential role of online schools.

2. To empower students (of all economic levels) as readers, a strong librarian is needed to serve as an instructional partner, an information specialist, a teacher, and program administrator.

3. Ebooks are a valuable vehicle in which online students may access literature, yet reading on desktop computers causes fatigue and difficulties that hampers reading motivation.

The three conclusions are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

Recommendations for the school of study, as well as for the larger population of online schools, will follow.

Providing access to literature is an essential role of online schools.

The first finding, presented in Chapter 4, was that parents, students, teachers, and administrators were happy to have a library from which students could access books. Stakeholders wished for the library to grow; to have more titles, an expanded genre, and more copies available for checkout. A conclusion to this finding is that the school library plays an essential role in supplying literature to students who attend an online school.
Students, particularly those who come from low-income families, often rely on the school library as their sole portal to books. This conclusion is also supported by the second major finding; being the foremost goal of the library to “get books into the hands of students.” An option to close the library and encourage students to utilize public libraries, to purchase their own books, or to find their own ways to access literature is no longer a feasible alternative. The school has come too far in its inaugural year of the library to close the library. The only viable conclusion is to continue to improve the library so that online students have supported access to literature.

To empower students (of all economic levels), a strong librarian is needed to serve as an instructional partner, an information specialist, a teacher, and program administrator.

Chapter 4 has shown that the library in the school of study was available to students, yet did little more to encourage staff and students to access library resources. This low-level library involvement resulted in primarily only self-motivated readers accessing the library. The conceptual framework behind this study attempted to help close the achievement gap between low-income and mid- or upper-income students. Many of the low-income students have not had exposure to literature in their homes, do not have parents who value independent reading time, and simply do not know how to find a book to match their interests. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that online schools need to have a librarian who serves in a traditional librarian role. Students need not be expected to “find the library on their own,” but need to be lured into the
library through the promise of a good book, through the skills of an engaging librarian, and as an integral, essential component of classroom learning.

The third finding in this study mentioned that without a true director, communication was lacking and many stake-holders did not know how to access or utilize the library. A strong librarian would mitigate these problems. A library conceived as the center of a school’s culture would naturally draw students and staff to its door.

The fourth finding detailed how teachers found it difficult to integrate the library into classes, and called for Library time as a special. What is needed is not only library time as a pull-out program, but time for both the students to go to the library and for the librarian to head to the classrooms. This true partnership would tap into those students who are not naturally inclined to wander into a library - virtual or physical - and resolve the fifth major finding of the study: that of the library primarily targeting only motivated readers.

Ebooks are a valuable vehicle in which online students may access literature, yet reading on desktop computers causes fatigue and difficulties that hampers reading motivation.

Students in this study have demonstrated, both in reading habits and through discussions, that it is difficult to maintain reading stamina while reading on their desktop computers. Administrators, teachers, and parents sympathized with the finding and agreed that digital reading devices that are portable may alleviate the problems of reading on a desktop computer. This conclusion is backed up by research emphasizing that not only are digital reading devices similar to reading a paper book, in some cases students
actually prefer reading from them. Students in the study reported that they appreciated the ‘on-demand’ book access afforded by Follett Shelf.

Recommendations

Because this program evaluation was situated in a specific school context, recommendations will first be issued for the school of study. General recommendations will then be discussed for other K-12 online schools. Recommendations for further research will conclude this section.

Recommendations for the school of study.

The school of focus should consider:

1. A re-conception of the school library from that of one on the periphery to that of one in the center of the school. The school template should reflect this change and make the school library easily accessible from students’ homepages.

2. The transition of the school librarian into a more traditional school librarian role encompassing the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) suggestions of: librarian as an instructional partner, librarian as an information specialist, librarian as a teacher, and librarian as a program administrator. Ideally, students will visit the library as a weekly special. Because the school has over 15,000 students, additional librarians may need to be added to fully implement all four roles.

3. Use of weekly school-wide video segments to highlight books and to draw students and staff into the library as well as to serve as a method of communication regarding library policies.

**Recommendations for online K-12 schools.**

National online K-12 schools with similar characteristics should consider:

1. The development of a library system as a method of delivery of physical books as well as ebooks.
2. A school librarian who is knowledgeable of, experienced with, and able to fulfill the AASL’s four roles; that of librarian as instructional partner, librarian as information specialist, librarian as teacher, and librarian as program administrator.
3. The use of portable, digital reading devices that can access ebooks.
4. A strong communication system that can keep all stakeholders informed of the library system and library resources.

**Recommendations for further research.**

This study unearthed a method of delivering literature to students attending online school. These previously uncharted waters created numerous possibilities for future research. Because it was shown that access alone will not create a strong library system, further research should consider:

1. The effect of *Library* time as a special. What effect does this have on students’ motivation to read? How is an online librarian’s time best spent when students visit a virtual library? How best can an online librarian collaborate with online teachers during *Library* time?
2. The effect of mobile digital reading devices on students attending an online school. Do students who have access to these devices follow through and read entire ebooks? Do students prefer ebooks to physical books or vice versa?

3. The possibility of replacing physical books with ebooks. Can ebooks take the place permanently of paper books in an online school? Is the cost of solely relying on ebooks in an online school prohibitive or beneficial for the library budget?

4. The librarian-to-student ratio in an online school. How many librarians are needed to support students attending an online school? Assuming the librarian(s) fulfill all four roles as dictated by the AASL, are more or less librarians needed in a virtual environment than traditional school environment?

**Program evaluation: Executive summary.**

Theory driven program evaluations supply a summative report to stakeholders dictating the extent to which program components supported or hindered the results of the program. The findings presented in Chapter 4, as well as the analyses, conclusions, and recommendations in Chapter 5 were presented in a concise report to the stakeholders of the school studied. This executive report can be viewed in its entirety in Appendix CC.

**Researcher Reflections**

This project began with a simple goal: To allow students who attend an online school to access quality children’s literature. It was hoped that by opening the virtual library door, students would flock in by drones to read book after book. But online
school libraries are not that different from brick-and-mortar school libraries. If a room solely exists to house books, where is the joy? Where is the excitement? Why would students suddenly feel the urge to develop reading as a new hobby of theirs?

As the nine month data collection phase progressed, it became clear that access to books in an online school was simply phase one. Libraries become great places and meccas for students if an enthusiastic teacher or librarian lures students in and shares the magic and suspense of books. Libraries become necessary resources instead of just “something extra” when class lessons require students to conduct outside research.

While much of this dissertation highlights what needs to be done to create an empowering library at this online school, the researcher feels as if year one of the library was a raging success. Rome was not built in a day, nor will a top-notch library in an online school be created over the course of one school year. The hard part is done. Students can now get physical books delivered to their doorsteps, or can call up ebooks on demand. With time, perseverance, and a general drive to share the passion of reading, the staff at this online school can certainly create a library that empowers all students, regardless of economic status.
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## Appendix A: Action Plan/Evaluation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Meet with administrative focus group</td>
<td>L. Hibbard, principal, superintendent, manager of title office, librarian, others as indicated by interest</td>
<td>9/15/12</td>
<td>A. Face-to-face meeting at headquarters</td>
<td>A. Review program documents&lt;br&gt;B. Identify crucial elements for implementation&lt;br&gt;C. Revise data collection methods&lt;br&gt;D. Create goals of program&lt;br&gt;E. Approve student and parent survey; add/adapt questions if necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Step 2: Create executive summary, add additional action plan steps gleaned from administrative focus group | L. Hibbard | 9/22/12 | A. Transcript and assistant’s notes from administrative focus group | A. Create executive summary to share with teachers<br>B. Add further action steps as dictated by focus group |

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<tr>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<th>Tasks</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Step 3: Meet with 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher focus group | L. Hibbard, 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers | 9/30/12 | A. Elluminate online meeting program  
B. Executive summary from administrative focus group  
C. Question protocol | A. Determine current use of program  
B. Identify crucial elements for implementation on teacher end  
C. Create goals of program as determined by teachers |
| Step 4: Create executive summary from teacher focus group; compile with executive summary from administrative focus group | L. Hibbard | 10/1/12 | A. Recording, transcript, and notes from teacher focus group | A. Create executive summary; disseminate to teachers and administrators  
B. Add further action steps as dictated by focus group |
| Step 5: Administer survey to students and parents | L. Hibbard, Communication Director for school | 10/15/12 | A. Survey  
B. Online surveying tool | A. Communication director approves survey  
B. L. Hibbard emails consent forms to parents.  
C. L. Hibbard sends survey link to parents/students who have given consent. |
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<tr>
<th>Action Steps</th>
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<th>Resources</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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</table>
| Step 6: Analyze quantitative results from survey | L. Hibbard                     | 11/15/12       | A. Survey results B. SPSS software | A. Gather descriptive statistics from survey results  
B. Email summary of results to focus group participants (teachers and administrators)  
C. Use results to drive future steps/program implementation |
| Step 7: Collect DIBELS scores for 5th grade students | 5th grade teachers            | 11/30/12       | A. DIBELS       | A. Obtain and record initial oral reading fluency scores for all students  
B. Enter DIBELS scores into SPSS |
| Step 8: Gather library usage rates       | L. Hibbard, title office       | 1/15/13        | A. Data detailing usage rates | A. Determine use patterns of students between teachers and between economic groups  
B. Enter usage into SPSS  
C. Generate report for in-house stakeholders |

