

Perceptions of Preparedness to Teach Reading: A Qualitative Study of Pre-Service and Early Career Teachers in British Columbia

by

Sarah R. Bjelde

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

We accept the Thesis as conforming to the required standard.

Dr. Ana Vieira, Faculty Supervisor

Faculty of Education

Vancouver Island University

Dr. Rachel Moll, Dean

Faculty of Education

Vancouver Island University

April 2026

Abstract

This qualitative study examined how pre-service teachers (PSTs) and early career teachers (ECTs) in British Columbia (BC) perceive their preparedness to teach reading in the primary grades, with particular attention to their attitudes and their knowledge of foundational reading instruction. The study was guided by the following research question: How do PSTs and ECTs in BC perceive their preparedness to teach reading to primary students? Employing qualitative, one-time, semi-structured, narrative interviews, data was collected from five PST and five ECT participants. The data was systematically analyzed through an inductive and thematic approach which eventually led to refined themes. The results reveal PSTs and ECTs feel overwhelmed, underprepared, and uncertain about teaching reading to primary students in BC, highlighting the importance of improved teacher education program (TEP) coursework, reimagined school district resource and professional development allotment, and further curriculum support from the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care within the topic of reading and literacy instruction. These findings advance our understanding of the practical realities of implementing instruction based on the Science of Reading and also offer practical insights for bridging the gap between reading research and classroom practice. Furthermore, the study provides a foundation for future research on this topic, emphasizing a wider breadth and depth of participant experiences. Overall, this work contributes to both theoretical knowledge and applied practice in the field of education within BC, offering evidence-based guidance for stakeholders and policymakers.

Keywords: effective reading instruction, equitable reading instruction, Science of Reading, pre-service teachers, early career teachers, teacher education programs

Acknowledgements

I wrote this thesis on the beautiful lands (and waters—many ferry rides included!) of the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh), Lək^wəŋən (Songhees and X^wsepsəm/Esquimalt), and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. Every day I am in awe of the beauty of the lands and waters that I have always been lucky enough to call home. I strive to instill a similar sense of appreciation in the natural world and gratitude towards the local Indigenous stewards of the land in my students. hay čx^w qəw.

I must share a huge thank you to my wonderful supervisor Dr. Ana Vieira for all of her thoughtful guidance and ongoing support throughout the research and thesis-writing process. I am so honoured to have had the opportunity to learn from you. Another important thank you needs to be shared towards my cohort—listening, reflecting, and growing within our special learning community for the past two years has changed who I am as an educator and as a human being. Thank you to all of my incredible colleagues for your encouragement over the past two years of working on my Master's degree. Thank you to each and every one of my students across my first four years of teaching—it's hard to say who learned more from one another. Finally, I need to share my biggest thanks to my mum, dad, and brother, whose constant and unwavering love and support has shaped me into the person and educator that I am today.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Personal Researcher Context	1
Statement of the Research Problem	6
Purpose and Justification of the Study	9
Overview of the Study	11
Definition of Terms	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review	13
Reading Acquisition in the English Language	13
Theoretical Framework	15
Reading Development Theories Supported by the Science of Reading	16
The Reading Wars	23
Personal and British Columbia Context	26
Reading is an Issue of Social Justice	29
Equity Through Evidence-Based Reading Instruction	31
Integrating Reading Research into Pre-Service and Teacher Professional Development	32
The Path Towards New Understandings	35
Conclusion	35
Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures.....	37
Methodology	37

Study Participants and Recruitment	38
Study Design	38
Data Collection, Methods, and Procedures	39
Ethical Considerations	40
Data Analysis	41
Study Trustworthiness	42
Chapter 4 – Findings and Results	44
Introduction and Participant Demographics	44
Study Context and Overview of Findings	45
Presentation of Findings by Category	45
One: Feelings Related to Preparedness	45
Two: Perceived Knowledge Base of Reading Instruction	50
Three: Areas in which Participants Desired Further Preparation and Support	54
Four: A Reimagined Landscape for Pre-Service and Early Career Teachers in BC	60
Key Findings of Themes and Conclusion	71
Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusions.....	72
Discussion of Findings	72
Theme 1: Feeling Underprepared to Teach Reading is a Shared Experience by Pre-Service and Early Career Teachers	73
Theme 2: Reading Instructional Knowledge is Developed Through Fragmented and Inconsistent Pathways	73
Theme 3: The Gap Between Theory and Practice in their Preparation Leaves New Teachers to Navigate Literacy Instruction Largely on their Own	74

Theme 4: Complex Classroom Realities Disrupt Confidence and the Implementation of Effective Reading Instruction	75
Theme 5: Pre-Service and Early Career Teachers Envision Stronger Systems of Preparation	76
Theme 6: School District Supports are Needed to Provide Coherent and Sustained Guidance for Literacy Instruction	77
Study Limitations	78
Implications and Recommendations	79
Implications for Teacher Education Programs	79
Implications for School Districts	80
Implications for Curriculum	80
Recommendations	81
Suggestions for Further Research	82
Conclusion	82
References	86
Appendix A – Recruitment Materials.....	95
Appendix B – Informed Consent Documents.....	99
Appendix C – Pre-Service and Early Career Teacher Interview Questions	105

Chapter 1: Introduction

Learning to read is fundamental; it is a basic and essential constitutional right (Moore v. British Columbia, 2012). Proficient reading provides life-changing opportunities and is a means by which marginalized people can break free from systems of oppression and cycles of poverty. Beyond the devastating disadvantages to an individual, illiteracy and functional illiteracy also have disastrous social and economic costs to the growth of national and global economies (Cree et al., 2023). Teaching children to read effectively is a paramount issue of equity and social justice as proficient reading skills will allow students to eventually challenge the systems and structures of inequity they live within, setting them up for success in life. Furthermore, within the context of public education in British Columbia, the provincial government's *Statement of Education Policy Order* asserts that the purpose of the school system is to enable learners to become *educated citizens*, those who think critically, communicate effectively, and contribute positively to society and the economy, all of which are skills dependent upon and grounded in strong, foundational literacy (Vision for Student Success - Province of British Columbia, 2020).

In this chapter, I first share my personal context and position myself as a person, learner, educator, and teacher-researcher. I then explain my connection and passion towards early literacy and in particular, effective reading instruction. With that, I share my focus topic on how pre-service and early career teachers in British Columbia (BC) are feeling equipped to teach reading to primary students. Next, I explain my research problem and the purpose of the study. I then elaborate on the need for more support in effective reading instruction, assessment, and intervention for primary years teachers in BC.

Personal Researcher Context

I am a learner, educator, and teacher-researcher. Every relationship I have been a part of, whether it be with living things or the lands and waters, is indelibly connected to me and has influenced the person I am today. I am both the possibility and the culmination of the people and

places most important to me. I am a 26-year-old, white, cisgender, neurotypical, settler woman born and raised on lək'wəŋən territory, also known as Victoria, BC, Canada. I acknowledge that the many privileges in my life are granted to me by overlapping vectors such as my whiteness, middle-class upbringing, education, gender identity, and lack of a disability. Social systems such as education, healthcare, and the legal system favour me while simultaneously oppressing others, including many of the students I teach. Ongoing reflection, learning, and action in these areas is imperative to my practice as an equitable educator, teacher-researcher, and educational leader.

Who I am is also a question of where I am and who is with me. Métis scholar Dr. Erynne Gilpin introduced me to the concept of self-locating and emphasized the importance of relational accountability during this practice. While positioning myself as a teacher-researcher, I am bringing my communities with me, and I am accountable to them. My communities span across BC, all the way to Ireland, and include my loving and generous parents and brother, and of course my friends, extended family, and colleagues. I believe relational accountability is important not only to who I am but also in what I do: my values, connections, and accountabilities beget my actions. Since teaching is a profession based in the heart and pure human-connection, my values act as both my north star and my anchor, guiding my practice forward and rooting my educational philosophy in my nature of being. What I value as a person is what I value as an educator, teacher-researcher, and leader.

Teachers work in “radical spaces of possibility” and have the opportunity to be catalysts of greater societal change (hooks, 1994, p. 12). Despite bell hooks situating this position on education within a context of higher education, I believe this sentiment deeply connects to the Kindergarten to Grade 12 system where it is up to teachers to provide equitable learning opportunities and help all students develop their own voice, agency, and critical thinking skills. As a teacher-researcher, I believe the multiple realities that I work within are co-constructed by myself and my research participants, and our many different perspectives influence these social contexts. Moreover, our perspectives arise from our unique experiences and privileges. It is my duty as a teacher-researcher

to not only be aware of my entanglement within my research, but also to use my privilege to illuminate existing social imbalances and then advocate for positive social change. The knowledge gained in my research has the potential to provide understanding towards the field of Education and is negotiated through dialogue with my participants. I intended to approach my research in effective reading instruction with an emphasis on equity and social justice.

As I was considering a focus for the writing of this thesis, I was teaching a Grade 2 and 3 combined class in a public school in the Lower Mainland of BC, Canada. The school had a high English Language Learner (ELL) population with 60% of my class being ELLs and of that group, 42% were ELL Level 1 (Beginning). Beyond the ELL population, the school served a diverse community with some families living in nearby non-market subsidized units and housing co-operatives, some actively fleeing conflict and trauma, and some coming from very affluent backgrounds. Currently, I am teaching a Kindergarten/Grade 1 class in a very similar community with a large percentage of ELLs and an even higher population of students with behavioural and socio-economic needs. In comparing my experiences to those of my students—many of whom come from single-parent homes, are neurodivergent, or, in the vast majority, are people of colour—I am reminded of the privileges associated with my own upbringing.

Growing up, I always knew that I would come home to a warm, clean house with nutritious food on the table and a loving family waiting for me. Books were plentiful and my parents read to my brother and I every day since my earliest memory. My parents are the people I look to for strength and inspiration when I need guidance; they are two of the most dedicated and hardworking individuals I have ever known. Both came from childhoods that looked very different from my own, and each faced unique challenges. Despite those challenges, they carefully and lovingly nurtured my upbringing, providing me with the example and unconditional support to always try my best in all of my endeavors.

Together, my parents modeled perseverance, compassion, and the importance of hard work—values that deeply shaped who I am. Perhaps one of the most formative influences in my life, however, has been my older brother who has Fragile-X Syndrome, a rare genetic intellectual disability. Growing up alongside him has profoundly shaped my worldview and instilled in me a deep sense of empathy and a strong passion towards inclusion and equity. I carry these values with me into every space I occupy, particularly the classroom. Embedding inclusion and kindness into the fabric of my teaching practice is not just a goal, but a core value that grounds my educational philosophy and positionality as a researcher.

Bridging the gap between my own experiences and those of my students, some of whom have already lived through more trauma than I can begin to imagine, requires ongoing, critical self-reflection and an honest examination of my biases. Their unique identities and life experiences transcend the scope of my own, and it is my responsibility as an educator to ensure that my teaching, especially of something as paramount as reading, is responsively and compassionately informed by that truth.

Literacy, defined by Dr. Jodi Streehlasky as the social practice of communication, is integral to all elements of a child's life and has always been an area of my interest (personal communication, September 23, 2019). In particular, I am passionate about effective reading instruction, assessment, and intervention; they are constantly on my mind and are a crucial part of my daily practice as a primary years' teacher. Three of my favourite courses from my undergraduate teacher education program were on the topic of early literacy and how children learn to read: Literacy and Language, Reading Instructional Principles and Strategies, and Supporting Learners Experiencing Difficulties with Literacy I. Throughout my practicum experiences and up until my first year of teaching, I was unaware of "the Reading Wars" and the tumultuous and politicized history of 'code-based' versus 'meaning-based' reading pedagogy that dates back to the late 18th century (Cambourne, 2021). These wars refer to the long-standing debate over the best way to teach children to read, primarily

between code or phonics-based instruction (focusing on the relationship between letters and sounds) and whole language approaches (emphasizing meaning and context in reading). The conflict centers on whether children learn best through explicit teaching of decoding skills or through immersion in rich, meaningful texts. It is only after working in the field of Education that I have begun to consider how the debates between the Science of Reading and the whole-language approach may have influenced and informed my teacher education program and therefore my knowledge and preparedness in reading instruction.

During my first year of teaching, when I had to plan and design a full year of reading instruction for my Grade 2 and 3 students, I felt extremely overwhelmed. I faced, as many teachers across our province do, an extremely complex class composition where a quarter of my students were unable to decode simple text made up of consonant-vowel-consonant words, (e.g., 'bug' or 'pat'), and the majority of my students could not identify a large number of consonant sounds and most short vowel sounds, making it increasingly challenging for them to decode words they had not memorized. While spelling, they would include letters that did not make any of the sounds present in the word or they would completely omit sounds, for example, spelling "wayt" or "wat" instead of "went."

Feeling deeply confused and worried by the state of the reading skills in my classroom, I utilized many different strategies from my reading courses in university: having students skip a word and come back to it later, telling them to guess what the word was, prompting them to look at the picture to help them read the word, and using running records. The latter, a form of reading assessment, was developed from a whole-language lens as a method to assess and analyze students' meaning, structural, and visual reading errors while reading aloud. Running records and their efficacy will be further elaborated on in Chapter 2.

Immediately noticing that these strategies were not effective for helping the majority of my students learn to read, I looked around my classroom at the growing disparities in reading

proficiency and I knew I had to ask for help. I turned to colleagues and classmates from my teacher-education program for advice, but was met with similar confusion and a slew of random reading resources. From textbooks by ‘reading gurus’ to one-off worksheets from websites such as Teachers Pay Teachers, it seemed as though no one around me had a concrete scope and sequence for the crucial reading skills that I needed to teach my Grade 2 and 3 students.

Simultaneously, I looked to the English Language Arts 2 and 3 Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies, and Content in the BC Curriculum documents, which provided me, as a new teacher, with very little guidance in how I should teach my students how to read. Broad statements such as students should “read fluently at grade level” are provided with further elaborations that state “reading with comprehension, phrasing, and attention to punctuation” (Building Student Success - B.C. Curriculum, n.d.). This made me wonder, what kind of text should a Grade 2 student read in order to “read fluently?” What types of spelling patterns should be included? Should a Grade 2 student be able to read digraphs, silent e words, and r-controlled vowels? I felt baffled by the vagueness of the curriculum standards—I thought these documents were supposed to outline how and what I should be teaching and assessing? I felt lost, frustrated, and deeply unequipped to do my job effectively.

Knowing the paramount importance of literacy and its connection to a child’s successful life outcomes, a passion was sparked within me to do right by my students and, thus, I embarked on a learning journey in effective reading instruction. This journey involved studying the history of the Reading Wars and learning about research-based reading instruction practices. I began to explore the ongoing debates between the Science of Reading and Balanced Literacy and their impacts on reading instruction, eventually leading to this research.

Statement of the Research Problem

Similar to the professional tensions I described in the previous section, the British Columbia New Teacher Survey 2021/2022 (2023) highlighted tensions as experienced through the voices of

new and early career teachers. In this report, many new professionals expressed disbelief that they completed their teacher education programs without learning how to teach students to read or how to support struggling readers (St. Clair, 2023). Several of these teachers reported feeling “totally unequipped” and “inadequate” when faced with students who struggled to read, especially in diverse classrooms with ELLs (St. Clair, 2023, p. 123). These experiences largely mirrored my own, with many teachers detailing how they learned to teach foundational reading skills through “trial and error” rather than intentional preparation (St. Clair, 2023, p. 78).

Yurick et al. (2024) state that around “30% of all children will learn to read regardless of approach,” “50% will require systematic and explicit instruction,” and “the remaining 20% will need additional, possibly specialized supports, regardless of approach” (p. 566). The Science of Reading, a growing body of research, which includes how the human brain learns to read, shares compelling evidence for systematic and explicit reading instruction (Goldberg & Goldenberg, 2022; The Reading League [TRL], 2022). This body of research originates from interdisciplinary findings in the fields of Cognitive Psychology, Communication Sciences, Developmental Psychology, Education, Inclusive Education, Implementation Science, Linguistics, Neuroscience, and School Psychology (TRL, 2022). Converging evidence from the Science of Reading indicates that, in order to read efficiently and accurately (i.e., to understand and make meaning from text), children must learn to analyze the printed forms of words and map that text into comprehensible meaning (Castles et al., 2018). In addition, this body of research offers evidence on how proficient reading and writing develop, why some children experience difficulty with these skills, and the most effective instructional practices for reading instruction, assessment, and intervention (TRL, 2022). The organization further describes how the Science of Reading supports “explicit and systematic” instruction that follows developmental principles of learning by structurally teaching prerequisite word recognition skills (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary) to then use alongside language comprehension skills (e.g., making meaning from text).

TRL (2022) maintains that a skillful reader is someone who can read fluently and deeply comprehend text. They also assert that in order to be skillful, a reader must have a high level of automatic word recognition and language comprehension skills. In the *Science of Reading: Defining Guide* (2021) the evidence supports two main theoretical frameworks that articulate the skills needed to develop skillful and/or proficient readers: Gough and Tunmer's Simple View of Reading (1986) and Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001). Both of these frameworks support the concept that skillful reading is the product of two main areas—language comprehension and decoding.

Balanced Literacy, the approach to reading instruction that I was taught in my teaching program, is described by Yurick et al. (2024) as an approach that encourages memorizing the visual shape of written words, guessing words, using the Meaning-Structure-Visual (MSV) three-cueing system, and fostering a love of reading in children through exposure to a variety of rich texts. It includes components such as guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, and writer's workshop that provide a mix of skills-based and meaning-based instruction. However, the authors argue that Balanced Literacy approaches do not adequately emphasize the importance of following a systematic scope and sequence to explicitly teach word recognition skills such as phonics and phonemic awareness. A more in-depth exploration of the key terminology and core theoretical perspectives that define the Science of Reading and Balanced Literacy can be found in Chapter 2.

My beginning experiences as a pre-service and early career teacher revealed a growing tension and contradiction between my values of equity and inclusion and my knowledge-base in teaching reading. These moments of struggle and my lack of capacity to enact effective reading instruction into practice highlighted not only the gaps in my teacher training but also in the systems at large that support early career primary teachers. I posit that there is a need for consistent resources and training for primary teachers in BC in research-based and systematic reading instruction, assessment, and intervention at the pre-service, early career teacher, and curriculum levels. I maintain that educators, researchers, curriculum designers, and policy-makers need to work

together to bridge the divide between the research and practice of effective reading instruction.

Hindman et al.'s (2020) research furthers these ideas by arguing that teacher education programs need to solidify their teacher candidates' knowledge of reading research through more intentional, practice-oriented preparation for reading instruction.

Purpose and Justification of the Study

Since children arrive at school with varying levels of literacy exposure linked to socio-economic status, it is crucial for primary teachers to provide effective reading instruction to help all students become literate members of society (Gough, 1996). Literacy levels are closely tied to socio-economic status (SES) in several ways. Children from lower SES backgrounds often lack access to books, early language exposure, and quality educational resources, which hampers reading development (Reardon, 2011; Stanovich, 1986), contrasting to that of higher SES families who typically have more time, money, and resources to support their children's literacy growth. These differences work to widen the literacy gap over time, impacting academic success, graduation rates, and future employment opportunities (Reardon, 2011; Stanovich, 1986). Cree et al. (2023) highlight that illiteracy affects a country's economic growth and an individual's life outcomes, including poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. They also note that illiterate parents are less likely to read to their children, exacerbating the disadvantages for children in lower SES households. From the same article, the World Literacy Foundation found that children of professional parents hear over 33 million words before school, compared to just 10 million for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (p. 6). Beyond SES, other factors like race, gender, presence of a visible or non-visible disability, and language intersect to shape a child's identity, compounding the challenges in literacy acquisition. As previously mentioned, research shows that children from underprivileged or minoritized backgrounds often face additional barriers before they even reach school (Cree et al., 2023; Reardon, 2011; Stanovich, 1986). Once in school, those who struggle with reading are at

higher risk of academic failure, dropping out, and eventually engaging with the criminal justice system (Yurick et al., 2024).

Literacy leads to stronger mental and physical health, a wider breadth and depth of knowledge, more meaningful engagement in democracy, and greater achievement in the workplace and in life (Castles et al., 2018). In short, learning to read is critical to human flourishing and therefore, fostering proficient reading is a primary educator's paramount duty (Manitoba Human Rights Commission, 2025; OECD, 2023; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022; Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2023). Porter et al. (2023) found that a significant link between a knowledgeable reading teacher and growth in student reading performance in the areas of "basic features of print, phonological and phonemic awareness skills, and the ability to apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words" (p. 2013). That is, teachers with a strong knowledge base of foundational language and literacy skills can positively impact their students' foundational reading skills (Porter et al., 2023). Therefore, the ability of BC schools and our system as a whole to ensure the best possible life outcomes for students, with all the successes that a life of literacy can afford them, depends on a critical piece: teacher knowledge.

