CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TUTORS
AND THE IMPACT ON STUDENT READING ACHIEVEMENT

A CAPSTONE PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY
JULIE SHAW ENNAMORATO
MARY WILLIAMS HOLLAND
JASON K. THOMPSON

CAPSTONE FACULTY ADVISOR: TRACEY S. HEBERT, PH.D.

LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
JULY 2012
This Capstone Project, directed and approved by the candidates’ Juried Review Committee, has been accepted by the Doctor of Education Program of Lipscomb University’s College of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TUTORS

AND THE IMPACT ON STUDENT READING ACHIEVEMENT

By

Julie Shaw Ennamorato

Mary Williams Holland

Jason K. Thompson

for the degree of

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

Juried Review Committee
CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TUTORS
AND THE IMPACT ON STUDENT READING ACHIEVEMENT

Julie Shaw Ennamorato
Mary Williams Holland
Jason K. Thompson

Program Doctor of Education

Print Reproduction Permission Granted
I understand that I must submit printed copies of my Capstone Project Manuscript (hereafter referred to as “manuscript”) to the Lipscomb University Library, per current LU guidelines, for the completion of my degree. I hereby grant to Lipscomb University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive and make accessible my manuscript in whole or in part in all forms of media in perpetuity. I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of the manuscript. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this manuscript.

I hereby grant permission to Lipscomb University to reproduce my manuscript in whole or in part. Any reproduction will not be for commercial use or profit.

I additionally grant to the Lipscomb University Library the nonexclusive license to archive and provide electronic access to my manuscript in whole or in part in all forms of media in perpetuity. I understand that my work, in addition to its bibliographic record and abstract, will be available to the world-wide community of scholars and researchers throughout the LU Library. I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of the manuscript. I am aware that Lipscomb University does not require registration of copyright for the electronic manuscript.

I hereby certify that, if appropriate, I have obtained and attached written permission statements from the owners of each third party copyrighted matter to be included in my manuscript. I certify that the version I submitted is the same as that approved by my committee.

Signatures below signify understanding, agreement, and permission to all the above by each author:

Julie Shaw Ennamorato
Date: 9-4-12

Mary Williams Holland
Date: 09/04/12

Jason K. Thompson

Acknowledgements

Working on a Capstone Project as a team of three is an experience we will never forget. We have grown to appreciate the strengths of each team member and have worked tirelessly to produce a study worthy of your reading. Our goal was to provide our client, Dr. Tammy Lipsey and the Tennessee Literacy Partnership, with valuable information regarding relationships between the tutors and the students they serve. Without Dr. Lipsey’s support, we would not have been able to complete this capstone project.

We thank and acknowledge our family and friends. How do people make it through life without these two very important groups of people? We give a very sincere thank-you to our spouses, Curt, Joe, and Megan, for believing in us and for providing unwavering support, patience, and encouragement. To our eight children, Amber, Kelsey, Brooklin, Lauren, Drew, Kelsey Joy, Ella Grace, and Will Hudson, thank you for providing us with the inspiration needed to finish this project and for sharing us. We look forward to spending more time with each of you.

We would also like to thank our co-workers and fellow cohort members who encouraged us along the way. There have been challenges and gifts of being part of Lipscomb University’s inaugural Ed.D. program. These past two years have been rewarding.

Thank you to Dr. Kenneth Blake for serving as our statistician and SPSS coach. His patience with us was outstanding.

We thank our advisor Dr. Tracey Hebert and our committee members. To Dr. Candice McQueen, Dr. Marcia Stewart, and Dr. Roger Wiemers, we appreciate each of you for guiding us each step of the way.
And finally, and most importantly, we are eternally grateful to our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father in Heaven who walked with us each step of the way. 

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen! (Ephesians 3:20-21).
JULIE SHAW ENNAMORATO, MARY HOLLAND, AND JASON THOMPSON.

Characteristics of Effective Tutors and the Impact on Students’ Reading Achievement.
(Under the direction of TRACEY S. HEBERT, PH.D.)

The purpose of this study was to examine the characteristics of minimally trained reading tutors and their impact on the K-4 students. Reading achievement gains were reviewed in conjunction with characteristics of the tutors. The tutors fall into one of three categories: high school students, preservice teachers, and community volunteers. This capstone project builds upon the prior research of Dr. Tammy Lipsey (2009) whose research revealed tutoring in reading clinics had a positive impact on struggling readers’ achievement; however, the characteristics of effective tutors were not established. This study used a mixed methods approach. A total of 197 tutors participated in the research. The participating tutors’ ages ranged from 16 years to over 51 years of age. The total ethnic make-up for the tutors was Caucasian (62.4%), African American’s (26.4%) and Other (11.2%). The reading scores of students were matched to their respective tutors. There was no statistical significance found with the tutor’s temperament, age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background as a predictor of student reading gains. However, there was a statistical significance among the high school students serving as tutors. Their students showed the highest gains. The research also revealed the female students experienced higher reading gains than the male students. There was also a correlation between reading achievement gains and female gender-matched tutor and student. This research demonstrated that the use of high school students was related to student gains and poses questions for future research.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypotheses</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Study</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Review of Literature</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Overview of Educational Reform</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Children Cannot Read</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Years of Disparity</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learners Backgrounds and Immigration</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of Reluctant Readers</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Subgroups</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disparity in Schools</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Influences</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Reading Intervention</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Educational Impact of Reading Intervention and Tutoring</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Literacy Partnership / TLP</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Literacy Partnership Training</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Lesson Framework and Tutoring Programs</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships Impact Achievement</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Types of Tutors in the TLP Reading clinics</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Students Serving as Tutors</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservice Teachers Serving as Tutors</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Volunteers Serving as Tutors</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Four Temperaments</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanguine</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choleric</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melancholy</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phlegmatic</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Twelve Blends of the Temperaments</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Tutors</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Literature</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.  Methodology</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Project</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design of the Study</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Method</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Variables</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variable</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in TLP Reading Clinics</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents of the Questionnaire</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Participants</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection and Instrumentation</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperament Quiz</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Testing</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Ethics and Approvals</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Review Board</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNPS</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.  Results and Analysis</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Analysis</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table of Contents (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypotheses Results</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Two</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypothesis Result</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Three</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypothesis Result</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Four</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypotheses Results</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path Analysis</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Analysis</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings from Questionnaire</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding from Focus Groups</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Tutor Characteristics</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same Ethnicity</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same Gender</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Talk</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Background</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Framework</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Tutorial vs. One-to-One Tutoring</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Common Threads Discussed</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Tutors Offer to Students</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Most Days in Tutoring I Feel”</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings from Individual Interviews</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Summary and Discussion</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Research</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Literature</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results and Analysis</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Findings</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Two</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Three</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Four</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Other Findings</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for TLP Reading Clinics</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Studies</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection of the Researchers</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Lipscomb University’s Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>MNPS Reading Clinics Tutor Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Focus Group Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Focus Group Consent Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>Individual Interview Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>Individual Interview Consent Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>Lipscomb University Internal Review Board Approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>MNPS Approval Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix J</td>
<td>MNPS External Researcher Statements of Assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix K</td>
<td>Researchers’ Human Subject Form Certificate of Completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix L</td>
<td>Researchers’ Biographies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>MNPS Total Enrollment for the 2011-2012 School Year</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>MNPS Student Ethnic Composition District-Wide</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>TLP Participating Tutor Age Distribution</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>TLP Participating Tutor Ethnicity</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>TLP Participating Tutor Education Background</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>MNPS District Reading Benchmarks</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Gender Matching and Student Average Reading Gain</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Students with Zero Reading Gains and Characteristics of Tutors</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Gender Matching of Tutor and Student</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MNPS Achievement Scores</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Comparison of Achievement Scores</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>MNPS Statistical Overview</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>TLP Five Steps for an Effective Tutor</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>TLP Participating Student Ethnicity</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>TLP Participating Student Grade Level Distribution</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>TLP Participating Student Reading Gains</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>TLP Participating Tutors Types</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>TLP Student Reading Gains and Type of Tutor</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Path Analysis</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>TLP Participating Tutor Quotes Addressing Strengths and Strategies</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>TLP Participating Tutor Temperaments</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One

Introduction

The Tennessee Literacy Partnership is a model for merging university, community, and school resources to improve academic achievement of both K-12 students and college students. Lipscomb University’s College of Education has partnered with the Tennessee Literacy Partnership (TLP) to identify the indicators of effective tutors and the impact on students’ reading achievement. The partnership promotes promising practices in literacy that hope to significantly raise the level of achievement for all students. This partnership will also provide literacy opportunities that serve the needs of the community. A Memorandum of Understanding was established between Lipscomb University and the Tennessee Literacy Partnership (Appendix A).

Background

Dr. Tammy Lipsey is the District Coordinator for the Metro Nashville Public School System’s reading clinics. She provides oversight, coordination, and training for all the reading clinics within the Metro Nashville Public School System (MNPS). Lipsey conducted a quasi-experimental study to evaluate the effectiveness of an early reading intervention method designed for students who were in need of extra help in reading. Lipsey’s (2009) recent research *Reading Intervention with K-4 Struggling Readers* merged two great necessities: preservice teachers in need of real life teaching experiences and students in need of reading intervention.

Lipsey’s research spawned the idea of starting what is now known as the TLP which have been established in eleven MNPS sites. A TLP reading clinic provides intensive, individualized, and one-to-one tutoring using instructional strategies proven by research to promote reading gains (Lipsey, 2009). Students are selected for the program if
they are performing two or more reading levels below grade level. The goals of the TLP reading clinics include the following:

1. to provide instructional services to a wide variety of students in grades K-10 who are experiencing difficulties with reading;
2. to enhance student performance in reading;
3. to provide a research-based one-to-one reading tutorial session;
4. to allow volunteers the opportunity to serve struggling students in their own communities;
5. to allow preservice teachers the opportunity to gain critical reading knowledge and skill through supervised one-to-one tutoring of MNPS students in a clinical setting (TLP Training Materials).

Tutors for these clinics have expanded to include pre-service teachers in university preparatory programs, high school students, and community volunteers who are affiliated with the TLP through their churches or places of employment. All volunteers are trained using a lesson framework formatted after a reading recovery program. Intentional instructional strategies supported by research and the skill of the tutor contribute to the success of students’ reading growth. Most students are tutored for 30-40 minutes twice a week during the school day. The tutoring session focuses on the five pillars of reading: fluency, comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary. The lesson has five parts: warm-up reading, word study, new reading, writing, and retelling. Lipsey’s research determined tutoring, with minimally trained tutors (college students) using a set lesson format based in best practices, is effective as an early intervention with struggling readers (Lipsey, 2009).
TLP provides service-learning opportunities. Butler and Lawrence (2010) defined service learning as “a process of integrating action and intention, as practical experiences that are reciprocally beneficial for all involved, and as a teaching method in which academic instruction is combined with community service while focusing on reflection and critical thinking” (p. 158). Field experiences are considered service-learning when they are responsive to the needs of the community. The authors state “service-learning provides a powerful lens for conceptualizing field experiences in teacher education” (p. 159). Leal, Johanson, Toth, and Huang (2004), concluded the following:

Two findings revolved around the successes of literacy tutoring that were not attributed to specific strategies. These included (a) the close relationship between tutor and student and (b) the knowledge of the tutor about the child's developmental level and the child's learning styles, that is, the way his or her child liked to learn and learned best. (p. 59)

These two supportive findings (Leal, et al., 2004) are exactly what this study addressed. Can students and tutors foster caring relationships that translate to greater gains long-term? Is one tutor more effective than another and if so, why? If a tutor were matched with gender or learning likenesses of the student, how could that potentially impact at-risk readers? As research has pointed out (Leal, et al., 2004), these two components, relationships and connections, make a difference; but how does one intentionally foster such a concept and understand its true contributing factors for student achievement?

Lipsey (2009) explored the characteristics of best instructional practices and timelines for student growth to be realized, and concluded that tutors are effective; however, the indicators which describe characteristics of effective tutors were not
established. Her research examined the effect of using minimally trained tutors in an inner-city public school. This study was built upon her research and determined the indicators of an effective tutor, especially in a TLP reading clinic.

**Statement of the Problem**

The Tennessee Literacy Partnership (TLP) has determined the importance of tutoring for low achieving readers, but it has no known or researched indicators which describe characteristics of an effective tutor.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine indicators that identify effective tutors. Students were selected for the TLP reading clinics if they were performing two or more reading levels below grade level. Tutors for these clinics were comprised of preservice teachers in preparatory programs, high school students, and community volunteers. All volunteers were trained using a lesson framework formatted similar to reading recovery practices (Lipsey, 2009). The success of students’ reading growth has been attributed to intentional instructional strategies supported by research and the tutors. Although the instructional strategies used for teaching are research-based, the characteristics of effective tutors have not been identified.

The goal of this research was to determine what type of soft skills or temperament of tutors yields the highest student achievement. Could successfully selecting appropriate tutors improve reading scores, build student confidence, and establish a successful student-tutor relationship? This study identified which tutor traits, if any, are associated with gains in a student’s reading ability and propose a model for predicting such gains. If this research could determine correlations between tutor characteristics and student achievements, then perhaps a successful partnership of the tutor and student could
improve reading gains, build student confidence, and contribute to a successful mentor relationship.

The research team expected to see a diverse range of various students identified for reading intervention. Many of these students came from Title I schools representing low-income families, poor literacy skills, English language learning families, and students with poor academic performance. Students may also have challenges such as limited English skills, limited cognitive skills, poor oral language skills, failed school experiences, special needs, and fear/hate of reading.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Do the reading assessment scores of students participating in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership differ significantly based on the temperament of the tutor?

2. Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized reading gains in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership?

3. Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized no reading gains in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership?

4. Will the background of tutors (preservice teachers, high school students, and community volunteers) participating in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership relate to varied effectiveness of reading achievement gains?

**Null Hypotheses**

In order to explore the research questions and findings, null hypotheses were developed for the research questions.
1. No statistically significant gains exist between a student’s reading scores and the tutor’s temperament.

2. No statistically significant relationships exist between a student’s zero gain in reading scores and the tutor’s temperament.

3. No statistically significant gains exist between a student’s reading scores and the common characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, education attainment) of the tutor.

4. No statistically significant relationships exist between a student’s zero gain in reading scores and the common characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, education attainment) of the tutor.

5. No statistically significant gains exist between the average reading scores of students who were tutored by preservice teachers and the average reading scores of students who were tutored by community volunteers.

6. No statistically significant gains exist between the average reading scores of students who were tutored by preservice teachers and the average reading scores of students who were tutored by high school volunteers.