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<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 9: Meet with teacher focus group</td>
<td>L. Hibbard, 5th grade teachers</td>
<td>1/31/13</td>
<td>A. Elluminate online meeting program B. Data from current usage rates</td>
<td>A. Perform mid-year analysis: Identify problems B. Choose remedial actions C. Create report to disseminate to administrative focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 10: Meet with administrative group</td>
<td>L. Hibbard, administrative stakeholders</td>
<td>2/15/13</td>
<td>A. Face-to-face meeting at headquarters B. Report from teacher focus group C. Data from current usage rates</td>
<td>A. Discuss problems B. Discuss remedial actions C. Create report detailing changes and submit to teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 11: Create executive summary from teacher and administrative focus group</td>
<td>L. Hibbard</td>
<td>3/1/13</td>
<td>A. Recording, transcripts, and notes from teacher and administrative focus groups</td>
<td>A. Create executive summary by combining findings from the focus groups B. Add further action steps as dictated by focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 12: Administer second student and parent survey</td>
<td>L. Hibbard</td>
<td>5/15/13</td>
<td>A. Survey B. Online surveying tool</td>
<td>A. L. Hibbard sends survey link to parents/students who have given consent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Steps</td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 13: Analyze quantitative results from survey</td>
<td>L. Hibbard</td>
<td>5/30/13</td>
<td>A. Survey results</td>
<td>A. Gather descriptive statistics from survey results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B. SPSS software</td>
<td>B. Analyze and describe changes between fall survey and spring survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 14: Collect DIBELS scores for all 5th grade students</td>
<td>5th grade teachers</td>
<td>6/10/13</td>
<td>A. DIBELS</td>
<td>A. Obtain and record end of the year oral reading fluency scores for all students</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>B. Enter DIBELS scores into SPSS</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C. Analyze and describe changes between fall and spring DIBELS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 15: Optional student interviews</td>
<td>L. Hibbard</td>
<td>6/10/13</td>
<td>A. Survey results (pre-test, post-test)</td>
<td>A. Select 2-4 students to interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>B. DIBELS data</td>
<td>B. Conduct a phone interview (approximately 20 minutes)</td>
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<th>Action Steps</th>
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<th>Timeline</th>
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<th>Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 16:</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/10/13</td>
<td>A.  Data detailing usage rates</td>
<td>A. Determine use patterns of students between teachers and between economic groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather</td>
<td>L. Hibbard, title office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B. Generate report for in-house stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C. Enter data into SPSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>usage rates</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D. Graph descriptive data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 17:</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/15/13</td>
<td>A.  Elluminate online meeting program</td>
<td>A. Discuss results of program: Have teacher’s behaviors changed? How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet</td>
<td>L. Hibbard, 5th grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B. Have students’ reading habits changed? How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with teacher</td>
<td>grade teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C. Identify problems</td>
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<td>focus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D. Choose remedial actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E. Create report to disseminate to administrative group</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 18: Meet with administrative group</td>
<td>L. Hibbard, administrative stakeholders</td>
<td>6/30/13</td>
<td>A. Face-to-face meeting at headquarters</td>
<td>A. Discuss results of program</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>B. Report from teacher focus group</td>
<td>B. Identify problems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C. Results from student/parent survey</td>
<td>C. Choose remedial actions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D. Data from current usage rates</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E. Data from DIBELS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 19: Produce summative report for in-house stakeholders</td>
<td>L. Hibbard</td>
<td>8/31/13</td>
<td>A. Results from teacher focus group</td>
<td>A. Compile data</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>B. Results from administrative group</td>
<td>B. Present to stakeholders</td>
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<td>C. DIBELS data</td>
<td>C. Document recommended changes based on findings</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D. Results from student and parent surveys</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E. Data from current usage rates</td>
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Appendix B: Recruitment Letter/Email to Students and Parents

Recruitment Tools: Email to Parents and Students

Subject: Would You Like To Help Our Library Grow?
Email:

Dear Parents and Fifth Grade Students,

My name is Laura Hibbard and I am a fifth grade LIFT teacher at ECOT. Some of you may be students in my class, but many of you work with other teachers. I am writing to invite you to take part in a study that I am doing with Ohio University and with ECOT. This year, administrators, teachers, and I are working to improve our library. Did you know that ECOT has a school library and that you can request books to be sent to you in the mail? You can keep them for a few weeks and then send them back. The best part is that it is totally free!

You may never have heard of this program before because not many teachers and students use it. My study aims to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate our library so that it grows into a wonderful program that you all can use! Because you, the students, are at the heart of the program, your voice matters!

Attached, please find a consent form and student form for this study. Parents may open these forms, print them, ask any questions, and sign and return them if you would like to participate. Students also have a place to sign, indicating that they are willing to participate. My phone number and extension can be found on the consent form. Once parents and students sign and return the forms, you will be sent a link to the survey.

The questions will ask you about your thoughts on reading. There are no right or wrong answers and it is not for a grade. Parents should read the survey questions and responses to their children. After 22 questions, there will be a spot for you to write your wishes for the school library. Your parent will also be able to write some thoughts on the school library.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes. I will email the same survey in the spring. If you take both the fall and the spring survey, YOU WILL RECEIVE A BOOK IN THE MAIL TO KEEP! This is my way of saying “Thank you!” This survey is completely voluntary. That means that if you don’t want to participate, you don’t have to! Your grades will not be tied to this study in any way, either positively or negatively.

If you choose to participate, the survey will be available until October 15, 2012. After that time the survey will close.

Mrs. Hibbard
Appendix C: Consent Forms for Students and Parents

Ohio University Parental Consent Form: Parent and Child Survey, Library Use, and DIBELS Scores
Fall Form

Title of Research: Student Literature Access in an Online School

Researchers: Laura Hibbard

You are being asked permission for you and your child to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want yourself and your child to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your child’s personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow you and your child’s participation in this study. You should print a copy of this document for your records.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done because our school’s lending library is being developed, organized, and evaluated this year. I would like you and your child to give us input to help design and evaluate our school library.

If you agree to allow your child to participate, your child will be asked to complete a 22 question survey. I will send a link through this message center which will open the survey. Survey questions refer to how much your child values reading and how your child perceives himself or herself as a reader. Parents will be instructed to read the survey to their children. After the 22 questions, there are two open-ended questions. The first will ask your child for his or her input on our school library. As the parent, you may type the response for your child. The second open-ended question is for you, the parent, to write your ideas for our school library.

The same survey will be given to you and your child again in the spring.

You and your child’s participation in the study will last approximately 20 minutes per session.

In addition to consenting to the survey, this document also gives the researcher your permission to access your child’s library usage and DIBELS scores. By looking at the number of books your child checks out during the year and the number of words your child reads in one minute (DIBELS score) the researcher will be able to see if the library
helps your child to be a better reader. DIBELS scores are routinely collected by your child’s teacher three times a year. This document is only asking for the researcher to use your child’s scores for the study. No additional testing is required to participate.

This survey is completely voluntary. Grades will not be affected by participation either positively or negatively.

Risks and Discomforts
No risks or discomforts are anticipated in this study.

Benefits
You and your child may benefit from this study because your voices will be heard. You and your child have the ability to steer our lending library in ways that may affect generations of students.

Confidentiality and Records
Your study information will be kept confidential by the researcher. All open-ended responses will be read and compiled into a report with no identifying characteristics.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Compensation
As compensation for your time/effort, parents and students who complete both the fall survey and the spring survey will receive a children’s book (approximate value $3-$5) in the mail to keep. Your child can expect to receive this book next June.

Because compensation is being provided from a grant from Ohio University, the Office of Finance will receive the names and addresses of all participants.

Contact Information
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact:

Laura Hibbard
Ohio University
laura.hibbard@ecotoh.org
1-888-326-8395 ext 3705

Or
Teresa Franklin  
Ohio University; Advisor  
Professor, Instructional Technology  
Instructional Technology Program Coordinator  
franklit@ohio.edu  
740-593-4561 (office)

If you have any questions regarding your or your child’s rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered  
you have been informed of potential risks to your child and they have been explained to your satisfaction.  
you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries your child might receive as a result of participating in this study  
you are 18 years of age or older  
you and your child’s participation in this research is completely voluntary  
you or your child may leave the study at any time. If your child decides to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to your child and he/she will not lose any benefits to which he/she is otherwise entitled.

Parent Signature________________________ Date____________________

Printed Name__________________________

Child’s Name__________________________
Ohio University Parental Consent Form: Parent and Child Survey, Library Use, and DIBELS Scores
Spring Form

Title of Research: Student Literature Access in an Online School

Researchers: Laura Hibbard

You are being asked permission for you and your child to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want yourself and your child to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your child’s personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow you and your child’s participation in this study. You should print a copy of this document for your records.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done because our school’s lending library is being developed, organized, and evaluated this year. I would like you and your child to give us input to help design and evaluate our school library.

If you agree to allow your child to participate, your child will be asked to complete a 20 question survey. An identical survey was given, with your consent, to your child in the fall.

I will send a link through this message center which will open the survey. Survey questions refer to how much your child values reading and how your child perceives himself or herself as a reader. Parents will be instructed to read the survey to their children. After the 20 questions, there are two open-ended questions. The first will ask your child for his or her input on our school library. As the parent, you may type the response for your child. The second open-ended question is for you, the parent, to write your ideas for our school library.

You and your child’s participation in the study will last approximately 20 minutes.

In addition to consenting to the survey, this document also gives the researcher your permission to access your child’s library usage and DIBELS scores. By looking at the number of books your child checks out during the year and the number of words your child reads in one minute (DIBELS score) the researcher will be able to see if the library helps your child to be a better reader. DIBELS scores are routinely collected by your
child’s teacher three times a year. This document is only asking for the researcher to use your child’s scores for the study. No additional testing is required to participate.

This survey is completely voluntary. Grades will not be affected by participation either positively or negatively.

**Risks and Discomforts**

No risks or discomforts are anticipated in this study.

**Benefits**

You and your child may benefit from this study because your voices will be heard. You and your child have the ability to steer our lending library in ways that may affect generations of students.

**Confidentiality and Records**

Your study information will be kept confidential by the researcher. All open-ended responses will be read and compiled into a report with no identifying characteristics.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

**Compensation**

As compensation for your time/effort, parents and students who complete both the fall survey and the spring survey will receive a children’s book (approximate value $3-$5) in the mail to keep. Your child can expect to receive this book in June.

Because compensation is being provided from a grant from Ohio University, the Office of Finance will receive the names and addresses of all participants.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact:

**Laura Hibbard**
Ohio University
[lahibbard@ecotoh.org](mailto:lahibbard@ecotoh.org)
1-888-326-8395 ext 3705

Or
If you have any questions regarding your or your child’s rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks to your child and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries your child might receive as a result of participating in this study
- you are 18 years of age or older
- you and your child’s participation in this research is completely voluntary
- you or your child may leave the study at any time. If your child decides to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to your child and he/she will not lose any benefits to which he/she is otherwise entitled.

Parent Signature __________________________ Date ___________________

Printed Name_____________________________

Child’s Name_____________________________

Version Date: [04/11/12]
My name is Mrs. Hibbard. I am trying to learn about your thoughts on reading so that we can work on making a library here at our school. I would like to know how much you value reading and see if having access to books changes the way you think about reading. If you would like, you can be in my study.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will take a survey with your parents at the beginning of the year and then again at the end of the year.

I do not expect any risks to occur if you agree to participate. That means that you won’t feel hurt by any of the questions or have any sad feelings. If you agree to help in this study, you will be able to give us your input concerning a school library.

Other people will not know if you are in my study. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other students, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

Your parents or guardian have to say it’s okay for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don’t want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that’s okay. You can stop at any time.

My telephone number is 1-888-326-8395 ext. 3705. You can call me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don’t want to be in the study any more.

You can keep a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.

Agreement

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don’t have to do it. Mrs. Hibbard has answered all my questions.

______________________________ ________________
Signature of Study Participant   Date

______________________________ ________________
Signature of Researcher/ Date
My name is Mrs. Hibbard. You may remember participating in my study last fall. I am working on developing a library here at our school and I asked you in the beginning of the year to fill out a survey. This past school year, you were able to take out books from our school library. Now I would like to see if your thoughts on reading have changed at all, since you have used the library all year long.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will take a survey very similar to the one you took last fall.