The purpose of this study is to explore how pre-service and early career teachers in BC feel equipped to teach reading to primary students. The goal is to contribute to the discourse on the need to bridge the gap between reading research and classroom practice in BC. As a result, the question guiding my research asks: How are pre-service and early career teachers in BC feeling equipped to teach reading to primary students?

To meet the purpose of this study, five pre-service teachers from a Bachelor of Education program at a university on Vancouver Island, as well as five early career teachers from across British Columbia, will be interviewed. They will be asked questions to gauge feelings of preparedness and attitude toward reading instruction as well as questions on their knowledge of reading instruction content and skills.

Overview of the Study

In this chapter, I first introduced and explained my positionality as well as the research study's context, purpose, problem, justification, question, and definition of terms. Next, through an examination of the literature, Chapter 2 introduces the practice of reading, reading development theories, and the tumultuous discourse surrounding effective reading instruction. The chapter notes three critical themes drawn from the literature including the connection between reading instruction and social justice, the need for reading to be taught equitably, and the importance of reading research being translated into practical teacher instruction at the pre-service and in-service teacher levels.

Definition of Terms

Pre-Service Teachers

The operational definition of pre-service teachers is teachers who have yet to be certified and enter the workforce—those still in Teacher Education program courses or practicum experiences.

Early Career Teachers

The operational definition of early career teachers is teachers who are within their first five years of teaching a full time (FTE 1.0) class.

Primary Students

The operational definition of primary students is students ranging across Kindergarten to Grade 3

The Science of Reading

The operational definition of the Science of Reading is a growing, interdisciplinary field of research containing knowledge about reading, reading development, and instruction, assessment, and intervention practices based in the scientific method (Fien et al., 2021; Hudson et al., 2021; Petscher et al., 2020; The Reading League [TRL], 2022; Yurick et al., 2024).

The Reading Wars

I look to Petscher et al. (2020) to provide the operational definition of the Reading Wars: a debate “focused on conflicting views in epistemology between constructivists and positivists on the basic mechanisms associated with reading development” (p. S268).

Illiteracy

The operational definition of illiteracy is the complete inability to read and write (Cree et al., 2023).

Functional Illiteracy

Functional literacy is operationally defined as when someone has basic literacy skills but cannot engage meaningfully in most communities or societal practices due to inadequate reading, writing, and arithmetic skills (Cree et al., 2023).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review explores the process of becoming a reader and the historical and contemporary beliefs that inform the discourse surrounding effective reading instruction—the Reading Wars. Through examining the literature, three key themes are identified: (1) reading instruction as an issue of social justice and equity; (2) the need to align reading instruction with evidence-based findings; and, (3) the imperative of incorporating foundational knowledge of evidence literacy instruction practices at the pre-service and in-service teacher levels. Finally, I outline how this knowledge informs my research on why further support in effective reading instruction is imperative for the success of British Columbia pre-service and early career primary teachers in providing all students with the best chance to become literate and active citizens.

Reading Acquisition in the English Language

A child’s proficiency in all areas of literacy—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—greatly contributes to their all-encompassing success. As discussed in Chapter 1, being literate connects to stronger mental and physical health, a wider breadth and depth of knowledge, more meaningful engagement in democracy, and greater achievement in the workplace and in life (Castles et al., 2018).

Reading is a complex cognitive, social, and cultural practice that depends on purpose and context, and is informed by various biological, behavioural, social, developmental, and cultural factors (Aukerman & Schuldt, 2021; Castles et al., 2018; Jensen, 2021). Reading a simple sentence requires many cognitive processes including identifying words, understanding their meanings in the context of the text, making causal connections between events or ideas, connecting to background knowledge and experiences, making inferences, placing demands on working memory, and various executive functioning skills (Castles et al., 2018). The goal of reading proficiency may be simple, having the ability to understand and make meaning from text (Castles et al., 2018; Petscher et al., 2020), but the path to getting there is anything but.

English is a code-based alphabetic language where the visual symbols of the written language (i.e., letters and letter combinations, known as graphemes), represent and correspond to the phonemes (i.e., sounds) of the spoken language (Castles et al., 2018; Miller, 2019; Petscher et al., 2020). A foundational step towards gaining reading proficiency is understanding the alphabetic principle, or, the knowledge that graphemes represent phonemes (Castles et al., 2018; Ehri, 2020; Petscher et al., 2020). For example, the word *cat* has three graphemes (c, a, t) and three phonemes (/k/ /æ/ /t/), whereas the word *cash* has three graphemes (c, a, sh) and three phonemes (/k/ /æ/ /ʃ/), even though it is spelled with four letters. Without explicit instruction in how graphemes and phonemes are connected, most children do not show evidence of inducing the alphabetic principle and gaining the ability to decode words independently and accurately (Castles et al., 2018). Decoding can be defined as understanding the code that connects graphemes to phonemes in the English alphabetic writing system, internalizing it, and applying it to segment a word into its phonemes—*cat* sounded out spells /k/ /æ/ /t/ (Gough, 1996).

Although research reveals the importance of teaching letter-sound correspondences to children so they can internalize the alphabetic principle and decode text, English presents additional challenges as it is categorized as a deep orthographic language (Gough, 1996; Miller, 2019). The orthography of a language refers to the pattern in how letters correspond to sounds (Castles et al., 2018; Gough, 1996; Miller, 2019; Petscher et al., 2020). Gough (1996) and Miller (2019) outline that alphabetic languages fall on a spectrum depending on their orthographic depth, or the regularity of their letter-sound correspondence. The authors describe English as an extremely deep orthographic language with many letter-sound irregularities—24 out of the 26 letters in the alphabet correspond to at least two sounds ('v' and 'r' being the only letters with one-to-one letter-sound correspondence). Both authors contrast English to languages with shallow orthographies, like Korean Hangul which is composed solely of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences. English, in comparison, is shown to have extremely varied letter-sound correspondences that often depend on

context. The 26 letters in the alphabet correspond to approximately 44 sounds and then those sounds are represented by approximately 250-300 graphemes (Moats, 2020). Petscher et al. (2020) suggest that although children can learn to decode “69% of monosyllabic words in English,” many words cannot be decoded due to their irregular letter-sound correspondence (e.g., two, knight, laugh) and children must learn how to match these irregular spellings to the meanings of the words they know (p. S270).

Theoretical Framework

The journey towards reading proficiency is an immense and complex task for the reader and the reading teacher. A comprehensive synthesis of the literature highlights foundational theories of reading instructional practices that align with the knowledge base of the Science of Reading. The Science of Reading is a growing, interdisciplinary field of research containing knowledge about reading, reading development, and instruction, assessment, and intervention practices based in the scientific method (Fien et al., 2021; Hudson et al., 2021; Petscher et al., 2020; TRL, 2022; Yurick et al., 2024). This field of research has the potential to provide the knowledge base for practical applications in supporting typically developing and struggling readers. The research spans the past 50 years (Goldberg & Goldenberg, 2022) and is based in numerous fields from Cognitive Psychology to Neuroscience (TRL, 2022). However, the foundations of code-based reading instruction, a critical element of the Science of Reading, date back over 100 years (Orton, 1925). Castles et al. (2018) maintain that the body of research supporting the Science of Reading posits that in order to understand and make meaning from text efficiently and accurately, children must learn to analyze the printed form of words and map that text into comprehensible meaning.

Foundational theories and research in the Science of Reading are rooted in positivist paradigms aimed to “establish generalizable patterns through internal validity or causation” using trials and experiments based in the scientific method (Jensen, 2021, p. S72; Petscher et al., 2020). As the field has advanced over time, scholars such as Aukerman and Schuldt (2021) in addition to

Milner (2020) are beginning to seek and build new knowledge on effective reading instruction beyond the quantitative, and instead through a qualitative lens. Their lens is based in the epistemologies and methodologies of constructivism and critical theory.

This literature review is informed by a blended epistemological stance that acknowledges both the empirical, scientific foundations of the Science of Reading and the socially constructed nature of literacy. While I draw from positivist principles that emphasize the importance of evidence-based, systematic instruction in word recognition skills, I also acknowledge that reading is a social and cultural practice shaped by students' lived experiences. My dual perspective informs this review and values both cognitive scientific research as well as scholarship that highlights the inseparable role of identity, language, and context in learning to read.

Reading Development Theories Supported by the Science of Reading

Samuel Orton (1925) was an influential neuropsychiatric researcher whose research identified similarities between children with reading difficulties (later recognized as dyslexia) and adults with brain trauma and language loss. His research into the crucial nature of code-based phonics instruction for all children, but especially for those with dyslexia, has laid the groundwork for the Orton-Gillingham method—a reading instruction and intervention program designed for children with reading difficulties (Ritchey & Goeke, 2006).

Jeanne Chall was an educational researcher, psychologist, and teacher in the field of reading who advocated for phonics instruction in tandem with rich literacy experiences (Petscher et al., 2020; Yurick et al., 2024). Her research spans the 1940s to the early 2000s and emphasizes the importance of decoding in early reading instruction. In her first book, *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* (1967), Chall demonstrates that explicit decoding instruction leads to improved word recognition and spelling skills as well as improved ability to read for meaning and understanding.

In her book *Reading Assessment: Linking Language, Literacy, and Cognition*, reading scholar Farrall (2012) describes Chall's Stages of Reading Development (1983) as having an initial focus on

oral language development and phonological awareness and eventually moving towards children gaining the ability to "synthesize a unique point of view based upon a variety of different materials read" (p. 21). She reveals how Chall's stages are positioned in the context of Jean Piaget's Developmental Stages of the Child. Chall's stages begin with: Stage 0 (pre-reading), where young children develop oral language skills and early concepts of print; Stage 1 (Initial Reading or Decoding) focuses on learning phoneme-grapheme correspondences and building sight word vocabulary; Stage 2 (Confirmation) centers on fluency and self-monitoring, while Stage 3 (Reading to Learn) marks a blatant shift to using reading to acquire knowledge and think critically; and, Stages 4 and 5 extend into high school and beyond, emphasizing analysis, synthesis, and forming independent thoughts. Farrall's (2012) review of Chall's Stage Theory reveals how it aims to streamline instruction for children of different ages by outlining a general reading need and a way to match individual student needs to instructional practices at each stage. Her book proposes other notable ideas from Chall including: advocating for teacher-centered reading instruction where new learning is explicitly taught, as well as bridging the disparity between reading research and practice in the classroom as a way to bolster achievement for all children, "particularly those of low socioeconomic status" (p. 23).

In 1979, Linnea Ehri, a key theorist in reading research, developed the Amalgamation of Word Identities Theory which states that children learn to read words "by amalgamating or bonding their various identities together to form single lexical units in memory" (Ehri, 1979; Ehri, 2020, p. S46). Ehri proposed that the identities being amalgamated can be orthographic (spelling), phonological (pronunciations), morphological (word roots and affixes), syntactic (grammar and sentence function), or semantic (meaning). Her theory demonstrated the process by which all words become amalgamated into memory and eventually recognized by sight. First, spellings are bonded to pronunciations by various grapheme-phoneme units such as simple grapheme-phoneme correspondence, onset-rimes, syllables, or morphemes (Ehri, 1979; Ehri, 2020; Glossary | U F Literacy Institute, 2024). Next, Ehri (1979) suggests that readers bond spellings to syntactic and

semantic identities by making and storing connections in memory while looking at the spelling. After a few sightings, she states that the connections are amalgamated in memory and a reader can automatically read a word as a whole unit. Ehri's Amalgamation of Word Identities Theory reveals the importance of students being explicitly taught and given opportunities to practice grapheme-phoneme correspondence skills in order to recognize all words, not just high-frequency words, by sight.

Ehri provided further knowledge towards the field with the proposal of her Phase Theory (1995), which outlines four stages of word recognition that lead to the ability to read words automatically—what she refers to as reading by sight (Castles et al., 2018; Ehri, 1995, 2020; Farrall, 2012). Farrall (2012) goes on to clarify that reading by sight is not to be confused with sight words, the latter being regular or irregular words that readers have “read several times and that have been successfully stored in memory with links to spelling, pronunciation, and meaning” (p. 24).

Ehri's first phase, the Pre-Alphabetic Phase, connects to Chall's Stage 0 and is usually composed of preschool and Kindergarten-aged children. In this stage, the author also states that children do not yet have a grasp of grapheme-phoneme correspondence and rely on non-alphabetic cues, such as the environment, to read visual cues—for example, reading the golden arches symbol as “McDonald's” (Farrall, 2012, p. 24). She describes the Partial-Alphabetic Phase as when children begin to recognize words using some alphabetic knowledge, context, and partial-letter cues—knowing that *house* starts with ‘h’. The Full-Alphabetic Phase aligns with Chall's Stage 1, and the author maintains that systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics is required for students to learn the necessary skills within the phase. Farrall (2012) also states that students must receive ample practice time reading text that uses spelling patterns they have learned in order to retain these words in memory. Finally, she shows that the Consolidated-Alphabetic Phase, also known as the orthographic phase, aligns with Chall's Stage 2. In this phase, Farrall describes how students can accurately and fluently chunk letter sequences and store multisyllabic words in their

minds as sight words based on their graphosyllabic units (e.g., sup-port-ing) (Farrall, 2012, p. 24-25). Farrall (2012) further suggests that Ehri's phases were developed for supporting teachers' explicit instruction for their typical and atypical readers as well as appropriate structured intervention based on their atypical readers' needs.

Ehri's (2014) Phases of Word Reading theory aligns with the concept of orthographic learning, where a reader recognizes and understands familiar words rapidly and automatically without having to rely on decoding (Castles et al., 2018). Orthographic learning arises, similarly to the development across Ehri's Phases of Word Reading theory, as a "function of alphabetic decoding together with repeated exposure to novel words in print" (Castles et al., 2018, p. 21; Farrall, 2012). Similarly, the Dual-Route Theory of Reading (Coltheart et al., 2001), emphasizes the importance of explicit phonics instruction to build decoding skills while also supporting the memorization of rule exceptions—or, 'sight words' (Seidenberg et al., 2020).

The Simple View of Reading, a prominent theory by Gough and Tunmer from 1986, states that reading is the product of word recognition and language comprehension (Castles et al., 2018; Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Gough, 1996; Petscher et al., 2020; TRL, 2022; Yurick et al., 2024). This theory is "empirically validated by over 150 scientific studies" (TRL, 2022, p. 17) and maintains that a reader's ability to decode words, in addition to their understanding of language and sentence structure, depend on one another to produce reading proficiency (Yurick et al., 2024). The Simple View of Reading suggests that as a reader reads, they utilize word recognition skills to decode the text while subsequently using language comprehension skills such as the ability to understand spoken language, mental visualization, and harnessing relevant background information to then make meaning from the text (Castles et al., 2018; Gough, 1996; Petscher et al., 2020; TRL, 2022; Yurick et al., 2024). Yurick et al. (2024) demonstrate that decoding, along with other word recognition skills, must be taught explicitly as these skills do not "emerge coincidentally with exposure to quality literature alone" (p. 565).

Yurick et al. (2024) describe how Duke and Cartwright proposed the Active View of Reading theory (2021) by harnessing the ideas behind the Simple View of Reading (1986) and extending them to include a third component: active self-regulation. The article reviews how active self-regulation recognizes the importance of motivation, engagement, and executive functioning skills in reading. Currently, the validity of the Active View of Reading by Duke and Cartwright (2021) still needs further empirical validation to become a recognized theory of reading development and is still being debated (Hoover & Tunmer, 2021).

The Self-Teaching Hypothesis was proposed by Share (1995) and explains how children move from novice to skilled readers through repeated decoding practice (Castles et al., 2018). Castles et al. (2018) describe that with each word decoded successfully, children build an orthographic knowledge base and a lexical toolbelt that is essential for fluent word recognition. This knowledge base allows children to read more complex texts and foster vocabulary and comprehension. Share's (1995) hypothesis holds some similarities to Perfetti's (2007) Lexical Quality Hypothesis which suggests that a person's understanding of a word is shaped by the precision and flexibility of its mental representation (Castles et al., 2018). These two theories outline a common theme across the research of the Science of Reading that "low level processes underpin and are an essential foundation for the high-level ones" and "through repeated exposure to words, a child develops specialized and efficient basic word recognition mechanisms that are optimized for reading for meaning" (Castles et al., 2018, p. 21; Perfetti, 2007).

The *National Reading Panel Report (NRP)* (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000) was a groundbreaking report outlining the five main pillars of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. This report (2000) used a systematic review and meta-analysis to analyze hundreds of experimental and quasi-experimental research studies that measured reading as an outcome. The *National Reading Panel Report* (2000) showed support of explicit and direct instruction across the five main pillars of reading

instruction. The NICHD (2000) and Seidenberg et al. (2020) describe phonemic awareness as the knowledge that words are made up of smaller units of sound called phonemes and maintain it should be taught first through learning the spoken language and eventually in experience with print. The report (2000) defines phonics as a means of instruction that teaches the connection or correspondence between graphemes and phonemes. Fluency is regarded by the authors as a characteristic of fluent reading where readers read with automaticity, phrasing, and attention to punctuation. Finally, the report (2000) describes vocabulary as a basic element of language, and comprehension as, simply, the goal of reading! Seidenberg et al. (2020) argue that the research behind these pillars has been misinterpreted in teacher practice, often treated as a checklist rather than interconnected skills. In fact, the authors state that the pillars inextricably impact and influence one another and largely cannot be taught in isolation.

Connor (2016) and Hindman et al. (2020) propose the Lattice Model of Reading Development which synthesizes ideas from the NICHD (2000), the Lexical Hypothesis Model (Perfetti, 2007), and the Active View of Reading (2021). The model highlights the importance of code-based processes such as decoding for higher-level cognitive skills such as comprehension. It emphasizes the need for direct instruction in decoding and acknowledges the role of socio-emotional and self-regulatory processes in reading.

Farrall (2012), Scarborough (2001), TRL (2022), and Yurick et al. (2024) are proponents of Scarborough's Reading Rope Model, a visual representation of the simultaneous development of skills needed for reading with fluency and comprehension: a rope with two strands being woven together. One strand is automatic word recognition (skills in phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition), while the other is language comprehension (strategic skills in background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge). They state that as reading proficiency increases over time, the language comprehension strands become more strategic while the word recognition strands become more automatic. Scarborough (2001), the

model's creator, defines skilled reading as a fluent and synchronized performance of word recognition and text comprehension skills.

Castles et al. (2018) and Perfetti and Stafura (2014) describe the Reading System Framework Interactive Model (RSF) (2014) and suggest reading involves three types of knowledge: linguistic, orthographic, and general knowledge, which interact during the comprehension process. The model suggests that word recognition is a critical first step of reading before a reader's central executive system can guide them to activate relevant knowledge, disregard irrelevant details, and resolve any ambiguities. The authors regard the RSF as important because of how it highlights the crucial interaction between knowledge, cognitive processes, and memory in reading comprehension, with comprehension being largely about making inferences.

A critique of the Science of Reading by Aukerman and Schuldt (2021) argues that the field of study, based in positivist and quantitative research and knowledge, should move towards being interdimensional, including areas such as writing and meaning-making across modalities. Milner (2020) supports this claim by maintaining that quantitative studies, the foundation of the field, "only provide one layer of knowledge and knowing" and qualitative approaches could bolster the breadth and depth of the research base as they are designed with the "goal of knowing more to actually humanize the research process and aid in improving not only science but also the communities researched" (pp. S250-253).

Aukerman and Schuldt (2021) contend that reading is a social, cultural, and cognitive experience where all dimensions are of equal importance. They emphasize the importance of instruction that values and builds on students' diverse linguistic, cultural, and individual identities, echoing Milner's (2020) view that literacy develops across time, place, and space. Within this holistic lens, Aukerman and Schuldt (2021) propose two core domains of reading development: textual dexterity and literate dispositions. Textual dexterity involves the sophisticated use of multiple reading competencies, expanding on Freebody and Luke's (1990) four reader roles: code breaker,

text participant, text user, and text analyst. Literate dispositions refer to readers' engagement, motivation, and self-efficacy— affective qualities shaped by texts, practices, and teacher instruction. These contemporary thinkers in the Science of Reading propose ways to deepen the knowledge base beyond the scientific method and shine a light upon the need for further research from a qualitative methodological approach. The converging ideas of the theories and models presented in this section are taken up in the sections that follow to critically examine the issues underpinning the Reading Wars.

With a knowledge base dating back almost a century and formal recognition as a field of study for over 50 years, the Science of Reading provides ongoing research and theories in how the brain learns to read (TRL, 2022). If the research exists, why is the widespread implementation of its tenets into reading instruction not currently taught, or accessible, across primary classrooms in BC?

The Reading Wars

With a knowledge base rooted in extensive research in how the brain learns to read, the Science of Reading is “a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing” (TRL, 2022, p. 6). The organization states that over 50 years of research and thousands of studies have resulted in a “preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some have difficulty; and how we can most effectively assess and teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties” (p. 6).