7. No statistically significant gains exist between the average reading scores of students who were tutored by high school students and the average reading scores of students who were tutored by community volunteers.

**Significance of the Study**

Although Lipsey has developed a research-based tutoring intervention, little has been understood or studied about tutors. Effective tutors display a high level of support and nurturance in their interactions with their students, while at the same time encouraging and motivating students. Content knowledge and the ability to support
student learning is important. However, one cannot underestimate the impact of the student/tutor relationship. The relationship built between the tutor and the student can often make or break the success of the student’s growth in reading.

A tutor is a crucial component of education. If a tutor understood his or her own temperament, would that knowledge enhance teaching and learning? Could the awareness of one’s own characteristic weaknesses assist the tutor in becoming more proficient in one-to-one tutoring? Since the students in TLP reading clinics come from low-income families, with challenging environments and low parental involvement, the characteristics of the tutor become even more crucial to the learning process. Understandably, characteristics of effective tutors become a major consideration to improving literacy.

**Delimitations**

The coverage of this study is based on one public school district. Although the district is very diverse, other learning organizations may find themselves less likely to have some of the barriers to why children cannot read. This district also has a high free and reduced lunch rate (FARL) of more than 70%. It represents a metropolitan setting with a significant amount of international populations.

The study covers the effectiveness of tutors within the setting of TLP reading clinics. It does not review tutors outside this program that may volunteer in other MNPS schools. Therefore, this study does not consider students in other tutorial settings. It also does not consider other academic areas outside of literacy. Although TLP reading clinics serve students from Kindergarten through high school, this research focused on students in Kindergarten through fourth grades.

This study is a continuation of Lipsey’s (2009) work with TLP reading clinics, although it can be used independently of her study. The timeline of the study was limited
to the school year and MNPS testing dates for students’ running records. There were no means for the researchers to add alternative assessments or other reading methods.

**Definition of Terms**

The discipline of education has its own unique vocabulary. For the purpose of this study, a definition of terms is included to help bring clarity to the reader. These terms appear below in alphabetical order as well as the acronyms to which some terms are commonly referred.

*At-risk* – Students who fall behind their classmates early in the process of learning to read are considered to be at-risk (Lennon & Slesinksi, 1999). This term may be used interchangeably with high-risk and disadvantaged students, and infers that they have not met minimal or normal achievement levels (Ramey & Ramey, 2006).

*Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* – A measurement defined by the United States federal No Child Left Behind Act (2001) that allows the U.S. Department of Education to determine how every public school and school district in the country is performing academically according to results on standardized tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

*Basal Reading Series* – A basal reading program is a core reading program that is used to teach children to read. The term "basal" comes from the word "base," as the program acts as the basis for the lessons that teach children reading skills. Basal reading programs are mainly used by school districts, as they are generally too expensive for most homeschoolers and tutoring centers (Zimmerman, 2009, para. 1).

*Benchmarks* – Benchmark assessments are assessments administered periodically throughout the school year, at specified times during a curriculum sequence, to evaluate
students’ knowledge and skills relative to an explicit set of longer-term learning goals (Coffey, 2009, para. 2).

Cluster – School clusters are groups of geographically defined attendance areas, which are composed of a high school/consortium and designated elementary and middle level feeder schools (Craig, 2006, para. 4).

Corrective Action – When a Title I school fails to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals for four consecutive years, the district must implement at least one of the following corrective actions: replace school staff, implement new curriculum, decrease the authority of school-level administration, appoint outside experts to advise the school, extend the school year or school day, and/or restructure the internal organization of the school (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

Cross-Age Tutoring – A method of tutoring where an older student tutors a younger student (Gaustad, 1993).

Early Educational Intervention – Refers to a systematic and intentional endeavor to provide supplemental educational experiences to children before they fall further behind (Ramey & Ramey, 2006).

English Learners (EL) – An active learner of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs. This term is used mainly in the U.S. to describe K–12 students (Education.com, 2012, para. 2).

Fluency – The ability to read text accurately and quickly with proper inflection (McShane, 2005, p. 155).

Guided Reading – According to Fountas and Pinnell (1996), guided reading is an instructional setting that enables (the teacher) to work with a small group of students to help them learn effective strategies for processing text with understanding. The purpose
of guided reading is to meet the varying instructional needs of all the students, enabling them to greatly expand their reading powers” (p.189 - 191).

*Instructional Reading Level* – The level at which a reader can manage the text with no more than approximately 1 in 10 words missed or they can read it with 90% accuracy. A reading-level book should be easy enough to develop a student’s confidence and facilitate understanding, but difficult enough to challenge without frustrating (Clay, 1991).

*Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS)* – Developed by Louisa C. Moats, Ed.D., LETRS provides a “deeper knowledge of reading instruction by addressing each component—phoneme awareness; phonics, decoding, spelling, and word study; oral language development; vocabulary; reading fluency; comprehension; and writing—as well as the foundational concepts that link them” (Reading Institute, 2009, para. 3).

*Limited English Proficient Students* – The percentage of students served in programs of language assistance, such as English as a second language, high-intensity language training, and bilingual education. A LEP student, or English language learners (ELL) is defined as an individual who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; or who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or who is an American Indian or Alaska Native and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on his or her level of English language proficiency; and who, by reason thereof, has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in
classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in our society (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011).

*Literacy* – Literacy skills are all the skills needed for reading and writing. They include such things as awareness of the sounds of language, awareness of print, and the relationship between letters and sounds. Other literacy skills include vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension (Early Beginnings, 2009, p. 2).

*Minimally Trained Tutors* – High school or college students that have little or no experience in teaching struggling readers and have attended a four to six hour tutorial training session (Lipsey, 2009, p. 10).

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* – The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is a federal law passed under the George W. Bush administration. NCLB represents legislation that attempts to accomplish standards-based education reform. The law and its subsequent implementation have grown to be a very controversial issue in Education. The law reauthorized federal programs meant to hold primary and secondary schools measurably accountable to higher standards. It also provided more opportunities to parents for school choice and placed a greater emphasis on reading in schools. NCLB is written so that it requires 100% of students (including special education students and those from disadvantaged background) within a school to reach the same set of state standards in math and reading by the year 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, para. 1). (*While conducting this research, the state of Tennessee received a governmental exemption from NCLB.*)

*Phonemic Awareness* – The ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds (McShane, 2005, p. 155).
Reading Clinics – Reading clinics provide intensive, individualized, one-on-one tutoring using instructional strategies proven by researchers to promote reading gain. The reading clinics are housed within a public school building and staffed with Tennessee Literacy Partnership employees and volunteers (TLP, 2011).

Reading Intervention – Additional instructional reading support provided to children who are struggling readers (Hiebert & Taylor, 2000).

Reading Recovery – A widely researched intervention for young children having extreme difficulty with early literacy learning. Reading Recovery techniques provide intensive one-on-one tutoring in beginning reading skills. Lessons are highly interactive, emphasizing print concepts, contextual reading, and meaning. Typically, lessons are provided on a one-to-one basis, for 30-minutes, twice a week, for 12-20 weeks (Reading Recovery, 2012, para. 1-4).

Restructuring – When a Title I school fails to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals for five consecutive years; the district must prepare a plan to restructure the school. The restructuring plan must include one of the following alternative governance arrangements: reopen the school as a public charter school; replace all or most of the school staff, including the principal; enter into a contract to have an outside entity operate the school; arrange for the state to take over operation of the school; or any other major restructuring of the school's governance arrangement (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

Running Records – A running record assesses a student’s instructional reading level and documents reading progress by creating a graphic representation of a student’s oral reading, and identifying patterns of effective and ineffective strategy use. The assessment checks oral reading, fluency, and comprehension (Clay, 2005).
Specialized Program Individualizing Reading Excellence (SPIRE) – This program is a comprehensive, multisensory, systematic reading and language arts program designed for struggling readers and for students with learning differences. It incorporates total language instruction including phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, spelling, handwriting, and comprehension (Specialized Program Individualizing Reading Excellence, 1999, para. 1).

Subgroups – Subgroups are demographic subgroups, including major ethnic/racial groups, economically disadvantaged students, limited English proficient (LEP) students, and students with disabilities (NCLB Subgroups, 2005, para. 1-3).

Teach For America (TFA) – The TFA is a non-profit organization that aims to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting high-achieving recent college graduates and professionals to teach for two or more years in low-income communities throughout the United States. Uncertified corps members receive alternative teacher licensure through coursework taken while completing the program. Uncertified corps members attend an intensive five-week summer institute to prepare for their commitment. The organization aspires for corps members to gain the insight and added commitment to tackle the root causes of America's achievement gap throughout their lives. Members of the corps represent a rich and diverse set of backgrounds and experiences, but are selected for qualities they have in common with successful teachers (Teach for America, 2011, para. 1).

Whole Language – a method of teaching reading and writing that emphasizes learning whole words and phrases by encountering them in meaningful contexts rather than by phonics exercises (Adams, 1995, p. 38).
Organization of the Study

This capstone project is divided into five chapters. Chapter one includes the introduction of the project describing the background of TLP reading clinics and Lipsey’s work. It also contains the research problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and definition of terms. Chapter two presents a comprehensive review of the literature as it relates to the research questions and other variables that surround this study. Chapter three describes the methodology and procedures used to gather data. This section also gives full details to the design of the study, the research method, lists of independent and dependent variables, population samples, and instrumentation. Chapter four presents the findings of analysis and interpretation of data and its significance. Chapter five contains the summary of the study, results, conclusions drawn from the findings, and recommendations for future studies.
Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

The review of the literature is presented in six sections. The first section is a brief historical overview of education reform over the past six decades and the outcomes that pertain to education today, specifically in the area of reading. It discusses the laws that have been instrumental in the restructure of the public school system: *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) and *No Child Left Behind 2001* (NCLB).

The second section presents major variables that impede a student’s ability to be a fluent reader. These variables are early years of disparity, English learners’ backgrounds and immigration, culture of reluctant readers, poverty, race subgroups, disparity in schools, and parental involvement. Each section reports how these variables impede reading success. Although the variables are reported independently, it is not uncommon for students to bear the consequences of many of these variables. In some cases, a student may be identified with all of these variables.

The third section gives a general setting of the history and demographics of the district where the research took place. Some of these demographics include size, background of students, student ethnic composition district-wide, current status within the state in reading scores and assessments. The fourth section covers not only the need for reading intervention, but the educational impact of reading intervention and tutoring with an overview of the Tennessee Literacy Partnership. The fifth section offers insight about the tutors: characteristics, relationships, and types of tutors. The sixth section covers the impact of relationships on student achievement. Finally, section seven
introduces the reader to Temperament Theory and the role temperaments may play in successful tutoring situations.

**Historical Overview of Educational Reform**

Through the past several years, education has been the center of political debates and Americans’ rights as citizens. Thought provoking questions surrounding education have been asked from the oval office to the classroom. How does one educate all children? What must a country do to create equal access to education? What prevents children from learning?

With each succession of presidents, education has been a continued priority. Truman’s administration petitioned for greater technology, while Eisenhower and Kennedy’s administrations were forced to critically consider the United States’ educational superiority in comparison to the rest of the world. President Lyndon B. Johnson, a former teacher, witnessed the impact of poverty on students in America. “Johnson believed that equal access to education was vital to a child's ability to lead a productive life” (Brown-Nagin, 2004, para. 1).

During the Johnson administration, one of the most aggressive federal educations bill was passed: Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). President Johnson propelled the ESEA in Congress and its passage into law in just 87 days. The law was comprised of five titles. Title I provided guidelines and funds for educating children who are disadvantaged. Title II provided funds for library materials and audio/visual technology. Title III supported programs meeting the educational disparity of students at risk of failing. Title IV allotted funding for college and university research as it related to education issues, and Title V apportioned funds for individual state departments. For the next 30 years, presidential administrations have attempted to
enhance and mitigate the ESEA by providing revisions, expansions, and regulations attempting to serve all students (Brown-Nagin, 2004).

The 43rd President of the United States, George W. Bush, announced a new reform entitled, *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, which was launched in January of 2001. The legislation was based on accountability, choice, parent involvement, and flexibility in federal educational programs. This new law seemed to address what the last four decades had attempted to accomplish. The NCLB offered solutions to education for all students, accountability to schools and states, and global competitiveness. This new system forced all states to regulate standards in reading and mathematics. Annual testing was required for all students in 3rd through 8th grades with annual statewide objectives ensuring that all groups of students reached proficiency within twelve years (U.S. Department of Education, Executive Summary, 2004). What do all students represent? The phrase “all students” is comprised of four subgroups within the legislation:

1. Economically disadvantaged students (free and reduced lunch/FARL);
2. Students from major racial and ethnic groups (Asian and Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, White);
3. Students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
4. Students with limited English proficiency (EL).

With decades of governmental spotlight on education and billions of dollars allocated for students’ success, citizens have high expectations for better results and greater student achievement. “More than 8,600 schools nationwide have been identified as needing improvement or corrective action in the 2002–2003 school year” (Public Education Network, 2002, p. 43). According to more recent statistics,
There were nearly 15,000 schools identified as “in need of improvement” in the United States for school year 2009-10—roughly 16% of all public schools and 28% of all Title I schools nationwide. The schools identified include nearly 6,000 schools in Restructuring (an increase of nearly 4,000 schools in just 3 years) and 2,000 schools in Corrective Action—a number that has remained relatively constant (Institute for Competitive Workforce, 2011, para. 7).

These numbers indicate the need for improvements in the American education. The NCLB Act specified that all students have proficient reading scores by 2014; however, scores have continued to be unsuccessful for all NCLB subgroups (U.S. Department of Education, Executive Summary, 2004).

The following statistics from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics/NCES (2007) reveal some alarming societal concerns related to literacy and provide indication of widespread weakness in our educational system that carry high stakes not only for our schools, but for the country:

1. 85% of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate.
2. More than 60% of all prison inmates are functionally illiterate.
3. Penal institution records show that inmates have a 16% chance of returning to prison if they receive literacy help, as opposed to 70% who receive no help. This recidivism equates to taxpayer costs of $25,000 per year per inmate and nearly double that amount for juvenile offenders.
4. Illiteracy and crime are closely related. Over 70% of inmates in America's prisons cannot read above a fourth grade level.
5. Literacy is learned. Illiteracy is passed along by parents who cannot read or write.

6. One child in four grows up not knowing how to read.

7. 43% of adults at Level 1 literacy skills live in poverty compared to only 4% of those at Level 5.