I do not expect any risks to occur if you agree to participate. That means that you won’t feel hurt by any of the questions or have any sad feelings. If you agree to help in this study, you will be able to give us your input concerning your thoughts on our school library.

Other people will not know if you are in my study. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other students, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

Once again, your parents or guardian have to say it’s okay for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don’t want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that’s okay. You can stop at any time.

My telephone number is 1-888-326-8395 ext. 3705. You can call me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don’t want to be in the study any more.

You can keep a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.

Agreement

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don’t have to do it. Mrs. Hibbard has answered all my questions.

_________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Study Participant   Date

_________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Researcher/ Date
Appendix D: Letter of Support from Participating School

To whom it may concern:

ECOT hereby approves the proposed research project by Laura Hibbard titled Student Literature Access in an Online School: A Program Evaluation as described in the project description below:

It is the intent of this study to evaluate a burgeoning school library program in an online, high-poverty elementary school. While school libraries typically serve a variety of roles, one of their primary purposes is to get quality literature into the hands of their students. This specific niche will be the focus of this program evaluation: What is the best way to get literature into online students’ homes so that their reading fluency and enjoyment of reading increase?

The goal of this program evaluation is to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate a lending library in an online elementary school in an effort to improve the fluency levels of students and to increase their levels of reading enjoyment. Nearly eighty percent of the students attending this school are classified as economically disadvantaged. Low-income students often live in environments with a limited amount of reading materials. It is hoped that this study will elicit ways for online students to easily access high-quality literature.

As it is currently operated, the lending library is vastly underused at this school. Primarily, teachers only take advantage of the library when sending class-sets of books to their students. Many teachers do not even know about the library, or have no model on how to integrate it into their curriculum. Very little organization is in place regarding the library. Materials are sparse and are often not returned. Books must currently be chosen on titles alone and students frequently receive books that do not match their expectations. When a fifth grader receives a picture book targeted to a first grader, money is wasted and reading enthusiasm is deflated.

A program evaluation model was selected so that students, parents, teachers, and administrators may be included in determining the sphere of options to allow this school’s lending library to grow. In involving a multitude of stakeholders, it is hoped that a variety of models may be evaluated. The library system may remain operating as is: the school can continue to send books in the mail with return envelopes provided. Or, a method of distributing e-books may be explored. Perhaps it may even be more cost-effective to allow students to keep inexpensive books, rather than require returns. Rather than only evaluating our current, sparse program, this program evaluation design allows stakeholders’ views, interests, and ideas to easily be incorporated throughout the year-long, mixed-methods study.

Furthermore, ECOT approves of the proposed research methods as stated in section 6.c. of the project outline form and grants access to library use records for students attending ECOT, as well as the students’ oral reading fluency scores for the purposes of this research.

ECOT understands that the data collected will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the lending library program and supports the use of survey tools. We support Ms. Hibbard’s research and look forward to review any findings upon the completion of the project.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Nick Wilson
Communications Director
Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow
Appendix E: Recruitment Letter/Email to Administrative Stakeholders

Subject: Focus Group for Lending Library

Email:

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to ask for your participation in a focus group to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate our lending library. I have spoken with many of you regarding this topic over the past few years.

The goal of this project is to improve the fluency levels of students and to increase their levels of reading enjoyment. Nearly eighty percent of the students attending our school are classified as economically-disadvantaged. Low-income students often live in environments with a limited amount of reading materials. It is hoped that this study will elicit ways for online students to easily access high-quality literature.

As discussed at convocation, our Lending Library has seen numerous changes this year. Teachers and students are now able to access a webpage to view book titles, authors, genres, covers, and details on available books. Teachers and students may select books on this webpage to be delivered to their houses. Because this program is brand new, it can be anticipated that we will experience a number of growing pains and issues as students and teachers adapt to the system.

I have chosen to formally evaluate the Lending Library for my doctoral dissertation at Ohio University. A program evaluation model was selected so that students, parents, teachers, and administrators may be included in helping this school’s lending library to grow into a successful program. In involving a multitude of stakeholders, it is hoped that a variety of topics may be evaluated; including goals, processes, and results. This program evaluation design allows stakeholders’ views, interests, and ideas to easily be incorporated throughout the year-long, mixed methods study.

I hope that you agree to take part in this very important and exciting project! If you agree to participate, I will begin to schedule a face-to-face meeting at headquarters. We will meet for a total of three times; once in the fall, once in the winter, and once at the end of the school year. If you know of another person who should be included, please let me know. Please respond to this email and let me know if you are willing to be included, or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Laura Hibbard
Appendix F: Consent Forms for Focus Groups

Ohio University Consent Form: Adults
Focus Group 1: Fall

Title of Research: Student Literature Access in an Online School: A Program Evaluation

Researchers: Laura Hibbard

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate a lending library in an online elementary school in an effort to improve the fluency levels of students and to increase their levels of reading enjoyment.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in three focus groups: one in the fall of 2012, one in the winter of 2013, and one in the spring of 2013. Your opinions, suggestions, and recommendations are integral to the success of this project. Each focus group session will last approximately one hour.

There are no foreseeable reasons why you should not participate in this study, other than the time and effort needed to carry out the study. Your participation in the study will last approximately nine months.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

Benefits

You may benefit from this study because your voice will be heard. You have the ability to steer our lending library in ways that may affect generations of students.

Confidentiality and Records
Your study information will be kept confidential by the researcher. Focus group sessions will be recorded for the sole purpose of the researcher transcribing and identifying emerging themes. All comments that will be reported to other stakeholders in the school will be reported anonymously. That is, your input will be reported to others, yet will not be identified as your unique comment.

Other focus group participants will be encouraged to keep the discussion confidential, but please be aware that they cannot be kept from sharing information.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:
   * Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
   * Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Compensation
As compensation for your time/effort, focus group participants who participate in all three focus group sessions will be given a $10 gift certificate to Starbucks after the final focus group session.

Because compensation is being provided from a grant from Ohio University, the Office of Finance will receive the names and addresses of all participants.

Contact Information
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact:

Laura Hibbard  
Ohio University  
Lr108693@ohio.edu  
740-594-1896

Or

Teresa Franklin  
Ohio University; Advisor  
Professor, Instructional Technology  
Instructional Technology Program Coordinator  
franklit@ohio.edu  
740-593-4561 (office)

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.
By signing below, you are agreeing that:
you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
you are 18 years of age or older
your participation in this research is completely voluntary
you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature_________________________ Date_________________________

Printed Name_________________________ Version Date: [04/11/12]
Ohio University Consent Form: Adults  
Focus Group 2: Winter

Title of Research: Student Literature Access in an Online School: A Program Evaluation

Researchers: Laura Hibbard

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate a lending library in an online elementary school in an effort to improve the fluency levels of students and to increase their levels of reading enjoyment.

This is the second of three focus group sessions. Your opinions, suggestions, and recommendations are integral to the success of this project. Each focus group session will last approximately one hour.

There are no foreseeable reasons why you should not participate in this study, other than the time and effort needed to carry out the study. Your participation in the study will last approximately nine months.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

Benefits

You may benefit from this study because your voice will be heard. You have the ability to steer our lending library in ways that may affect generations of students.

Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by the researcher. Focus group sessions will be recorded for the sole purpose of the researcher transcribing and identifying emerging themes. All comments that will be reported to other stakeholders in the school...
will be reported anonymously. That is, your input will be reported to others, yet will not be identified as your unique comment.

Other focus group participants will be encouraged to keep the discussion confidential, but please be aware that they cannot be kept from sharing information.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:
* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Compensation
As compensation for your time/effort, focus group participants who participate in all three focus group sessions will be given a $10 gift certificate to Starbucks after the final focus group session.

Because compensation is being provided from a grant from Ohio University, the Office of Finance will receive the names and addresses of all participants.

Contact Information
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact:

Laura Hibbard  
Ohio University  
Lr108693@ohio.edu  
740-594-1896

Or

Teresa Franklin  
Ohio University; Advisor  
Professor, Instructional Technology  
Instructional Technology Program Coordinator  
franklit@ohio.edu  
740-593-4561 (office)

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
you are 18 years of age or older
your participation in this research is completely voluntary
you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature________________________ Date__________________

Printed Name________________________ Version Date: [04/11/12]
Title of Research: Student Literature Access in an Online School: A Program Evaluation

Researchers: Laura Hibbard

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate a lending library in an online elementary school in an effort to improve the fluency levels of students and to increase their levels of reading enjoyment.

This is the final focus group of three sessions. Your opinions, suggestions, and recommendations are integral to the success of this project. Each focus group session will last approximately one hour.

There are no foreseeable reasons why you should not participate in this study, other than the time and effort needed to carry out the study. Your participation in the study will last approximately nine months.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

Benefits

You may benefit from this study because your voice will be heard. You have the ability to steer our lending library in ways that may affect generations of students.

Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by the researcher. Focus group sessions will be recorded for the sole purpose of the researcher transcribing and identifying emerging themes. All comments that will be reported to other stakeholders in the school
will be reported anonymously. That is, your input will be reported to others, yet will not be identified as your unique comment.

Other focus group participants will be encouraged to keep the discussion confidential, but please be aware that they cannot be kept from sharing information.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Compensation
As compensation for your time/effort, focus group participants who participate in all three focus group sessions will be given a $10 gift certificate to Starbucks after the final focus group session.

Because compensation is being provided from a grant from Ohio University, the Office of Finance will receive the names and addresses of all participants.

Contact Information
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact:

Laura Hibbard  
Ohio University  
Lr108693@ohio.edu  
740-594-1896

Or

Teresa Franklin  
Ohio University; Advisor  
Professor, Instructional Technology  
Instructional Technology Program Coordinator  
franklit@ohio.edu  
740-593-4561 (office)

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
you are 18 years of age or older
your participation in this research is completely voluntary
you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature_________________________ Date____________________

Printed Name_________________________ Version Date: [04/11/12]
Appendix G: Recruitment Letter/Email to Teachers

Subject: Focus Group for Lending Library

Email:

Dear Teachers,

I am writing to ask for your participation in a focus group to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate our lending library. I have spoken with many of you regarding this topic over the past few years.

The goal of this project is to improve the fluency levels of students and to increase their levels of reading enjoyment. Nearly eighty percent of the students attending our school are classified as economically-disadvantaged. Low-income students often live in environments with a limited amount of reading materials. It is hoped that this study will elicit ways for online students to easily access high-quality literature.

As discussed at convocation, our Lending Library has seen numerous changes this year. Teachers and students are now able to access a webpage to view book titles, authors, genres, covers, and details on available books. Teachers and students may select books on this webpage to be delivered to their houses. Because this program is brand new, it can be anticipated that we will experience a number of growing pains and issues as students and teachers adapt to the system.