Yurick et al. (2024) propose that the Science of Reading advocates for conceptually systematic instruction that follows developmental principles of learning by structurally teaching prerequisite word recognition skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary) alongside language comprehension skills (making meaning from text or comprehension). The authors present concepts such as a purposeful instructional scope and sequence as well as immediate and specific feedback and reinforcement as crucial aspects of the Science of Reading.

From examining the literature, the foundational theories and research within the Science of Reading suggest an approach to reading instruction that involves explicit and systematic teacher instruction in the areas of phonics and phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (NRP, 2000). The Science of Reading aims not to ignore meaning-making and comprehension processes, but simply to illuminate the profound importance of text-based and code-based processes such as decoding, encoding, and text automaticity and fluency, particularly within the primary grades. Comprehension skills, including developing as a text participant, user, and analyzer, are just as essential as decoding in a comprehensive Science of Reading–based program.

The Science of Reading is situated within the context of the Reading Wars. Petscher et al. (2020) define the Reading Wars as a debate “focused on conflicting views in epistemology between constructivists and positivists on the basic mechanisms associated with reading development” (p. S268). The authors describe constructivists, also known as Whole-Language Approach or Balanced Literacy proponents, as those who believe reading should develop through literacy-rich experiences and environments. They state that this side of the war believes reading will come about naturally, like learning to speak a language. The article describes those on the other side of the war as the positivists, Scientifically-Based Reading instruction or Science of Reading enthusiasts, who hold the perspective that learning to read and write do not develop naturally and that explicit instruction is an effective means for children to understand that graphemes represent phonemes, a critical element of learning to read.

Castles et al. (2018) trace the Reading Wars back over 200 years ago in the United States of America to Horace Mann, known as the father of the American Public School System, who was an early Whole-Language advocate. Mann rallied against phonics and direct instruction of grapheme-phoneme correspondence, which had been the standard practice dating back to the 16th century (as seen in Noah Webster’s “blue backed spellers” and *The American Spelling Book*) (Castles et al., 2018,

p. 6). Mann famously referred to letters as “bloodless, ghostly apparitions,” and wanted children to learn to read by reading whole words (Kim, 2008, p. 89).

The debates continued and notably, around 50 years ago, Whole-Language theorist Kenneth Goodman proposed that if you give a child the opportunity to immerse themselves in print, they will quickly and naturally learn to read (Gough, 1996). Castles et al. (2018) and Ehri (2020) explain how this idea, also known as the Psycholinguistic Theory of Reading, led to a ubiquitous early literacy practice called the “Three-Cueing Approach” or “MSV” —meaning (M), structure (S), visual (V). They describe the MSV approach as readers being prompted to use graphic, semantic, and syntactic knowledge to guess the meaning of a printed word. This reading technique encourages children to guess words by looking at pictures, using context clues, or hypothesizing what could fit at that place in the sentence, rather than using grapheme-phoneme correspondence skills (Yurick et al., 2024). The thinking behind MSV is that “reading is a selective process that involves partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader’s expectation...and tentative decisions are made to be confirmed, rejected, or refined as reading progresses” (Goldberg & Goldenberg, 2022, p. 622).

From the 1970s to the early 2000s, the Reading Wars continued. Goldberg and Goldenberg (2022) recount two pivotal events from the Reading Wars: The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and Reading First. The authors describe NCLB as an American Act of Congress while Reading First was an American federal education program, both of which were designed to allow scientifically-backed reading research to inform reading instruction in classrooms across America—both however backfired and further exacerbated the Reading Wars. They state that NCLB was enacted by President George Bush and was legislation that aimed to improve student achievement through scientifically-based reading instruction, primarily supporting phonics-based approaches. The review claims that a large failure of this act was how schools were required to routinely and rigorously assess their students’ reading proficiency through standardized tests and hold them

accountable for meeting reading benchmarks. Reading First, described by the authors as a key program within NCLB, sent federal funds to promote phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency in early reading instruction. They outline how this program focused narrowly on phonics through direct instruction but failed to foster rich literary experiences through comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills. The review argues that although these programs and legislations failed to effectively implement the Science of Reading into classrooms, they have provided the field with valuable lessons and an emerging road ahead to hopefully end the Reading Wars.

Personal and British Columbia Context

Throughout my courses in reading instruction in my teacher education program, I learned about the Three-Cueing Approach/MSV and how to implement it into classroom instruction. I was also taught and assessed on my ability to administer Marie Clay's running records, a reading assessment practice steeped in the tenets of MSV (Stouffer, 2021). Running records ask teachers to guess why their students made errors in reading aloud by checking the meaning and structural appropriateness as well as the visual likeness between the substituted word and the text (Stouffer, 2021).

As a practicing primary grades early career teacher, I look to the English Language Arts curriculum for guidance in what, when, and how I should be teaching reading. Upon critical examination of the current Grade 2 English Language Arts Content Elaboration document from the BC Ministry of Education website, there is clear evidence of various Balanced Literacy practices, including MSV:

Reading strategies: using illustrations and prior knowledge to predict meaning; rereading; retelling in own words; locating the main idea and details; using knowledge of language patterns and phonics to decode words; identifying familiar and "sight" words; *monitoring* (*asking: Does it look right? Sound right? Make sense?*); self-correcting errors consistently

using *three cueing systems: meaning, structure, and visual*. (Area of Learning: English Language Arts Kindergarten Big Ideas, 2016)

Similarly, within the now phased-out 2009 BC Performance Standards for Reading document for Grade 2, MSV is also found:

A grade 2 student who fully meets expectations for reading literature does so by “reading a variety of short, simple materials independently and with understanding” and “combines phonics, word structure (patterns, endings), and context clues to figure out new words; usually successful with simple words; may need support (e.g., “*What would make sense and sound right?*”) for more complex or irregular words (e.g., daughter, restaurant)”. (Reading Grade 2, n.d.)

Despite its ubiquity in primary reading instruction, which I posit is a credit to its undeniable presence within pre-service teacher education programs and the BC English Language Arts Curriculum of the past and present, three cueing or MSV is a practice that has been debunked by a growing number of cognitive studies (Goldberg & Goldenberg, 2022; Hemenstall, 2003). Research reveals that grapheme-phoneme correspondences are more important for recognizing words than meaning or structural cues (Hemenstall, 2003). Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith’s (1971) initial study *On the Psycholinguistic Method of Teaching Reading* proposes the Three-Cueing Approach/MSV, which strongly encourages children to rely on meaning cues while reading words, is now revealed to have been flawed and is discredited by numerous studies (Goldberg & Goldenberg, 2022; Hemenstall, 2003). At the local level, in their 2023 position statement, the British Columbia Association of School Psychologists critiqued the three-cueing method and argued that it “[lacks] research support” (Sinclair et al., 2025, pp. 111-112).

The Reading Wars are a broad and complex issue—a culmination of many disagreements across education, research, politics, and society. Although mainly researched and discussed in an American context, Canadian, and specifically British Columbian, classrooms, schools, school boards,

and teacher education programs are not shielded from the impacts of the Reading Wars. These ongoing debates continue to shape Canadian educational policies, teacher training, school district resources, teaching practices, public discourse, research, media coverage, and professional development.

As previously mentioned, British Columbia's English Language Arts curriculum (2016) has historically aligned with many balanced literacy approaches (Area of Learning: English Language Arts Kindergarten Big Ideas, 2016; Reading Grade 2, n.d.; Sinclair et al., 2025). However, the *K–4 Foundational Learning Progressions* were introduced in 2025 to “provide additional details and clarity to help teachers develop key foundational skills” in early literacy instruction and assessment (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2025). Additionally, in 2024, the Ministry of Education and Child Care announced a three-year, \$30 million provincial literacy initiative to provide supports for school districts including universal literacy screening from Kindergarten to Grade 3, targeted intervention, and teacher professional development (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2025). Nevertheless, initiatives promoting structured approaches to teaching literacy have historically been met with resistance by various stakeholders including some educators, academics, and the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF), for reasons that they undermine teacher autonomy, reduce professional judgment, and limit culturally responsive meaning-making processes (Ungerleider, 2025). These factors continue to impact the widespread implementation of evidence-based reading instruction at the district level, and the spirit of teacher autonomy extends into higher education institutions and pre-service teacher training. The BC Ministry of Education and Child Care sees their role as a co-governor with the districts, and as such they see their role as advising, not mandating changes such as structured approaches to teaching literacy (Sinclair et al., 2025).

Reading is an Issue of Social Justice

Literacy equity advocate Phyllis C. Hunter states that “reading is the gateway skill, it is the skill that I term ‘The New Civil Right’ because children cannot access their other rights... unless they can read and read well” (Goldberg & Goldenberg, 2022, p. 621).

Cree et al. (2022) classify illiteracy as either functional or complete, with the latter being defined as the complete inability to read and write. They describe that when someone is functionally illiterate, they have basic literacy skills but cannot fully participate as healthy and productive members of society. This is due to their inadequate reading, writing, and arithmetic skills that limit their ability to perform practical, day-to-day tasks including: reading medicine labels, filling out job applications, reading nutritional facts on food, gaining and exercising political knowledge, completing high school education, and understanding the news, bank statements, and work correspondence.

Cree et al. (2022) state that illiteracy affects the economic growth of low- and middle-income countries the same as it does high-income countries since nations with lower literacy rates have a lower GDP; individual taxpayers, businesses, and social systems are impacted by illiteracy—each loses money and resources to the heavy financial burden that illiteracy places directly on social services, benefit systems, the prison system, and the healthcare system.

At the individual level, Cree et al. (2022) demonstrate how illiteracy traps the most vulnerable members of society in the poverty cycle where they become vulnerable to the following harrowing statistics: earning almost half the income of their literate counterparts; having poor health, hygiene, and nutrition; having self-esteem issues and mental health challenges such as depression; participating in high-risk sexual behaviour; increased work-place accidents due to misunderstandings of safety protocols and procedures; being linked to crime and a perpetual entanglement with the prison system; relying on welfare or unemployment benefits because of dropping out of school and being unable to find work; bearing children who are more likely to

struggle with attendance, academics, and behaviour in school; and, bearing children who are multiple grade levels behind their literate counterparts.

Fien et al. (2021) state that shockingly only 35% of students in the United States develop reading proficiency by Grade 4 and at that point, the statistic is unlikely to change by a large margin. The authors reveal that this statistic is even worse for students of colour, students with visible or invisible disabilities, English language learners, and students from a low socio-economic status. These educational disparities mirror the aforementioned wealth, employment, and health disparities faced by illiterate individuals.

The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), an international survey from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), measured adult literacy levels in BC. Of the surveyed 16- to 65-year-olds in BC, 45% have difficulty accomplishing daily living tasks such as filing taxes and reading rental agreements due to their functional illiteracy (Literacy Facts and Figures - Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2023). In the Canadian educational context, public discourse and demand is beginning to increase for the implementation of reading research into teacher training and provincial curricula (Zhu, 2024). However, to meet this demand, there is a need for comprehensive studies and clear data on provincial and territorial literacy rates for children and adults in Canada.

Studies suggest that failing to utilize and implement research into reading instruction, especially systematic phonics instruction in the primary grades, harms underserved students and “undoubtedly contributes to struggling readers and societal inequalities, disproportionately affecting minority and low socioeconomic families lacking resources to counterbalance inadequate classroom instruction” (Fien et al., 2021; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022; Yurick et al., 2024, p. 566). Marginalized students do not usually have the privilege to access private tutoring to bridge any gaps by ineffective reading instruction (Yurick et al., 2024). Children with early reading challenges disproportionately experience negative consequences in their lives due to the catalyst of academic

struggles at school, these include: being flagged for special education, dropping out of school, having future interactions with the criminal justice system, and eventually working low-paying jobs as adults (Hindman et al., 2020; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022; Yurick et al., 2024).

Equity Through Evidence-Based Reading Instruction

Reading proficiency and literacy are key components for a person's productive performance and positive identity within society. Every child has the right to learn to read and deserves access to educators who have both a strong knowledge base and feelings of confidence and preparedness in how to best tackle that critical task (Ontario Human Rights Commission., 2022; Yurick et al., 2024).

Milner (2020) shares a poignant quote by civil rights activist James Baldwin and grounds it in his critique of the Science of Reading from a lens of equitable reading instruction: "I can't believe what you say, because I see what you do" (p. S249). The author shares a constructive critique of the Science of Reading, stating how the current knowledge, understandings, and practice in reading instruction are deeply shaped by the gendered and racial identity and politics of the researcher.

Well, who is the researcher in the Science of Reading? Jensen (2021) corroborates Milner's ideas and states that whiteness and maleness are at the centre of the research from the Science of Reading and its findings perpetually privilege White, upper middle-class ways of knowing and being. Milner (2020) argues that in order for reading instruction and the research supporting it to be equitable, a research methodology based in critical theory is in order: "the pages of journals we read must be as diverse as the communities we study to build the knowledge" (p. S252).

With a basic knowledge of the context of equity and the Science of Reading, Jensen (2021) defines teaching reading equitably as being both effective and meaningful by honouring the lived experiences, values, practices, and identities of minoritized students while instructing them to read proficiently. He asserts that effective reading instruction "requires educators to draw simultaneously on their knowledge of reading, pedagogy, and readers to make in-the-moment decisions to meet the needs of more than two dozen readers at once" as well as have "knowledge of cultural models,

values, and practices manifesting in students' everyday lives and of histories and experiences of communities where students live" (p. S70). The author states that equitable instruction utilizing the research from the Science of Reading will go beyond the sole actions of the teacher since it also includes students, parents, policy makers, school leaders, and curriculum developers. He maintains that teachers need time to learn, collaborate, and practice evidence-based, equitable approaches in grade-level teams.

Jensen's (2021) vision aligns with the BC curriculum's focus on inclusive, personalized learning, cultural responsiveness, student agency, and a recognition of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The *Literacy Foundations* (2010) and *Early Learning Framework* (2008, revised 2020) policies emphasize the importance of oral language, identity, and relationships as part of early literacy development. Additional BC education policies, including the *Diversity in BC Schools* (2001, revised 2017) and the *Anti-Racism Action Plan for K-12 Students* (2023), emphasize equity and reconciliation, reinforcing the dire need for literacy instruction that is both evidence-based and responsive to the cultural and social contexts of learners. Embedding the Science of Reading within a framework of social-constructivism ensures that all students, particularly those from marginalized communities, receive effective instruction.

Through synthesizing the thinking of scholars Jensen (2021) and Milner (2020) and policies from the BC Ministry of Education, they suggest that an approach to reading instruction, based in effectiveness and meaningfulness, is critical to teaching reading equitably. Driving the field of the Science of Reading forward towards a future of equitable reading instruction practices will require researchers to engage in a truly balanced approach using methodological, ontological, and epistemological pluralism with practical research applications into pre-service teacher education.

Integrating Reading Research into Pre-Service and Teacher Professional Development

In Cree et al.'s (2023) report, the authors reveal how the World Literacy Foundation states that in order for illiteracy to be eradicated, teacher programs and training in effective reading

instruction must be developed to improve the quality of literacy instruction. For new graduates, this could look like ongoing professional development opportunities as well as reframed early career teacher assessments that work more as ongoing, relational mentoring opportunities.

Earlier in the chapter, I posed a question as to why this expansive, growing body of research has not yet been implemented into practice. Castles et al. (2018) explain that the implementation of reading instruction typically devolves to the—in the case of BC—district level, and is influenced by variability in epistemologies across teacher education programs. The review provides two concrete limitations as to why putting reading research into practice has been unsuccessful thus far, further exasperating the Reading Wars. First, the authors state that an accessible review as to why phonics works and is integral to primary reading instruction is still needed. Second, the authors claim that many of the presentations of evidence about the Science of Reading do not go beyond the use of phonics, despite the field promoting skills in word recognition in addition to language comprehension. Seidenberg et al. (2020) extend this thinking by proposing an imbalance between “basic and translational research” in the Science of Reading which has impeded its implementation into practice (p. S122). The authors cite phonics as an example of a translational issue because an implication based in research is that proficient readers have a strong grasp of the correspondences between graphemes and phonemes and can decode words with automaticity and accuracy. They maintain that phonics clearly has its place in early reading instruction, however, the research does not clearly state how or the order in which letter-sound correspondences should be taught.

The central argument of Goldberg and Goldenberg’s (2022) review of the Reading Wars states that in order to bridge the divide between research and practice, reading stakeholders must work through collaboration to design a thoughtful plan worth implementing. The authors’ conclusion is that all educational and policy-level stakeholders in reading legislation and instruction should come together to participate in a premortem. A premortem is defined by the authors as a process in which all parties consider what could possibly go wrong and use that information to address those

issues in a plan. Similarly, Jensen (2021) states that researchers and reading stakeholders must work collaboratively with educators to bridge the gap between research and practice.

In their review, Hindman et al. (2020) state that pre- and in-service teachers from preschool to Grade 4 generally lack knowledge in effective literacy instruction and the scientific research in how children learn to read. This finding is startling and as Hudson et al. (2021) state in their article, teachers need explicit understanding of literacy concepts like phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension in order to teach reading effectively. The authors maintain that teachers who are more knowledgeable in English phonology, orthography, and morphology and who provide explicit phonics instruction produce students with stronger word-recognition skills than less knowledgeable teachers. The authors posit that educators, particularly early years teachers, need specific coaching and guidance in how to teach reading using the Science of Reading's research base.

Hindman et al. (2020) explain that for pre-service teacher training in particular, reading education courses should be centred in knowledge and practical assessment. Pre-service teachers should be provided with clear information and many ongoing opportunities to practice instruction skills, be observed, receive feedback and reflect while in community with mentors and peers. These arguments align closely with the findings from the *British Columbia New Teacher Survey 2021/22* (2023) that outline how early career teachers report lacking experience and having gaps in concrete skills such as literacy instruction and assessment (p. 143). In addition, early career teachers state that theory and knowledge "dominated" their teacher education coursework, without proper integration into or balance with practice (p. 143). A study by Hudson et al. (2021) found that when able to provide their students with direct training of concepts and knowledge from the Science of Reading, as well as opportunities to apply the learnings under expert guidance, teacher education programs can increase their pre-service teachers' understanding of phonological awareness, phonics, and morphological awareness. With regard to effective reading instruction, research strongly indicates

that teachers with a strong knowledge base have more tools to empower their students to become proficient and successful readers (Hudson et al., 2021).

The Path Towards New Understandings

From my extensive literature review search and beyond the British Columbia Teachers' Council's *British Columbia New Teacher Survey 2021/22 (2023)*, I have not found thorough information about pre-service teacher and early career teacher attitudes towards primary-grade reading instruction preparedness in British Columbia. This literature review reveals the need for more discourse and studies in the area of how pre-service and early career BC primary grades teachers are equipped to teach reading instruction to primary students. My research has the potential to contribute to this field of knowledge by drawing further attention to the cause and informing the various stakeholders (educators, leaders, researchers, and policy makers) of the need to bridge the gap between reading research and effective instructional practice, for the benefit of both teachers and children.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I first explained the practice of reading. Next, I dove deeply into the theoretical framework of reading instruction as well as the reading development theories that build the foundation of the field of Science of Reading. Then, I explained a brief history of the Reading Wars and how my practice as a primary grades teacher in BC has been impacted by these ongoing debates and discourses. Next, I explored reading as an issue of social justice and illuminated possible pathways towards equity through evidence-based reading instruction. Then, I explored the need for the implementation of reading research into early career teacher professional development and pre-service teacher education. Finally, I positioned my research on the path towards new understandings in literacy research within the educational sphere of BC. These learnings will shape my research by providing me with a strong grasp of foundational theories in reading research, a solid understanding

of the context in which I learn and work as a reading teacher, and an unwavering belief in reading as an issue of social justice, deeply rooted in equity for all learners.

I conclude this chapter with a call to action as I believe it is time for all stakeholders, who I posit to be any and all citizens who wish for a literate and equitable society, to recognize the need for effective reading instruction across BC schools. As we navigate the current social, political, economic, and environmental times of high “volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity” (HBS Working Knowledge, 2017), literacy has the potential to guide us forward towards a bright and hopeful future despite the ongoing and unique challenges of the 21st century.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures

The intent of this research was to explore how pre-service teachers and early career teachers in British Columbia (BC) feel equipped to teach reading to primary students. This qualitative study specifically investigated pre-service and early career teachers' attitudes and feelings of preparedness towards teaching reading as well as the extent of their knowledge base in foundational reading instruction content and skills. Through one-time, semi-structured interviews, participants were queried on their: professional experiences and contexts; beliefs and values about reading instruction; perceived preparedness, knowledge areas, and emotional responses to reading instruction; and, evolving understandings of reading instruction within teacher education. The goal of this research was to contribute to the discourse on the need to bridge the gap between reading research, teacher preparation programs, and classroom practice in BC. This chapter outlines the design of this research, including details surrounding the recruitment of participants, study design, and data collection and analysis processes.