8. Three out of four food stamp recipients perform in the lowest two literacy levels.

9. 90% of welfare recipients are high school dropouts. (U.S. Dept. of Education, NCES, 2007)

Students are not making adequate gains in reading especially as it pertains to NCLB subgroups. The U.S. Department of Education NCES (2011) stated:

The average reading scores in 2009 for White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native students were not measurably different from their scores in 2007. However, the 2009 reading scores for White, Black, and Hispanic students were higher than the scores from assessment years prior to 2007. In 2009, the average reading score of Black 4th-grade students was less than that of White 4th-grade students by 26 points. This gap was not measurably different from the gap in 2007 but was smaller than the gaps in all other assessment years prior to 2007. In 2009, Hispanic 4th-grade students scored 25 points lower than their White peers; this gap was not measurably different from the gaps in 2007 or 1992 (p. 4).

Although these reading statistics from the NCES allow the reader to understand the disparity that exists among White, Black, and Hispanic students, there is no explanation as to why these students are falling behind. The next section of the literature
review, *Why Children Cannot Read*, offers descriptions of students who are failing. This section of literature will provide a better understanding of the students and influences beyond the realm of the classroom that impede certain children from reading or making adequate reading gains.

**Why Children Cannot Read**

Although in many ways *traditional books* are taking a backseat to technology, the skill and importance of reading remain the driving force in this information-rich world. Due to the revolution of technology and the sophistication of reading needed with this new technology, a basic level of literacy is no longer adequate to function in higher education and the workplace. In 2006 a cover story entitled, *Why Johnny (Still) Can’t Read*, provided insight into the reading failures of older students. “Young people must handle an array of complex texts -- narratives, repair manuals, scholarly journals, maps, graphics, and more -- across technologies. They need to evaluate, synthesize, and communicate effectively” (Guensburg, 2006, p. 35).

More than eight million students (grades 4 – 12) struggle to read, write, and comprehend sufficiently. Guensburg (2006) states “Only three out of ten eighth graders read at or above grade level” (p. 35). It is imperative that these struggling readers not only be identified, but for the reader to recognize the perplexing variables that contribute to these students’ failures. The major categories addressed in this section, *Why Children Cannot Read*, are early years of disparity, English learners (EL) backgrounds/immigration, culture of reluctant readers, poverty, race subgroups, inequality among schools, and parent influences.

**Early years of disparity.** The first category of students considered is preschool/early elementary children. Starting kindergarten is one of the biggest
milestones in a child’s life. The federal government’s investment in preschool education programs for low-income children is considerable, annually about $25 billion (Burke, 2010, p. 1). Success in these formative years is a critical prerequisite for success in school and ultimately as it pertains to adulthood (McPartland & Slavin, 1990).

*USA Today* (Toppo, 2008) reported a study from the University of California that revealed the effects of poverty on children’s brains. Brain functions of low-income nine and ten-year-olds were less than those of wealthy children. The study noted that this difference is almost equivalent to the damage from a stroke. Although the report caused heated discussions across the nation, the study adds to the mounting evidence that poverty afflicts children’s brains. “Researchers have long pointed to the ravages of malnutrition, stress, illiteracy, and toxic environments in low-income children’s lives” (para. 3).

This information is vital when we consider children and their ability to learn, especially being mindful that the national average for children living below the poverty line is 18%. In some states, it is as high as 30% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). “Research has shown that the neural systems of poor children develop differently than those of middle class children, affecting language development, ‘executive function’ or the ability to plan, remember details, and pay attention in school” (Toppo, 2008, para. 3). According to the article, these findings are reversible if intensive interventions, focused lessons, games, and literacy activities are used.

Toppo (2008) reported on the significant gap that existed in a child’s vocabulary during these impressionable years was extraordinary. In this controversial article, Toppo stated, “The most famous study, from 1995, transcribed conversation between parents and children and found that by age 3, middle-class children had working vocabularies
roughly twice the size of poor children’s” (para. 6). Further complications arise when one considers the nation’s five million students with limited English proficiency (Guensburg, 2006). Deficiency in language acquisition, in addition to poverty, creates a greater disparity in vocabulary.

In the development of a young child’s brain, there is academic consensus that the earliest years of life, from birth to age five, are the time when a child’s brain is undergoing the most growth and development (McPartland & Slavin, 1990). The early years of disparity have numerous consequences. According to Shonkoff & Phillips (2000), children who lack academic and social stimulation can become fragile. “What happens during the first months and years of life matters a lot, not because this period of development provides an indelible blueprint for adult well-being, but because it sets either a sturdy or fragile stage for what follows” (p. 5). Shonkoff & Phillips (2000) point out the influence of poverty on early childhood:

Poverty during the early childhood period may be more damaging than poverty experienced at later ages, particularly with respect to eventual academic attainment. The dual risk of poverty experienced simultaneously in the family and in surrounding neighborhood, which affects minority children to a much greater extent than other children, increases young children’s vulnerability to adverse consequences (p. 9).

Early school age children struggle with literacy for a variety of reasons. Unquestionably, poverty is the common denominator. Children living in poverty come from low-income families with little to no educational resources. Many times they come from low-literacy or illiterate homes. In a recent literacy conference, the founder of Family Literacy, Sharon Darling, said, “The average five-year-old has been read to for
characteristics of effective tutors

more than 2,000 hours. A five year old in poverty, has been read to less than 20 hours” (Darling, 2011). This creates a disadvantage not only for the child having little interaction with literacy but for the teacher who must adapt her class vastly to accommodate children with literacy gaps.

In studying the significance of students’ background variables and actual standardized test scores, Paulson and Marchant (2009) found students to be disadvantaged in educational settings when it came to achievement. They state, “Much of the variation among students can be accounted for by innate and contextual factors that students bring with them when they come to school” (p. 15). Many times students fall into more than one Elementary and Secondary Education Act/ESEA subgroup. For example, they may qualify for free and reduced lunch, belong to a minority group, come from a non-English background and have illiterate parents. These factors contribute heavily to a child’s early challenges in reading.

These multiple ESEA subgroups of students are common in many metropolitan schools across America. As schools address issues of low student reading achievement, the complexity of deciphering and distinguishing subgroup or subgroups to which a student belongs is increasingly difficult. If a student is identified for one subgroup, schools are able to strategically target that subgroup for intervention. Seemingly, the more subgroups to which students default, the greater number of barriers there are for students to overcome and schools to address.

**English learners’ backgrounds and immigration.** From 1975-2006 more than 2.4 million refugees have immigrated into the U.S. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2006). The current immigration wave, which consists of documented immigrants, undocumented immigrants, and refugees, is the largest in U.S. history (Atkinson, Morten
& Sue, 1998, p. 3). Unlike early immigration that originated primarily in Europe and whose members were readily assimilated, the current immigration wave pattern demonstrates a dramatic increase in the non-white populations. Immigration to America combined with the birth rates of these ethnic groups across the country, especially in areas of heavy immigration settlement, has created an influx of English language learners (Atkinson et al., 1998).

According to the 2000 Census, one out of every five children in the United States is a child of immigrants (Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, 2010). Each year, tens of thousands of refugees flee their war-torn countries and communities and enter the United States. At least 40% of these refugees are children (American Psychological Association, 2010). In 2002, there were 13.5 million children of immigrants under the age of 18 living in the United States. This percentage represented a significant portion of all children in the United States under different demographic variables. Of all the low-income children in the U.S., 26.2% are immigrants. More than half of these children are raised in low-income families (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2006).

In some respects, refugee families struggle the same way that low-income American families struggle. They battle with poverty, have little to no education, live in low-income neighborhoods that are often unsafe, and attend poor schools. Eighty percent of all refugees are women and children (World Vision, 2009). The United States is not the only resettlement country with taxing problems as it pertains to educating immigrants, even though it is the largest (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2012).

Education is one of the most important public services representing a major spending commitment from resettlement countries’ budgets and bearing the heavy
burdens of immigration challenges. The cost of illegal immigration in the United States’ educational budget has been exhausted. Just in California alone, the state spends approximately $7.7 billion a year to school the children of illegal immigrants who now are 15 percent of the student body (Longley, 2004). “Education for the children of illegal aliens constitutes the single largest cost to taxpayers, at an annual price tag of nearly $52 billion” (Potter, 2011, para. 8). Most of these costs are absorbed by state and local governments, where immigrants settle in high populations.

As the United States continues to provide for immigrants and refugees, there must be an enlightened awareness of how these students contribute to the overall challenges of achievement gaps as they relate to the English language learners. Educational systems along with all their stakeholders must be vigilant and preemptive in solving dilemmas, such as school failure and low literacy skills, before culture chaos or a civil crisis occurs beyond unresolvable measures. It is a universal debate that needs universal answers as Baker and LeTendre (2005) contend “…the need to understand education on a more global level is inescapable in today’s world” (p. 5).

Students are coming from all parts of the world to the United States. This reality is pertinent to literacy. First, the United States is not the only country that struggles with inadequate literacy statistics among their language learning students. Countries like France and the United Kingdom report similar stories. The Department of Education includes these students in the NCLB under ethnic groups and limited English proficiency (LEP). However, it is not uncommon for these students to represent other categories such as low income. Most resettlement countries with larger immigration populations are struggling with issues like education and poverty.
Second, as the United States continues to be the leading resettlement country for refugees, schools will need to accommodate children with diverse needs. Third world countries’ refugees are less likely to have had significant educational experience. Therefore, these students are deprived of literacy resources and experiences that one knows are essential for reading success.

As a nation ten percent of school-aged children are considered limited English proficient (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). From the 1997-98 school year to the 2008-09 school year, the number of English-language learners enrolled in public schools increased from 3.5 million to 5.3 million, or by 51% (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011). This substantial growth in the elementary and secondary school populations has increased the number of students defined as English Language Learners (ELL). The Midwest, South, and West all had an increase in the size of the ELL student population both in total and percentage. All three of these regions had states with more than a 300% growth of ELLs in a ten-year period from 1995 to 2005 (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). These states include Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

This growth has impacted Tennessee’s public education, particularly Nashville. More than 20% of Metro Nashville Public Schools’ students do not speak English at home (Garrison, 2011, Para.13). Memphis has the second highest number of EL students with just eight percent. Even though Memphis has 30,000 more students than MNPS, it has half as many students with non-English backgrounds (Garrison, 2011, para.13). In fact, Nashville has more than 30% of all EL students in the state of Tennessee. In 2010 Metro’s English-learner subgroup increased by 800 students (Garrison, 2011, para.15).
Nashville experiences a high influx of international families because of three major nonprofit resettlement agencies. Nashville International Center for Empowerment (NICE), Catholic Charities, and World Relief are all organizations that receive international families from all over the world. As these families immigrate into Nashville, nearly all of these students will attend schools in the MNPS system.

Finally, many international families contribute to the overall poverty sector of America and others countries upon their arrival. Many of these children living in poverty represent subgroups of failure on achievement tests (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2011, p. 4), contribute to high dropout rates, and are underrepresented in higher education (Matlack, 2005). Although early years of disparity and English language learners’ backgrounds and immigration contribute to lower literacy skills in America, they are not the only sources of poor reading skills.

**Culture of reluctant readers.** Although American children are very comfortable with technology, some students lack the skills to handle complex texts, read a repair manual, synthesize information, or communicate effectively (Guensburg, 2006). More than eight million of US students in grades 4-12 are struggling to read and write sufficiently at grade level on standardized tests (Guensburg, 2006). Students have traded reading for pleasure for other entertainment such as home video games, internet games, social networks, texting, and watching television and movies. The following statistics reveal how many students in America fill their 24 hour, seven-days-a-week childhood.

1. TV viewing among kids is at an eight-year high. On average, children ages two – five spend 32 hours a week in front of a TV—watching television, DVDs, DVR and videos, and using a game console. Kids ages six – eleven spend about 28 hours a week in front of the TV (McDonough, 2009, para. 1).
2. Seventy-one percent of 8- to 18-year-olds have a TV in their bedrooms; 54% have a DVD/VCR player, 37% have cable/satellite TV, and 20% have premium channels (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010, p. 9).

3. Media technology now offers more ways to access TV content, such as on the Internet, cell phones and iPods. This has led to an increase in time spent viewing TV, even as TV-set viewing has declined. Forty-one percent of TV-viewing is now online, time-shifted, DVD or mobile (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010, p. 15).

4. In about two-thirds of households, the TV is usually on during meals (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010, p.18).

5. In 51% of households, the TV is on most of the time (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010, p. 18).

6. The Kaiser Family Foundation (2010) also reported that teenagers spend 53 hours a week with media versus 25 minutes a day reading.

Over the past 5 years, time spent reading books remained steady at about 25 minutes a day, but time with magazines and newspapers dropped 35% and 50%, respectively. The proportion of young people who read a newspaper in a typical day dropped from 42% in 1999 to 23% in 2009. On the other hand, Kaiser (2010) reported young people now spend an average of two minutes a day reading magazines or newspapers online (Kaiser, 2010).

With the use of technology 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from mobile to laptop, the amount of time young people spend with entertainment media has risen dramatically, especially among minority youth, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation (2010). Today, 8-18 year-olds devote an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes to
entertainment media in a typical day. With this massive media movement, educational entities must find innovative methods to reach these reluctant readers. This media movement so far has not increased students’ abilities to read at or above grade level.

“Older children still need instruction on what you call critical reading skills” (Guensburg, 2006, para. 4). “Schools must shift from an emphasis on remediation to an emphasis on prevention and early intervention” (Barganski, 2010, p. 27). This shift needs to occur before massive media becomes the obvious contender of time consumption in the student’s life. Students must have opportunities to read in the classroom, especially in elementary school. Older students still need strong literacy programs that help students develop higher levels of fluency and comprehension.

Reluctant readers also stem from lack of resources in the home, language barriers, illiteracy in the home, and even the disruptive home life of students. Barganski (2010) recognized that good readers do not happen automatically. The early years are crucial. He stated, “Students who do not learn to read in the elementary years, rarely become good readers in middle and high school” (p. 27). Struggling readers become anxious, lack confidence, and compensate, or *hide*, inadequacies in reading. They begin to hate reading because they do not feel successful. Many times these students choose to act as if reading does not matter (Beers, 2003). When students lack self-confidence in reading, they disguise their struggles. Barganski (2010) believed “If reading problems continue to grow during the elementary school, students reach a point where the effort exerted to find even minimal success with reading is not worth the embarrassment the students face in the process” (p. 29).