I have chosen to formally evaluate the Lending Library for my doctoral dissertation at Ohio University. A program evaluation model was selected so that students, parents, teachers, and administrators may be included in helping this school’s lending library to grow into a successful program. In involving a multitude of stakeholders, it is hoped that a variety of topics may be evaluated; including goals, processes, and results. This program evaluation design allows stakeholders’ views, interests, and ideas to easily be incorporated throughout the year-long, mixed methods study.

I hope that you agree to take part in this very important and exciting project! If you agree to participate, I will begin to schedule a meeting on Elluminate. We will meet for a total of three times; once in the fall, once in the winter, and once at the end of the school year. Please respond to this email and let me know if you are willing to be included, or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Laura Hibbard
Appendix H: MRP Author Statement

The following is a statement regarding the Motivation to Read Profile assessment. It has been included as an Appendix to justify its use as a public-domain instrument.

The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) is a public-domain instrument designed to provide teachers with an efficient and reliable way to assess reading motivation qualitatively and quantitatively by evaluating students' self-concept as readers and the value they place on reading. The MRP consists of two basic instruments: the Reading Survey (a Likert-type, self report, group-administered instrument), and Conversational Interview (which is administered on an individual basis). Item selection for the MRP was based on a review of research and theories related to motivation and included an analysis of existing instruments designed to assess motivation and attitude toward reading. The Reading Survey instrument can be administered to an entire class, a small group, or an individual, while the Conversational Interview is designed to be conducted on an individual basis.

Information derived from an analysis of the results of the MRP can be used to plan instructional activities that will support students in their reading development. (Contains 36 references. Appendixes present the Reading Survey, the Conversational Interview, teacher directions for both instruments, scoring directions for the Reading Survey, and a scoring sheet.)

From: http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED384008&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED384008
Appendix I: MRP Student Survey

TEACHER DIRECTIONS: MRP READING SURVEY

Distribute copies of the Reading Survey. Ask students to write their names on the space provided.

Say:

I am going to read some sentences to you. I want to know how you feel about your reading. There are no right or wrong answers. I really want to know how you honestly feel about reading.

I will read each sentence twice. Do not mark your answer until I tell you to. The first time I read the sentence, I want you to think about the best answer for you. The second time I read the sentence, I want you to fill in the space beside your best answer. Mark only one answer. Remember: Do not mark your answer until I tell you to. Okay, let's begin.

Read the first sample item. Say:
Sample #1: I am in (pause) 1st grade, (pause) 2nd grade, (pause), 3rd grade, (pause) 4th grade, (pause) 5th grade, (pause) 6th grade.

Read the first sample again. Say:
This time as I read the sentence, mark the answer that is right for you, I am in (pause) 1st grade, (pause) 2nd grade, (pause) 3rd grade, (pause) 4th grade, (pause) 5th grade, (pause) 6th grade.

Read the second sample item. Say:
Sample #2: I am a (pause) boy, (pause) girl.

Say:
Now, get ready to mark your answer.
I am a (pause) boy, (pause) girl.

Read the remaining items in the same way (e.g., number ____, sentence stem followed by a pause, each option followed by a pause, and then give specific directions for students to mark their answer while you repeat the entire item).
MOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE

READING SURVEY

Name ___________________________ Date ____________________

Sample #1: I am in _______________________.

○ 1st grade ○ 4th grade
○ 2nd grade ○ 5th grade
○ 3rd grade ○ 6th grade

Sample #2: I am a _______________________.

○ boy
○ girl

1. My friends think I am ________________________________.

○ a very good reader
○ a good reader
○ an OK reader
○ a poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.

○ Never
○ Not very often
○ Sometimes
○ Often

3. I read ____________________________.

○ not as well as my friends
○ about the same as my friends
○ a little better than my friends
○ a lot better than my friends
4. My best friends think reading is ________________.
   - really fun
   - fun
   - OK to do
   - no fun at all

5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can ________________.
   - almost always figure it out
   - sometimes figure it out
   - almost never figure it out
   - never figure it out

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.
   - I never do this.
   - I almost never do this.
   - I do this some of the time.
   - I do this a lot.

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand ________________.
   - almost everything I read
   - some of what I read
   - almost none of what I read
   - none of what I read

8. People who read a lot are ________________.
   - very interesting
   - interesting
   - not very interesting
   - boring
9. I am ____________________
   ○ a poor reader
   ○ an OK reader
   ○ a good reader
   ○ a very good reader

10. I think libraries are ____________________
    ○ a great place to spend time
    ○ an interesting place to spend time
    ○ an OK place to spend time
    ○ a boring place to spend time

11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading ________________
    ○ every day
    ○ almost every day
    ○ once in a while
    ○ never

12. Knowing how to read well is ____________________
    ○ not very important
    ○ sort of important
    ○ important
    ○ very important

13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I ________
    ○ can never think of an answer
    ○ have trouble thinking of an answer
    ○ sometimes think of an answer
    ○ always think of an answer
14. I think reading is __________________.

○ a boring way to spend time
○ an OK way to spend time
○ an interesting way to spend time
○ a great way to spend time

15. Reading is ____________________.

○ very easy for me
○ kind of easy for me
○ kind of hard for me
○ very hard for me

16. When I grow up I will spend ____________________.

○ none of my time reading
○ very little of my time reading
○ some of my time reading
○ a lot of my time reading

17. When I am in a group talking about stories, I ____________________.

○ almost never talk about my ideas
○ sometimes talk about my ideas
○ almost always talk about my ideas
○ always talk about my ideas

18. I would like for my teacher to read books out loud to the class ______________.

○ every day
○ almost every day
○ once in a while
○ never
19. When I read out loud I am a ____________________.

- poor reader
- OK reader
- good reader
- very good reader

20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel ________________.

- very happy
- sort of happy
- sort of unhappy
- unhappy

21. How many books have you read by your own choice in the last 30 days?

- 0-1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- More than 5

22. How many ebooks (books read on the computer or another digital device) have you read by your own choice in the last 30 days?

- 0-1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- More than 5

Question for Students: What are some of your goals concerning our lending library program?

Question for Parents: What are some of your goals concerning our lending library program?
Appendix J: MRP Scoring Sheet

SCORING DIRECTIONS: MRP READING SURVEY

The survey has 20 items based on a 4-point Likert scale. The highest total score possible is 80 points, which would be achieved if a student selects the most positive response for every item on the survey. On some items, the response options are ordered least positive to most positive (see item #2 below), with the least positive response option having a value of 1 point and the most positive option having a point value of 4. On other items, however, the response options are reversed (see item #1 below). In those cases, it will be necessary to recode the response options. Items where recoding is required are starred on the Scoring Sheet.

EXAMPLE: Here us how Maria completed items 1 and 2 on the Reading Survey.

1. My friends think I am ___________.
   - a very good reader
   - a good reader  ●
   - an OK reader  ○
   - a poor reader  ○

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.
   - Never  ○
   - Not very often  ○
   - Sometimes  ○
   - Often  ●

To score item 1, it is first necessary to recode the response options so that

- a poor reader equals 1 point,
- an OK reader equals 2 points,
- a good reader equals 3 points,
- a very good reader equals 4 points.
Since Maria answered that she is a good reader the point value for that item, 3, is entered on the first line of the Self-Concept column on the Scoring Sheet. See below.

The response options for item 2 are ordered least positive (1 point) to most positive (4 points), so scoring item 2 is an easy process. Simply enter the point value associated with the response that Maria chose. Because Maria selected the fourth option, a 4 is entered for item #2 under the Value of Reading column on the Scoring Sheet. See below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Sheet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept as Reader</td>
<td>Value of Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*recode 1. 3</td>
<td>2. 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To calculate the Self-Concept raw score and Value raw score, add all student responses in the respective column. The Full Survey raw score is obtained by combining the column raw scores. To convert the raw scores to percentage scores, it is necessary to divide student raw scores by the total possible score (40 for each subscale, 80 for the full survey).
MRP READING SURVEY
SCORING SURVEY

Student Name ________________________________

Grade _____________________________ Teacher ________________________________

Administration Date ________________________________

recoding scale

| 1 = 4 |
| 2 = 3 |
| 3 = 2 |
| 4 = 1 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Concept as Reader</th>
<th>Value of Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*recode 1. ___</td>
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<td>3. ___</td>
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<td>*recode 5. ___</td>
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<td>19. ___</td>
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</table>

SC Raw Score: _____/40 V Raw Score: _____/40

Full survey raw score (Self-Concept & Value): _____/80

Percentage Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Concept</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Full survey</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Comments: _____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
Appendix K: Questions for Administrative Stakeholder Focus Group; September Meeting

Opening

1. Tell us your name, your position at this school, and your current knowledge of this school’s book lending program.

Introductory Transition

2. From your perspective, what is the lending library program trying to accomplish and what resources does it have?

3. What is the desired effect of the lending-library program on our low-income students?

4. What accomplishments with the library program are likely in the next year?

Key Questions

5. What are the program’s main problems?

6. What are the available resources?

   Staff?

   Budget?

   Sources of funds?

7. What data or records must be collected?

   Costs?

   Services delivered?

   Service quality?

   Outcomes?
Other?

8. In looking at the proposed student survey on reading motivation, are there any questions that are essential to our mission that have not been included?

Closing Question

9. It was the intent to gather current knowledge on this school’s lending library program and to develop a plan to improve the program over the following nine months. Is there anything that you would like to add?
Appendix L: Questions for Teacher Focus Group; September Meeting

Opening

1. How have you used this school’s lending library program in the past school year(s)?
2. What requirements do you have for your students concerning daily reading?

Introductory Transition

3. From your perspective, what is the lending library program trying to accomplish and what resources does it have?
4. What accomplishments with the library program are likely in the next year?
5. How can our low-income students be supported in the classroom regarding the lending library program?

Key Questions

6. What are the program’s main problems?
7. What suggestions do you have so that using the library is easier for students and teachers?

Closing Question

8. It was the intent to gather current knowledge on ECOT’s lending library program and to develop a plan to improve the program over the following nine months. Is there anything that you would like to add?
Appendix M: Questions for Administrative Focus Group; January Meeting

Opening

1. At this point in the year, how well do you understand the lending library?
   (Consider both the physical book library as well as Follett Shelf/ebook library.)

Key Questions

2. In looking at the library usage rate data, can you speculate on the results? For example, why do you suppose students are utilizing or are not utilizing the library? (Data gathered from the physical lending library will be briefly presented to administrators and they will be asked to infer the trends including usage rates, return rates, number of titles available, etc.)

3. From an administrative point of view, what are the program’s main problems?

4. How can the identified problems be remedied?

5. A few weeks ago, teachers also identified a list of problems. (At this time, administrators will be presented with this data.) Can any of these problems be remedied by an administrative initiative?

Closing Question

6. It was the intent to gather current knowledge on this school’s lending library program. Is there anything that you would like to add?
Appendix N: Questions for Teacher Focus Group; January Meeting

Opening

1. At this point in the year, how well do you understand the lending library?
   (Consider both the physical book library as well as Follett Shelf/ebook library.)