Methodology

This study was informed by a qualitative research methodology. This methodological approach was selected because it aligned with the purpose of the study, which was to explore how pre-service teachers and early career teachers in BC feel equipped to teach reading to primary students. Qualitative methodologies are particularly well suited to this research question as they seek to understand participants' experiences and perspectives within their specific context (Creswell, 1998).

Within this qualitative research, a constructivist paradigm emphasized the unique lived experiences and feelings of the participants, making it an appropriate framework for examining preservice and early career teachers' feelings of preparedness for teaching reading (Creswell, 1998). Furthermore, a qualitative approach allowed for narrative, descriptive data to be collected and analyzed in ways that illuminated participants' unique voices and contexts (Creswell, 1998).

Study Participants and Recruitment

After receiving approval from the ethics board, the researcher began recruitment. Participants were selected using purposeful criterion sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015). The first population was five pre-service teachers in their last year of study in their Bachelor of Education program at a university on Vancouver Island, BC. The second population was five early career teachers from British Columbia public schools with zero to five years of experience in a full time primary (Kindergarten to Grade 3) classroom position. This population and number of participants (i.e., five pre-service and five early career teachers; 10 total) was chosen for interviews as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives across two distinct early stages of the teaching career while the sample size maintained a manageable dataset for rich qualitative analysis (Creswell, 1998). Pre-service teachers were invited through an email distributed by the Undergraduate Chair of the Faculty of Education (Appendix A), while early career teachers were recruited through posts in two BC-based Facebook groups for primary teachers (Appendix A). Recruitment messages outlined the purpose of the study and participation requirements. The first five eligible volunteers from each group were selected. Participants provided informed consent (Appendix B) and took part in a 30–45-minute interview conducted via Microsoft Teams. All participants either had participated in a language arts course at university or had experience teaching reading to primary students and represented some variation in teaching experience and grade levels, which contributed to the richness of the data. Ethical considerations are outlined below and were carefully considered.

Study Design

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data source in this research study. This method allowed the researcher to ask consistent guiding questions (Appendix C) while also providing flexibility for participants to elaborate on the experiences that were most meaningful to them. This format is appropriate to use within qualitative research because of its structured yet flexible nature,

allowing for further probing towards clarity or depth of response (Creswell, 1998). For all participants, the interview protocol consisted of 12 open-ended questions following the same themes but tailored to the stage in their career, either pre-service teachers or early career teachers. These questions were purposefully designed to allow for reflection on concrete experiences (e.g., grade levels of experience, moments of success in supporting a reader) and broader understandings (e.g., literacy instruction beliefs, tensions between university courses and classroom realities). Participants were also asked to discuss their perceived knowledge across foundational reading skills (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary), in addition to their feelings related to planning year-long structured primary literacy instruction.

To deepen understanding of how teacher preparation programs shape readiness, the interview questions also examined participants' exposure to resources, programs, routines, and structures within their coursework or practicum settings. Additional questions explored self-directed learning efforts, such as seeking out readings or professional development independently, and investigated how participants perceive the relationship between reading-research and the practical realities of primary classrooms.

Finally, the interview concluded with questions designed to surface emerging professional tensions and ongoing uncertainties about reading instruction. These questions included asking participants to identify contradictions they anticipate in primary reading instruction and to articulate their own questions as they continue with or prepare to enter their career.

Together, these 12 questions formed a coherent instrument that produced detailed descriptions of participants' feelings, knowledge, preparedness, and aspirations in teaching reading to primary students.

Data Collection, Methods, and Procedures

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams. Data collection occurred over two months (November 6th, 2025, to January 11th, 2026) and involved one

interview per participant, each lasting approximately 30-45-minutes. The primary data collection instrument for this study was through a semi-structured interview (Appendix C) which contained 12 open-ended questions designed to prompt reflection on feelings of preparedness, knowledge about early literacy, and experiences in teaching reading to primary age students. Follow-up questions and probes were used when necessary to clarify responses or encourage participants to expand on their experiences. Microsoft Teams was used for video conferencing, audio recording, and automated transcription to support accurate analysis. Following the interviews, transcripts were downloaded in Microsoft Word Document text-format and were stored securely on a OneDrive folder dedicated to the study. The design of the interview instrument was informed by the research question and literature from the literature review to ensure alignment between the interview questions and the aims of the study. Participation was voluntary, and participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time before, during, and after the interview. Identifying information was removed from transcripts, and pseudonyms were assigned to protect participant confidentiality.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central to all stages of the research process. Prior to data collection, the study received approval from the university's Research Ethics Board. All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study and were informed of the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential. Pseudonyms for participants were used in all written reports, and all information surrounding school names, school districts, and teacher education institutions were redacted. Participants were informed that their responses would be used solely for research purposes and that all data would be handled in accordance with ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Participant data was stored securely in a OneDrive folder dedicated to the study where only the researcher and

research supervisor had access to the raw data. All data was securely stored for the required retention period and permanently deleted following the completion of the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an inductive and thematic approach, consistent with the study's constructivist paradigm and qualitative design (Saldaña, 2021). Codes emerged naturally from participants' narratives, and led to general patterns, more specific categories, and eventually, refined themes (Saldaña, 2021). As the purpose of the research was to explore how pre-service and early career teachers felt prepared to teach reading to primary students, an inductive process allowed themes to emerge holistically from participants' descriptions and unique narrative stories.

All interview transcripts were read at least three times on paper to support a strong familiarization with the data. During the first reading, the researcher focused on understanding the narratives and overall tone of each interview. This included sparingly highlighting initial quotes and keywords that emerged as initially important. The second reading involved highlighting any recurring ideas, key phrases, and meaningful quotations to refine the keywords and capture important emerging information. The third reading offered an opportunity to group keywords and ideas into patterns onto colour-coded sticky notes, eventually formulating four beginning categories that emerged from the findings: feelings, knowledge-base, what participants wanted more of in terms of expanding their knowledge and skills, as well as finally, their reimagining of teacher education programs (Saldaña, 2021).

These categories were then compared across all 10 transcripts, refined, and grouped into themes. This iterative process involved consistent re-examination to ensure that themes accurately represented participants' stories. Manual annotation, highlighting, sticky notes, and chart paper were employed throughout the coding process to physically view and manipulate the emerging connections within themes.

Data interpretation was guided by the study's research question and informed by the constructivist paradigm where meaning is co-constructed between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 1998). The use of inductive thematic analysis ensured that findings were based upon participants' authentic experiences and reflected the complex and nuanced ways individuals make sense of their own unique reading-teaching practice.

Study Trustworthiness

The process of this study attends to Creswell (1998) and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) description of trustworthiness in qualitative research as it employed rigorous procedures to allow for its findings to, as closely as possible, accurately reflect the participants' meanings. The study's credibility was supported through detailed, in-depth semi-structured interviews that involved careful probing to accurately represent participants' meanings and nuanced experiences across the pre-service and early career teacher populations (Creswell, 1998). The procedures used throughout this research study were clearly outlined with transparency including the purpose of this study, the role of the researcher, and the researcher's potential influence over data results. Additionally, transparency regarding participant selection and data collection, analysis, and interpretation were highlighted throughout the research process. Coding was monitored through continuous reflexivity to ensure accuracy and an authentic representation of key findings.

The practice of reflexivity acknowledges the researcher's role in interpreting data and ensures that the researcher reflected on their positionality and potential influence on interpretation (Dodgson, 2019). Through ongoing self-reflection throughout the research process in addition to a refined researcher positionality statement, I strived towards constantly and critically examining how my role may influence study design as well as data collection, interpretation, and representation (Dodgson, 2019). As an insider to this research topic (i.e., falling within the category of early career teacher), I acknowledge that my position as a practicing primary teacher in my fourth year of teaching may have impacted both the questions I asked and the way I interpreted responses,

including the development of themes (Dodgson, 2019). To avoid the bias of selecting participants that might have opinions that support my own, I recruited participants from a pool of a wide range of school districts and locations in British Columbia (Jamieson et al., 2023). With my position in mind, I approached analysis with transparency and a commitment to situating myself as a co-constructor of knowledge production within the research (Dodgson, 2019).

Dependability was addressed by employing a logical and consistent interview protocol across all 10 participants as well as clear and secure documentation of data collection and analyses (Creswell, 1998). Confirmability of the study is demonstrated in how the interpretations of data were derived directly from the participants' narrative experiences through interview transcripts and direct quotations, rather than by researcher assumptions or inklings (Creswell, 1998). The study's transferability is strengthened in how it highlights the experiences of pre-service and early career teachers and allows the reader to see how findings may transfer across varied educational contexts (Creswell, 1998).

According to WorkBC (2025), approximately 38,000 elementary and Kindergarten teachers are employed across the province of British Columbia, and of that population, primary teachers (K-3) represent a subset (p. 59). Therefore, this study's sample size of 10 participants cannot be viewed as statistically significant, and the results cannot be considered generalizable across the primary teacher population. With this in mind, expanding the study population would be a next step towards greater significance, generalizability, and transferability of results.

This chapter outlined the methodology and methods used in the study, including the research design, participant recruitment process, data collection procedures, and data analysis approach. Ethical considerations were also outlined. The following chapter presents the findings of the study organized into the themes that emerged through the data analysis process.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Results

Introduction and Participant Demographics

The purpose of this research was to understand the experiences, feelings, and knowledge of pre-service and early career teachers in British Columbia (BC) surrounding reading instruction to primary students. This qualitative study specifically investigated pre-service and early career teachers' attitudes and feelings of preparedness towards teaching reading, as well as the extent of their knowledge base in foundational reading instruction content and skills. As a result, the question guiding this research was: How are pre-service and early career teachers in BC feeling equipped to teach reading to primary students?

This study examined the experiences of five pre-service teachers in their last year of study in their Bachelor of Education program at a university on Vancouver Island, BC as well as five early career teachers from British Columbia public schools with zero to five years of experience in a full time primary (Kindergarten to Grade 3) classroom position. The grades of teaching and practicum experience of the participants spanned from Early Childhood Education (ECE) to Kindergarten through to Grade 7. The majority of experiences fell within the Kindergarten to Grade 3 range.

The teaching and practica experiences of participants spanned across eight different school districts across the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island in BC. The majority of experiences were within urban centres, while some fell within rural locations.

Participants of this study attended a diverse array of Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) with varied foci and specializations, from Elementary (K-7) generalist, Social Emotional Learning, and Primary Years. Some participants obtained their Bachelor of Education as their undergraduate degree, and some received their Bachelor of Education as a post-degree program (PDP), following a non-education-related undergraduate degree. Cumulatively, the participants attended their TEPs at three different post-secondary institutions in BC.

Study Context and Overview of Findings

To gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences, the semi-structured interviews explored several key areas: professional experiences and contexts; beliefs and values about reading instruction; perceived preparedness, knowledge areas, and emotional responses to reading instruction; and evolving understandings of reading instruction within teacher education.

The findings of this study are based on qualitative data as a result of the semi-structured interview protocol that was followed to gain a deeper understanding of B.C. public teachers' current feelings, attitudes, beliefs, practices, and opinions as they pertain to primary grades reading instruction. The narrative data from the one-time semi-structured interviews over Microsoft Teams was transcribed through the Microsoft Teams transcription software into Microsoft Word documents for analysis.

Data analysis was conducted through an inductive and thematic approach, involving iterative reading of transcripts, initial coding of responses, and the organization of codes into broader categories.

Presentation of Findings by Category

Four key categories were identified that captured the shared experiences across participants' narratives: (1) feelings related to preparedness; (2) perceived knowledge base of reading instruction; (3) areas in which participants desired further preparation and support; and (4) a reimagined landscape for pre-service and early career teachers in BC. For the purposes of maintaining participant anonymity, pre-service teachers are identified as PST 1–5 and early career teachers are identified as ECT 1–5. Teacher Education Programs are referred to as TEPs.

One: Feelings Related to Preparedness

This category presents pre-service and early career teachers' emotional responses to reading instruction. The data reflects how the participants feel about planning, teaching, and assessing reading to primary age students. Across participants, a range of responses was reported, including

positive feelings, negative feelings, and feelings connected to complex class compositions and classroom management.

Positive Feelings. Some participants described positive feelings surrounding reading instruction and planning, including confidence, happiness, and hopefulness towards more practical experience in the future.

ECT 1 reported that they “felt most confident in recent years teaching reading when there was a structured plan to follow.” They described that the resource University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) Manual allowed them to teach “structured lessons that [were] routine-based on a weekly basis,” and that has given them “the most confidence [and success] in teaching reading.” Interestingly, they mentioned that “without a resource like UFLI” to guide their scope and sequence, they “don’t think [they] would feel as confident [in reading instruction].” ECT 1 also described that they “feel prepared knowing [they] have [the UFLI manual] and the skills [they’ve] learned in [their] most recent years from it.” Interestingly, ECT 1 was the only participant who connected one of the five pillars of reading instruction to positive feelings, stating that they are “able to feel very happy and confident when teaching comprehension lessons because [they] know there is always something students can grasp [from a story].”

The pre-service teachers’ positive feelings were rooted in future practical experiences, and many shared the perspective that, eventually, they hope to gain the skills needed to teach reading. For example, PST 2 was hopeful in their description of positive feelings and explained, “I think it will all come with time. There’s just angst getting into the career and the unknown of doing everything on your own [for the first time].” Similarly, PST 1 shared, “I’m feeling like I’m looking forward to spending some more time with literacy with [primary age students] and learning more about how to instruct [it effectively].”

Notably, most participants cited the importance of a reciprocal feeling of motivation, enjoyment, and fun between the teacher and students in reading instruction. This suggests that the

participants regard their own positive feelings towards reading instruction as connected to student reading enjoyment and motivation.

Negative Feelings. This category reports the participants' negative feelings regarding reading instruction including feelings of being underprepared, overwhelmed, uncertain, and holding great concern for student learning outcomes.

Across the majority of participants, they consistently described their feelings of underpreparedness in connection to the notion that their TEP did not adequately equip them for teaching reading. Upon entering the classroom in practicum or in a teaching contract, many participants stated that they did not have the necessary knowledge or confidence to deliver effective reading instruction. When speaking on behalf of their cohort of classmates from their TEP, ECT 1 stated, "We all felt a little bit underprepared," while going on to share, "I did not feel prepared in my first year for sure." This sentiment was echoed by ECT 5, who explained, "I did not feel prepared in my opinion, at all [to teach reading]," and "definitely felt underprepared heading into my career." ECT 3 stated that they "didn't understand how to do assessments" and they "didn't really have the knowledge or the reasoning behind why [they] were choosing [particular books for their students]."

The pre-service teachers shared a similar sentiment—PST 1 described, "I really don't feel like I've been that prepared for literacy instruction throughout the university program," wondering, "How [can I] really start that foundational [reading instruction] in a way that's successful to my students?" This was reinforced by PST 3 who shared that they "just feel totally unprepared" in reading instruction, while PST 1 continued on to state that they are "not confident" in reading instruction. Overall, the participants shared a passionate and consistent response, indicating that feelings of unpreparedness were a shared experience among pre-service and early career teachers.

Many of the participants shared negative feelings about the complexity of literacy instruction and planning—how it feels too large and daunting to manage, especially without a clear scope and sequence to follow. Participants were queried on their feelings connected to creating a

structured literacy plan with routines and schedules (Question 6, Appendix C), which led PST 2 to mention feeling “overwhelmed at first,” while PST 3 answered with, “[I’m drawing] an absolute blank.” Similarly, making a year-long plan for literacy instruction was “a little bit overwhelming” to PST 4, and caused PST 5 to stop in their tracks and say, “Oh no. I don’t know very much about that.” ECT 2 described the idea as “overwhelming” because “I’m always feeling like there’s not a solid plan to follow and I’m just grabbing [resources] from different places.”

ECT 5 shared that long-term planning for reading instruction “can feel a bit overwhelming... trying to puzzle-piece everything together.” This sentiment was shared by ECT 4, who described that making a year-long literacy plan would make them feel “incredibly lost” and “stressed because there [aren’t] these set plans or really, directions.” A lack of direction in planning and instruction for reading was an idea shared among many of the participants that ECT 4 further expanded upon, “I felt like I didn’t have a full scope and sequence... I was just kind of randomly trying things as I went [since there] really isn’t a clear plan of how to teach [reading] that’s given to new teachers.”

Besides making a clear instructional plan for reading, ECT 2 wondered about resources and asked, “What are the best resources to use that just make sense so [reading instruction] is not so random feeling?” PST 3 emphasized, “I don’t have any direction,” and ECT 3 furthered this idea by stating that they felt “unknowing, scattered, confused... [and they] did not know how to set up a routine.” Finally, ECT 5 shared a feeling of “struggle” in “trying to figure out where [students] need to be at what times in the year,” also wondering where reading instruction’s focus should lie at different times of the year. Across the participants, their narratives illuminated consistent feelings of being overwhelmed and lacking a general structure in reading instruction design and implementation.

The participants shared many emotional responses to uncertainty in their reading instruction, such as stress, anxiety, and a lack of confidence. When prompted to share feelings surrounding creating a structured literacy plan with routines and schedules (Question 6, Appendix

C), ECT 1 stated that if this question was asked of them in their first year of teaching, they would have been “terrified... I did not know how to teach reading!” PST 1 answered a similar question by stating they would feel “definitely nervous for sure... a little bit of anxiety.”

ECT 2 spoke about how teaching reading “stresses [them] out” in terms of making sure they are properly serving and best meeting the needs of their students—a sentiment shared by ECT 5. They delved deeper into the context of early career reading planning, instruction, and assessment being especially challenging. They described the challenge as situated within a context of overwhelm and newness since “there’s already a lot of things within that first five years [of teaching],” that early career teachers are “just trying to figure out.”

Many participants reported a sense of feeling lost or confused, like PST 3 who shared, “I feel like, where do I even start?” in regards to reading instruction—an experience echoed by ECT 2, “Sometimes I ask myself, ‘Oh my gosh, what am I doing?’” Feeling stress, anxiety, confusion, and a lack of confidence in reading instruction was a shared experience across the board for pre-service and early career teachers alike.

Feelings Connected to Complex Class Compositions and Classroom Management. This subtheme embodies participants’ feelings of emotional distress, constraint, and decreased efficacy in reading instruction while working within the bounds of complex class compositions and having to manage diverse behaviours. ECT 1 described a strong sense of limitation in their ability to effectively support all learners by sharing, “Sometimes, I feel like I’m not doing the best job because I can’t meet everyone’s needs at once,” and ECT 2 connected to this sentiment by stating, “It’s hard to manage the different [reading] levels in a way that can be part of a routine.”

Specifically, managing behaviours was noted by ECT 1 as taking precedence over literacy instruction and diminishing the opportunity for small-group targeted learning:

“When [there are] behaviours [to manage] on top of teaching literacy, behaviours go first, literacy goes second. So, teaching small groups is usually out of the question unless I have a

secondary person or a third person in the room with me. So that's where I feel unsuccessful or not as successful, because hearing a child read and understand, and try to grasp their fluency is really hard to do in a very loud classroom."

An interesting finding that arose across the pre-service and early career teachers was feelings of emotional distress that were tied not only to their sense of self as educators, but also to a fear of failing their students. ECT 2 mentioned that they "often feel like so many kids are getting left behind," and they feel tensions in ensuring "everybody's getting the help they need." PST 3 continued this idea and asked "How are we supposed to do this?" regarding delivering effective reading instruction that meets the needs of all students in a classroom, "...with 22 kids at different levels?" Participants frequently described a strong sense of responsibility for their students' outcomes and success in foundational reading development.

Across the data, a key pattern that emerges is both pre-service and early career teachers having reduced confidence or a lack of confidence in reading instruction. Feelings of uncertainty and overwhelm were commonly expressed and were often linked to both a perceived lack of preparedness in reading instruction and the complexities within today's classrooms in BC. However, it is important to highlight the positive feelings of confidence, happiness, and hopefulness towards more practical experience in the future shared by many participants. Together, these findings suggest that generally, pre-service and early career teachers have many shared experiences that contribute to their stress, confusion, and concern for effective reading instruction and its impact on student reading development.

Two: Perceived Knowledge Base of Reading Instruction

This category details the foundational knowledge base that participants report as grounding their practice as reading teachers. Across participants, there was a consistent pattern of referring to a wide array of sources from which they built or are building their knowledge base. Overall, this category shows that, when describing their perceived knowledge of reading instruction, participants

drew on a range of resources, routines, and assessments, as well as theories and professional learning contacts.

Varied Resources, Routines, and Assessments. This category reflects the plethora of resources, routines, and assessments that participants referred to as keystones of their instructional knowledge bases.

While speaking to their knowledge of reading instruction, participants frequently expressed the names of specific resources that they refer to in practice or that they know they can look back on in the future. PST 1 explained, “I have bookmarked all the websites that I’ve gone to throughout the program under a literacy section in my [computer] browser,” and “I plan to read back in my notes to hit key ideas” when planning for reading instruction. Across the 10 interviews, participants named the following 14 reading instructional resources and literacy “gurus”: Tara West, Daily 5, UFLI, Heggerty, Secret Stories, the Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years (POPEY), Teachers Pay Teachers (TPT), Words Their Way, PM Benchmarks, Syllasense, McCracken Spelling, Faye Brownlie, Adrienne Gear, and Canadian Daily Practice. Interestingly, across the dataset, UFLI emerged as the only resource referenced by every participant.