**Poverty.** Although poverty has been mentioned in a previous section, it deserves attention because it has its own category in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) subgroup,
known as free and reduced lunch (FARL). There have been many different reviews, research, studies, and opinions given about the effects of poverty. Poverty will probably never be recorded as a reason a child cannot read; however, it certainly contributes to the student’s difficulty in accessing what other fluent readers possess, such as reading time with an adult, books in the home, literate parents, and a rich vocabulary.

Payne (2005) defines two types of poverty. Generational poverty is the state of being in poverty for more than two generations. Situational poverty occurs over a shorter period of time and is often triggered by a circumstance such as a death in the family, divorce, illness, sudden loss of income, etc. Both types of poverty affect all races of people. Payne (2005) stated, “Regardless of race or ethnicity, poor children are much more likely than non-poor children to suffer developmental delay and damage, to drop out of high school, and to give birth during the teen years” (p. 4). Not only are these the consequences of poverty, they are the seeds embedded within poor children continuing the cycle of generational poverty.

There are a number of ways that poverty correlates to student failure in reading. Poverty leaves a trail. It seeds itself deeply into generations. It links itself to parents who have failed in education. First, one could consider family poverty and the role it plays in the child’s early childhood development, lack of resources, and missed opportunities of shared text, rich vocabulary, and oral fluency. Because of these missed opportunities, there is no context of literacy in the home. E.D. Hirsch, author and curriculum designer argues that “you can’t learn to read without context. You can’t understand what you read without knowing about the broader world” (Whitmire, 2011, p. 142). Students in poverty must have broader connections. They do not live in a world surrounding by text (p. 143). Payne (2005) states “One of the biggest differences of classes is how ‘the world’ is
defined for them” (p. 44). Students of poverty not only lack exposure to text but also see the world in a very different context than other students.

Low-income families often lack reading resources. Books are not necessities when one comes from a low socioeconomic background. Payne (2005) stated “Low achievement is closely correlated with lack of resources, and numerous studies have documented the correlation between low socioeconomic status and low achievement” (p. 87.) These students are also less likely to have enriched vocabulary. Low-income students struggle more with vocabulary and meaning from printed material, especially students learning English. Without the background knowledge of vocabulary and meaning from printed material, the text is estranged from the student. These students are more likely to struggle with reading passages and comprehension. As these students struggle, they become less motivated to read and therefore spend less time practicing.

Pink (2009), in his book about intrinsic motivation stated “For artists, scientists, inventors, schoolchildren and the rest of us, intrinsic motivation---the drive to do something because it is interesting, challenging, and absorbing ---is essential for high levels of creativity” (p. 46). If students are unable to have meaningful interaction with unfamiliar text, there is no motivation.

Students of poverty also represent the increased number of homeless students in America. Scott Pelley, in a CBS 60 Minutes special (Anderson, Young & Ruetenikre, 2011) counted the rising number of students descending into poverty. Pelley stated “American families have been falling out of the middle class in record numbers. The combination of lost jobs and millions of foreclosures means a lot of folks are homeless and hungry for the first time in their lives” (Anderson et al., 2011). According to this documentary, the United States government considers a family of four to be
impoverished if they have an income of less than $22,000 a year. Pelley reported, “Based on that standard, and government projections of unemployment, it is estimated the poverty rate for kids in this country will soon hit 25%. Those children would be the largest American generation to be raised in hard times since the Great Depression” (Anderson et al., 2011).

The National Center on Family Homelessness (NCFH) [2009] has created America’s Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness to communicate a broad snapshot of this epidemic. In this document on the detrimental effects of homelessness, it states the high stakes of failure for these children. “Without a voice, more than 1.5 million of our nation’s children go to sleep without a home each year. Homeless, these children also endure a lack of safety, comfort, privacy, reassuring routines, adequate health care, uninterrupted schooling, sustaining relationships, and a sense of community. These factors combine to create a life-altering experience that inflicts profound and lasting scars” (NCFH, 2009, p. 9). More than 34% of the United States’ homeless population is comprised of families with children, and this number is increasing (p. 17). The report also included consequences as it relates to a child’s school life.

Within a single year, nearly all (97%) homeless children have moved, at least 25% have witnessed violence, and 22% have been separated from their families. About half of all school-age children experiencing homelessness have problems with anxiety and depression, and 20% of homeless preschoolers have emotional problems that require professional care. Their education is often disrupted and challenges in school are common. (p. 17)
These dismal circumstances create impediments to student success. These children are apt to be more transient, lack resources, and do not have the infrastructure of a home life. These impediments compromise students’ consistent reading instruction based on their needs, adequate progress monitoring in reading, and overall language development. Although, the effects of poverty are dismal, it certainly does not leave the child hopeless. Payne (2005) suggests two powerful components that defeat even the travesty of poverty: education and relationships (p. 3), which are the core focus of this study.

**Race subgroups.** Although many components of the NCLB Act are being fast tracked to extinction, accountability for student success in the four subgroups is here to stay: economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and students with limited English proficiency (Tennessee Department of Education, 2011). There is an undeniable correlation among race, class, and the achievement gap (Teach for America, 2011). While poverty is represented in all subgroups, many minority subgroups unquestionably have higher representation across the country. Low-income and race are not only linked to each other but to the greatest gaps of students underachieving in education (Teach for America, 2011).

Macartney’s (2011) work on childhood poverty begins by quoting the work of Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997), *Consequences of Growing up Poor*:

Poverty is a critical indicator of the well-being of our nation’s children. Changes in child poverty rates over time can provide an evaluation of a particular antipoverty initiative and help to identify people and groups whose most basic economic needs remain unmet. Children who live in poverty, especially young children, are more likely than their peers to have cognitive and behavioral
difficulties, to complete fewer years of education, and, as they grow up, to experience more years of unemployment. (p. 1)

More than 1.1 million children were added to the poverty population just between 2009 and 2010 (Macartney, 2011). At this alarming rate, educational institutions and programs must consider the grave consequences not only inherited for our students but our society as a whole. Although poverty affects all races, one can see the higher percentages that correlate with certain races. In the 2010 census, Table 1 illustrates the racial percentages and number of impoverished children reported.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Children Living in Poverty in 2010</th>
<th>Percentage of Children Living in Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Races</td>
<td>15,749,129</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>8,477,376</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic*</td>
<td>5,471,739</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4,025,289</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>418,564</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American**</td>
<td>194,000</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When looking at race subgroups that are represented in the NCLB’s accountability of education for all students, one can see that poverty demonstrates its influence again. Poverty weakens the students’ chances of success. It sabotages teachers’ productivity in the classroom and contributes to schools’ low performances. If strategic considerations are not made for these children, they will continue to fail at reading. Ruby Payne (2005) in her book, *Framework for Understanding Poverty*, talks about hidden rules that exist in poverty, socioeconomic classes, and ethnic groups. What does this information mean for schools and reading? Payne used the term “hidden rules” to describe the unwritten assumptions of students in poverty. “Assumptions made about individuals’ intelligence and approaches to school and or work setting may relate more to their understanding of hidden rules” (p. 45). Students need an understanding of the hidden rules from teachers, society, and societal organizations, such as school. Educators must attempt to understand the hidden rules of the families and students they serve.

Payne (2005) quotes Dr. James Comer, “No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship” (p. 9). What does this information mean in the school and for reading? The theory in education since the 1980’s has been if you teach well enough, learning will happen. However, there are situations where learning is more difficult, slower, or even unconventional (Payne, 2005). All students need to be taught well. Some students are simply not ready to receive information or learning due to extenuating circumstances.

Students represented in racial subgroups may lack resources, experiences, nurture, language acquisitions, confidence, and even the essentials of life, food, shelter and a safe environment. These subgroups continue to fail because of what Payne coined as the failure for all to understand the complexity of each other’s culture of “the
knowledge of hidden rules” (Payne, 2005, p. 9). To improve the achievement scores, more specifically, scores of reading, Payne suggests that educators are not to “save” the student but rather to offer a support system, role models, and opportunities to learn (p. 113). These consistencies increase the likelihood of student success. It provides choices. Choices and opportunities increase as students achieve in school. As Payne pointed out, for many in poverty and these subgroups, choices have never existed.

From the data provided about the racial subgroups, there are academic achievement gaps. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) divides student performance into groups known as Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced.

1. **Below Basic**: This is the lowest level. This level represents no mastery and unpreparedness for grade level work.

2. **Basic**: This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.

3. **Proficient**: This level represents solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.

4. **Advanced**: This level signifies superior performance. (Hull, 2008)

Within standardized tests across the United States, there are alarming gaps amongst the racial groups. For example, nationally, nearly half of all White students are placed in either the Proficient or Advanced categories in reading, compared to less than 20% of Black students and about 25% of Latino students” (Teach for America, 2011,
“In five of seven subjects tested, a majority (over 50%) of Black students are rated Below Basic, compared to about 20% White students” (p. 19). On a national level one can conclude “the average Black or Hispanic high school student achieves at about the same level as the average White student in the lowest quartile of White achievement” (Education Commission of the States, 2003, p. 4). A closer look of student achievement in all subgroups will be provided for Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, where the research for this project was conducted.

**Disparity in schools.** Follow the poverty trail from a child’s low income home or apartment and one will probably find the same child attending a low-income, Title I school. Low achievement, crumbling infrastructure, and lack of instructional materials are often associated with high-poverty schools. Another practice of disparity in Title I schools, arguably more serious, is the fact that teachers with the least experience and fewest credentials are teaching in America’s poorest schools with the most at-risk children (Luebchow, 2009). “Because housing markets are highly segregated by race and income, and school districts often cover a wide geographic area, a single school district may encompass both high-poverty and low-poverty neighborhoods” (p. 5). This disparity is often manifested in low performing schools with underachieving students.

Richard Whitmire (2011) stated in his recent biography of Michelle Rhee, Nobody—not the U.S. Department of Education, not states, not superintendents, not principals—had even the slightest clue as to what to do about the schools that kept missing test-score targets, known under the law as *adequate yearly progress*, or AYP. (p. 157)

What are public schools missing, especially those that serve in poverty stricken areas?
There is no denying that public education has made a major contribution to the American society and prospered its citizens. Public education has explored works of technology, infamous innovation, colorful creativity, and an accessible path to continued leadership in the world. Education is forced to change as each generation attends public school. According to Caldwell & Hayward (1998),

Many of their leaders have come from humble origins along paths that could not have been negotiated were it not for the commitment of teachers and the contributions of communities that ensured schooling was possible for all, even in the most remote and often soul-searing settings. (p. 1)

The incredulous nature of the public school for many is that it has survived more than a century of social transformation. The local school still remains the center of all towns and cities from the east coast to the west.

Now more than ever, perhaps due to the perpetual and diverse challenges facing schools, public education is in a crisis. This crisis is being felt all over the world. High-stakes testing, education for all, technology, and global mobility have cast a spotlight on the current educational systems and its future. The fabric of many public schools is concerning. Schools that seem to suffer most are from districts facing great challenges such as rapid community change. These schools lack resources, man power, and even the knowledge of how to keep up with the societal fluctuations.

The failure for America’s educational system to prepare students for the future represents underachieving students who in turn become members who contribute to an unproductive society. Many at-risk or failing schools today lack resources, use irrelevant curriculum, have little to no parent involvement, have low performing or inexperienced teachers, have high attrition rates among teachers and administrators, but still have an
influx of government funds. Not all children who live in poverty fail in schools or struggle to read. However, according to statistics from at-risk schools, high poverty is the common thread of struggling readers. According to the Qualified Teachers for At-Risk Schools (2005) report, “At-risk schools are likely to serve a high proportion of minority and low-income students, have poor student achievement, and—if they are high schools—have lower graduation rates” (National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools, p. 6). Many of these schools are typically found in urban settings; however, rural areas have “at-risk” campuses as well.

Even children of poverty deserve an excellent education. Cochran-Smith & Power (2010) in a recent publication on educational leadership stated, “All students have the civil right to high-quality educational opportunities” (p. 8). While this statement might seem obvious and would probably be agreed upon by all those who read it, the reality is that not all students have access to the highest quality and most experienced teachers to guide them in their learning, progress, and growth. The teacher-quality gap is a growing trend in inner city, at-risk, or challenging learning environments. “Schools with large numbers of poor and minority students are most likely to have teachers who are inexperienced, teaching in areas outside their fields or otherwise unqualified” (p. 8).

The National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools (2005) report defines “effective teachers as those who are able to consistently assist their students in making significant academic progress” (p. 6). Teachers must have a strong understanding of their content area in both primary and secondary settings. Danielson states “To be effective teachers, they need to be able to articulate the purpose behind their behaviors. They must be able to explain to students, parents, and school personnel not only why the content they teach is important but also why the methods they use are appropriate” (Danielson,
Pink (2009) writes about what motivates people. He makes a valid point in that students need “the desire to get better and better at something that matters” (p. 111). Students need to feel that reading matters. Connections from reading to success must be convincing for at-risk students.

The National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools report, Qualified Teachers for At-Risk Schools (2005) stated that, “According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 20% of teachers in high-poverty schools have three or fewer years of teaching experience, compared with 11% of teachers in low-poverty schools” (p. 3). If becoming an excellent teacher includes having ample experience and opportunity, then continuing to staff at-risk campuses with teachers new to the field of education does not seem like a logical approach for academic turnaround.

There is also blatant disparity amongst physical school settings. Even within the same district, there are the have schools and the have-nots. Those schools that have are nestled in middle class America with the majority of students’ parents coming from successful educational backgrounds actively involved in their local schools. These buildings are clean, friendly, adorned with the latest technology, and will have the highest percentage of experienced successful teachers from the district. Drive ten minutes through the district and the story is quite different. The archaic building permeates the landscape of the have-nots. There are distinct building additions with no thought of beautification of the building’s exterior. It creates a hodge-podge look. Schools in low-income areas also house many “portables” being used as classrooms due to inadequate space. These students may be cut off from bathrooms, water, and access to the main learning areas of the school. These same schools are unkempt, lack major technology for student access, and serve the neediest students. In other words, public education has
allowed at-risk students to attend second class educational settings. Many schools reflect the same low-income environment from which students come. Kozol (1991) discussed in his writings the disparity of education between schools of different classes and races. In his observations he noted the overcrowded, unsanitary, and often understaffed environments that lacked basic tools for learning and teaching. The California for Justice Education Fund (2003) noted in one California survey, one-third of teachers state-wide and more than half of teachers in low-income schools reported not having enough textbooks for all of their students.

**Parental influences.** The lack of parent involvement contributes to why children cannot read. In fact decades of studies indicate it as being one of the most crucial factors of all. There are various reasons why parents demonstrate short comings in this area. This research has already mention risk factors of why children can’t read; poverty, EL background, low literacy skills/illiteracy, and how students spend their time. The typical students spend 30% of their day in school and 70% of their time in the care of a parent or care giver. This by no means is mentioned to point a finger in blame but simply to highlight critical perspectives that contribute to the struggling readers and also identify areas for solutions.