Introductory Transition

2. Have you integrated the lending library or Follett Shelf into your classroom?
   How so? If not, are there reasons why?

3. What, if anything, are your students saying about the libraries?

Key Questions

4. What are the program’s main problems?

5. How can the identified problems be remedied?

6. In looking at the library usage rate data, can you speculate on the data? For example, why do you suppose students are utilizing or are not utilizing the library? (Data gathered from the physical lending library will be briefly presented to teachers and teachers will be asked to infer the trends including usage rates, return rates, number of titles available, and discrepancies between classes.)

Closing Question

7. It was the intent to gather current knowledge on this school’s lending library program. Is there anything that you would like to add?
Appendix O: Questions for Administrator Focus Group; April Meeting

Opening

1. How (if at all) would teachers ideally integrate the libraries into their classes?
   (Consider both the Lending Library, and Follett Shelf.)

Introductory Transition

2. What actions need to be taken in the 2013-2014 school year to help teachers to implement the suggestions in Question 1?

Key Questions

3. One of the goals mentioned in the fall was to “get books into the hands of students,” particularly our low-income students. What steps can be taken in the 2013-2014 school year to encourage our low-income students to use the libraries?

4. What other suggestions do you have to improve the library for next school year?

5. Teachers mentioned the following suggestions to improve the library for next school year: (researcher will list suggestions gleaned from teacher focus group). What type of administrative support are you willing to provide to accommodate those suggestions?

Closing Question

6. It was the intent of the focus groups this year to help develop, organize, promote, and evaluate this school’s lending library programs. Is there anything that you would like to add?
Appendix P: Questions for Teacher Focus Group; April Meeting

Opening

1. Have you integrated the lending library or Follett Shelf into your classrooms?
   If so, how? If not, are there reasons why?

Introductory Transition

2. What, if anything, are your students saying about the libraries?
3. From your perspective, to what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills?

Key Questions

4. One of the goals mentioned in the fall was to “get books into the hands of students,” particularly our low-income students. What is the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes?
5. What suggestions do you have to improve the library for next school year?

Closing Question

6. It was the intent of the focus groups this year to help develop, organize, promote, and evaluate this school’s lending library programs. Is there anything that you would like to add?
Appendix Q: Questions for Student and Parent Interviews; Spring

Parents:
1. Has your child borrowed books from ECOT’s lending library? If so, do you have any suggestions to improve the library? If not, why not?

2. Has your child read books online using Follett Shelf? If so, do you have any suggestions to improve the program? If not, why not?

Students:
3. I want you to think about your time spent reading before fifth grade. How many books did you read for fun per month last school year or last summer?

4. Do you currently read books in your free time? If so, where do you get these books? If not, why not?

5. Do you use the lending library at ECOT? If so how many books have you read this year from the library? If not, why haven’t you borrowed books?

6. Do you read books on Follett Shelf? If so, how often? Do you read the whole book or just look at a few pages? If you’re just browsing, why are you not reading the whole book? If not, why not?

7. If students have answered “Yes” to Question 5 or Question 6: Has the lending library and/or Follett Shelf encouraged you to read books more often?

8. Do you want to ask me any questions?
Appendix R: Coding Scheme

A Priori Codes

1. Perceptions of Books Available
   BAS – Students
   BAT – Teachers
   BAA – Administrators

2. Browsing/Ordering Books
   BOS – Students
   BOT – Teachers
   BOA – Administrators

3. Return Policies/Issues
   RPS – Students
   RPT – Teachers
   RPA – Administrators

4. Management of Materials
   MMT – Teachers
   MMA – Administrators

5. Perceptions of ebooks
   EBS – Students
   EBT – Teachers
   EBA – Administrators

6. Goals of Program
   GPT – Teachers
   GPA – Administrators

Inductive Codes

7. Interactive Library Site
   SA – Administrators
   ST – Teachers
   SS – Students

8. Organization of ebooks
   OET – Teachers
   OEA – Administrators
   OES – Students

(continued)
9. Low-Income Students – Goals
   LIA – Administrators
   LIT – Teachers

10. Recommendations
    RT – Teachers
    RA – Administrators

11. Organizational Structure of Libraries
    OSA – Administrators
    OST – Teachers

12. Reading Requirements
    RRT – Teachers

13. Factors Affecting Reading Other than Library
    FA – Administrator programs
    FT – Teacher programs

14. Budget
    BA – Administrators
Appendix S: Transcription Example

1. Tell us your name, your position at this school, and your current knowledge of this school’s book lending program.

Louise: My name is Louise. I am a Teacher on Special Assignment here (um) and my current knowledge of the lending program? I’m not really sure. I think I know it fairly well. Maybe not this year as much, but…. I don’t know… moderate knowledge?

Kellie: I am the Reading Specialist K-5 here at ECOT. And, let’s see… (um) Current knowledge? I last fall was asked by Abby and Destiny to kind of get the library moving in a format so that teachers can start other than looking at an Excel spreadsheet. Last year I spent time putting all the books in picture format with the summary and leveling them. That’s about the extent of my knowledge.

Daniella: I am the Director of LIFT intervention program here. And I would say it would be moderate. I know there are some new things happening with the library as well as I was part of that discussion with Kellie last year trying to get things visually aware for kids to be able to have access to and they could see the pictures and check out books. Just greater access to books, in their hands.

Abby: Assistant Director of LIFT. (um) Probably moderate. (um) I’ve worked - collaborated with almost everyone here in the room on the title library. (um) We talked about visually involving students (um) with both the pictures and then allowing students to summarize their own renditions of the books so that they could involve other students as well. So I thought that was a large piece of getting other students involved. So that’s my extent!

Elizabeth: I’m the Library Media Specialist. Truthfully up until last spring, (um) my under- only connection with the Title Library was getting the updated Excel spreadsheet. And my understanding was, is that the things that were there were things that teachers had requested like multiple copies of-for classroom study and that kind of thing. (um) Plus I know there are also professional materials available for staff there. Now come last spring, Sue contacted me to help organize - not physically, but organize, continuing what I think you had started Kellie. And I worked on just doing the annotations and deciding what was historical fiction or what was picture book or what was this or what was that. And so I had all of that – I worked there a number of days inputting all that information into a spreadsheet that I think went on to the developers of the interactive site which looks really nice. (Group: Uh huh!) So my relationship with it really just started last spring. (Moderator: Perfect!) Oh I should add one other thing. They requested some new books and I put together a suggested order of books from Scholastic. And I don’t know what actually ended up getting ordered. Apparently things got ordered right? (Looks at Daniella and Abby for confirmation. They are unsure.) I believe so and I do not know about numbers of copies of what got ordered so that’s where I am with that. (Moderator reiterating: You gave suggestions and are not sure?) Mmm-hmmmm.

Kaylie: I’m in math this year so unfortunately I don’t get to do as much with the library especially after last year trying to get everything organized. I’m hoping that the one box
of books that was salvaged made it to the library (laughs). We had 4 or 5 boxes to begin with but they were sadly given away. So that’s….

**Laura:** I teach 5th grade LIFT, the reading section this year. I’ve been using the book lending program for a couple years now. Basically I used the spreadsheet, application shared it, let the kids select books, sent it off to Bethany – the list - and she would mail it to them. We have spent some time this year looking at the website and encouraging the kids…. Everyone is very excited about it. Kids seem to be happy with it. As far as ebooks, I have not introduced it formally to the class, but I’ve been playing around with it myself, so--

**Elizabeth:** Just so you know, really, any questions with that, unless it has to do with not getting in to it, username, password, that should go to Tom but anything else, you can send that to me. And I should just tell this group that on the 21st of this month, Follett is making a new upgrade to that, and it will look different. (Moderator: Ok.) Hopefully it is more user-friendly. So we’ll see what it looks like. I don’t know… I mean I do sort of know, but what it really looks like, we will see.
Appendix T: Highlights from Administrative Focus Group; Fall

Experience With/Knowledge of Library
- The group had moderate experience with the lending library. Participants had either used it with students or had observed classroom sessions integrating the library.
- A few participants had worked to make the library more visually appealing over the past six months and to provide descriptions such as genres for students. This information went on to the developers to create the interactive Library Site.
- Less experience was mentioned regarding Follett Shelf or other use of ebooks, yet it was mentioned that later this month Follett Shelf will get an upgrade.

Goals of Library
- To get books into the hands of students.
- To improve fluency by allowing students to read over and over.
- To provide a love of reading.
- To make the process of selecting books more visually appealing.
- To allow students to discuss/recommend books with each other.
- To provide ways for students to demonstrate comprehension.
- To expose children to a variety of genres.
- To improve self-esteem, self-efficacy of reading.
- To encourage life skills; the responsibility of borrowing, respecting, and returning books.
- To understand circulation patterns via data reporting features integrated in the interactive Library Site.

Current Problems
- Initial response from students has been overwhelming.
- Inventory of new books is not complete.
- While it was intended to have the library only be open to K-5 students, all ECOT students are seeing a link to the interactive Library Site on their homepages under Resources.
- Some teachers are confused as to the difference between the ebook library and the physical library as denoted on the homepage template.
- The homepage template cannot be modified globally at this point in the year.
- Students are ordering books, but orders are unable to currently be filled.
- Title office must deal with a number of other items and time allocated to the library is limited.
- Program lacks a current leader/director. It is unclear as to who is in charge.
- Program lacks a good work-flow. Ex. If new books are determined to be needed, from whom does the proposal come?
- Program lacks policies. Ex. What do we do when a book is returned, yet destroyed? The group’s consensus is to not create rigid policies and procedures
so that students’ access to literature is hampered, yet procedures should be created.

Recommendations from the Group

- Temporarily close the library until the inventory of new books is completed.
- Notify teachers in grades K-5 that the library is currently on hold.
- Inform teachers about the differences between the physical book library and the ebook library.
- Notify teachers in grades 6-12 of template issue and ask that they remove the link to the interactive Library Site (physical library).
- Determine who will direct the Lending Library Program.
- Create policies/workflow regarding the process to go through when deciding to order and inventory/describe new books.
- Create policies regarding how to communicate with students who have mistreated a number of books.
- Collect data to determine the effectiveness of program.
Appendix U: Highlights from Teacher Focus Group; Fall

Experience With/Knowledge of Library
- Of the eight attendees, only two had prior experience with the library.
- Reasons for not using it last year included: No information on how to use it, inaccessibility, and no knowledge of the program.
- Teachers who did use it last year noted problems with lost books and lost envelopes but felt the program was worthwhile.

Requirements of Daily Reading for Students
- Half of the participants require daily reading of 20-30 minutes for their students and discuss expectations with parents, but do not require a reading log.
- Two additional participants require 20-30 minutes of reading nightly and require a log.

Goals of Library
- To get real books in our students’ hands.
- To give students a choice in what they read.
- To show students books can be fun.
- To get students to enjoy reading.
- To provide an alternative to public libraries to students whose families are unwilling or unable to access them.
- To connect what we are doing in class to real world reading. (Example: Using the note-taking tool in Follett Shelf.)