In addition to resources, ECTs offered their preferred reading instructional routines as central organizing frameworks within their instructional approaches. Across the five participants, they named literacy stations, lit circles, UFLI decodables, reading rotations, Daily 5 CAFE, explode the image, buddy reading, individual whiteboard phonics, small group instruction, and whole group direct instruction as their core instructional routines. This category details how there is a wide and inconsistent variety of foundational tools that guide pre-service and early career teacher instructional planning and daily teaching practices.

Across the board, all of the participants linked their knowledge base back to reading assessments. All of the PSTs referred to planning to use screeners as formative reading assessment at some point in their interviews, which suggests an emphasis on the use of ongoing assessment to

drive instruction within their reading course in their TEP. This is verified through PST 2, mentioning that their TEP reading professor emphasized “the importance of assessments” in reading instruction and practice. Two early literacy screeners were mentioned by name—DIBELS and Acadience.

The examples within this category suggest the importance of resources and routines to the reading instructional knowledge of pre-service and early career teachers. Across participants, there was a consistent pattern of naming and referring to multiple sources as foundational to their knowledge base.

Theories. This category outlines the role of foundational literacy theories that participants identified as contributing to their knowledge in reading instruction. Throughout the 10 interviews, participants named concepts such as syllable types, the Science of Reading, structured literacy, and Scarborough’s Reading Rope.

PST 2 mentioned that within their TEP, their reading course introduced them to important theories, “It allowed me to not only understand why literacy is important, but how it [is cemented] in the brain. It was a really great foundation in that background knowledge that I needed in order to learn everything else along the way.” In addition to these theories, conceptual tools such as “Sound City, Meaning Mountains, and Vision Village” were mentioned by PST 2 as metaphors from their reading course that supported their understanding of literacy development and made more accessible how the brain learns to read (Amplify, 2022).

Participants often attributed their reading instruction knowledge base to their awareness of the underlying mechanisms of reading. Interestingly, the data revealed that PSTs were more apt to name theories than ECTs. Through ongoing reference to Scarborough’s Reading Rope and the Science of Reading, it suggests that participants are trying their best to demonstrate their knowledge as grounded in research-informed perspectives and structured literacy practices.

Professional Learning Contacts. This category presents the professional learning contacts that participants identified as contributing to their knowledge of reading instruction.

Many of the ECTs cited district literacy coordinators as important points of contact in the development of their reading instructional knowledge base. ECT 5 reported that they worked alongside “a really great district literacy coordinator” for a few months in their first year of teaching, which made them feel “very fortunate that [they’ve] gotten the opportunity to participate in a lot of professional development [in the area of reading instruction].” In addition to these high-level district consultants, many pre-service and early career teachers reported learning foundational knowledge through collaboration with grade-level colleagues in their practicum or early career teaching placements. This suggests that collaborative and collegial relationships may support the development of pre-service and early career teacher knowledge base in reading instruction.

Interestingly, PST 2, who was very confident in speaking to their knowledge base of reading instruction, reported: “[In my practicum], I was placed with a literacy teacher [who] showed me how to do the guided instruction and how to do literacy.” They went on to say, “I’ve heard about [theories and knowledge of reading instruction in their TEP], but then I got to see it all in practice, which was so cool!” This anecdote was notable as PST 2 had a practicum experience unique from the other participants (i.e., with a specialist teacher rather than a generalist classroom teacher) and was the only participant to report high levels of confidence in reading instruction. They are also hoping to pursue further education in literacy instruction upon graduation from their undergraduate degree. This variation and PST 2’s unique perspective suggests that the context of one’s practicum placement (i.e., their mentor teacher’s position or area of expertise) may contribute to one’s confidence in reading instruction.

Across all categories, a key pattern that emerges is the wide variety of resources and routines that pre-service and early career teachers turn to for building their knowledge base in reading instruction. What stands out most is the sheer volume of varied resources across the Balanced Literacy perspective (e.g., PM Benchmarks, Daily 5 CAFE) and those that are aligned with the Science of Reading (e.g., UFLI, Syllasense, Tara West). Together, these categories reveal the

finding that across the 10 participants, there is not a clear path or method by which pre-service and early career teachers obtain and draw knowledge in their reading instructional practices.

Three: Areas in which Participants Desired Further Preparation and Support

A strong sentiment shared across all interviews was the need for further preparation and ongoing support in literacy instruction. Each participant reported motivation to improve their practice and best serve the needs of their students. They stated a reliance on trial-and-error, puzzle-piecing various resources together, and undertaking ongoing, self-directed, and self-funded professional learning. This category includes five key areas where participants desired further preparation and support as pre-service and early career teachers.

Desire for Streamlined, Coherent Resources. Many participants described the resources they use for reading instruction in a fragmented or piecemeal fashion. Participants shared that it was common, starting in their TEP, to begin collecting resources onto cloud programs like Google Drive or, in the case of PST 2, a USB flash drive: “I’ve been given a handful of resources from my last year’s mentor teacher, so I have a flash drive of a bunch of cool resources.” ECT 4 described the process of finding and synthesizing many resources and “meshing [them] together,” and how they rely on using “bits and pieces [from various resources]” in order to “supplement activities or just [to have] as a general guideline of what to teach in what order.” ECT 3 discussed how they rely on resources from their district that are accessed in various places, like a physical book room in their school and a “Microsoft Teams page of literacy resources from other colleagues.” ECT 5, along with many other participants, spoke to the fact that websites like TPT are easy and save time—sharing how they use these unvetted resources “because it’s somewhat of a skeletal plan” that they can follow because they “don’t have [the] answer to [the question of how to teach reading].”

In continuation of the idea of not having a reading instructional plan, many participants shared their frustrations towards the lack of a clear starting point or structure in reading instruction. PST 1 stated that, “When it comes to phonics, other than following the UFLI book, I don’t really know

where I would start.” Interestingly, only one participant referred to the *K–4 Foundational Learning Progressions* (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2025) while bringing up the idea that districts have moved away from standardized teacher resources like textbooks but have provided nothing in their place—ECT 5 described how they “know the Ministry just posted” more descriptions of learning progressions, but they have not had the chance to engage with them in detail. They also mentioned that these resources are appreciated; however, “It’s hard to start [a teaching] career without those things and without textbooks. We don’t have textbooks anymore!” ECT 2 built on from these ideas by posing the question, “What are some of the best resources to use that make sense,” to avoid their instruction feeling “so random.”

In further exploration of participants explaining their lack of structure and piecemealed resources, many also shared uncertainty towards whether resources were research-backed or of high quality. ECT 3 mentioned how they know “not everything is research-backed,” and they “need help knowing what is best.” They went on to ask, “What is the best [perspective] to listen to and how do I implement it the best?” Another ECT, who teaches a Kindergarten and Grade 1 (K/1) combined class, provided insightful thoughts and questions on where instructional emphasis should be placed at the foundational, K/1 level:

“I understand we need these five areas, but where [should] emphasis [be] placed on phonics... phonemic awareness...those early decoding and encoding skills? Or how much comprehension are we bringing in? Again, I feel like I do my best to balance, but I haven’t done a ton of research, I’m not a researcher, but I [wonder], does research suggest that the ability to decode words and look for word chunks... is that where emphasis should be placed [at these grades]? You know, when I learned to read, [we were told to] look at pictures. So, it seems like [there are] a lot of opinions [and varied resources] within reading instruction. And I don’t think that there’s necessarily a clear-cut ‘This is the only way to do reading instruction.’”

In addition to struggling to determine which resources are research-based or highly effective, many participants described heightened uncertainty and indecision surrounding choosing ‘the best’ resources. ECT 4 described a strong internal tension and pressure towards making the ‘right’ choice of reading instructional resources and routines because “there is no set plan or way to do it.” They described the fact that “there are so many paths you could take... and many interesting programs,” and due to those many options, they constantly ask themselves, “What if there's a better way?” They concluded their thoughts by sharing a sentiment, which was echoed by many other participants, that by them “choosing a path,” that choice will inevitably impact, for better or for worse, how their students learn to read.

Across the board, participants’ narratives shared a common thread that the lack of a clear scope and sequence guiding their reading instruction, in addition to the lack of vetted, research-backed resources, caused them to “piecemeal” together a program that was left feeling “janky” and “awkward”—especially in the early years of their career.

Reliance on Self-Directed, Self-Funded Professional Learning Outside of Work Hours.

Amongst pre-service and early career teachers alike, a common category surfaced where participants described relying on their own time, funding, and personal motivation to learn how to teach reading. ECT 4 described that since they “don't really know how to teach a full scope,” they do “research” themselves by “looking up programs... and learning and reading” on their own time. PST 3 described how they try to “consume as [many] webinars [as] POPEY has,” blocking off large amounts of their personal time in order to gain confidence in teaching reading.

Across the participant population, all ECTs and a handful of PSTs mentioned spending considerable amounts of their personal time watching videos, listening to podcasts, speaking with more experienced teachers, and purchasing programs with their own money—all on the topic of reading instruction. ECT 5 stated, “I spend a lot of my personal time trying to make [reading instructional resources] or trying to figure out the direction that I want to take [my reading

instruction].” Similarly, ECT 4 described a lot of “informal” self-directed professional learning as “[spending] a lot of time... constantly thinking [about] and seeing [ideas for instruction] and thinking about how to integrate it into my own classroom.” They went on to explain that many foundational elements of reading instruction, including the five main pillars of reading, weren’t “touched on [in their program],” so they had to “[learn] and read about on their own time.”

ECT 5 provided a unique perspective where their school district offered professional development in reading instruction that has “really helped motivate” them to learn more about reading instruction. They shared that finally, they are starting to gain confidence, but admitted, “It’s also been me seeking those out. I’ve taken the steps to do it because I know how important it is.” This participant provided an interesting perspective that, at least in their school district, resources and support towards developing effective reading instruction are available to early career teachers; however, they need to have the time and motivation to seek them out on their own time.

Need for Consistent, Practical Literacy-Focused Professional Development. Multiple participants described that they have not yet been offered literacy-based Professional Development (Pro-D) Days as pre-service or early career teachers, while many are actively seeking it out. ECT 1 stated that if they “have the ability to choose professional development on numeracy or literacy,” they will choose one of those focus areas. Generally, participants linked a lack of availability in literacy Pro-D with a widespread disconnect between reading research and practice. Many participants spoke to the theory they learned in their TEP but admitted to having a lack of confidence and little guidance in implementing it into classroom practice. PST 3 explained that they knew the theory, but “the application was missing.” Due to a lack of opportunity to anchor theoretical learning into practical, hands-on professional development, many participants described that their knowledge has not been “[cemented]” into their practice.

Building upon this disconnect, the majority of participants linked this issue to personal feelings of frustration and diminished confidence in teaching reading. The interviewees explained

their need for direct and explicit guidance in teaching reading, as seen through ECT 1, sharing how they "just wanted an answer" from their TEP: "How do we teach kids to read?" PST 5 described their practicum experiences as "whiplash"—a stark misalignment between the "ideal school" context of their TEP and the reality of schools in BC. Many participants wondered whether research takes into account the complex realities of classroom composition.

Complexity of Classroom Contexts Not Reflected in Research or Programs. In further exploration of reading instruction within the complex behavioural demands of contemporary classrooms, participants continually emphasized their concerns towards reading research and resources, wondering if these realities are considered in research or resource design.

Recommended reading instructional practices, such as direct and small group instruction, were questioned by many participants. PST 3 asked, "How do you use direct, explicit instruction with a whole bunch of different reading levels? How do you supervise all the kids? How [can] you be five people in one class at one time?" ECT 3 described research as a reflection of the "ideal circumstances where you have these 5 or 6 students in a small group" and "it all goes smoothly and no one interrupts you," pointing out a disconnect to reality—the unpredictability of contemporary classrooms cause constant interruptions to instruction... "one kid got a paper cut," kids are "rolling on top of one another," and "the office is calling because someone is getting picked up early." Similarly, ECT 5 expanded upon this idea and explained how research offers "various ways of teaching reading instruction" and is "not a one-size-fits-all approach," but emphasized that it "does not equate" to the complexities of classroom behaviours, often resembling a "cookie-cutter dream school" where "every kid's sitting there... totally focused and locked in." On the other hand, they described real classrooms as spaces where "kids are flipping around" and where "many other elements" affect the learning environment. In the end, these thoughts caused ECT 5 to question the effectiveness of many resources and research-backed practices: "how can I teach a kid to decode a CVC word when... [another] kid is throwing a chair?"

Questions and concerns surrounding practicality were elaborated on by ECT 1, who shared that “not being able to find time to do one-on-one” instruction makes “small group work” difficult. Additionally, ECT 2 emphasized that “teaching small groups is usually out of the question” without any additional adult support in the classroom. The inconsistency between knowledge and practice in a context of complex behaviour management contributed to many participants sharing feelings of inadequacy and frustration. Even after spending large amounts of personal time and money on bettering their practice, they report coming out on the other side feeling uncertain regarding balancing reading intervention and differentiation. ECT 1 described feeling uneasy and concerned about students who are “falling through the cracks” and wanted to know how they can best meet the needs of all students within a complex classroom—an exasperated sentiment shared by most participants.

Need for Deeper Knowledge of the Five Pillars of Reading Instruction. Finally, participants outlined the areas in which they want to gain confidence and knowledge across the five pillars of reading instruction (NRP, 2000). Most participants were familiar with the terminology of each of the five pillars, and many identified gaps in understanding and knowledge on how to teach and assess each area effectively. Pre-service teachers shared the sentiment of limited experience with foundational word recognition skill knowledge in areas like phonics and phonemic awareness, with one sharing how they want more knowledge “in honestly all [of the areas of reading instruction],” admitting, “I don’t know enough. I know some of the terms, but I just feel totally unprepared.”

Interestingly, many pre-service and early career participants outlined challenges in explicitly teaching and developing students’ comprehension skills with PST 5, mentioning how comprehension is “often assessed and tested but not taught.”

Teaching and assessing fluency were noted as an area of challenge by ECT 1 who stated, “Fluency is where I feel most underprepared in terms of assessing students at a certain level when everyone’s all over the place.” Many participants noted confusion and struggle due to their students’

reading proficiency having such a strong variability as well as a lack of a clear instructional scope and sequence. Multiple early career teachers pointed out the benefits of the autonomy of the context of the curriculum in BC while also illuminating its contribution to their feelings of confusion and uncertainty due to a lack of thorough foundational knowledge or guidance.

Across this category, participants shone a light on many shared experiences of holding high levels of autonomy and a profound lack of guidance. Each participant was motivated and committed towards effective literacy instruction, as evidenced by the sacrifices they made towards their personal time and funds in a noble commitment to the betterment of their students. This individualized, unvetted, and substantial time and monetary commitment falls in place of TEP preparation and ongoing professional development support. Every participant named multiple resources and a “piecemealed” approach to reading instruction driven by a personal interest in research-informed practice. Due to the many resources and uncertainty about which are effective or backed by research, many participants reported feelings of inadequacy in having to figure out how to teach reading through personal, unsupervised, and unvetted trial-and-error. The ambiguity and uncertainty of putting the impetus of choosing, purchasing, and/or designing resources onto the teacher is further exacerbated by the lack of congruence between reading theory and practice. To make matters more challenging for the participants, they went on to describe how this context falls within classroom conditions where complex and intense behaviours are met with a lack of support (inconsistent resource and EA support). This theme emphasized participants’ need for coherent, streamlined, and research-backed resources as well as the need to bridge the gap between reading knowledge and practical experience through their TEP and ongoing professional development that takes into account today’s complex classroom contexts.

Four: A Reimagined Landscape for Pre-Service and Early Career Teachers in BC

The final category that emerged from the study’s narrative data is a reimagined future landscape with potential paths forward for pre-service and early career teachers in BC. This

landscape demonstrates what participants regard as important to supporting the ongoing and continuous growth and professional development for new-to-career primary reading teachers. This category is important in relation to the research question as it illuminates authentic narratives from TEPs in BC and how PSTs and ECTs are feeling equipped after their training. It is also important in how it showcases suggestions from pre-service and early career teachers on how to enact positive, supportive change in teacher preparedness in primary reading instruction at the TEP, school district, and curriculum levels.

Narrative Realities from Teacher Education Programs in BC. This category reflects the lived experiences of pre-service and early career teachers in their TEPs across BC in relation to preparedness in reading instruction.

All participants shared that within their TEP, they only took one four-month literacy course. They explained that within this singular course, many different concepts were introduced that, in the end, lacked depth, cohesion, and practical implementation. PST 3 took a course titled *Language Arts* and explained, “I feel like we really just touched the surface of what new teachers should know going into [teaching Language Arts]. There is so much content, and there’s so much to learn.” This sentiment was shared by PST 5, who described that it was “hard to actually get into that nuance of each stage of reading,” due to a lack of time. ECT 4 felt that their literacy course taught them “random snippets” of reading instruction and, after the course, they revealed, “I didn’t really know how to make sense of [the learning from the course] or what to do with it.” Across participants, many shared the feeling that their literacy courses were not helpful to their development or preparation as reading teachers.

The participants elaborated on feeling underprepared by their literacy course, citing a lack of practical application and implementation of the theoretical learning. With limited opportunity to apply knowledge, participants described that many concepts felt abstract— “I feel like with the

amount of time we had, it's like trying to teach someone how to fix a car, but not having a car in front of you to actually do it... there wasn't anything to apply it to explicitly" (PST 3).

Many participants outlined the lack of a practical aspect in addition to a lack of emphasis on meaningful foundational skills (i.e., designing a scope and sequence and making a yearly, weekly, or daily plan for reading instruction). ECT 4 shared, "My Teacher Education Program was a bit more geared towards providing us with one-off activities rather than how to think of a whole scope and sequence." Similarly, ECT 2 shared, "I wish there [were] a little bit more [of the] building blocks and how to really lay [reading instruction] out and roll it out and program it." This sentiment was echoed by ECT 3, "We didn't have a lot of education on how to run a reading rotation or how to start [a reading program]." This common thread across all participants highlighted the absence of knowledge in designing and teaching a cohesive, structured scope and sequence for long-term literacy instruction on their own. ECT 4 described designing and implementing reading instruction as "very hard" to do by themselves, and they felt pressure to do it independently after their TEP "drilled" and emphasized, "Do things by yourself... Don't use any premade resources... You need to make things yourself."

Contributing to the lack of confidence and support in designing a scope and sequence, many participants described limited engagement with the five pillars of reading and early literacy skills within their TEP. All ECTs and most PSTs shared narratives surrounding insufficient depth in foundational literacy knowledge from their TEPs. ECT 4 described that within their literacy course, they "didn't really learn very much about how to teach reading," while ECT 5 similarly shared that their course "did not prepare [them] in the different areas of reading instruction." Many participants cited their course as "lacking" in the foundations of reading instruction— ECT 2 described that their course did not "[break] down all the building blocks of early literacy," leading them to share, despite being a handful of years into their career as a primary teacher, that they still wish they learned more in their TEP: "I wish I took more [courses in literacy]."

Another key element within this category is participants' descriptions of broad TEP structures that overgeneralize and dilute the effectiveness of literacy courses. Both pre-service and early career teachers outlined a lack of depth in their literacy course due to the short timeline (i.e., one semester) and an incredibly large range of information (K-7 and even K-12 reading, writing, listening, and speaking). PST 5 described that their Language Arts course was taken by Bachelor of Education students in both the elementary (K-7) and secondary (8-12) streams. Many participants' narratives imparted the idea that combining all or many different grades into one course is an unmanageable task to complete effectively. ECT 4 illuminated this reality by sharing, "Obviously, because we were grouped from K-7... I feel like we didn't really talk about anything super well or in depth..." and continued on to describe, "It's hard *to teach* how to teach Kindergarten and Grade 7 at the same time... in catering to all of us, it kind of felt like it catered to none of us..."

The majority of ECT participants look back on the projects and activities within their literacy course as useless or irrelevant, while ECT 4 cemented this concern by describing most assignments as "relatively abstract" and "social-justice focused." They continued on to emphasize how social justice ideas and perspectives are extremely important and valuable for educators; however, within a course designed to teach them the foundations of literacy, ECT 4 would have preferred to learn "the actual basics and scope" of reading instruction.

As a result of self-described broad and generalized literacy courses, participants felt underprepared and ill-equipped for the centrality and complexity of literacy instruction to all areas of teaching at the primary level. ECT 5 reflected, "...[literacy] is like 90% of our day... you constantly are doing learning about vocabulary and sentences and reading and writing..." an idea echoed by ECT 2, who went on to say their TEP literacy course, "did not prepare me, in my opinion at all... I definitely felt very underprepared heading into my career in regards to literacy instruction..." It is by this context, a lack of preparedness from their TEP, that inspired ECT 4 to share, "I formed more of an approach to reading instruction after my teacher education program." Collectively, these voices

reveal a common lack of preparedness in the crucial and all-encompassing nature of reading instruction.