With more than one in five children in the United States (15.75 million) living in poverty in 2010 (Macartney, 2011, p. 1), there are bound to be repercussions in the classroom. These findings are especially significant to the state of Tennessee with more than 25% of children living in poverty. Furthermore, Tennessee is one of the 11 states that had poverty rates of over 40% for children of some other race in 2010 (p. 6). This impacts a district like MNPS that is extremely diverse with more than 70% of the near 80,000 students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch. Nashville’s three resettlement
organizations for international refugees and its large Hispanic population (more than 17%) also contribute to the diversity and poverty of MNPS students (MNPS, 2011a).

These children represent parents struggling to provide the basic needs of life. For many parents lack of education, low literacy skills/illiteracy, unemployment and low earnings, and single parent homes are barriers for parental partnership in education. What ramifications are there when parents are uninvolved in their child’s education? According to an extensive literacy study done by the U.S. Department of Education under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) the ramifications are significant. As Binkley and Williams (1996) stated,

The substantial relationship between parent involvement for the school and reading comprehension level of fourth-grade classrooms is obvious, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Where parent involvement is low, the classroom mean average (reading score) is 46 points below the national average. Where involvement is high, classrooms score 28 points above the national average – a gap of 74 points. Even after controlling for other attributes of communities, schools, principals, classes, and students, that might confound this relationship, the gap is 44 points. (p. 59)

Even though this study was done 16 years ago, the lack of parent involvement continues to impede student achievement today. The problem takes on even greater importance when we consider how quickly minority populations are growing with many reluctant parents represented in these groups.

Other deficiencies occur before students are even school aged. For some children in America, literacy is valued and emphasized. Children read and write in the home for pleasure and as entertainment. They are consistently read to at an early age, and are
involved in conversations about the stories and the language found in the text.

Unfortunately, children in low-income families lack one-on-one reading time with a parent. A recent report commissioned by Jumpstart found “the average child growing up in a middle class family has been exposed to 1,000 to 1,700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading. The average child growing up in a low-income family, in contrast, has only been exposed to 25 hours of one-on-one reading” (Jumpstart, 2009, p. 8). Students who have disengaged parents for whatever reason are more likely to have lower reading scores in comprehension, fluency and vocabulary. These students in poverty start school with significantly lower literacy skills than those who come from middle and upper-class homes.

According to the work of Tabitha Scharlach (2005) from the University of Florida, teachers feel that parents play an invaluable role in students’ reading success. The qualitative case study examined the beliefs and professional knowledge of preservice teachers about teaching struggling readers. The findings indicated of the six preservice teachers gaining a degree as reading specialists, all commonly shared that parental involvement is important for reading acquisition in children’s motivation to read, children’s ability to be ready to read, and access and exposure to print (p. 133).

In summary, the lack of parental involvement in encouraging and practicing reading at home can be detrimental for a student’s literacy success. It is clear to see as school systems work to close the literacy gap and lower poor reading scores, promoting family literacy is essential for breaking the cycle. As more districts across America find themselves more diverse with a continued rise in children’s poverty and struggling home life, school initiated activities need to be created to help parents change the home environment.
Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS)

This research project focuses primarily on Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) and its students especially in the area of reading. To fully understand the data of this Capstone, a clear picture of whom the district serves is reported. Nashville, the capital of Tennessee, secures Davidson County within its borders. About 627,000 people live in Davidson County with a population of over a million in the greater Nashville area. The ethnicity make-up is 61% white, 27% black, 10% Hispanic, and 3% Asian. In 14% of the homes, English is not the primary language (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Public education in Nashville was first explored in 1821. The first school, Nashville English School, opened for a short period and soon failed due to social controversy. Alfred Hume, a respected principal of a private school, instigated another movement for public education nearly 30 years later. Hume studied and observed other public schools in the United States and reported his findings back to Nashville, Tennessee. Nashville’s first public school, Hume School, opened in February 1855. It is still open today in addition to 138 others.

Today, Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) educates nearly 80,000 students representing more than 120 different countries with more than 70 different languages (MNPS, 2011a). “MNPS has evolved over the years into one of the most racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse school districts in the country. The district is comprised of 139 schools, including 72 elementary schools, 34 middle schools, 21 high schools, three alternative schools, four special education schools, and five charter schools” (MNPS, 2011a). MNPS is the 46th largest school district in the country. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the number of students per school level.
Table 2

*MNPS Total Enrollment for the 2011-2012 School Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-School</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Kindergarten</td>
<td>2,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>33,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>22,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>20,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79,117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The ethnicity of MNPS is also important to note. Table 3 reports 46% of MNPS students are black. This statistic includes all African American students as well as immigrants from other countries such as Sudan, Rwanda, and Somali, etc. Whites are also represented with students from the Middle East and other parts of the world. For example, Nashville has more Kurdish people (11,000) than any other city outside of Kurdistan (Karimi, 2010). More than 17% of MNPS students represent the Hispanic population. This includes all students from countries that speak Spanish. In 2000, only 4% of the student population was Hispanic. In 10 years it has quadrupled in number (MNPS, 2011a). This growth phenomenon has added increased needs for English language services. As these percentages represent the district, there are many schools where more than 50% of the student body speaks Spanish. Some schools are comprised of students where more than 80% speak another language at home. As was discussed earlier, Nashville has many diverse populations with over nationalities representing many blends of cultures. There are nearly 100 native languages represented in the halls of
MNPS (Garrison, 2011, para. 13). The Chamber of Commerce also recognized this growing diversity in Nashville, “The school system English Language Learning (ELL) services continued to expand to more than 80 schools in order to better serve the 22% of MNPS students who come from a home where English is not the first language” (Chamber Education Report Card Committee, 2011, p. 13).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3,107</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>36,503</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>13,769</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Island</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>25,800</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Adapted from www.mnps.org, 2011.*
Three other important statistics need to be noted as one considers the data and finding of this report:

1. 13% of all MNPS students are being served in the ELL program;
2. 71% of all MNPS students receive free and reduced lunch;
3. 12.3% of all MNPS students have certified disabilities. (MNPS, 2011a)

There are more than 10,055 English learners (EL) in the MNPS school system receiving language services. Another important statistic is 56,533 of MNPS students (71.4%) are economically disadvantaged. In other words more than 71% of MNPS students are eligible for free and reduced lunch (MNPS, 2011b). Finally, these statistics are crucial to report when reviewing the district’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and as it relates to reading statistics.

In the 2010-2011 school year, more than 95% of Kindergarten through 8th grade students attended school, reaching the 93% state attendance goal (Chamber Education Report Card Committee/CERCC, 2011). However, high school attendance was only 91%, falling short of the goal. MNPS’s graduation rate for the 2011 school year was 76.2% (p. 19). Although Tennessee has been exempt from the NCLB Act, all MNPS schools are still accountable for student achievement. The CERCC (2011) indicates that there is now more student accountability:

Elementary and middle schools are held accountable for student performance on Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) tests in math and reading for grades 3-8 and for maintaining a 93% student attendance rate. TCAP scores count toward 20% of each Metro student’s final grade in the subject. The state writing assessment counts for one-sixth of the reading calculation at the
fifth- and eighth-grade levels. High schools are measured by results in math, reading and for making progress toward a 90% on-time graduation rate. (p. 14)

Less than half of all students at the elementary and middle school levels are proficient or advanced in reading, and only one-third of students are proficient in math. In other words more than 50% of all students are not reading on grade level (p. 14).

Figure 1 identifies high school scores 60% proficient in reading/language with whites, leaving 40% below proficient (p. 17). However, Blacks, Hispanics and the economically disadvantaged fall much lower as seen on a national average as well. Limited English students indicate 82% below proficient. Figure 1 illustrates how each subgroup tested. The largest gaps are between whites and black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged. On a positive note, there were small improvements from 2010 to 2011.

**Figure 1** MNPS Achievement Scores

---

**Figure 1.** Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools K-12 student achievement scores in Reading/Language and Math Proficiency. Adapted from the “Annual Education Report Card: 2010 -2011,” 2011, Chamber Education Report Card Committee, p. 38.
While Nashville has approximately 20% of its school-age children enrolled in private school, student withdrawal data reveal that the real competition comes from surrounding public school systems. Figure 2 compares the achievement scores of multiple schools systems in Tennessee including the surrounding counties. Student proficiency in MNPS is significantly below that of the nine public school systems adjacent to Davidson County, and also below Knox and Hamilton Counties (CERCC, 2011, p. 17).

**Figure 2 Comparison of Achievement Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Grades 3-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading/Language Prof, + Adv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davidson County</td>
<td>39.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheatham County</td>
<td>52.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson County</td>
<td>50.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutherford County</td>
<td>61.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murfreesboro</td>
<td>54.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumner County</td>
<td>57.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamson County</td>
<td>77.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin SSD</td>
<td>67.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson County</td>
<td>59.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon SSD</td>
<td>51.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelby County</td>
<td>57.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memphis</td>
<td>25.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knox County</td>
<td>56.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton County</td>
<td>45.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools 3-8 student achievement scores in Reading/Language and Math Proficiency compared to other counties in Tennessee. Adapted from the “Annual Education Report Card: 2010 -2011,” 2011, Chamber Education Report Card Committee, p. 17.*
Although MNPS did make gains from last year (2010-2011), the district falls short in many areas. Considerations must be made for subgroups that fall significantly lower than other subgroups represented. Davidson County (MNPS) was the second lowest district, only to Memphis, in the state on proficient and advanced scores on reading and language arts (39.7%). MNPS did show a reputable growth of 5.10. Counties in the same state must appropriate efforts and funds to assure all students have access to a great education.

Figure 3 reveals a snapshot of MNPS’s overall 2010-11 school year. This review moves toward efforts being made to close gaps in reading for all students in the Metro Nashville Public School system.

**Figure 3  MNPS Statistical Overview**

![Table](image)

*Figure 3. Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools statistical overview of the 2010-2011 school year. Adapted from the “Annual Education Report Card: 2010 -2011,” 2011, Chamber Education Report Card Committee, p. 49.*
The Need for Reading Intervention

National attention to literacy problems facing America’s children has greatly influenced educators and administrators to investigate ways to help close the literacy gap (Moore-Hart & Karabenick, 2009, p. 149). Few would argue learning to read as one of the most important accomplishments of a child’s early elementary school experience (Strickland, Snow, Griffin, Burns & McNamara, 2002). Eighty to ninety percent of children will learn to read without any modifications (Clay, 2005). However, for some children, learning to read is a difficult and unrewarding experience. There is plenty of national attention being given to the increasing numbers of children in America who are experiencing significant reading difficulties by third grade. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 40% of the fourth graders in the U.S. and almost 70% of low-income fourth graders could not read on their grade level. One of the committee’s recommendations was to provide reading interventions to struggling readers with the understanding that they need a variety of strategies provided to them.

Research has shown early intervention is vital and when no other intervention is provided, students continue to fall further behind (Juel, 1988, p. 444). Early educational intervention refers to a systematic and intentional endeavor to provide supplemental educational experiences for struggling students (Ramey & Ramey, 2006, p. 446). These additional opportunities are theoretically linked to later academic achievement because the goal is that the gap is closed (p. 446). When children experience difficulties in the primary grades, a barrier may be made preventing the child from finding the joy in reading. The primary grades are a critical time in the development of good reading skills as this time sets the tone for future reading success.

There is an abundance of research on reading, reading achievement, the
importance of reading, and the link to future success. A child that can read will be a child more likely to have more confidence and feel more successful in school and in life. Schools must continue to search for and participate in effective intervention programs that help struggling readers. Research shows that when no intervention is provided to struggling readers, these students continue to fall further behind. For example, in one study, only 12% of children experiencing reading difficulty in the first grade were reading on grade level at the end of the fourth grade (Juel, 1988, p. 445). The Juel study (1988), found that poor readers tend to become poor writers and spellers (p. 443). Unless individualized instructional practices are used during the primary grades, the inequities that commonly divide our students are likely to continue (p. 445). Students must learn good word recognition skills early in the primary grades of K-3 or chances are they will dislike reading due to the difficulty.

**The Educational Impact of Reading Intervention and Tutoring**

Historically, researchers have noted that volunteer tutoring programs with elementary schools produce academic gains in reading performance (Moore-Hart & Karabenick, 2009, p. 149). The term intervention is defined as an action taken to improve a situation. “Early intervention” refers to systematic and intentional actions to provide supplemental educational experiences to children who have been assessed and determined to be “at-risk” for not meeting benchmark achievement levels (Ramey & Ramey, 2006, p. 446). Lennon and Slesinski (1999) define the phrase “at-risk” as referring to students who fall behind their classmates in learning to read (p. 353). There are subgroups of students who typically are referred to as at-risk. Those children coming from a high poverty situation are the students who are entering the school system unprepared. Ramey and Ramey (2006) state the following:
No matter how much public schools improve their kindergarten through high school curricula and instruction, the irrefutable evidence indicates that a child’s entry level skills, and the family’s ability to support a child’s literacy development, are paramount in early school success. (p. 445)

The primary focus of reading intervention would be on those students who are not making sufficient gains in their current reading program (Hiebert & Taylor, 2000). Research reveals early intervention programs have the greatest promise for helping children who are at-risk of reading failure (Allington & Walmsley, 2007). One-to-one tutoring has been proven to be an especially powerful instructional tool (Pikulski, 1994). In fact, “today more than ever before, researchers and practitioners are beginning to appreciate the power of one-to-one tutoring in preventing reading failure in the primary grades” (Morris, 2005, p. 6). Lipsey (2009) found a need for more tutors with the growing number of students facing reading difficulties. She states, “Too few tutors are available to meet the needs of children in schools where half or more of the students are considered at-risk” (p. 3).