Current Problems
- Teachers need to be educated in using the library as well as policies and procedures.
- There is a lack of communication about accessibility.
- Returning books is predicted to be a problem.
- There is confusion between Follett Shelf/ebooks and the physical library.
- Teachers are having trouble relating information about the library to their students.

Recommendations from the Group
- Teachers need formal communication about the library so that this information may be related to students.
- Have a “grand opening” once the library is ready and make a big deal about it to students. Perhaps have the librarian create a video for the “ribbon cutting”.
Appendix V: Highlights from Fall Survey

Participants
- 35 students and parents participated.
- Participants’ demographics were similar to school demographics (80% economically-disadvantaged, 51% males, 14% on an IEP).
- DIBELS scores included: 26% (n=9) students at-risk, 23% (n=8) some-risk and 51% (n=18) low-risk.

Results from Survey: Motivation to Read Profile
- The survey measured total scores (out of 80) which were comprised of two subsets: value placed on reading and students’ self-concept of reading (40 possible points each).
- Higher scores show a greater value of reading and higher self-concepts of reading.
- Our average total score was 61.63 or 77%. The minimum total score was 43 and the maximum was 76.
- The mean score for the subset of self-concept was 29.51 or 74%. The minimum score for this subset was 21 and the maximum was 37.
- Regarding the subset of value of reading, the mean was 32.11 or 80%, with the minimum score being 22 and the maximum being 39.
- Students who are economically-disadvantaged had total scores that were more spread out than those who are not economically-disadvantaged. Those from mid-income homes had total scores in the upper half of all reported scores.
- Scores were similar regardless of language arts teacher.
- A significant positive relationship was found between DIBELS scores and total survey scores (r=.60).

Baselines: To what extent are students currently reading for pleasure?
- Regarding physical books, students who are not economically-disadvantaged tend to read more than low-income students. Almost 50% of the mid-income students selected the highest category, “More than 5 books” over the past 30 days. Almost half of the economically-disadvantaged students answered “2-3 books” over the past 30 days.
- Regarding ebooks, slightly over half of the students who are not economically-disadvantaged selected “0-1 ebooks” over the past 30 days, while lower-income students admitted to reading more ebooks. Slightly under half of the economically-disadvantaged students selected “2-3 ebooks”, and slightly over one third answered “More than 5 ebooks”.
- Findings: Economically-disadvantaged students are reading ebooks at a higher rate than mid-income students.

Goals of Library: Students’ Perspectives
In responding to the open-ended question regarding goals, the majority of students listed book recommendations. (Available upon request.) Students would like to have a say in what books are purchased.

Students also listed personal goals, such as “To read more.” “To improve my reading.”

Five students listed a goal of the library as being “To get kids to enjoy books.”

Other goals were: “To get books faster.” “To have more copies of books.”

Goals of Library: Parents’ Perspectives

32% of responses mentioned that parents would like the library to encourage, or inspire, their children to read more.

Seven parents hoped that the library would expand.

One parent wrote: “My goal as a parent is to make sure that this library is built in a student’s eye. Meaning the way a student may want it built. Such as book selections.”

Three parents hoped that their children’s reading levels would increase.

Parents also hoped that their children would learn to enjoy reading. One wrote, “I would like the program to help my daughter get to the level of reading that she is comfortable at and to where she would enjoy picking up a book and read it on her own without being forced to.”

While no comments were negative, a few comments showed that some parents are not familiar with the library at all. One comment included,” I did not even know that we had a library, so I am very excited to be able to utilize it. I love to read to my kids and I’m an avid reader myself.”
Appendix W: Highlights from Teacher Focus Group; Winter

Teachers’ Current Understanding

- Some are more familiar than others with both libraries (Lending Library and Follett Shelf)
- More feel comfortable with Follett Shelf, than the Lending Library, due to using it as an educational resource

Integration of Libraries into Classes

- Teachers feel that they are short on time; some push out links and allow time for book recommendations, but there is always a lot of other items on their plate
- Teachers feel that they can push out links, but it’s hard to make students follow through

Comments from Students about Libraries

- Students who use libraries are happy; enjoy the on-demand access from Follett Shelf
- Time to receive physical books is too lengthy
- Students wish the libraries had additional titles
- Students are confused on how to return physical books

Main Problems with the Libraries: Teacher Perspectives

- Time to get books is too lengthy
- Library is missing great authors
- Teachers wish Follett Shelf would be expanded; more titles
- Wish for Lending Library to level books
- Organizational problems: Can teachers see what books students have checked out?
- Log-in process is difficult; more passwords and usernames to remember

Suggestions to Remedy Problems

- Time to get books: Is this job too much for one person?
- Expanding titles:
  - Get the top books of each year, get Caldecott, Newberry
  - Ask grades for grade level lists
  - Acquire more series
- Making program easier for kids:
• Simple click – no new login
• Teach kids to mark libraries as favorites on tool bar
• Create Library as a special with a librarian

Teachers’ Interpretation of Lending Library Use Data

• Did the RAH program cause a surge in book requests in October?
• Why are requests so high, yet amount of books checked out much lower?
• 5th grade usage rate of Lending Library is likely due to teachers being in a group studying it, and their promoting/encouraging it
• Showing grade level usage would be more beneficial if percentage of students using it was presented
• Teachers were pleasantly surprised at their students’ usage rates

Teachers’ Interpretation of Follett Shelf Usage Data

• Teachers still have confusion between the difference of checking out a book versus reading a book online
• Some students who don’t attend live sessions are spending substantial time in Follett Shelf
• Students are browsing books at a much higher rate than reading chapter books over multiple days
  • Teachers wondered if it’s hard for students to read an entire book on their computers after being on their computers all day for class
  • Teachers felt that browsing titles is better than nothing
  • Students may feel excited to be in a place with so many choices
  • At this point, it should be celebrated that students are in the program – it is okay if they’re not reading entire books
  • Teachers may consider providing students with appropriately leveled books so that reading stamina may increase
• Teachers wanted the usage report to conference with students; both to discuss their choices and to identify students who have not used the program so that they may intervene.
Appendix X: Highlights from Administrative Focus Group; Winter

Administrators’ Current Understanding
- 3/7 administrators felt very familiar with the lending library and felt they could assist teachers, students, and parents in the lending process.
- 2/7 administrators felt very familiar with Follett Shelf and felt they could assist teachers, students, and parents in the ebook lending process.
- Administrators do not use the libraries as teachers do, but felt they could figure them out if needed.

Lending Library Usage Rates – Administrative Interpretation
- Lending library – seems to be fulfilling a need.
- December requests lower than initial requests in August – before the library was even up and running.
- Book supply is strong.
- Title office is able to keep up with requests and is filling orders in a timely manner.
- Question on whether information about the libraries are in teachers’ asynchronous lessons.
- Question whether library should be reintroduced/pushed at a future PD.
- Title office maintains that growth must be slow and controlled.

Follett Shelf Usage Rates – Administrative Interpretation
- The majority of titles seems geared to older readers: Might explain why 6th and 7th graders are using the resource more than elementary grades.
- Students are browsing more than reading.
  - Are students feeling like they are on the computer too much to be able to enjoy a book in addition to classwork?
  - Students with iPads can be taught to download books from Follett Shelf so that they may read without being on a computer.

Main Problems – Administrative Viewpoint
- There have been NO problems with either library reported to administrators.
- HS staff and administrators need Follett Shelf training so that they may view professional materials.
Administrative Response to Teacher Generated Problems

- Teachers remain confused with lending library process; answering students’ questions is difficult
  - Answer: A tutorial may need to come from the developers; administrators are not comfortable with making tutorial
  - Answer: Mentors are not teaching this and likely are not familiar with libraries
- Teachers have trouble integrating library time into synchronous sessions; would like Library to be a special like physical education/computers
  - Answer: Administrators agree this would be beneficial and will look into instituting this with the librarian in 2013-2014 school year
  - Answer: This would be a logical time to work non-fiction (Common Core component) into the curriculum
- Time to receive books can be lengthy
  - Answer: Books are typically shipped quickly, although there may be a delay when requests for hardware are made at the same time
  - Answer: Teachers who want to check a student’s status may call the Title Office directly
- The libraries are missing some really great authors
  - Answer: Teachers were recently asked for title recommendations
  - Some publishers/authors (ex. Gary Paulsen) have not granted ebook rights to Follett Shelf
Appendix Y: Recruitment Script for Parent and Student Interviews

Hi,

My name is Laura Hibbard and I am a 5th grade teacher here at ECOT. I am working on a project to improve the libraries we have at our school. I would like to hear from families with fifth graders from the various classes. We currently have the lending library, which allows your child to borrow books through the mail, and Follett Shelf, our ebook, or digital book library, which allows your child to read books on the computer.

I would like to ask you and your child a few questions regarding your thoughts on the libraries. I have only two questions for you, and five - six for your child. If you participate, I will send your child a chapter book to keep this June.

Would you be willing to schedule a time to meet me in Elluminate to take part in the interviews?

(If families are willing, consent and assent forms will be sent to them via email and the link to the Elluminate online meeting will be provided. Families can either return the signed consent and assent forms through email or can sign electronically during the Elluminate session.)
Appendix Z: Consent/Assent Forms for Student and Parent Interviews

Ohio University Parental Consent Form: Parent and Child Interviews
Spring Form

Title of Research: Student Literature Access in an Online School

Researchers: Laura Hibbard

You are being asked permission for you and your child to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want yourself and your child to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your child’s personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow you and your child’s participation in this study. You should print a copy of this document for your records.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done because our school’s lending library is being developed, organized, and evaluated this year. I would like you and your child to give us input to help design and evaluate our school library.

If you agree to participate and to allow your child to participate, you will be asked two questions and your child will be asked five-six questions. The questions center on your child’s use of the lending library and the ebook library.

You and your child’s participation in the study will last a total of approximately 5-10 minutes.

This survey is completely voluntary. Grades will not be affected by participation either positively or negatively.

Risks and Discomforts
No risks or discomforts are anticipated in this study.

Benefits
You and your child may benefit from this study because your voices will be heard. You and your child have the ability to steer our lending library in ways that may affect generations of students.

Confidentiality and Records
Your study information will be kept confidential by the researcher. All responses will be read and compiled into a report with no identifying characteristics.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

**Compensation**
As compensation for your time/effort, parents and students who participate in the interviews will receive a children’s book (approximate value $3-$5) in the mail to keep. Your child can expect to receive this book next June.

Because compensation is being provided from a grant from Ohio University, the Office of Finance will receive the names and addresses of all participants.