What is particularly notable in this category is the connection to the research question and the frequency of participants sharing their feelings of unpreparedness in teaching reading to primary students. Through ongoing reference to surface-level and insufficient depth in TEP literacy courses, a lack of practical application and implementation of knowledge within their TEP literacy courses, and an overgeneralization of the content within their TEP due to broad program structure and time constraints, participants reported widespread perceived feelings of under-preparation and fragmented literacy knowledge.

Reimagined Teacher Education Programs. This category reveals the imagined ideas offered by pre-service and early career teachers as to how TEPs could better serve teachers and prepare them for having the ability to design, teach, and assess reading effectively. Key suggestions include increased practical experience, longer literacy coursework, developmentally levelled coursework, having a foundational framework with high-quality instructional resources, and rebalancing TEP course priorities.

Across the board, participants shared a desire for further applied learning, explicit modelling, and opportunities for literacy instruction practice before their evaluated practicum experience. ECT 4 asked, “How can [reading instruction] be taught to us better... before we’re actually in a classroom... I felt like my first class were guinea pigs...” and went on to explain, “I do feel like since it was not taught to me... I was just randomly trying a bunch of things...” With this sentiment in mind, many participants suggested that if literacy courses within TEPs could embed a practical, hands-on element into their coursework (beyond the formal practicum), it would be an opportunity for growth in literacy instruction skills development.

Most participants also advocated for a longer and more prioritized course on the topic of literacy instruction to allow for more adequate time to explore the intricacies of this central subject.

“[My] language arts class... should run a full year,” shared PST 3, who went on to describe, “... the amount of information... is really jammed in there.” This participant referred to literacy as “the anchor of school,” a sentiment echoed by ECT 1, who further posited, “I don’t think there is enough time focused on literacy in primary years [TEPs]... If I could have it my way, primary years [TEPs] would only assess numeracy, literacy, and social emotional learning...” Across participants, many shared the desire for their literacy course to be more thorough, clear, and focused towards the basics and foundations of reading instruction, something they suggest is possible through a longer and more prioritized course structure.

Beyond length of time and depth of focus, PSTs and ECTs also imagined a TEP where literacy coursework was differentiated by developmental levels: a primary (K-3) literacy course and an intermediate (4-7) literacy course. ECT 4 shared, “I would have loved to have a primary-focused class where [they taught us], ‘this is how you teach reading...’” and went on to describe, “If we are being qualified to teach K-7... that would be really useful to get more specifics...” Even PST 5, whose practicum placements have been solely in intermediate grades, echoed this sentiment by sharing, “The reality of teaching is that you get what you get, so it’s very important to be familiar with content and knowledgeable across all ages.” This statement reflects the truth of many urban school districts where full-time contracts are challenging to obtain at the start of one’s career, and one may have to work in a grade level beyond one’s personal experience or knowledge base. In order to ensure teachers’ knowledge bases align with all grades of their K-7 certification, ECT 4 stated, “I think that intermediate teachers should have some more understanding of the basics [of primary reading instruction] too...” Interestingly, PST 4 shared that while working in intermediate classrooms during their practicum placement, they realized,

“I quickly discovered that you’ll always be working on reading [even beyond the primary years], and all teachers should really be informed about how to teach reading because you

will get those kids that haven't been practiced or haven't been practicing reading or are really good at masking skill deficits and you're the one that finds it."

This section within the category illuminated a consistent desire for a more in-depth knowledge base for teachers to be able to draw from across primary and intermediate reading instruction contexts.

Across participants, many desired structure and explicit guidance on their reading scope and sequence. In addition to this, they also wanted high-quality resources to guide their instruction. As such, participants suggested TEPs implement a clear reading framework course supported by comprehensive reading resources, rather than expecting PSTs and ECTs to build their own curriculum independently.

Participants, like ECT 4, suggested TEPs could provide their students with instructional clarity through consistent resources and structures, "I feel like it would be really nice to have a course for... the building blocks [of reading instruction]... This is the structure of a reading lesson..." —an idea based on a resource created by their school district. They went on to share that "having a fundamental resource where it kind of maps out... what we must teach and need to know..." and teaching PSTs how to use it through the means of a reading instructional course would be highly effective.

Finally, a handful of participants advocated for a rebalancing of TEPs, shifting focus towards literacy foundations over less-central subjects. While acknowledging the importance of arts education to children and their development, PST 3 described the shortcomings of their TEP art class, one of many curriculum and instruction courses across the subject areas. They explained that four months of coursework were spent doing hands-on elementary-level art projects, where, instead, "We could've been spending time looking deeper at literacy programs..." They went on to describe their literacy course, Language Arts, as a course that should have been of paramount importance within their TEP, yet it did not feel as such:

“Even the course name, *Language Arts*, doesn’t lend [itself to] the seriousness [of the course] almost, because school is entirely literacy based. Literacy is the anchor of school and [all children need to have] capability in reading. [Calling our literacy course] Language Arts, it’s sort of like it’s [comparable to a course like Social Studies] but it’s so much more important [and foundational] than that.”

Similarly, ECT 1 explained their frustrations with their TEP lacking focus on literacy, stating they did not specialize in primary education to hone their skills in Physical and Health Education (PHE) or Applied Design and Skills Technology (ADST), and instead advocated for prioritizing both literacy and numeracy courses. A reimagined TEP landscape within BC, according to the participants of this study, should involve prioritizing literacy courses to ensure early career teachers enter the workforce with strong foundational knowledge in literacy, the central subject.

Interestingly, this category provided insight as to how pre-service and early career teachers would reimagine the TEP landscape in BC. What is particularly notable is the unanimous desire for TEPs to prioritize literacy coursework and provide more opportunities for PSTs to hone their skills in content and instructional knowledge in specified primary and intermediate contexts. Connecting this category to the research question demonstrates that participants are not feeling prepared to implement effective reading instruction and felt as though their TEP could have played a critical role in their prowess as primary reading teachers.

School District Resources. Participants shared imagined opportunities for school districts to provide their teacher employees and pre-service teachers with thorough, clear, and easy-to-access resources for primary literacy instruction. This category suggests ideas that are currently actualized by school districts in BC, while others are more general desires shared by participants.

ECT 4 shared that their school district created a foundational, online instructional guide for teaching literacy, “I hugely benefited from [my] district creating [comprehensive online literacy resources]... showing the discrete categories of all the different parts of reading...” Within this digital

webpage, ECT 4 described sections for the following components of literacy instruction: comprehension, concepts of text, phonological awareness, vocabulary and background knowledge, phonics, and decoding in context. Within each of those components, a collection of vetted materials are organized into instructional routines, assessments, proficiency indicators, sample week schedules, recommended resources, and decolonial practices.

ECT 4 described, "...[since] we weren't given those basics in my program, I found it was a useful resource..." The participant described that because of this thorough foundational instructional guide provided by their school district, their practice as a primary reading teacher gained clarity, structure, and directionality—all of which were reported as lacking following their TEP.

Interestingly, PST 5 described their desire and idea for clear, district-wide guidance and standardization of teaching resources, very similar to that of ECT 4's district. PST 5 stated, "[A way to help embed reading research into practice] would be district resources..." and went on to describe that these district resources could help "...[inform] teachers about how to use the data that's collected from assessment and specific activities..." PST 5 shared the importance of "[resources] to be spoken by or written by the district, so it's [consistent] across the board for everyone..." as well as, "...easily accessible in a way that doesn't take teachers weeks to read through"—emphasizing the value of consistency and accessibility in resources for pre-service, early career, and veteran teachers alike.

In addition to school district material resources, participants also cited the importance of professional collaboration and modeling through district-provided learning opportunities in early literacy. Many participants referred to informal observations and conversations with grade-level teaching colleagues as important to their practice, while ECT 5 shared how they "sought out" formal mentoring opportunities. They participated in a district-provided primary-focused series on literacy where, using in-school collaboration time and after-school meetings, they observed and planned alongside veteran teachers across all primary grades. ECT 5 mentioned, "To actually see [resources

like UFLI] modelled and in practice was the most valuable learning...” —a meaningful opportunity that many other participants shared as an abstract idea they wished to participate in themselves. ECT 5 shared that it was largely due to these opportunities offered by their school district that “really helped motivate” them, “...now I’m starting to gain confidence [in my reading instruction]!”

Furthering the idea that school district resources go beyond material resources, most participants shared that increased structural supports, like EA staffing, could help enable the successful implementation of effective reading instruction. PST 4 shared, “If we had more hands-on support in a classroom, more EAs... the teacher would be able to divert some of that workload...” since it’s “really hard to be the only body in the room to focus on everyone’s individual skill level.” Participants shared how classroom conditions, including complex student behaviours and needs, affect their capacity to teach literacy effectively. Many participants also cited how managing complex behaviours takes precedence over literacy instruction, and suggested that increasing adult support within classrooms could, in turn, improve instructional conditions.

This category suggests ways in which district resources have been effective in compensating for gaps left by TEPs (i.e., foundational instructional guides and professional mentoring and collaboration) as well as provided suggestions as to how PSTs and ECTs would reimagine their school district’s role in their professional development. What is particularly notable is how participants commonly shared the fact that school districts have a unique opportunity in providing their pre-service and early career teachers with effective structures, implementation practices, and working conditions, and how that can potentially positively impact primary reading instruction.

Specific Curriculum Supports. The final category expresses the importance of specific language within curriculum documents to guide PSTs and ECTs reading planning, instruction, and assessment within a primary context.

A common experience among participants was a lack of shared understandings in what students should aim towards achieving, or what is expected of them as readers at each primary

grade level. Participants referred to the curricular Big Ideas, Competencies, and Content as having unclear definitions of proficiency for readers (Government of British Columbia, n.d.-a). ECT 3 shared,

“I think the question, ‘What is a proficient reader,’ is still sort of a question I still have. What is a realistic goal for a child that enters grade 2, and a child leaving grade 2? Is it 20 pages? Is it a full chapter book? Is it being able to understand what they’ve read?”

Without clear standards, “cut-offs,” or “markers” as to “what emerging, developing, proficient, and extending looks like in terms of literacy,” ECT 5 similarly shared confusion and a lack of clear directionality in their instruction. They also shared how their understanding of a proficient reader within a grade sometimes looks different from colleagues, a sentiment echoed by many participants. Furthermore, many participants shared that they are unsure what to teach, when, and in what progression, circling back to the idea of the absence of a clear scope and sequence.

In a search for guidance, most participants shared that they turned to the official curriculum documents but realized that the language was far too abstract to guide their reading instruction in an organized fashion—as seen through PST 5, stating, “Engage actively as listeners... to develop understanding of self, identity, and community.’ Wow, that’s beautiful. But... what does that actually mean?...How do you do that?” The majority of participants referred to the curriculum documents as vague, lacking clarity, and leading to feelings of overwhelm. ECT 5 shared, “[The curriculum being vague] stressed me out early on and honestly still continues to do so... it doesn’t really give you anything to fall back on or give you concrete and clear expectations...”

Due in part to the vagueness of the curriculum, participants further described inconsistency and subjectivity in the area of assessment. Due to a lack of standardized “benchmarks,” participants cited “room for disagreements” and “subjectivity” in what reading proficiency looks like across Kindergarten to Grade 3.

Within the curriculum documents from the BC Ministry of Education, participants shared their desires and presented a stark need for literacy to be a curricular and assessment priority. They

highlighted the burdens that come from open and vague language and an absence of clear end goals, defined progressions, and shared language for assessment benchmarks using the proficiency scale.

Key Findings of Themes and Conclusion

The results from the qualitative data from the narratives of five pre-service and five early career teachers in BC revealed several key themes about feelings related to preparedness in reading instruction, perceived knowledge base of reading instruction, areas where participants desired further knowledge and support, and a reimagined landscape for pre-service and early career teachers in BC regarding reading instruction.

Participants frequently described feeling overwhelmed, uncertain, and underprepared which affected their confidence in reading planning, instruction, and assessment. Pre-service and early career teachers emphasized a desire for more knowledge in foundational reading instructional skills as well as more hands-on practical experience teaching reading within their literacy courses within their TEPs. Participants offered suggestions for improving literacy courses within TEPs in BC, as well as ways in which school districts and the BC Ministry of Education's public school curriculum can support new teachers regarding primary literacy instruction.

The next chapter will build on these findings by examining patterns across the data, interpreting their significance in relation to existing research, and discussing implications for teacher education and professional practice.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to explore how pre-service teachers (PSTs) and early career teachers (ECTs) in British Columbia (BC) feel equipped to teach reading to primary students. This study employed a qualitative design and sought to explore the narrative experiences of PSTs and ECTs and their feelings of preparedness in teaching reading to primary students. Through one-time, semi-structured interviews with five PSTs and five ECTs, qualitative data was collected. Participants were asked to share about their: professional experiences and contexts; beliefs and values about reading instruction; perceived preparedness, knowledge areas, and emotional responses to reading instruction; and, evolving understandings of reading instruction within teacher education. The data that emerged was analyzed following an inductive and thematic approach where codes were naturally derived from participants' narratives, and led to general patterns, more specific categories, and eventually, refined themes.

From the qualitative data, six key themes emerged: (1) Feeling underprepared to teach reading is a shared experience by pre-service and early career teachers, (2) Reading instructional knowledge is developed through fragmented and inconsistent pathways, (3) The gap between theory and practice in their preparation leaves new teachers to navigate literacy instruction largely on their own, (4) Complex classroom realities disrupt confidence and the implementation of effective reading instruction, (5) Pre-service and early career teachers envision stronger systems of preparation, and (6) School district supports are needed to provide coherent and sustained guidance for literacy instruction.

Discussion of Findings

The following discussion examines the themes that emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data in relation to existing research literature. Each theme is considered in connection with relevant studies and theoretical perspectives to situate the findings within the broader field of literacy education and teacher preparation. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how

the experiences and perceptions of participants align with, extend, or differ from established research.

Theme 1: Feeling Underprepared to Teach Reading is a Shared Experience by Pre-Service and Early Career Teachers

This theme highlights that across the participants, PSTs and ECTs share the experience of feeling underprepared to teach reading to primary students. Data from this study suggests that both a lack of knowledge and practical skill in foundational reading instruction affected participants' confidence levels. These findings align with existing research indicating that pre- and in-service teachers from preschool to Grade 4 generally demonstrate limited knowledge in effective literacy instruction and the scientific research in how children learn to read (Hindman et al., 2020).

Participants described feeling underprepared, overwhelmed, uncertain, and stressed about designing, planning, and implementing effective reading instruction and assessment. This suggests that across various TEPs in the province, teachers are completing their degrees with a perceived sense of inadequate training in this central element of their careers as primary educators. In practice, participants reported feeling unsure about the effectiveness of their reading instruction—a tension reflected in research where due to the lack of a strong, foundational knowledge base, many pre- and in-service teachers are found to “implement less-than-ideal reading instruction” (Hindman et al., 2020, p. S198).

Taken together, this theme suggests that perceived underpreparedness may influence both teacher confidence and instructional decision-making in early reading instruction.

Theme 2: Reading Instructional Knowledge is Developed Through Fragmented and Inconsistent Pathways

This theme reveals a tension between the pathways of development of participants' reading instructional knowledge. Findings from this study show that participants gain resources, skills, and foundational knowledge largely on their own time and through personal funding and professional

networking. While participants expressed interest in further professional learning and the prospect of trying new reading instructional resources, they also described feeling lost and confused due to a lack of directionality and guidance. Together, these findings suggest that instructional skills development and teaching resources are sourced in fragmented and disorganized ways. This tension is reflected in existing research, which indicates that teachers need explicit understanding of literacy concepts like phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension from their TEPs in order to teach reading effectively (Hudson et al., 2021).

At the same time, every participant described at least an awareness of the resource University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) Manual and many described positive experiences with the resource in how it allowed them to gain confidence and success in teaching reading. UFLI was the only consistent resource noted by all participants, which could be due in part to its clear scope and sequence.

The findings of this theme further highlight the complexity of PSTs and ECTs navigating the landscape of researching, selecting, purchasing, and teaching themselves how to use resources—an idea corroborated by Hudson et al. (2021) who outline that early years teachers require specific coaching and benefit from direct guidance in how to teach reading according to the Science of Reading's research base.

Theme 3: The Gap Between Theory and Practice in their Preparation Leaves New Teachers to Navigate Literacy Instruction Largely on their Own

This theme reflects the independent learning and development in the area of reading instruction that PSTs and ECTs have to undertake following their TEPs. Findings from this study suggest that while participants were introduced to a range of theories and foundational knowledge related to reading instruction in their TEPs, the knowledge is not consistently evident within their practice due to a lack of practical, hands-on literacy learning. Rather than having time built-in to their TEPs to practice teaching lessons on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension,

and vocabulary, the data indicates PSTs and ECTs have to navigate learning how to teach these foundational reading skills on their own.

These findings extend previous research that suggests teachers need time to learn and practice evidence-based approaches to reading instruction through collaboration in grade-level teams (Jensen, 2021). The literature also emphasizes that reading instruction is a complex practice requiring educators to amalgamate foundational knowledge of both reading and general classroom instruction to make split-second decisions (Jensen, 2021). Without direct guidance in approaching this complex task, PSTs and ECTs are left to their own devices to try to make curricular decisions beyond their scope of expertise.

The gap between theory and practice is a phenomenon outlined in further research such as Castles et al. (2018), who explain that an individual's reading instruction is influenced by the values and epistemological stances of their greater governing bodies (i.e., school districts and teacher education programs). Similarly, Goldberg and Goldenberg (2022) reinforce the idea of the divide between reading research and practice, and in order to take the responsibility of preparation away from PSTs and ECTs, reading stakeholders like curriculum designers, policy makers, TEPs, and school districts must work together to design a thoughtful plan for increased practical experience for PSTs.

Overall, this theme reflects the ongoing experience of many PSTs and ECTs in BC who have entered their practicum or the workforce lacking sufficient knowledge and practice in reading instruction and have to figure out the immense task on their own.

Theme 4: Complex Classroom Realities Disrupt Confidence and the Implementation of Effective Reading Instruction

This theme draws attention to the complexities that impact PSTs' and ECTs' effective implementation of reading instruction including diverse behavioural, mental health, and social emotional needs of students. Findings suggest that in practice, diverse needs within the learning

environment impact participants' confidence in providing their students with effective whole-group or small-group direct instruction.

Although not included in the literature review in Chapter 2, additional literature was consulted in order to contextualize this finding. Participants reported that their implementation of effective reading instruction is hampered by complex classroom realities, an idea corroborated by Friesen and Hennessy (2024) who cite diverse learner needs and lack of necessary supports as a barrier to effective reading instruction. In addition, participants named classroom complexity, diversity of learner needs, and increased frequency and intensity of behavioural challenges as an additional struggle to navigate while learning how to teach literacy—aligning with research that emphasizes the same idea from the College of Alberta School Superintendents [CASS] (2023). Furthermore, research indicates that instructional decision making within literacy instruction becomes additionally complex within high needs environments where teachers are required to draw upon knowledge and practical skills—skills that should be built through ongoing practice before practicum or teaching experiences (Frontiers in Education, 2025).

Overall, this theme highlights the need for reading researchers, curriculum designers, policy makers, TEPs, and school districts to recognize how complex behavioural demands can impede PSTs and ECTs implementation of effective, research-based reading instruction.

Theme 5: Pre-Service and Early Career Teachers Envision Stronger Systems of Preparation

This theme reflects how PSTs and ECTs envision improvements for the governing bodies and systems of preparation for teacher training in literacy instruction in BC. While the release of the *K–4 Foundational Learning Progressions* and the \$30 million provincial literacy investment towards K-3 literacy screening assessments shows progress towards the widespread implementation of structured literacy practices in the province, participants' experiences illuminated how these measures do not address the gaps in their teacher preparation (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2025).

The findings from this research demonstrate how PSTs and ECTs desire more opportunities to apply their knowledge base into practical, hands-on teaching experiences to improve their competence in reading instruction. The literature reveals that explicit instruction and systematic, supervised practice in foundational reading instruction skills is required in effective TEP literacy coursework and preparation (Cree et al., 2023; Hindman et al., 2020). Reports from British Columbia ECTs reinforce this idea and further outline how TEPs prioritize theoretical coursework over practical experiences (British Columbia New Teacher Survey 2021/22, 2023). Hudson et al. (2021) describe the effectiveness of programs that consistently balance direct instruction of knowledge and theories based in the Science of Reading with ongoing, relational practice within classrooms application. Within programs such as these, PSTs were shown to gain both an increased knowledge base and more confidence in instructional skill (Hudson et al., 2021).