The American Heritage Dictionary (2012) defines tutor as a “private instructor,” or “one who gives additional, special, or remedial instruction.” Salomon & Perkins (1998) describe tutoring as a type of instructional arrangement, which benefits the learning process due to the relationship between the tutor and the learner. Tutoring is not a new concept. In fact, tutoring is perhaps the oldest form of instruction (Slavin, 2002). Studies have shown that students working with the best tutors attain achievement levels that are two standard deviations higher than students in conventional classroom settings (Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982). Effective reading instruction is dependent upon the depth and quality of understandings by which the intervention session is guided. The Howard
Street Tutoring Manual (Morris, 2005) proposes a three-step process for working with at-risk readers in the primary grades:

1. That classrooms must provide more effective reading instruction for under-achieving readers.

2. Intensive intervention must be provided to under-achieving readers outside of classroom time.

3. Tutors must be trained and used effectively.

Hieberts’ (1994) meta-analysis revealed that college students (primarily preservice teachers) and trained community volunteers were able to provide a significant gain for struggling readers. Further, Juel (1996) discussed the power of close personal identification between tutors and students as a contributing factor in students’ success. Cohen et al. (1982) cited four major reviews of tutoring from educational literature published between 1969 and 1982 (Devin-Sheehan, Feldman, & Allen, 1976; Ellson 1976; Fitz-Gibbon, 1977; Rosenshine & Furst, 1969). All of these reviews indicated that peer tutoring led to significant learning gains in reading and math, as well as other areas. Cohen, Kulik & Kulik (1982) conducted a meta-analysis of the achievement outcomes of 52 tutoring studies, mostly studies of peer-to-peer tutoring or by a paraprofessional. They found the average growth to be 40% of a standard deviation higher in reading achievement over those who received no tutoring. The authors stated, “These programs have definite and positive effects on the academic performance and attitudes of those who receive tutoring” (p. 244).

The benefits of tutoring struggling readers are plentiful. However, there has been research implying more growth may be seen in other subject areas. For example, Cohen et al. (1982) found that tutoring was substantially more effective in math with an effect
size of .60 than in reading with an effect size of .29, although they were able to identify more studies of tutoring in reading than in all other subject areas combined (p. 246).

Shanahan (1998) proposed that students achieved more growth in math because it is a systematic process skill. Thus, for most students, reading growth is more gradual due to the complexity of reading. A study conducted by Vaughn et al. (2003) found that there was not a statistical difference between tutor student ratios of 1:1 to that of 1:3 in reading (p. 301). This is significant for schools with a lack of resources. This would allow one tutor to work with three students instead of one; therefore, more students would receive the extra help needed. Group size is an instructional feature associated with effective outcomes. “Smaller groups ratios increase the likelihood of academic success through student-teacher interactions, individualization of instruction, student on-task behavior, and teacher monitoring of student progress and feedback (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Wotruba & Algozzine, 1993).

The message from the educational literature on tutoring programs is clear that tutoring programs have positive effects on student outcomes (Cohen et al., 1982, p. 244). “In fact, tutored students outperformed their peers on examinations, and they expressed more positive attitudes toward the subjects in which they were tutored” (p. 244). The National Reading Panel Report (2000) also suggested that students need intensive and expert tutoring if they are to maintain the pace of their peers. Even though the research provides evidence to show that tutoring programs produce gains, there is an ongoing need to more clearly evaluate their efficacy and to determine which factors contribute to those gains (Moore-Hart & Karabencik, 2009, p. 149). Therefore these findings validate the extreme importance of the Tennessee Literacy Partnership reading clinics in Metro Nashville Public Schools.
This research project is furthering the research of Lipsey (2009). The purpose of her research was to evaluate the effectiveness of early intervention for struggling readers at-risk of falling further below grade level. Lipsey conducted a quasi-experimental study to measure an intervention method for students in kindergarten through fourth grade in one inner-city public elementary school in reading clinics that was established in 2007. The tutors used in this project were all preservice teachers (students enrolled in education courses) enrolled in a local state university and were minimally trained in how to use a reading intervention lesson designed and implemented under the supervision of a university reading professor. The reading clinics provide much needed extra help in reading intervention for struggling readers and they provide the college students the much-needed practical experience of working with students. Teachers cannot simply learn how to teach by being told how to teach, they need practice, demonstration, and modeling. The same is true for students. Not all students learn to read by being told how to read. They also need practice, demonstration, and modeling.

The significant finding of Lipsey’s (2009) study suggests that tutoring, by minimally trained college students using a set lesson format based in best practices, is effective as an early intervention for struggling readers. Additionally, a minimum number of lessons may be a critical element in achieving a significant gain in reading. Lipsey also identified the practice of repeated re-telling of a story as an important instructional tool to improve reading comprehension. These research findings are significant because educators need all the resources and strategies they can acquire to ensure all children have an equal chance at reading successfully. The outcomes of this study offers insight into the amount of tutoring hours and the number of lessons needed to show reading
gains for low achieving students. Due to the positive findings of this project, Lipsey was able to establish reading clinics in several schools within the district.

**Tennessee Literacy Partnership Training**

Training tutors on effective tutoring practices is essential. The number and types of tutors volunteering at the reading clinics has changed dramatically in the past four years. As of 2011, there were nearly 400 tutors volunteering in the TLP reading clinic at eleven sites. These tutors were primarily preservice teachers from local universities. Additional sources of tutors include faith-based organizations, community agencies, and local high school students. Once tutors are identified, they must successfully pass a background check and then be properly trained by Dr. Lipsey. Tutors attend a four to six hour training session. The training includes learning techniques for helping students decode words and gain better comprehension skills. Strategies such as think-aloud, scaffolding, how to observe the student’s reading behaviors, how to provide independent practice, and how to use application skills are also taught to tutors. In addition, games are taught as an important part of the tutoring session to ensure the students have fun while learning. The outline for the training is detailed in Figure 4.
Figure 4 TLP Five Steps for an Effective Tutor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 – Know what is expected of you as a tutor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Framework of the lesson: Warm up, New book, Word study, Writing, Retelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time management of the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedure for the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 – Setting up the tutoring session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be prepared, this helps the lesson run smoothly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3 – Meeting your student’s needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meet your student’s needs, it is the key to a successful session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build a relationship with your student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Praise your student’s efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4 – Ingredients of a Good Tutoring Session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greet your student and give them your undivided attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set the agenda and tell the student exactly what they will be doing in the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be flexible as you evaluate the rigor of the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keep track of your student’s strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help your student feel good about his/her attempts and accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End the session on a positive note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5 – Ending the session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tell the student of their scheduled times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take your students to the sign out book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walk your student back to their classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete any necessary paperwork in the Clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare lesson for the next session (Lipsey, 2009).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the completion of the training, the tutors sign an agreement called the MNPS Reading Clinics Tutor Responsibilities (Appendix B). This document includes the following topics: communication, the tutor’s role, confidentiality, submission of tutoring hours, tutoring location, what to do in case a student is absent, and reporting information. The tutors are trained to meet the needs of their students academically.

The reading clinics have consistently shown reading gains for the students.
involved. One extra hour of reading intervention/tutoring a week with trained tutors, adequate space, and materials, yields a success rate. It is reasonable to expect that the average elementary child could gain up to twelve reading levels if they receive a minimum of 30 lessons (Lipsey, 2009).

**Effective Lesson Framework and Tutoring Programs**

There is a plethora of reading programs in existence. School systems may use a whole language approach, basal readers, guided reading, Reading Recovery, SPIRE, LETRS, etc. In some cases, the district mandates how to teach reading, yet in other districts the school or even the teachers can make the decision. As is well documented, there are still students who struggle significantly learning to read (National Reading Panel, 2000). Often, these students need extra help in the form of individualized instruction by the teacher or a qualified tutor.

Since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation offered provisions for supplemental education, tutoring has become a familiar tool that schools use to reinforce reading instruction and/or provide remediation to struggling readers (Gordon, 2009, p. 440). Regardless of the future of NCLB, principals and educators will need a systematic approach to helping struggling readers make gains. Gordon (2009) offers the following as recommendations for effective tutoring programs:

1. use a diagnostic/developmental tutoring program;
2. structure the tutoring programs;
3. use your most experienced teachers as tutors and train them;
4. maximize the site of the tutoring for long-term results;
5. encourage the use of peer tutoring in the classroom. (pp. 440-443)

An effective tutoring session should include several components. Critical
elements include phonological awareness, familiarity with word structures and patterns, fluent reading practice with a variety of texts, and instruction in comprehension strategies (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Schools that focus primarily on teaching decoding skills in the early grades may neglect the essential vocabulary knowledge that students need to become competent readers (Juel, Biancarosa, Coker & Deffes, 2003). In one study (Juel et al., 2003), nearly 200 students from preschool to first grade were observed and their reading achievement was tracked. In those classrooms where vocabulary was an integral part, the achievement scores were higher. Juel et al. concluded, “Such lessons encourage students to develop both their comprehension skills, which build on vocabulary knowledge, and their decoding skills” (p. 13). This type of instruction ensures the students are progressing well not only in oral vocabulary but in comprehension as well. Improving vocabulary comprehension ensures they know how to do more than simply decode words. Juel concluded, “After students learn to decode, further growth of their reading comprehension depends on their knowledge of word meanings” (p. 14).

The role of phonemic awareness is very significant. A beginning reader must be able to match sounds with letters to form words. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds-phonemes--in spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they need to become more aware of how the sounds in words work. They must understand that words are made up of speech sounds, or phonemes (the smallest parts of sound in a spoken word that make a difference in a word's meaning) (Snider, 1997, p. 203). In general, skilled readers possess and display a high degree of phonemic awareness (Morris, 1980; Scarborough, Ehri, Olson, & Fowler, 1998).

Word study is an important element to include in the remediation of reading. It consists of a cluster of strategies that students use to explore words. Struggling readers
find it difficult to remember patterns shared by known words and need this knowledge to decode unknown words (Vaughn, et al., 2003, p. 302). Instruction on spelling patterns and word sorts are helpful strategies.

Difficulty with reading fluency is one of the most common characteristics exhibited by students who are struggling readers (Vaughn et al., 2003, p. 302). Reading fluency is the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. A dysfluent reader is slow and laborious while reading. Dysfluent readers have a hard time comprehending material read because they have spent much of their cognitive resources to decode the text (Therrien, Gormley & Kubins, 2006, p. 23). As a general definition, “oral reading fluency is the quick and accurate reading of text with expression” (Patton, Crosby, Houchins, & Jolivette, 2010, p. 100). It enables readers to see words and phrases in chunks of text and serves as a bridge to literacy development (p. 100). Current literature continues to support the efficacy of fluency-based interventions to improve overall reading. Most would agree the ultimate goal of reading is comprehension, which is the construction of word meaning. The theory of automaticity suggests that with increased speed and accuracy, cognitive resources become available for reading comprehension (p. 102).

In addition to incorporating phonological awareness activities, fluency practice, and comprehension skills, tutoring sessions should include a vocabulary portion to a tutoring session. If students cannot understand the nuances of more sophisticated “book language,” their comprehension will certainly suffer (Juel, et al., 2003, p. 14). Ultimately, effective early reading instruction must help students learn to identify words and know their meanings. It does little good to be able to sound out words if one has no idea what they mean (Juel et al., 2003).
Relationships Impact Achievement

Although tutoring is considered as a *gold standard*, there is little knowledge about the dynamics of the tutoring process (De Grave, Dolmans, & van der Vleuten, 1999, p. 901). Successful tutoring has been found in diverse settings, yet common threads run through them all (Leal, Johanson, Toth & Huang, 2004, p. 51). For example, Lepper, Drake & O’Donnell-Johnson (1997) found that tutors give roughly equal amounts of attention to cognitive, motivational, and social factors of tutoring. Some of their findings include the notion that tutors must have subject-matter knowledge along with some subject-specific pedagogical knowledge to relate to students learning disabilities. Effective tutors display a high level of affective support and nurturance in their interactions with their students while at the same time encouraging and motivating students. Finally, Lepper et al. (1997) recommend tutors consistently raise expectations and convey these expectations to their student.

Content knowledge and the ability to support student learning is important. However, one cannot underestimate the impact of the student/tutor relationship. One of the many benefits of tutoring students is that relationships form between the parties involved, often times even among the families involved (Leal, et al., 2004). The relationship built between the tutor and the student can often make or break the success of the student’s growth in reading (p. 63). The close relationship that develops between the two is “highly influential” (p. 63). In the Leal et al. (2004) study, it was revealed that those tutors who invested themselves into the lives of struggling readers impacted their lives as well as their reading and writing accomplishments (p. 63). The Lepper et al. (1997) study concluded, “increasing at-risk students reading through strategic assessment, remediation and caring relationships fosters success for both children and
their preservice reading teachers” (p. 64). “Success is greatest when it is woven together with...motivating relationships, providing motivating materials and creating motivating goals and activities” (p. 64).

As Dr. James Comer stated, “No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship” (Payne, 2005, p. 9). It is easy to understand that children need positive relationships with adults. Relationships in which a child feels valued are essential for development (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2008). Margolis (2005) determined that tutors have the ability to increase struggling learners’ self-efficacy, which increased learning. Understanding what students strive to learn in their lives outside of the school environment is crucial (Brozo & Simpson, 2007). Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2009) found in their systematic review in the area of mentoring that the evidence clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of reading interventions aimed at children at-risk.

In the study by Leal et al. (2004) the researchers concluded that two findings revolved around the successes of literacy tutoring that were not attributed to specific strategies. These findings include the close relationships between tutor and student and the knowledge of the tutor about the child’s development level and learning styles, that is the way that his or her child liked to learn best (p. 83). These two supportive findings are exactly what this study addresses. Can students and tutors foster caring relationships that translate to greater longevity gains? Is one tutor more effective than another and if so, why? If a tutor is matched with “learning likenesses” of the student, how can that potentially impact at-risk readers? Relationships and connections make a difference, but how does one intentionally foster such a concept and understand its true contributing factors for student achievement?
In the meta-analysis of 29 research projects conducted by Hughes & Moody (2000), a supporting argument was determined that “well designed, reliably implemented, one-to-one interventions can make a significant contribution to improved reading outcomes for many students” (p. 617). This was especially true for those students with poor reading abilities, which places them at a high risk for academic failure. Hughes & Moody recommend that “schools give serious consideration to one-to-one reading interventions that use trained college students and volunteers” (p. 617). However, schools have several options to consider when beginning such a program. Worthy, Prater, and Pennington (2003) cautioned those desiring to start one to do the following:

1. carefully screen potential tutors for interest and commitment to the program;
2. provide specialized reading training for struggling readers;
3. consistently supervise the tutors;
4. maintain low tutor-to-supervisor ratios;
5. involve schools and teachers in the development of the tutoring program;
6. maintain structured tutoring sessions (p. 150).