**Contact Information**
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact:

 Laura Hibbard  
Ohio University  
laura.hibbard@ecotoh.org  
1-888-326-8395 ext 3705

**Or**

 Teresa Franklin  
Ohio University; Advisor  
Professor, Instructional Technology  
Instructional Technology Program Coordinator  
franklit@ohio.edu  
740-593-4561 (office)

If you have any questions regarding your or your child’s rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
you have been informed of potential risks to your child and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries your child might receive as a result of participating in this study
you are 18 years of age or older
you and your child’s participation in this research is completely voluntary
you or your child may leave the study at any time. If your child decides to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to your child and he/she will not lose any benefits to which he/she is otherwise entitled.

Parent Signature___________________________ Date____________________

Printed Name_________________________

Child’s Name_________________________

Student Literature Access in an Online School: A Program Evaluation
Assent Form
Spring Interview Form

My name is Mrs. Hibbard. I am trying to learn about your thoughts on reading so that we can work on improving our libraries here at our school. I would like to know how much you are reading and see if having access to books changes the way you think about reading. If you would like, you can be in my study.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you and a parent will answer a few questions about the library.

I do not expect any risks to occur if you agree to participate. That means that you won’t feel hurt by any of the questions or have any sad feelings. If you agree to help in this study, you will be able to give us your input concerning our school library.

Other people will not know if you are in my study. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other students, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

Your parents or guardian have to say it’s okay for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don’t want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that’s okay. You can stop at any time.

My telephone number is 1-888-326-8395 ext. 3705. You can call me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don’t want to be in the study any more.

You can keep a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.
Agreement
I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don’t have to do it. Mrs. Hibbard has answered all my questions.

______________________________ ________________
Signature of Study Participant   Date

______________________________ ________________
Signature of Researcher    Date
Appendix AA: Highlights from Teacher Focus Group; Spring

Integration of Libraries into Classes

- As reported in winter, still a lack of time to fully implement during synchronous sessions
- Follett Shelf used for small group time
- Teachers push out links, but are unsure if students follow through and order

Comments from Students about Libraries

- Students ask teachers questions; particularly why it takes so long to receive a book
- Teachers were instructed to check with Brianne if students are waiting a while; students should have more than one book in their queue
- Students enjoy being able to browse through books
- Students enjoy choosing their own books
- Teachers field questions frequently on how to get there, check out books, etc

Library as a Factor in Students’ Reading Habits and Skills

- Students have shown excitement over receiving books
- Some students may have given up due to length of time to receive a book or due to a lack of desired titles
- Students who enjoy reading are using it the most; students who aren’t self-motivated readers seem to not be taking advantage of it

Effect of Library on Low-Income Students

- It is a good resource if students have parents who value reading, value education
- Seeing some more excitement for reading
- Teachers felt this was difficult to ascertain

Suggestions to Improve the Library for Next Year

- Establish Library as a special: Students come to Library once per week all year long. A short story is read or “teaser chapters”. Students then select books and librarian assists with recommendations/levels. Librarian may also do fun, short activities with books.
- Obtain more series of books
- Organize elementary book discussions: One week sports books, one week comics, etc.
- Obtain more graphic novels, comics
- Spread the word about the libraries to parents
- Utilize ECOT TV for book trailers, recommendations, author visits
- Add a part to the Lending Library for book reviews, recommendations
- Librarian could visit our classes once a month (like the counselor)
- Library needs to be viewed as a “fun place”. It’s a place to read in a different way than what Reading Street offers.
- Consolidate Follett Shelf, Lending Library, Little Bird Tales, Tumblebooks into one space
- Teach students how to download books on to digital readers
- Purchase digital readers for students (Wish list 😊)
Appendix BB: Highlights from the Administrative Focus Group; Spring

Administrators’ Suggestions on Integrating the Library into Classes
- Teachers should be sharing the joy of books with students, through class discussions and modeling how to access the resources
- Science and social studies teachers should model subject searches
- Rather than just having the library available, administrators suggested writing goals to access the library into assessment maps
- The Lending Library is able to increase circulation rates, but growth must be slow
- Students who report any issues/trouble with the library can find support by calling the helpdesk

Encouraging Low-Income Students to Use the Library
- For students who request a book that is not available, some participants felt a fund should be created to purchase the book for the student – either as a gift or as an addition to the library
- The interactive library site should have a place for students and teachers to request books
- The goal of “getting books into the hands of kids” needs to be expanded: We need kids not only to access the books, but we need to motivate students to want to read
- To motivate readers: Use interest inventories, model enjoyment, read books or chapters out loud, use ECOT TV, use Facebook, use the school’s digital newspaper to highlight books, hold class discussions, allow students to select books for class assignments based on interest, continue RAH program/incentive based programs, use of professional books such as The Book Whisperer and In the Middle

Administrators’ Reactions to Teachers’ Suggestions
- Communicating to parents, students about libraries: Use ECOT TV, Facebook, digital newspapers, but again, growth must be manageable and slow
- Library as a special: Much enthusiasm from administrative focus group, but librarian’s job description will need to be modified as this would create a drastically different role
- Acquire more series of books: Follett Shelf does not always have all titles in a series available in ebook format; Lending Library can order series, but depending on availability, students may not get the books in the desired order
- Consolidate different reading resources into one central area: Administrators agreed this would be beneficial and will speak with the designer of the template
Teach students how to download books: Administrators agreed this is a timely goal and will look to see if there are tutorials on accomplishing this as it is not intuitive.

Purchasing digital readers: Administrators felt that students would be more comfortable reading if they were not tied to their computers.
Appendix CC: Executive Report

Student Literature Access in an Online School: A Program Evaluation
Evaluator: Laura Hibbard
Date: June 3, 2013

Executive Summary

ECOT’s inaugural year of library services included over 10,000 physical book requests and almost 25,000 ebook requests from students. A program evaluation was completed throughout the 2012-2013 school year, in an effort to collect formative and summative data to aid in developing, organizing, promoting, and evaluating the library. This report will provide stakeholders with findings from the program evaluation and will recommend changes based on the findings. The executive summary provides overall findings and recommendations, while the remainder of the report expands on those details.

Six research questions guided the study. They were:

Developmental/Formative Questions:
1. To what extent are students in this online elementary school reading for pleasure? What is the baseline and does it relate to socioeconomic class?
2. How well do teachers understand this school’s current lending library system?
3. What are the parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ goals concerning the lending library program?

Summative Questions:
4. Have teachers integrated the lending library into their classrooms? How so?
5. To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills?
6. What is the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes?

Data was collected throughout the 2012-2013 school year. Focus groups were conducted with administrators, office staff, and teachers. A sample of students and parents were interviewed or took surveys. Mid-year and end-of-the-year library usage rates were analyzed and students’ DIBELS scores were collected to determine what impact, if any, the library had on oral reading fluency rates.

Six key findings emerged from the study. They are as follows:

1. Parents, students, teachers, and administrators were generally happy to have access to the libraries. Stakeholders described the libraries as a great addition to the school. Parents and students frequently asked for more titles and an expanded genre.
2. The major goal of the library was similar across stakeholders: To get books into the hands of the students.
3. The library lacked a true director; therefore communication suffered and many stakeholders were ill-informed.
4. Teachers found it difficult to integrate the library into live class sessions. They requested the students be able to have regular trips to the library, supported by a school librarian.
5. Students who accessed the library most were those who were already motivated readers.
6. Stakeholders agreed that reading ebooks on a desktop computer lacks the comfort of reading on a digital reader or of reading a book.

Published articles were consulted regarding the six key findings above to generate the following four recommendations. The school should consider:

1. A re-conception of the school library from that of one on the periphery to that of one in the center of the school. The school template should reflect this change and make the school library easily accessible from students’ homepages.
2. The transition of the school librarian into a more traditional school librarian role encompassing the American Association of School Librarian’s (AASL’s) suggestions of: librarian as an instructional partner, librarian as an information specialist, librarian as a teacher, and librarian as a program administrator.
3. Use of weekly school-wide video segments to highlight books and to draw students and staff into the library as well as to serve as a method of communication regarding library policies.

The remainder of this report expounds on the above research questions, methodology, findings, and recommendations.
Introduction:

The goal of this program evaluation was to develop, organize, promote, and evaluate a lending library, encompassing both physical and ebooks, in an online school in an effort to improve students’ enjoyment of literature as well as their oral reading fluency rates. A mixed-methods program evaluation was performed, relying on both qualitative and quantitative data to generate findings and recommendations. The school’s fifth grade students and teachers participated in the study. This report highlights the processes and results of the nine month study.

Statement of Purpose:

Because of the prevalent underuse of the lending library coupled with students’ enjoyment of receiving books during a pilot study, a formative evaluation phase was first conducted to assess the stakeholders’ needs in developing, organizing, and promoting a lending library in an online school. A program evaluation model was selected so that students, parents, teachers, and administrators were included in determining the sphere of options to allow this school’s library to grow. Rather than only evaluating the current program, this program evaluation design allowed stakeholders’ views, interests, and ideas to easily be incorporated throughout the study. A summative evaluation phase was also conducted to formally evaluate the first year of the school’s lending library programs.

Description of Methodology:

A mixed-methods program evaluation was selected to mitigate problems inherent in either using qualitative or quantitative data alone. Qualitative strands included: focus groups, open-ended survey questions, and student and parent interviews. Quantitative strands included: student and parent surveys, analysis of library usage records, and analysis of students’ DIBELS scores. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to calculate quantitative findings.

Focus groups were held in the fall, winter, and spring and were differentiated between administrative staff and fifth grade teachers. Because the survey response rate was low (14% participation rate), students and parents were interviewed to gain a minimum of a 20% response rate. At the conclusion of each data phase, Highlights were distributed to participating teachers and students so that formative changes could be implemented. Often questions emerged during the teacher focus groups that were remedied through meeting with administrators. The teachers were kept informed of these responses so that solutions could be passed on to students. Copies of data phase Highlights are available upon request.
Research Questions:

Both formative and summative evaluation questions were developed. Formative questions were used to guide the program evaluation so that recommendations for improvement could be generated and implemented throughout the school year. Summative questions were included to determine what effect, if any, the library program had on students’ education. Below are both the questions and answers as dictated through the data collection phases elicited above.

Developmental/Formative Questions:

1. To what extent are students in this online elementary school reading for pleasure? What is the baseline and does it relate to socioeconomic class?

Prior to exposure to the school’s library, there was no clear pattern dictating the extent to which students were reading. Surveys and interviews showed that while some students read for pleasure, many were not. There was no clear differentiation between students of varying economic levels.

2. How well do teachers understand this school’s current lending library system?

Teachers were formally introduced to the lending library’s interactive website at the start of the 2012 school year. Through focus group meetings in the fall, winter, and spring, teachers demonstrated varying degrees of comfort regarding the policies and procedures from the library. Most fifth grade teachers felt comfortable using Follett Shelf, yet had questions when it came to borrowing physical books.