At the same time, PSTs are expected to gain knowledge across such a wide array of subject areas, and are positioned as generalists, which may unintentionally dilute literacy preparation (Hindman et al., 2020), a sentiment shared by many ECTs from this research. Overwhelmingly, the literature reviewed in this study outlines how improving primary-teacher reading instruction at the PST and ECT levels requires policy changes and curriculum amendment documents, in addition to reimagined TEPs with literacy coursework to include extended time, deeper and more specific content knowledge, and increased opportunities for practical application.

Theme 6: School District Supports are Needed to Provide Coherent and Sustained Guidance for Literacy Instruction

This theme highlights how school districts play an imperative role in providing guidance for coherent, research-informed literacy instruction. Findings from this study suggest that many PSTs and ECTs often experience fragmented resources and sporadic guidance in their literacy practice when district supports and resources are limited or unclear. This leads to variability and confusion surrounding effective practice. Interestingly, ECT 4 shared their positive experience with

comprehensive literacy resources provided by their district and how it greatly impacted their confidence in reading instruction. Furthering the same idea of the importance of school district guidance, ECT 5 outlined their rich learning and growing confidence that developed from ongoing collaboration with district literacy coordinators and observations of grade-level veteran teacher mentors.

The findings suggest that school districts have the opportunity to translate research into coherent resources to improve their employees' instructional practice—echoing Castles et al.'s (2018) finding that reading instruction implementation is usually a district-level responsibility that is shaped by dominant epistemological viewpoints from TEPs. Widespread school district-designed resources aligned to reading research and evidence could alleviate the burden of PSTs and ECTs having to source, vet, purchase, and test resources on their own (something all participants shared experiences in).

Together, these factors illuminate the need for districts to contribute to lessening the gap between reading research and practice by providing their employees with comprehensive literacy frameworks and resources and ongoing opportunities for professional learning and collaboration. This assertion aligns with Jensen (2021) who maintains that coherent and sustained guidance for literacy instruction requires school district supports based in collaboration with important stakeholders, including researchers, policymakers, and TEP professors.

Study Limitations

Utilizing a constructivist paradigm and a qualitative design, this study's narrative approach towards data collection was implemented to gain an in-depth understanding of PST and ECT experiences and feelings of preparedness in teaching reading to primary students in BC. Qualitative data were analyzed using an inductive and thematic approach to find commonalities and differences in experience. The data from interviews was transcribed and re-read meticulously for precision and for accuracy of interpretation. Additionally, literature evidence showed congruence in supporting

the study's emerging themes. To alleviate as much researcher bias as possible, ongoing reflection on personal influence as an insider to this research topic was a priority. Despite these measures, limitations still exist within the results of this study.

One limitation of this study is the small pool of participants (i.e., 10 out of a subset of 38,000 Kindergarten and Elementary (K-7) teachers in BC) (WorkBC, 2025, p. 59). Due to this small sample size, the participant pool may not be fully representative of the realities of all PSTs and ECTs in the province. Another limitation is the small number of, and primarily urban, school districts represented (i.e., eight out of 60) (Government of British Columbia, n.d.-b). As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to all broader school district realities, and particularly those within rural contexts. Additionally, the small pool of three universities out of the eight total institutions in BC with accredited teacher education programs (TEPs) may have influenced the data. Casting a wider net to hear the experiences of those across many different TEPs would provide further credibility as well as an enriched breadth and depth in participant perspectives. Finally, another limitation of this study is in the interpretation of the data due to the positionality of the researcher. Personal biases as well as their status as an insider to the research, a primary teacher in their fourth year of teaching, may have impacted the results. In addition to this, it was the researcher's first formal effort in conducting interviews and educational research. These factors should be considered when interpreting the findings, and they point to directions for future research.

Implications and Recommendations

This section outlines the implications of the findings for teacher education programs, school districts, and curriculum in British Columbia, followed by recommendations to support pre-service and early career teachers in developing confidence and competence in reading instruction.

Implications for Teacher Education Programs

The findings of this study suggest that TEPs should prioritize training in literacy instruction and specifically reading instruction as a central course of study within the program. It may be

beneficial to restructure program requirements across the province to increase the length and depth of topics within literacy coursework. Reimagined TEP literacy courses are suggested to emphasize foundational literacy knowledge and theories within lectures and assignments as well as include mandatory course-based opportunities for practical skill development. The hands-on element of coursework should include students observing explicit lessons highlighting the five pillars of reading instruction including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary modeled by an instructor or veteran teacher. Additionally, visiting classrooms on a weekly basis to practice those modeled skills based on knowledge from the course is imperative to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This learning is suggested to occur within the scheduled course time as to not encroach on students' personal time outside of their studies.

Implications for School Districts

This research demonstrates how school districts across BC have the opportunity to prioritize their PSTs and ECTs professional development in reading instruction and literacy instruction as a whole. School districts can support this population within their first five years of teaching by allocating funding towards district-wide initiatives in resource creation and curation. These initiatives could help to standardize the scope and sequence of foundational reading instruction by directly providing PSTs and ECTs with vetted and research-informed resources to guide their instruction. In addition to providing consistent and accessible resources, school districts should also prioritize the organization of mentoring opportunities for PSTs and ECTs to observe experienced teachers within their practicum or working hours using release time or collaboration budgets. Offering after-school mentorship meetings on top of within-working-hours opportunities would be an additional idea for school districts to consider.

Implications for Curriculum

Implications for the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care curriculum documents, based on the findings of this study, include the importance of widespread dissemination of system-level

curricular supports. It should be noted that in the process of writing this thesis and conducting this study, the *K–4 Foundational Learning Progressions* were introduced in 2025 to “provide additional details and clarity to help teachers develop key foundational skills” in reading and literacy instruction and assessment (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2025). This supplementary document is an excellent example of work being done by the BC Ministry of Education to support PSTs and ECTs. However, the interviews in this study occurred half a year after the documents were published, yet only one ECT mentioned the documents. This participant went on to explain their awareness of the *K–4 Foundational Learning Progressions* but shared how they have not had the chance to look through them yet. This finding reveals the need for a more widespread implementation and distribution of curriculum resources to ensure they are accessible and clear for all PSTs and ECTs. In addition to these learning progressions, the BC Ministry of Education also introduced funding for universal literacy screening from Kindergarten to Grade 3, targeted intervention, and teacher professional development (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2025). These screeners provide an opportunity for PSTs and ECTs to learn and develop assessment practices that can inform instruction. Similar to the *K–4 Foundational Learning Progressions* documents, if the BC Ministry of Education wants their work to be utilized effectively by PSTs and ECTs, they need to communicate these documents and changes clearly as well as apply them consistently across school districts to avoid confusion, overwhelm, or extra work for PSTs and ECTs.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the key stakeholders begin to work collaboratively to prioritize PST and ECT professional development in primary literacy and reading instruction. Four recommendations are outlined below:

1. School districts should provide PSTs and ECTs with access to clear, comprehensible, consistent, vetted, and evidence-based resources to guide their reading instructional scope and sequence, routines, and to support confidence.
2. TEPs should build in more prioritized time learning foundational reading research and theories as well as time built in to literacy courses for PSTs to practically apply learning under the guidance of a knowledgeable professor and teacher-mentor in ongoing, hands-on, relationship-based practical opportunities.
3. TEPs should restructure their coursework requirements to have longer and specifically differentiated (K-3 and 4-7) literacy courses in order to increase PSTs breadth and depth of knowledge and practical skill experience.
4. School districts should provide ECTs with more support (i.e., increased EA and resource teacher time during reading instruction, as well as built-in collaborative release time with literacy specialists) to counteract classroom behavioural complexities while ECTs are still learning how to teach reading instruction.

Suggestions for Further Research

Reflecting on the potential limitations of this study, suggestions for future research could include a larger sample size with a varied population across BC (i.e., varied TEP institution, school districts, and rural/urban contexts). This further investigation is needed to understand the widespread feelings of preparedness in reading instruction by PSTs and ECTs across BC and whether this study's consistencies in feelings of preparedness also occur across the province as a whole. Studies with a larger and more diverse sample size could illuminate variation in the professional needs and desires for further preparation for PSTs and ECTs, depending on their different contexts.

Conclusion

This research sought to explore how PSTs and ECTs in BC feel equipped to teach reading to primary students, guided by a constructivist, qualitative, and narrative approach. Throughout the

previous chapters, many shared and lived experiences emerged from the data. Chapter 1 established the researcher's positionality and introduced their connection to the topic of reading instruction geared towards primary students in BC. Next, Chapter 2 critically reviewed and synthesized relevant empirical studies and educational literature on effective reading instruction. Chapter 3 outlined the study's methodological approach and analysis procedures. Then, Chapter 4 presented the research findings and revealed key categories of commonality across the interviews. Finally, within this chapter, six key themes emerged and were explored.

The findings of this study highlight the need for: access to comprehensible, evidence-based resources to support PST and ECT confidence; longer, more in-depth, and hands-on TEP coursework in literacy instruction; and, school district guidance in the form of materials and mentorship opportunities in literacy instruction. These results not only correspond directly to the research question but also connect meaningfully to the existing literature, particularly from Hindman et al. (2020), Jensen (2021), and the British Columbia New Teacher Survey 2021/22 (2023).

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of effective reading instruction in BC and underscores the significance of thorough PST preparation and ECT professional support. Overall, this study demonstrates that PSTs and ECTs in BC need more guidance and direction at the TEP, school district, and curricular levels in order to provide their primary students with effective reading instruction.

While there are limitations, including the sample size and the breadth of TEP and school district demographics, the study offers future pathways for research in supporting PSTs and ECTs in developing their skills in effective reading instruction. Ultimately, this work contributes to ongoing conversations in education within BC and provides meaningful findings towards the dire need for bridging reading research and classroom practice.

I conclude this research by framing it through a lens of educational leadership, and grounding it within an ethic of care and critique (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). It is through these

paradigms that effective reading instruction can be regarded as a political, educational, and moral imperative, rather than a simple pedagogical practice.

This study is best interpreted through an ethic of care, a framework based upon the thinking of educational philosopher and theorist Nel Noddings that demonstrates the centrality of relationships, empathy, and responsiveness to others' needs as the keystone of ethical decision-making within the field of education (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Within each of the interviews, participants expressed a palpable concern for their students' reading development and life outcomes—a direct reflection of Noddings' (1992) thinking, "The first job of the schools is to care for our children" (p. xiv). Through relational and future-oriented questions, as seen in ECT 1's reflection, "What is the best way to catch [readers up]... before they exit the public education system? How do we ensure they have the skills they need...?" participants shared the belief that caring underpins the foundation of meaningful educational practice. This very sense of care shared among participants has the power to propel this research forward into the world, steeped in hopefulness, "Caring is the very bedrock of all successful education and... contemporary school can be revitalized in its light" (Noddings, 1992, p. 27).

In parallel to an ethic of care, this research is informed by an ethic of critique. Based on thinking by leading scholars in the field of critical pedagogy such as Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Henry Giroux, this ethical perspective foregrounds effective reading instruction in the importance of questioning power structures and challenging systemic inequities to consider the impact of educational decisions in further privileging or marginalizing children (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

All participants regarded reading instruction as imperative to a child's success in life, "...really, reading is that, the key to life...And so if I can give my students...the keys to have the language to thrive in life, then I'm going to try my hardest" (PST 2). It is through an ethic of critique that this research aims to provide a "discourse for expanding basic human rights," and may "serve as a vehicle in the struggle against inequality" (Giroux, 1992, p. 48; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 14-

15). It is hoped that this work can contribute towards “making known the voices of those who are silenced, particularly students,” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 15). This research reflects the fact that participants share a developing vision of literacy instruction in BC, grounded in collective responsibility, critical perspectives, care for all students, and hope for more equitable educational futures—an idea exemplified by ECT 1’s closing statement, “I do want to create successful, intelligent students...And I want to help them feel confident in reading and I want them to love reading...I just want to make sure that we’re doing it right and that we’re all doing it.”

References

- Amplify. (2022). *Cortex in the classroom: Advancing the science of reading in the early years* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ozikJR3oY8>
- Area of Learning: English language arts kindergarten big ideas. (2016). https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/english-language-arts/en_english-language-arts_k-9_elab.pdf
- Aukerman, M., & Chambers Schuldt, L. (2021). What matters most? Toward a robust and socially just science of reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56(S1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.406>
- BC Ministry of Education. (2019). *Core Competencies: Building student success - BC's new curriculum*. Gov.bc.ca. <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies>
- British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care. (2019). *Early learning framework* (2nd ed.). https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/early-learning/teach/earlylearning/early_learning_framework_2019.pdf
- British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care. (2020). *Framework for enhancing student learning*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/framework>
- British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care. (2025). *K–4 foundational learning progressions*. Government of British Columbia. <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/learning-pathways/k-4-foundational-learning-progressions>
- British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care. (2025). *Literacy screening*. Government of British Columbia. <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/literacy-screening>
- British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care. (n.d.-a). *Diversity in B.C. schools: A framework*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/diversity-in-bc-schools>

British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care. (n.d.-b). *Inclusive education*.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/inclusive-education>

Building Student Success - B.C. curriculum. (n.d.). Curriculum.gov.bc.ca.

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/english-language-arts/2/core>

Cambourne, B. (2021) *A brief history of the 'reading wars.'* Retrieved April 21, 2025, from

<https://foundationforlearningandliteracy.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/A-Brief-History-of-the-Reading-Wars-FINAL-15.4.pdf>

Castles, A., Rastle, K., & Nation, K. (2018). Ending the reading wars: Reading acquisition from novice to expert. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 19(1), 5–51.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100618772271>

Chall, J.S. (1967). *Learning to read: The great debate: An inquiry into the science, art, and ideology of old and new methods of teaching children to read, 1910-1965*. Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Chall, J. S. (1983). *Stages of reading development*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

College of Alberta School Superintendents. (2023). *Classroom complexity: Supporting and strengthening the strategic purpose*. <https://cass.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Classroom-Complexity-Report-Final-Copy-10.23.23.pdf>

Coltheart, M., Rastle, K., Perry, C., Langdon, R., & Ziegler, J. (2001). DRC: A dual route cascaded model of visual word recognition and reading aloud. *Psychological Review*, 108(1), 204–256.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295x.108.1.204>

Connor, C. M. (2016). A Lattice model of the development of reading comprehension. *Child Development Perspectives*, 10(4), 269–274. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12200>

Cree, A., Kay, A., & Steward, J. (2023). *The economic & social cost of illiteracy: A snapshot of illiteracy in a global context*. [Final Report from the World Literacy Foundation].

<https://worldliteracyfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/The-Economic-Social-Cost-of-Illiteracy-2023.pdf>

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage Publications.

Decoda Literacy Solutions. (2023, February 21). *Literacy Facts and Figures*.

<https://decoda.ca/resources/literacy-facts-figures/>

Ehri, L. C. (1979). *Orthography and the Amalgamation of Word Identities in Beginning Readers. Final Report*. (pp. 1–195) [Review of *Orthography and the Amalgamation of Word Identities in Beginning Readers. Final Report*.]. National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, DC. Basic Skills Group. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED188145.pdf>

Ehri, L. C. (1995). Phases of development in learning to read words by sight. *Journal of Research in Reading, 18*(2), 116-125.

Ehri, L. C. (2014). Orthographic mapping in the acquisition of sight word reading, spelling memory, and vocabulary learning. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 18*(1), 5–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2013.819356>

Ehri, L. C. (2020). The science of learning to read words: A case for systematic phonics instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly, 55*(S1), S45–S60. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.334>

Farrall, M. L. (2012). *Reading assessment : Linking language, literacy, and cognition*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

Fien, H., Chard, D. J., & Baker, S. K. (2021). Can the evidence revolution and multi-tiered systems of support improve education equity and reading achievement? *Reading Research Quarterly, 56*(S1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.391>

Freebody, P., & Luke, A. (1990). Literacies programs: Debates and demands in cultural context. *Prospect, 5*(3), 7–16. <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/49099/>

Friesen, D. C., & Hennessy, A. (2024). Teachers' perceptions of implementing Ontario's Right to Read report's recommendations. *Education Sciences, 14*(7), 791.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14070791>

Frontiers in Education. (2025). Role of data literacy training for decision-making in teaching practice: A systematic review.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/education/articles/10.3389/educ.2025.1485821/full>

Giroux, H. A. (1992). *Border crossings: Cultural workers and the politics of education*. Routledge.

Glossary: U F Literacy Institute. (2024). Ufl.edu. <https://ufl.education.ufl.edu/resources/teaching-resources/glossary/>

Goldberg, M., & Goldenberg, C. (2022). Lessons learned? Reading wars, reading first, and a way forward. *The Reading Teacher, 75*(5). <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2079>

Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and Special Education, 7*, 6–10.

Gough, P. B. (1996). How children learn to read and why they fail. *Annals of Dyslexia, 46*(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02648168>

Government of British Columbia. (2020). *Vision for Student Success*.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/program-management/vision-for-student-success>

Government of British Columbia. (2023, January 23). *Action plan to support K-12 anti-racism efforts*.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023ECC0003-000066>

Government of British Columbia. (n.d.-a). *B.C. curriculum*. <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/>

Government of British Columbia. (n.d.-b). *School district map*.

<https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/bcmap.htm>

HBS Working Knowledge. (2017, February 17). *VUCA 2.0: A strategy for steady leadership In an unsteady world*. Forbes.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/hbsworkingknowledge/2017/02/17/vuca-2-0-a-strategy-for-steady-leadership-in-an-unsteady-world/#725a041613d8>

Hempenstall, K. (2003). The three-cueing system: Trojan horse? *Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities, 8*(2), 15–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19404150309546726>

Hindman, A. H., Morrison, F. J., Connor, C. M., & Connor, J. A. (2020). Bringing the science of reading to preservice elementary teachers: Tools that bridge research and practice. *Reading Research Quarterly, 55*(S1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.345>

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge.

Hoover, W. A., & Tunmer, W. E. (2021). The primacy of science in communicating advances in the science of reading. *Reading Research Quarterly, 57*(2). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.446>

Hudson, A. K., Moore, K. A., Han, B., Wee Koh, P., Binks-Cantrell, E., & Malatesha Joshi, R. (2021). Elementary teachers' knowledge of foundational literacy skills: A critical piece of the puzzle in the science of reading. *Reading Research Quarterly, 56*(S1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.408>

Jamieson, M. K., Pownall, M., & Allen, K. A. (2023). Reflexivity in quantitative research: A rationale and beginner's guide. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 17*(2), e12735. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12735>

Jensen, B. (2021). Advancing the science of teaching reading equitably. *Reading Research Quarterly, 56*(S1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.409>

Kim, J. S. (2008). Research and the Reading Wars. In Hess, F. M. (Ed.), *When research matters: How scholarship influences education policy* (89-112). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 9*(4), 289–331. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(85\)90062-8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(85)90062-8)

Manitoba Human Rights Commission. (2025). *Supporting the right to read in Manitoba: The ABCs of a rights-based approach to teaching reading – Phase one report*.

<https://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/education/pdf/public-consultations/supportingrighttoread.pdf>

Miller, R.T. (2019). English Orthography and Reading. In J. Liantas (Ed.), *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0461>

Milner, H. R. (2020). Disrupting Racism and Whiteness in Researching a Science of Reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55(S1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.347>

Moats, L. C. (2020). *Speech to print: Language essentials for teachers* (3rd ed.). Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Moore v. British Columbia, 2012 SCC 61, 3 S.C.R. 360 (2012).

<https://www.canlii.org/en/ca/scc/doc/2012/2012scc61/2012scc61.html>

National Reading Panel (U.S.) & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (U.S.). (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: an evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. Teachers College Press.

OECD. (2023). *High performing systems for tomorrow: 2023 conceptual framework* [Review of High Performing Systems for Tomorrow: 2023 Conceptual Framework].