The powerful effects of one-on-one tutoring are many. One can look at the tutor, the student, the program, the environment, or all the above for answers. Could the one-on-one tutoring time simply heighten the engagement of the learner because it limits the distractions of a normal classroom? Does having the sole attention of the tutor help the student achieve at a higher level? Is it simply the immediate nature of the physical and emotional context of the tutoring session that brings the student to new heights? What role does the lesson framework of the tutoring session hold? Does the tutor’s experience or certification change the outcome for the student? Or is it all about the relationship formed between the tutor and the student?
As this review has mentioned the importance of practices used for reading intervention; who teaches the programs must also be considered. Outside of hired positions in schools, extra literacy support is often given by outside volunteers. Schools across America attempt to use volunteers to provide extra support to tutorial students, especially those struggling in reading. This research looks at three specific groups of tutors used in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership: high school students, local community volunteers and preservice teachers enrolled in local universities’ teacher training programs.

This research is investigating what makes the tutors in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership effective. To adequately address this research, the types of tutors and their backgrounds should be identified to provide a broad understanding of their role. As previously stated, the program has nearly 400 tutors. For the purpose of this study, the tutors have been grouped into three categories: high school tutors, preservice teachers (teachers in training), and community volunteers.

**Three Types of Tutors in the TLP Reading Clinics**

Schools across America attempt to use volunteers to provide extra support to students, especially those struggling in reading. The Tennessee Literacy Partnership uses three specific groups of tutors: high school students, community volunteers, and preservice teachers. High school students in the partnership are typically students who are in leadership classes and doing well academically. The community volunteers are typically part of a local business or faith community. The preservice teachers are college students enrolled in local universities’ teacher training programs. This study investigated whether or not there is statistical significance of student reading achievement based on the three types of tutors. Is one of these three groups of tutors more effective than the
The preservice teacher and high school students in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership participate in a pedagogy called service-learning. From the onset of public education in the United States, prominent thinkers and reformists such as John Dewey (1916) proposed that schools should teach beyond academic goals and help students develop critical thinking skills for solving problems, making ethical decisions, and participating in society as caring individuals and responsible citizens. The formation of service-learning is attributed to John Dewey who is known as the “founding figure” from his progressive education movement in the early 1900’s (Daynes & Longo, 2004, p. 9).

Service-learning is unique from community service and volunteering because it focuses on meeting both the needs of the community and the learner through a beneficial partnership. In addition, service-learning is “a form of experiential learning which tests students’ higher order thinking skills while deepening their understanding of the subject matter, their community, and themselves” (Muscott, 2001, p. 10). Learning through service also provides civic participation on social issues that extend beyond the immediate needs of individuals or projects.

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse identified several studies that supported identifiable standards that contributed to outstanding service-learning programs. Indicators listed were:

1. Service-learning experiences are appropriate to participant ages and developmental abilities.
2. Service-learning addresses issues that are personally relevant to the participants.
3. Service-learning provides participants with interesting and engaging service activities.

4. Service-learning encourages participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed.

5. Service-learning leads to attainable and visible outcomes that are valued by those being served. (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2007)

The TLP tutors who are involved in service learning have the opportunity to experience these indicators. For example, tutors are able to see attainable and visible outcomes because of reading gains of the students being tutored.

**High school students serving as tutors.** High school aged youth has certain advantages over adults in teaching younger children. The method of tutoring where an older student tutors a younger one is called cross-aged tutoring. These tutors may more easily understand the academic challenges the younger students face because they are cognitively closer (Allen & Feldman, 1976). Thus, the adolescent tutors may pick up on academic problems in the younger student more quickly because they may have experienced similar problems just a few years earlier.

An at-risk child may more easily identify with a student closer to his or her age, particularly one of the same ethnic or social backgrounds, than with an adult (Cohen, 1986). Cross-age tutoring takes advantage of the higher status inherent in the age difference while maintaining some similarity since they are both still students. Adolescents who tutor younger children benefit from learning by teaching (Paolitto, 1976). According to Cohen (1986), the time spent reviewing, practicing, and organizing materials for the tutoring sessions facilitates long-term retention, as well as helping them form a more comprehensive understanding of the material.
Tutoring also provides the opportunity to practice and improve communication skills. Another benefit to the tutors is improved self-esteem. As they see their tutee improve academically, they realize they are making a difference. This meaningful experience is powerful and has even been shown to improve the behavior choices of the tutors. In one study, it was reported that the tutors stop skipping classes and behaved less disruptively once they realized they were role models (Gaustad, 1992). Tutors who have struggled themselves academically are typically more patient and understanding to the younger students because they can relate to them (Lippitt, 1976).

There are benefits from cross-age tutoring to teachers, classrooms, and schools as well (Newcomb, 2002). Teachers have reported positively on their school environments, in which children learned to work and play with children of different ages, with older children often taking responsibility for younger children. Some teachers reported a family-like closeness in their schools. Cross-age tutoring not only benefits the younger learners, but can also be used to improve the skills of the older tutors. For example, cross-age tutoring has been used to improve the reading ability of struggling adolescent readers. A recent study involved using seventh grade remedial reading students to read to first and second graders (Fisher, 2001). In this study, teachers developed lesson plans based on children’s books such as *Hop on Pop* and modeled the lessons for the seventh-graders. The seventh graders read to small groups of the first and second graders twice a week, while asking questions and performing activities from the lesson plan. The tutors kept a journal in which they recorded their tutoring experiences. They also wrote their own words for wordless books, and then read them to the younger students (Newcomb, 2002).

Fisher states at the end of the study, "The literacy-related outcomes for the tutors, all of whom were struggling readers and/or identified with reading disabilities, all
demonstrated significant increases” (Fisher, 2001). They also outperformed a comparison group of students who did not engage in cross-age tutoring. Fisher identifies three key reasons for the success of the program: an authentic reason for literacy learning, extensive feedback, and the integration of writing into the curriculum. The seventh-graders wanted to improve their reading fluency in order to read to the younger children in a clear and entertaining manner. They also wanted to create interesting stories for the wordless books. By integrating the key language arts skills, students were able to make broad academic progress (Newcomb, 2002).

High school tutors in a cross-age tutoring program are concurrently participating in service learning at their schools. There are many studies of research indicating the impact of service learning amongst students, particularly in the high school years. All across America, school boards have incorporated service learning and volunteer service into the high school graduation requirements. Many school boards know that universities and colleges require such experiences on a student’s application for admission, especially as it relates to attainment of scholarships. It is estimated that over 4.2 million elementary, middle, and secondary school students participated in service-learning during the 2007-08 academic year in approximately 20,400 schools; of these, high schools were most likely to engage students in community service or to include service-learning as part of their curriculum (Spring, Grimm, & Dietz, 2009).

A study done by Furco (2002) on service learning versus community service found that young people in his California study who “had the strongest outcomes were those who engaged in meaningful service activities that challenged them, interested them, or gave them the highest levels of responsibility” (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2007, para. 3). These students also reported a sense of self-efficacy. There
were also greater outcomes when young people experienced positive relationships with each other, with teachers, and with the community being served. “Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005) similarly showed that when students perceived their service to be meaningful, they were more likely to be committed to the service-learning project, to acquire more knowledge and skills, and to develop both their own project ideas and a greater sense of efficacy” (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2007).

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2007) reported a study by Smartworks Incorporated which surveyed service-learning students in Flint, Michigan in Grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 about their learning and found, “More than two thirds of students reported that their participation helped them understand what they were learning in school and improved their academic achievement” (para. 7). According to National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2007), youth who participate in high-quality community-based service-learning are likely to benefit in a number of ways:

1. Gained access to the range of supports and opportunities (or developmental assets) they need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. One study of youth civic activism found that these settings had particular strength in cultivating youth and community involvement.
2. Increased sense of self-efficacy as young people learn that they can impact real social challenges, problems, and needs.
3. Higher academic achievement and interest in furthering their education.
4. Enhanced problem-solving skills, ability to work in teams, and planning abilities.
5. Enhanced civic engagement attitudes, skills and behaviors. Many leaders in public service today speak about how they were nurtured, inspired, and shaped in early experiences in community service or volunteering (para. 4).

Service-learning projects for the high school tutors in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership must be very meticulous to develop impact on both the participator and recipient. The specific benefits or impact will vary, depending on the focus, scope, and quality of a particular service or service-learning experience. Also based on the noted research from National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2007), it is likely that the benefits are stronger (particularly for young people) for service-learning than for volunteering or community service. Thus, integrating core elements of effective service-learning is key to reaping these and other benefits. Among these core elements of effective practices are critical themes:

1. Students have active and meaningful leadership roles;
2. Programs are guided by clear goals and intentional learning;
3. Students are involved at least 20 hours across several months;
4. Service-learning projects confront real community needs and priorities (para. 10).

Today, elementary, middle, and high schools across the nation participate in service learning with the support of federal, state, district, and foundations’ funding. Strong indications from various researches indicate outcomes were highest when the service activity addressed meaningful problems within students own communities such as helping a struggling reader to become successful.

**Preservice teachers serving as tutors.** From a university perspective, Bringle and Hatcher (1995) have described service-learning as: a credit-bearing educational
experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (p. 113).

Although the Tennessee Literacy Partnership was developed to meet the needs of struggling readers in public education, it has also provided a powerful instrument for service-learning opportunities for many preservice teachers. The Tennessee Literacy Partnership provides training for preservice teachers addressing the need for effectively preparing future educators. The need for training teachers is ever-present. The statistics of teacher readiness and retention are alarming. The National Education Association (2008) has promoted that some twenty percent of all new hires leave the classroom within three years. In urban districts, close to fifty percent of newcomers leave the teaching profession during the first five years of teaching (National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools, 2005, para. 3). On the other hand, Hoffman, Roller, Maloch, Duffy & Beretvas (2005) suggested that participation in preservice teaching experiences had an affirmative impression of teachers in the first three years of teaching literacy. By inviting or requiring teachers in training to be involved with working with children, they will have a better understanding of their future role as a teacher.

Butler and Lawrence (2010) stated in their recent research of preservice educators, “service-learning provides a powerful lens for conceptualizing field experiences in teacher education” (p. 159). They define service-learning as “a process of integrating action and intention, as practical experiences that are reciprocally beneficial for all involved, and as a teaching method in which academic instruction is combined with community service while focusing on reflection and critical thinking” (Butler &
Field experiences are considered service-learning when they are responsive to the needs of the community. Tennessee Literacy Partnership provides service-learning opportunities for preservice teachers by providing the opportunity to have real-life teaching experiences as they prepare to one day have their own classroom. The experience also prepares teachers to work in diverse settings. Banks and Banks (2001) argued an important aim of teacher education in the first decades of the new century is to help [preservice] teachers acquire the knowledge, values, and behaviors needed to work effectively with students from diverse groups (p. xii). These preservice teachers are exposed to methods that raise hope in students. Since effective reading programs have teachers who believe in themselves and expect their students to succeed in learning (Blair, Rupley & Nichols, 2007), preservice teaching opportunities are essential. This sense of empowerment is the product of service-learning opportunities as experienced by preservice teachers in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership.

**Community volunteers serving as tutors.** The third category of tutors involved with the Tennessee Literacy Partnership is Community Volunteers. Every year 90 million Americans contribute more than 20 billion hours of their time to providing services that range from coaching community sports to responding to natural disasters (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1996). Volunteering rekindles a sense of community and bridges the gulfs that exist within the fabric of the American society (Grossman & Furano, 2002, p. 5).

On April 21, 2009, President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2009, para. 1) building on President George H. W. Bush’s call in his 2002 State of the Union Address for every American to give at least two years to serving others. Community volunteers are
recognized not only as a kind act of service, but as necessary to the development of people across the United States. David Eisner, former CEO of the Corporation for National Community Service (2006) stated,

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our nation. From schools to shelters to hospitals and hotlines, volunteers are vital to America’s social and economic well-being. The bottom line is volunteering isn’t just nice, it is necessary to solving some of our toughest social challenges. (para. 6)

An abundance of research has been conducted on the effects of school-based volunteering on students, but little has been done on the volunteers who mentor and tutor. Caldarella, Gomm, Shatzer & Wall (2010) looked at the motivations and benefits of volunteering. They discovered that volunteers see mentoring as a way to express their values or gain a greater understanding (p. 209). For many community volunteers, the greater good is the motivation behind volunteering. Community volunteers are seeing beyond the constraints in the environment stemming from bureaucratic policies, scarce resources, oppression, and societal issues reflected in the lives of students of poverty. They can make direct change defined by the moral purpose of serving the greater good (Lyman, Ashby & Tripses, 2005).

Karcher (2009) discovered high school students who served as mentors to at-risk students reported gains in school-related connectedness and self-esteem. College students had similar benefits (Trepanier-Street, 2007). It is assumed that community volunteers experience the same benefits. Service-learning combined with preservice training combined with community volunteers is a win-win for all parties. These opportunities provide real-time experiences to prepare university students how to teach while benefiting struggling readers.
The Four Temperaments

The purpose of the study is to determine “indicators” that identify effective tutors. The Tennessee Literacy Partnership has determined the importance of tutoring, but it has no known or researched indicators that describe characteristics of an effective tutor. The success of students’ reading growth is contributed to intentional instructional strategies supported by research and the tutors. Although the instructional strategies used for teaching are research based, the characteristics, including the temperament, of the various tutors have not been researched. Could it be possible that a tutor’s temperament could actually be an indicator of student success?

The goal of this study was to determine what type of soft skills or disposition of tutors may contribute to student achievement. Temperament is a person’s natural disposition. Successfully selecting appropriate tutors may improve reading scores, student confidence, and a successful student-tutor relationship. This Capstone project will identify which tutor traits are associated with gains in student reading ability and propose a model for predicting such gains. Successfully partnering the tutor and student could improve reading gains, student confidence, and a successful mentor relationship. Does a tutor’s temperament have a significant impact on student achievement?

Based on the research questions of this project, the temperament of a tutor becomes an interesting variable. LaHaye (1984) defines temperament as the “combination of inborn traits that subconsciously affects (a person’s) behavior” (p. 23). Do the test scores of students differ significantly based on the “combination of inborn traits” of the tutor? Each temperament has distinct characteristics. Will certain groups of tutors be more effective than other groups? Does temperament vary between community volunteers, pre-service teachers, and high school students?
The idea that behavior is related to a person’s natural tendencies or temperament has been around for nearly 2,400 years. Temperament theory, also known as the Four Temperaments theory, has its roots in the ancient four humors theory of Hippocrates (460-370 BC). His humors theory, which he called a medical theory, was his understanding that the body had four types of fluid that caused human behavior: blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. The bloodstream portion of his theory has not withstood the test of time, but the four categories that emerged have (Cruise, Blitchington & Futcher, 1980, p. 944). Eysenck and Eysenck’s study (1969) revealed “Factor analyses of several existing personality tests, such as those conducted by generally have revealed the most straightforward and parsimonious explanation of temperament” (Cruise, Blitchington & Futcher, 1980, p. 943). Many personality theorists have utilized a conceptual scheme, which assumes four categories of personality or temperament to be “sanguine”, “choleric”, “melancholic” and “phlegmatic” after the bodily fluids or humors (Kagan, 1998).