3. What are the parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ goals concerning the lending library program?

The main goal across stakeholders was to “get books into the hands of students.” Other goals mentioned included: to help students to enjoy literature, to improve students’ reading abilities, to teach life skills and responsibility, to provide a place for students to discuss and recommend books with each other, to expose students to a variety of genres, and to provide student choice in reading materials.

Summative Questions:

4. Have teachers integrated the lending library into their classrooms? How so?
During the winter and spring focus groups, fifth grade teachers reported that they occasionally push out links to the library resources to their students during live sessions. Teachers utilize Follett Shelf for small group reading time. Teachers also reported a lack of time to truly motivate students to use the library. While they felt the library was an essential resource, it was often viewed as something to do when all other tasks and lessons were finished. They wished for library time to be a special, similar to physical education or computers. At library time, teachers hoped a librarian could read aloud a story or chapter, recommend and highlight books, and help children navigate the programs to find books that would match both their interests and ability levels.

5. To what degree has the library program become a factor in students’ reading habits and skills?

Because this study was not designed as a causal study, a clear impact of the library program is difficult to ascertain. DIBELS scores improved from the fall to the spring, however a multitude of interventions occurred throughout the school year. Teachers reported that students who regularly accessed the libraries were primarily already motivated readers. Those who perhaps needed the resources the most, were not encouraged enough to use them.

6. What is the apparent impact of the program on learners from various economic classes?

Students from all economic levels appreciated access to the libraries, and usage rates were not disproportionately higher from students of various economic classes. Teachers felt that what mattered more than social class, was a caring adult (parent or teacher) who encouraged and valued use of the libraries. Providing motivation to use the libraries and to read had a larger impact than access alone.

**Evaluation Findings:**

Six key findings were generated from the data. Below, each finding is presented with evidence from the study to illustrate the statement.

1. Parents, students, teachers, and administrators were generally happy to have access to the libraries. Stakeholders described the libraries as a great addition to the school. Parents and students frequently asked for more titles and an expanded genre.
Through teacher focus groups, it was demonstrated that students showed enjoyment towards the libraries. Students had commented to their teachers that they appreciated the on-demand access of Follett Shelf, and expressed true joy when receiving books in the mail. Students and parents conveyed a similar sentiment during their interviews. While for some parents the interviews were the first time they had heard of the library, they were very pleased to have access to these resources. No major complaints regarding the libraries emerged during the data collection phase, from any of the stakeholders. Administrators reported that they had received no criticism or grievances of the library whatsoever. On the student and parent survey, a preponderance of respondents wrote that the library is “fine the way it is” on their open ended response questions.

Many students and parents recommended that the library grow. Specific titles were requested, genres were suggested (comic books, graphic novels, history books, additional non-fiction), and in general, students wanted more books to choose from. One parent elaborated on the growth, stating, “My goal as a parent is to make sure that this library is built in a student’s eye. Meaning the way a student may want it built. Such as book selections.”

2. The major goal of the library was similar across stakeholders: To get books into the hands of the students.

During their focus groups, both teachers and administrators talked at great length about the need for the online students to have access to children’s books. Parents and students also reported this goal on their open-ended survey questions. Through usage reports from both the physical lending library as well as from the school’s ebook library, Follett Shelf, this goal has been achieved. As presented earlier in this report, over 10,000 physical books were requested and almost 25,000 ebooks were accessed.

3. The library lacked a true director; therefore communication suffered and many stakeholders were ill-informed.

While many stakeholders have a claim to the library, a true director does not exist. Communication was provided at convocation from the principal and the programmer of the interactive website, and an issue of The LINK highlighted the libraries, yet little other communication was directed to teachers, students, or parents. This left many stakeholders confused about policies and procedures, and unsure of whom to ask for answers. In student and parent interviews, some parents reported never having heard of the libraries. Without a clear director, a budget request regarding library expenditures was not made available.
4. Teachers found it difficult to integrate the library into live class sessions. They requested the students be able to have regular trips to the library, supported by a school librarian.

Teachers regularly commented that there was little time to fully integrate the libraries into their already packed live sessions. While they understood the importance of students visiting the library, they often felt that they ran out of time. This thought was expressed in both the winter and spring teacher focus groups. Piggy-backing from this discussion, the need for a student-centered school librarian and library time to be a separate class garnered much enthusiasm from the teachers. Students and parents also reported that help was needed to find and select books at an appropriate level. An analysis of library records, specifically fifth grade Follett Shelf usage patterns, demonstrated that students tend to use the ebook library to browse, rather than read, complete books. This corroborates the fact that students likely had a troublesome time finding an appropriate book. Teachers felt that with the addition of a student-centered school librarian available during dedicated library times, the librarian could aid the students in selecting books.

5. Students who accessed the library most were those who were already motivated readers.

While the main goal was to provide access to books, students who utilized the library the most were those who were already active readers. Data from the student interviews showed that students who read a lot during the summer of 2012 also used the library more. Students who had not already developed a love of reading were unlikely to be inspired to read simply by having access to the libraries. A teacher verified this in saying:

I see that our top readers, or not necessarily our top readers, but our kids who enjoy reading the most still visit it the most. And I still see some of the kids down there who are hard to motivate, aren’t necessarily self-motivated readers--They’re not taking advantage of it.

Administrators noted that this phenomenon is likely not unique to their school. The conversation then morphed to an issue of motivation. Administrators discussed ways to lure the students to the libraries. Hooking students to books was also a common theme in the teacher focus groups and through parent comments.

6. Stakeholders agreed that reading ebooks on a desktop computer lacks the comfort of reading on a digital reader or of reading a book.
Administrators, teachers, students, and parents all commented that it may not be feasible to expect that students would choose to read a book solely for pleasure on their desktop computers. In light of the fact that students at an online school are on their computers for a large portion of the school day, administrators and teachers agreed that a break is needed from their desktop screens. Parents and teachers suggested providing digital readers for the students. It was suggested that students ought to be taught how to download Follett Shelf books onto digital readers, as some families already have these devices in their homes.

Conclusions:

Three main conclusions, stemming from the research questions, the findings, and subsequent research were drafted from this study. They are:
1. Providing access to literature is an essential role of online schools.
2. To empower students (of all economic levels), a strong librarian is needed to serve as an instructional partner, an information specialist, a teacher, and program administrator.
3. Ebooks are a valuable vehicle in which online students may access literature, yet reading on desktop computers causes fatigue and difficulties that hampers reading motivation.

The three conclusions are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

Recommendations for improvements will follow.

Providing access to literature is an essential role of online schools.

The first finding was that parents, students, teachers, and administrators were happy to have a library from which students could access books. Stakeholders wished for the library to grow; to have more titles, an expanded genre, and more copies available for checkout. A conclusion to this finding is that the school library plays an essential role in supplying literature to students who attend an online school. Students, particularly those who come from low-income families, often rely on the school library as their sole portal to books. This conclusion is also supported by the second major finding; being the foremost goal of the library to “get books into the hands of students.” During the 2012-2013 school year, over 10,000 physical books were requested and almost 25,000 ebooks were accessed. An option to close the library and encourage students to utilize public libraries, to purchase their own books, or to find their own ways to access literature is not a feasible alternative. The school has come too far in its inaugural year of the library to
close the library. The only viable conclusion is to continue to improve the library so that online students have supported access to literature.

To empower students (of all economic levels), a strong librarian is needed to serve as an instructional partner, an information specialist, a teacher, and program administrator.

Data has shown that the school library was available to students, yet did little more to encourage staff and students to access library resources. This low-level library involvement resulted in primarily only self-motivated readers accessing the library. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that online schools need to have a librarian who serves in a traditional librarian role. Students need not be expected to “find the library on their own,” but need to be lured into the library through the promise of a good book, through the skills of an engaging librarian, and as an integral, essential component of classroom learning.

According to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), in their 2009 guidelines, school librarians have five roles, all of which are needed to empower students (Moreillon, Cahill, & McKee, 2012). These roles include: the librarian as a leader, the librarian as an instructional partner, the librarian as a specialist in information, the librarian as a teacher, and the librarian as a program administrator. The AASL considers the role as a leader to be incorporated into the other four roles.

The third finding in this study mentioned that without a true director, communication was lacking and many stake-holders did not know how to access or utilize the library. A library conceived as the center of a school’s culture would naturally draw students and staff to its door. The fourth finding detailed how teachers found it difficult to integrate the library into classes, and called for Library time as a special. What is needed is not only library time as a pull-out program, but time for both the students to go to the library and for the librarian to head to the classrooms. This true partnership would tap into those students who are not naturally inclined to wander into a library - virtual or physical - and resolve the fifth major finding of the study: that of the library primarily targeting only motivated readers.

Ebooks are a valuable vehicle in which online students may access literature, yet reading on desktop computers causes fatigue and difficulties that hampers reading motivation.

Students in this study have demonstrated, both in reading habits and through discussions, that it is difficult to maintain reading stamina while reading on their desktop computers. Administrators, teachers, and parents sympathized with this finding and agreed that digital reading devices that are portable may lessen the problems of reading on a desktop computer. This conclusion is backed up by research emphasizing that not
only are digital reading devices similar to reading a paper book, in some cases students actually prefer reading from them. Students in the study reported that they appreciated the “on-demand” book access afforded by Follett Shelf. More research is suggested to determine if mobile digital readers are prohibitive or beneficial for the library budget.

**Recommendations:**

The following recommendations are based on the data collection, the findings, and the conclusions.

The school of focus should consider:

1. A re-conception of the school library from that of one on the periphery to that of one in the center of the school. The school template should reflect this change and make the school library easily accessible from students’ homepages.

2. The transition of the school librarian into a more traditional school librarian role encompassing the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) suggestions of: librarian as an instructional partner, librarian as an information specialist, librarian as a teacher, and librarian as a program administrator. Ideally, students will visit the library as a weekly special. Because the school has over 15,000 students, additional librarians may need to be added to fully implement all four roles.

3. Use of weekly school-wide video segments to highlight books and to draw students and staff into the library as well as to serve as a method of communication regarding library policies.


**Evaluator Bio:**

Laura Hibbard is a 5th grade teacher at this school and completed this program evaluation to fulfill dissertation requirements for her doctoral degree in Instructional Technology at Ohio University. All data collection phases for this program evaluation have been in compliance with Ohio University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Financial support of this project was made possible by Ohio University’s Graduate Research Fund.
Appendix DD: IRB Approval

The following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University for the period listed below. This review was conducted through an expedited review procedure as defined in the federal regulations as Category(ies):

Project Title: Student Literature Access in an Online School: A Program Evaluation

Primary Investigator: Laura Elizabeth Hibbard
Co-Investigator(s):

Faculty Advisor: Teresa Franklin
Department: Educational Studies, Instructional Technology

Approval Date: April 11, 2012
Expiration Date: April 10, 2013

This approval is valid until expiration date listed above. If you wish to continue beyond expiration date, you must submit a periodic review application and obtain approval prior to continuation.

Adverse events must be reported to the IRB promptly, within 5 working days of the occurrence.

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to implementation.