<https://www.oecd.org/en/about/projects/pisa-high-performing-systems-for-tomorrow-hpst.html>

Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2022). *Right to read inquiry report* [Report]. Ontario Human Rights Commission.

https://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Right%20to%20Read%20Executive%20Summary_OHRC%20English_0.pdf

- Orton, S. T. (1925). "Word-blindness" in school children. *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry*, 14(5), 581. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archneurpsyc.1925.02200170002001>
- Palinkas, L., Horwitz, S., Green, C., Wisdom, J., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Perfetti, C. (2007). Reading Ability: Lexical Quality to Comprehension. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 11(4), 357–383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888430701530730>
- Perfetti, C., & Stafura, J. (2014). Word knowledge in a theory of reading comprehension. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 18(1), 22–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2013.827687>
- Petscher, Y., Cabell, S. Q., Catts, H. W., Compton, D. L., Foorman, B. R., Hart, S. A., Lonigan, C. J., Phillips, B. M., Schatschneider, C., Steacy, L. M., Terry, N. P., & Wagner, R. K. (2020). How the science of reading informs 21st-century education. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55(S1), S267–S282. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.352>
- Porter, S. B., Odegard, T. N., Farris, E. A., & Oslund, E. L. (2023). Effects of teacher knowledge of early reading on students' gains in reading foundational skills and comprehension. *Reading and Writing*, 37(8), 2007–2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-023-10448-w>
- Reading grade 2 (n.d.). https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/performance-standards/reading/reading_g2.pdf
- Reardon, S. F. (2011). The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations. In G. J. Duncan & R. J. Murnane (Eds.), *Whither opportunity? Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances* (pp. 91–116). Russell Sage Foundation. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610447515.10>

- Ritchey, K. D., & Goeke, J. L. (2006). Orton-Gillingham and Orton-Gillingham—Based Reading Instruction. *The Journal of Special Education, 40*(3), 171–183.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00224669060400030501>
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. SAGE Publication. ISBN-13: 978-1529731743
- Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. (2023). *Equitable education for students with reading disabilities: A systemic investigation report*. <https://saskatchewanhumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Equitable-Education-for-Students-with-Reading-Disabilities-report.pdf>
- Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook for research in early literacy* (pp. 97-110). New York: Guilford Press.
- Seidenberg, M. S., Cooper Borkenhagen, M., & Kearns, D. M. (2020). Lost in translation? Challenges in connecting reading science and educational practice. *Reading Research Quarterly, 55*(S1).
<https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.341>
- Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J. A. (2005). *Viewing ethical dilemmas through multiple paradigms*. In *Ethical leadership and decision making in education* (2nd ed., pp. 10–27). Erlbaum.
- Share D. L. (1995). Phonological recoding and self-teaching: Sine qua non of reading acquisition. *Cognition, 55*(2), 151–226. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277\(94\)00645-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277(94)00645-2)
- Sinclair, J., Nickel, J., Fraser, A., Brethour, M., Critch, T., Hope, L., McCallum, D., Norris, M., Croix, N. S., Vieira, A., Worden, J., Sinclair, J., Nickel, J., Fraser, A., Brethour, M., Critch, T., Hope, L., McCallum, D., Norris, M., & Croix, N. S. (2025). Teaching reading in Canada: Curriculum and assessment policy updates from the provinces and territories. *Journal of Teaching and Learning, 19*(5). <https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v19i5.10423>

Stanovich, K. E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21(4), 360-407.

<https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.21.4.1>

Stouffer, J. (2021). Seeking middle ground: Analyzing running records from the top and bottom. *The Reading Teacher*, 74(6). <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2012>

The Reading League. (2024, October, 6). *Science of Reading: Defining Guide*.

<https://www.thereadingleague.org/what-is-thescience-of-reading/>

Ungerleider, C. (2025, January 16). Questionable judgement. *On Education Canada*.

https://oneducationcanada.substack.com/p/questionablejudgment?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web

WorkBC. (2025). *B.C. labour market outlook: 2025 edition*. Government of British Columbia.

<https://www.workbc.ca/research-labour-market/bc-labour-market-outlook>

Yurick, A. L., Council, M., Alana Oif Telesman, Shobana Musti, Gardner, R., & Cartledge, G. (2024). On the science of reading: How social justice, behavior analysis, and literacy instruction

converge. *Behavior and Social Issues*, 33, 563–580 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42822-023-00154-1>

Zhu, C. (2024, September 6). Low literacy rates in Canada prompt reading curriculum changes. CBC.

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/updated-reading-curriculum-1.7313187>

Appendix A – Recruitment Materials

Recruitment Email to Pre-Service Teachers

On this page you will find the recruitment email that I asked the Faculty of Education Undergraduate Chair to send to the Year 5 BEd pre-service teachers on my behalf.

Hi there,

My name is Sarah Bjelde and I am a Kindergarten/Grade 1 teacher in the Richmond School Board No. 38. Before teaching these grades, I taught Grade 2/3 for three years. Prior to working as a full time primary teacher, I was a TTOC in the Greater Victoria School No. 61.

I am currently working on my Master of Education in Educational Leadership through Vancouver Island University. I am conducting a research thesis that looks at how preservice teachers and early-career teachers in British Columbia feel equipped to teach reading to primary students. I have developed a 45-60-minute interview geared towards exploring pre-service teachers' attitudes and feelings of preparedness towards teaching reading. This qualitative research is intended to contribute to the discourse on the need to bridge the gap between reading research, teacher preparation programs, and classroom practice in BC.

Anyone who is interested in teaching reading or literacy as a whole at the primary grade levels (Kindergarten to Grade 3) is invited to participate. I am hoping to conclude all interviews by December, before Winter Break.

The REB file number for this research thesis is 103703. You can contact the REB at REB@viu.ca.

If you would like more information, please contact me at xxxxxxx@my.viu.ca by (include date which will be 5 days from receipt of email).

With gratitude,

Sarah Bjelde
Student, Master of Education, Educational Leadership Candidate
Vancouver Island University
xxxxxxx@my.viu.ca
xxx-xxx-xxxx

Recruitment Materials for Early Career Teachers

On this page is the message script that I sent to the social media Facebook groups listed below before I posted in their groups.

- Kindergarten Connections
 - K-1 Connections BC
-

Hello group administrator,

My name is Sarah Bjelde and I am a Kindergarten/Grade 1 teacher in the Richmond School Board No. 38. Before teaching these grades, I taught Grade 2/3 for three years. Prior to working as a full time primary teacher, I was a TTOC in the Greater Victoria School No. 61.

I am currently working on my Master of Education in Educational Leadership through Vancouver Island University. I am conducting a research thesis that looks at how pre-service teachers and early career teachers in British Columbia feel equipped to teach reading to primary students. I have developed a 45-60-minute interview geared towards exploring early career teachers' attitudes and feelings of preparedness towards teaching reading. This qualitative research is intended to contribute to the discourse on the need to bridge the gap between reading research, teacher preparation programs, and classroom practice in BC.

Anyone who has 0 to 5 years of experience teaching a FTE 1.0 Kindergarten to Grade 3 class is invited to participate. I am hoping to conclude all interviews by the time we go to Winter Break in December.

A recruitment letter can be found below this message, and I would greatly appreciate it if you could distribute it to your members.

The REB file number for this research thesis is 103703. You can contact the REB at REB@viu.ca.

If you would like more information, please contact me at xxxx@my.viu.ca.

Kind regards,

Sarah Bjelde
Student, Master of Education,
Educational Leadership Candidate
Vancouver Island University
xxxxxxxx@my.viu.ca
xxx-xxx-xxxx

On this page you will find the post that I uploaded to the Facebook groups to recruit early career teachers. It was posted alongside the following flyer.

Hi there,

My name is Sarah Bjelde and I am a Kindergarten/Grade 1 teacher in the Richmond School Board No. 38. Before teaching these grades, I taught Grade 2/3 for three years. Prior to working as a full-time primary teacher, I was a TTOC in the Greater Victoria School No. 61.

I am currently working on my Master of Education in Educational Leadership through Vancouver Island University. I am conducting a research thesis that looks at how pre-service teachers and early career teachers in British Columbia feel equipped to teach reading to primary students. I have developed a 45-60-minute interview geared towards exploring early career teachers' attitudes and feelings of preparedness towards teaching reading. This qualitative research is intended to contribute to the discourse on the need to bridge the gap between reading research, teacher preparation programs, and classroom practice in BC.

Anyone who has taught a 1.0 FTE Kindergarten to Grade 3 class and is in their first five years of teaching is invited to participate. I am hoping to conclude all interviews by Winter Break. The REB file number for this research thesis is 103703. You can contact the REB at REB@viu.ca.

If you would like more information, please contact me at xxxxxxx@my.viu.ca.

With gratitude,

Sarah Bjelde

Student, Master of Education,

Educational Leadership Candidate

Vancouver Island University

xxxxxxx@my.viu.ca

xxx-xxx-xxxx

Calling All Early Career K-3 Teachers in BC!



- 🎓 Are you in your first five years of teaching?
- 📖 Have you taught a full-time Kindergarten to Grade 3 class?
- 👉 I'd love to hear from you!

Research Study Opportunity



My Master of Education thesis in Educational Leadership at Vancouver Island University will explore how **early career and pre-service teachers in BC feel equipped to teach reading to primary students**, focusing on their **attitudes, preparedness, and experiences** in bridging research and classroom practice.

What's Involved

- One 45–60 minute interview (flexible scheduling, online or in person)
- Share your thoughts, experiences, and insights
- Participation needed before Winter Break

If interested, please contact Sarah Bjelde:


[@my.viu.ca](mailto:[redacted]@my.viu.ca)

Appendix B – Informed Consent Documents

Early Career Teacher Participant Consent Form

Version 2 – October 19, 2025

Equitable Reading Instruction and the Science of Reading

Research Ethics Board Application Ref No: **8127** (REB Ethics ID # TBD)

(REB@viu.ca, File Number 103703).

(month, day), 2025

Dear prospective participant,

I am a student pursuing thesis research towards the completion of the Master of Education in Educational Leadership program through the Faculty of Education at Vancouver Island University (VIU). I am a Project Team Lead for the study entitled “***Equitable Reading Instruction and the Science of Reading***,” which aims to explore how pre-service teachers and early career teachers in British Columbia feel equipped to teach reading to primary students. This qualitative research aims to contribute to the discourse on bridging the gap between reading research, teacher preparation programs, and classroom practice in BC. The Principal Investigator is my Faculty Supervisor, Dr Ana Vieira. Both of our contact information can be found at the bottom of this letter.

In total, your voluntary participation in this study will take about 75–90 minutes, including a 45–60-minute interview, about 5 minutes to arrange a time by email, 5 minutes to complete the consent form, and around 15 minutes to review and revise the transcript of your interview. The interview will be semi-structured, with open-ended questions that allow for flexibility while still following the general themes of the research. Interviews may take place in person or via Microsoft Teams.

Participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer or choose to withdraw from the interview at any time. If you withdraw, your interview will be deleted and not used in the research.

This risk of participation is considered minimal and every reasonable measure will be taken to keep individual participants anonymized from their school districts and institutions of teacher education. There is a risk of feeling vulnerable when sharing your opinions and feelings during the interview. You may feel free to decline to answer questions that you do not wish to answer. You will not be asked to share student data. Any information that could identify a student, school, school district, or institution of teacher education will not be included in the research. Whenever possible, identifiable data will be de-identified or anonymized at the earliest practical stage of the research process within the Microsoft 365 environment, minimizing the risk associated with identifiable information. Only de-identified data will be used for analysis, if feasible for the research objectives. You will be assigned a pseudonym (e.g./ participant 1) in the publication of the study.

The benefit of participating in this study is that you will be providing your own experience in how early career and pre-service teachers feel prepared to teach reading in primary classrooms. The insights you share have the potential to add to the discourse supporting stronger connections between reading research, teacher training, and classroom practice in BC.

Data collected will include your number of years teaching and your number of years teaching primary grades. Data included in the thesis will include themes from the interviews and coded quotations using pseudonyms from interviews. Data collection and participation in this study will run from October 2025 to December 2025. All research data, particularly personal or sensitive information, will be collected, stored, and managed using Microsoft 365 services (e.g., OneDrive) provided by Vancouver Island University (VIU). VIU has conducted a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) for its Microsoft 365 environment, confirming its adherence to relevant privacy legislation, including British Columbia's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) and the principles of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 (2022)). The PIA ensures that appropriate technical, administrative, and physical safeguards are in place to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data.

Research data will be stored on VIU's Microsoft 365 cloud storage (OneDrive), which utilizes industry-standard encryption protocols for data at rest and in transit. Access to research files will be restricted to authorized research team members through VIU's secure login credentials, with permissions managed by the Principal Investigator. Teams video and voice recording with AI assisted real-time closed caption and transcript enabled (One Note) will be used to record in-person interviews. The resulting data will be stored on the interviewer's OneDrive. Upon completion of the research thesis and consistent with VIU's research data retention policies, identifiable data stored within Microsoft 365 will be securely disposed of according to VIU's data retention schedule and privacy guidelines.

The results of this study will be presented in a final report submitted as a thesis for completion of my degree and may also be used for conference publications, presentations, and published in academic journals. The completed thesis will be emailed to you, and may be made publicly available on VIUSpace.

By agreeing to take part, you are consenting to be audio and video recorded through Microsoft Teams or OneNote. You are also consenting to providing the potential use of coded quotes from your interview in the study. You will have the chance to review and edit the transcript of your interview.

You may withdraw from the study at any time during the study and up to 5 days after receiving your transcript by email. If you do not submit revisions or contact the researcher within those 5 days, it will be interpreted as consent to have your data included in the study. If you withdraw, your data (recordings, transcripts, and forms) will be permanently and irrevocably deleted from OneDrive. All remaining study data will be permanently deleted 3 months after my thesis is approved and submitted, likely in the Summer of 2026.

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Board at reb@viu.ca. The REB file number for this research thesis is 103703.

Please sign this document to indicate that you have received, and had a chance to review this Participant Consent Form within 7 days of receiving the form. Consent is indicated by your active participation in the research process, and can be withdrawn at any time.

Full Name: _____ Signature or initial: _____

Date: _____

Sincerely,
Sarah Bjelde

Project Team Lead

Sarah Bjelde, Student
Master of Education, Educational Leadership
Candidate
Vancouver Island University
xxxxxxxx@my.viu.ca
xxx-xxx-xxxx

Principal Investigator and Faculty Supervisor

Dr Ana Vieira
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
xxxxxxxxxxx@viu.ca
xxx-xxx-xxxx

Pre-Service Teacher Participant Consent Form

Version 2 – October 19, 2025

Equitable Reading Instruction and the Science of Reading

Research Ethics Board Application Ref No: **8127** (REB Ethics ID # TBD)

REB@viu.ca, File Number 103703).

(month, day), 2025

Dear prospective participant,

I am a student pursuing thesis research towards the completion of the Master of Education in Educational Leadership program through the Faculty of Education at Vancouver Island University (VIU). I am a Project Team Lead for the study entitled “***Equitable Reading Instruction and the Science of Reading***,” which aims to explore how pre-service teachers and early career teachers in British Columbia feel equipped to teach reading to primary students. This qualitative research aims to contribute to the discourse on bridging the gap between reading research, teacher preparation programs, and classroom practice in BC. The Principal Investigator is my Faculty Supervisor, Dr Ana Vieira. Both of our contact information can be found at the bottom of this letter.

In total, your voluntary participation in this study will take about 75–90 minutes, including a 45–60-minute interview, about 5 minutes to arrange a time by email, 5 minutes to complete the consent form, and around 15 minutes to review and revise the transcript of your interview. The interview will be semi-structured, with open-ended questions that allow for flexibility while still following the general themes of the research. Interviews may take place in person or via Microsoft Teams.

Participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer or choose to withdraw from the interview at any time. If you withdraw, your interview will be deleted and not used in the research. The VIU Faculty of Education will not know who has or has not volunteered for this study.

This risk of participation is considered minimal and every reasonable measure will be taken to keep individual participants anonymized from their school districts and institutions of teacher education. There is a risk of feeling vulnerable when sharing your opinions and feelings during the interview. You may feel free to decline to answer questions that you do not wish to answer. You will not be asked to share student data. Any information that could identify a student, school, school district, or institution of teacher education will not be included in the research. Whenever possible, identifiable data will be de-identified or anonymized at the earliest practical stage of the research process within the Microsoft 365 environment, minimizing the risk associated with identifiable information. Only de-identified data will be used for analysis, if feasible for the research objectives. You will be assigned a pseudonym (e.g./ participant 1) in the publication of the study.

The benefit of participating in this study is that you will be providing your own experience in how early career and pre-service teachers feel prepared to teach reading in primary classrooms. The insights you share have the potential to add to the discourse supporting stronger connections between reading research, teacher training, and classroom practice in BC.

Data collected will include your number of years teaching and your number of years teaching primary grades. Data included in the thesis will include themes from the interviews and coded quotations using pseudonyms from interviews. Data collection and participation in this study will run from October 2025 to December 2025. All research data, particularly personal or sensitive information, will be collected, stored, and managed using Microsoft 365 services (e.g., OneDrive) provided by Vancouver Island University (VIU). VIU has conducted a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) for its Microsoft 365 environment, confirming its adherence to relevant privacy legislation, including British Columbia's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) and the principles of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 (2022)). The PIA ensures that appropriate technical, administrative, and physical safeguards are in place to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data.

Research data will be stored on VIU's Microsoft 365 cloud storage (OneDrive), which utilizes industry-standard encryption protocols for data at rest and in transit. Access to research files will be restricted to authorized research team members through VIU's secure login credentials, with permissions managed by the Principal Investigator. Teams video and voice recording with AI assisted real-time closed caption and transcript enabled (One Note) will be used to record in-person interviews. The resulting data will be stored on the interviewer's OneDrive. Upon completion of the research thesis and consistent with VIU's research data retention policies, identifiable data stored within Microsoft 365 will be securely disposed of according to VIU's data retention schedule and privacy guidelines.

The results of this study will be presented in a final report submitted as a thesis for completion of my degree and may also be used for conference publications, presentations, and published in academic journals. The completed thesis will be emailed to you, and may be made publicly available on VIUSpace.

By agreeing to take part, you are consenting to be audio and video recorded through Microsoft Teams or OneNote. You are also consenting to providing the potential use of coded quotes from your interview in the study. You will have the chance to review and edit the transcript of your interview.

You may withdraw from the study at any time during the study and up to 5 days after receiving your transcript by email. If you do not submit revisions or contact the researcher within those 5 days, it will be interpreted as consent to have your data included in the study. If you withdraw, your data (recordings, transcripts, and forms) will be permanently and irrevocably deleted from

OneDrive. All remaining study data will be permanently deleted 3 months after my thesis is approved and submitted, likely in the Summer of 2026.

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Board at reb@viu.ca. The REB file number for this research thesis is 103703.

Please sign this document to indicate that you have received, and had a chance to review this Participant Consent Form within 7 days of receiving the form. Consent is indicated by your active participation in the research process, and can be withdrawn at any time.

Full Name: _____ Signature or initial: _____

Date: _____

Sincerely,
Sarah Bjelde

Project Team Lead

Sarah Bjelde, Student
Master of Education, Educational Leadership Candidate
Vancouver Island University
xxxxxxxx@my.viu.ca
xxx-xxx-xxxx

Principal Investigator and Faculty Supervisor

Dr Ana Vieira
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
xxxxxxx@viu.ca
xxx-xxx-xxxx

Appendix C – Pre-Service and Early Career Teacher Interview QuestionsPre-Service Teacher Interview Questions

1. Could you please share the grade level/levels you have taught in your practicum? What grade level/levels do you hope to teach one day?
2. Can you share a story or moment during your practicum, tutoring, or volunteer work where you felt successful in supporting a student's reading?
3. What beliefs or values guide how you hope to approach teaching reading in your own classroom?
4. How has your language arts course supported you in your understanding and beliefs about teaching reading? What other factors such as your teacher education program, mentors, peers or other influences have been shaping your beliefs about teaching reading?
5. What kinds of resources, programs, routines, or structures have you had access to so far in your training for teaching reading? How have these shaped your sense of preparedness or readiness about teaching reading?
6. When you imagine creating a structured literacy plan with routines and schedules, what feelings or thoughts come up for you?
7. When you think about different areas of teaching reading like phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary, which areas feel most familiar to you so far, and which feel newer or less clear?
8. Have you sought out readings, workshops, or experiences on your own to learn more about teaching reading? What drew you to those experiences?
9. Since you began your teacher training, how has your thinking about teaching reading evolved?
10. When you think about what you've learned from reading research in your program, how connected or disconnected does it feel from what you've seen in classrooms so far? What do you imagine might help you apply research in practice when you have your own classroom?
11. What tensions or contradictions are you already noticing or anticipating about teaching reading in the early years?
12. What's a question about teaching reading you're still holding as you prepare to begin your career?

Early Career Teacher Interview Questions

1. Could you please share the grade level/levels you teach and your number of years teaching? Have you taught any other grade levels within those years?
2. Can you share a story of when you felt successful when teaching reading?
3. Can you share a story or moment that shows your beliefs about teaching reading in action? If you feel like it, you can also name what those beliefs are.
4. How do you think your beliefs were shaped by the place or people around you? Your teacher education program? Your colleagues? Resources from your school district?
5. What kinds of resources, programs, routines, or structures do you currently have for teaching reading? How have these supported or challenged your approach to literacy instruction?
6. Can you tell me about how you feel about developing a comprehensive working plan for reading instruction, or literacy instruction as a whole, that is structured and complete with a schedule and routines?
7. When you think about the different areas of teaching reading like phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary, where do you feel most confident right now? How do you feel your teacher education program prepared you with the knowledge and strategies to implement instruction in the different areas of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary)?
8. Have you pursued further professional development on your own time in regards to teaching reading? How did those experiences shape how you feel about teaching reading?
9. Looking back, how has your approach to teaching reading shifted since you first started?
10. When you think about the research on how children learn to read, how connected or disconnected does it feel from your day-to-day classroom realities? What helps you bring research into practice, and what makes it harder?
11. What tensions or contradictions are you still learning to live with in regards to teaching reading at the primary level?
12. What's a question about teaching reading that you're still holding?