Temperament theorists believe temperament is inherited (LaHaye, 1984, p. 20). This combination of traits is passed through generations. Temperament combines with other human characteristics to produce the basic makeup of the human spirit. A person’s temperament can be observed at every stage of life. Thus, a person brings a certain temperament to the relationship between tutor and student.

Cruise, Blitchington, and Futcher (1980) state that, from a psychometric perspective, the Four Temperament theory “is one of the soundest theories of personality in existence” (p. 943). They also argued in their study that the four-category approach is the most consistent valid and reliable approach in explaining personality among normal
Eysenck (1967) is the author of the modern scientific work on the Four Temperament theory. Numerous theorists furthered the research on temperament theory to what is known today as personality-type inventories (Kagan, 1998). The theory divides people according to various personality characteristics that appear to make up their basic temperament. The temperaments are easy to understand and use. The temperaments have both strengths and weaknesses and offer simple explanations for the complexity of individual differences. The Four Temperament theory proposes simple solutions to complex problems of everyday living. Each of the four temperaments represents a cluster of traits observable in one’s everyday behavior (Cocoris, 2009).

The four temperaments are expressed in a variety of personality tests. DiSC assessment is popular in the business community and in organizational psychology (DISCUS, 2012). The DiSC assessment mirrors the four temperaments as follows: Dominance (Chloric), Influence (Sanguine), Steady (Phlegmatic) and Compliant (Melancholy). Another popular temperament test is the Keirsey Temperament Sorter, whose four temperaments were assigned to the 16 types of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Keirsey, 1998). In each of these temperament tests, each type has strengths and weaknesses.

For the purpose of this research, the four traditional temperament categories proposed by Galen will be used. The four temperament categories are Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy, and Phlegmatic (LaHaye, 1984). Each of the four temperaments has positive and negative characteristics, which make up the personalities of individuals.
Sanguine. Sanguines are cheerful and friendly. They are talkative, lively, and are the life of the party. These restless people can also be self-centered and undependable. The Sanguine temperament personality is fairly extroverted. People of a sanguine temperament tend to enjoy social gatherings, making new friends and tend to be boisterous. They are usually quite creative and often daydream. However, some alone time is crucial for those of this temperament to sustain their drive (LaHaye, 1984).

Sanguines can also be very sensitive, compassionate and thoughtful. Sanguine personalities generally struggle with following tasks all the way through, are chronically late, and tend to be forgetful. They are sometimes a little sarcastic. Often, when pursuing a new hobby, a sanguine loses interest quickly when it ceases to be engaging or fun because they are sociable yet irresponsible (Martindale & Martindale, 1988, p. 836). They are very much people persons. They are talkative and not shy. People of sanguine temperament can often be emotional (LaHaye, 1984).

LaHaye (1984) said of a sanguine, “he is a fascinating story teller and the warm, emotional nature almost helps you relive the experience as he tells it” (p. 26). Sanguines are able to influence others through talking. They are described as convincing and magnetic. As a tutor, these characteristics seem to be appropriate, but there is no known research to indicate if these characteristics are indicators of success.

Choleric. Cholerics are optimistic, active, confident, and strong-willed. They can also be quick to anger, aggressive, and inconsiderate. A person who is choleric is a doer and thrives on activity. He or she has ambition, energy, and passion, and tries to instill it in others. Often, cholerics are seen as impetuous, egocentric, and proud (Martindale & Martindale, 1988, p. 836). People with the choleric temperament can dominate people of other temperaments, especially the phlegmatic types.
Many great charismatic military and political figures were choleric. Persons who have the choleric temperament like to be leaders and in charge of everything. They can be very manipulative and are very active in dealing with problems and challenges. They are described as forceful, egocentric, strong willed, driving, determined, ambitious, aggressive, and pioneering.

He or she rarely empathizes or sympathizes with others. LaHaye (1984) described the choleric, “He does not sympathize easily with others, nor does he naturally show or express compassion” (p. 27). A tutor should be able to sympathize, or at least empathize, with his or her students.

**Melancholy.** Melancholies are sensitive and analytical. LaHaye (1984) observed the following about the person who is melancholy, “His exceptional analytical ability causes him to diagnose accurately the obstacles and dangers of any project he has a part in planning” (p. 29). They can also be perfectionistic, unsociable, moody, and rigid. A person who is a thoughtful ponderer has a melancholic disposition. Melancholies are sacrificial and can be described as conservative, pessimistic, and anxious (Martindale & Martindale, 1988, p. 836). They are often very considerate and get rather worried when they are not on time for events. Melancholies can be highly creative in activities such as poetry and art. Their works can become preoccupied with the tragedy and cruelty in the world.

People with a melancholic personality are often self-reliant and independent. They can be so independent that they can get so involved in what they are doing to the point they forget to think of others. They do adhere to rules, regulations, and structure. They like to do quality work and do it right the first time. Melancholies are careful, cautious, exacting, neat, systematic, diplomatic, accurate, and tactful.
Melancholic tutors will follow the lesson plan exactly as it is written. They will do quality work and be considerate of the student. From a negative view, are melancholy tutors too rigid? Tutors must have the ability to be flexible and make the lesson plan applicable to the needs of the individual student

**Phlegmatic.** Phlegmatics are calm, controlled, reasonable, dependable, efficient, easy-going, and passive (Martindale & Martindale, 1988, p. 836). They can also be stubborn and lazy. They tend to be self-content and kind. They can be very accepting and affectionate. They may be very receptive and shy and often prefer stability to uncertainty and change. They are very consistent, relaxed, calm, rational, curious, and observant, making them good administrators. They can also be very passive-aggressive. The term, phlegmatic, derives its name from what Hippocrates thought was the “calm, cool, slow, well-balanced temperament” (LaHaye, 1984, p. 30).

Phlegmatics want a steady pace, security, and do not like sudden change. These individuals are relaxed, patient, predictable, deliberate, stable, and consistent. These characteristics in tutors could bring a sense of ease to the tutor and student relationship.

**The twelve blends of the temperaments.** Cocoris (2009) proposed that everyone has traits of all four temperaments and that there are combinations of temperaments. He also believed that traits can be developed based on a person’s response to variables in the environment such as: early home life, peers, where and when one grew up, education, gender, and group affiliation. One of the main objections to the four temperaments is the overly simplistic nature of categorizing into four distinct types. Buss and Plomin (1975) took the first lead in incorporating the concept of combinations among the four temperaments within individuals. LaHaye (1984) proposes that people are a mixture of
two temperaments; one predominates and the other is secondary. He posited the
following twelve blends:

1. SanClor is the strongest extrovert of all the temperament blends. The SanClor
talks too much. He expresses himself before he knows all the facts.
2. SanMel is a highly emotional person who fluctuates drastically. Persons with
this temperament are very empathetic.
3. SanPhleg is the easiest person to like. The person with this temperament
enjoys helping people.
4. ChlorSans are active, productive and purposeful people.
5. ChlorMel is industrious. This person is goal-oriented and detailed.
6. ChlorPhleg is very organized. This person can also be bitter and hold a
grudge.
7. MelSan can both be scholarly and can communicate well with students.
8. The MelChlor person is both a perfectionist and a driver.
9. MelPhleg persons have greatly benefited humanity.
10. PhlegSan is the easiest person with whom to get along.
11. PhlegChlors make good counselors.
12. PhlegMels are gracious, gentle and quiet.

LaHaye (1984) said that many educators are MelSan (p. 47). He also stated that
the SanMel temperament is extremely empathetic. The different blends of temperament
create twelve possibilities for the tutors who participate in the Tennessee Literacy
Project.

**Implications for tutors.** There is little information about the temperament of
teachers. There is even less information about the temperament of tutors. A teacher or a
tutor is a crucial component of education. If a tutor understood his or her own temperament, would that knowledge enhance teaching and learning? Knowledge of characteristic weakness could help teachers to become more proficient. Since the students in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership come from low-income families in frustrating environments, the temperament of the tutor become even more crucial to the learning process. Because of the lack of adult interaction, the temperament of tutors becomes a major consideration to building the effective relationship between the tutor and student.

**Summary of the Literature**

Learning to read is one of the most important necessities of a child’s early elementary school experience; however, low literacy skills in our educational system have become an epidemic in our nation. This epidemic has impacted Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS). Less than half of all students at the elementary and middle school levels are proficient or advanced in reading and more than 50% of all students are not reading on grade level (CERCC, 2011, p.14). A functional literacy level no longer exists for many students because of the early years of disparity, the increased number of immigrants, a culture of reluctant readers, poverty of students, racial subgroups, disparity in schools, and the lack of parental influence.

Educators are investigating ways to help close the literacy gap, and early intervention is vital to increase literacy. Tutoring programs with elementary schools have proven to produce academic gains in reading performance. This research is building on the work of Lipsey’s (2009) research that evaluated the effectiveness of early intervention for struggling readers at-risk of falling further below grade level. She discovered that tutoring by preservice teachers using a set lesson format based in best practices is an effective early intervention for struggling readers. Because of the positive findings of her
project, Lipsey was able to establish reading clinics in several schools within the MNPS district. The number and types of tutors volunteering at the reading clinics has increased over the past four years. As of 2011, there were nearly 400 tutors at eleven sites, representing preservice teachers from local universities, high school students, and community volunteers.

Although Lipsey has developed a researched based tutoring intervention, little has been noted about tutors. Effective tutors display a high level of support and nurturance in their interactions with their students while at the same time encouraging and motivating students. Content knowledge and the ability to support student learning is important. However, one cannot underestimate the impact of the student/tutor relationship. The relationship built between the tutor and the student can often make or break the success of the students’ growth in reading.

A tutor is a crucial component of education. If a tutor understood his or her own temperament, would that knowledge enhance teaching and learning? Knowledge of characteristic weakness could help tutors to become more proficient. Because students in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership come from low-income families with challenging environments and little positive adult interaction, the characteristics of the tutor become even more crucial to the learning process. The characteristics of effective tutors become a major consideration to improving literacy.
Chapter Three

Methodology

This section is designed to help the reader understand the process of how the research was conducted. It has been specifically labeled with headings to serve as guides while reading through this process. The first section is the Summary of the Project. This recaps the essence of what this project is about. The next section, Design of the Study, is simply restating the problem being investigated, the reason for this research, and the guiding questions that encompass the research. The Participants section depicts all information about the setting and the population and sample as it relates to this study. The Procedure section includes how the data collection occurred and the instrumentation used to acquire the data. This section recounts step by step how the research project transpired. The Analysis documents the mixed methods research in first discussing the quantitative analysis and then the qualitative procedures. The last section is a summary of this chapter.

Summary of the Project

Lipscomb University’s College of Education has partnered with Tennessee Literacy Partnership (TLP) to identify the indicators of effective tutors in reading clinics and the impact on students’ reading achievement. The partnership will promote promising practices in literacy that hope to significantly raise the level of literacy achievement for all students. This partnership will also provide literacy opportunities that serve the needs of the community.

Lipsey (2009) determined tutors are effective as part of her doctoral studies at Tennessee State University. While her study provided data of what constitutes best practices and a generalized understanding of a timeline needed to demonstrate students’
growth, it did not define characteristics of effective tutors. She examined the effect of using minimally trained tutors in an inner-city public school. This study will be used to help provide information on tutors as the TLP reading clinics continue to develop and enhance volunteer partnerships.

The goal of this research was to determine what types of soft skills or temperaments of tutors yield the highest student achievement. Successfully selecting an appropriate tutor could improve reading scores, build student confidence, and establish a successful student-tutor relationship. This study identified which tutor trait, if any, is associated with gains in a student’s reading ability and proposes a model for predicting such gains. If this research could determine correlations with tutor characteristics and student achievements, then perhaps a successful partnership of the tutor and student could improve reading gains, build student confidence, and contribute to a successful mentor relationship. The success of students’ reading growth has been attributed to intentional instructional strategies supported by research and the tutors. Although the instructional strategies used for teaching are research-based, the characteristics of effective tutors have not been identified.

The research team expected to see a diverse classification of students identified for reading intervention. Many of these students came from Title I schools representing low-income families, poor literacy skills, English language learning families, and students with poor academic performance. Students may have had other challenges such as limited English skills, limited cognitive skills, poor oral language skills, failed school experiences, special needs, or fear/hate of reading.
Design of the Study

Participation in this study was voluntary. Although there are risks involved in all research studies, this study included only minimal risks such as volunteers were asked to provide their names on the questionnaire. Focus group and interview participants were asked to sign a consent form to participate. There were no financial obligations to participate in this study.

**Purpose of the study.** The purpose of the study was to understand if the type of tutor (high school, preservice, or community) had any influence on students’ reading outcomes. This study also measured tutors’ effectiveness with age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, socioeconomic background as a child, and finally the temperament of the tutor. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Do the test scores of students participating in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership differ significantly based on the temperament of the tutor?
2. Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized reading gains in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership?
3. Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized no reading gains in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership?
4. Will the background of tutors (preservice teachers, high school students, and community volunteers) participating in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership relate to varied effectiveness of reading achievement gains?

**Research method.** The researchers used a mixed-method approach, combining both grounded-theory qualitative investigation and quantitative research using descriptive statistics, comparative, path, and correlation analysis. The research team had access to the students’ pretests/posttests as well as the names of the tutors, the characteristics, and to
whom the students were assigned. The researchers were granted access to student
demographics as well as quantitative data such as test scores, growth patterns, gains, and
pretests/posttests collected and stored by TLP reading clinics. The research team also
used an online questionnaire (Appendix C) developed specifically for this research. The
researchers gained information from these responses and further insight from focus
groups and individual interviews.

**Independent variables.** The quantitative data included the following independent
variables:

1. Tutor’s age (Scale) – *Personal*
2. Tutor’s gender (Nominal) – *Personal*
3. Tutor’s ethnicity (Nominal) – *Personal*
4. Tutor’s education level (Scale) – *Educational*
5. Type of tutor: preservice teacher, community, and high school student
   (Nominal) – *Educational*
6. Tutor temperament (Nominal) – *Attitudinal*
7. Tutor’s childhood socioeconomic background (Nominal) – *Personal*
8. Student’s instructional reading level (Scale) – *Educational*
9. Student’s ethnicity (Nominal) – *Personal*
10. Student’s gender (Nominal) – *Personal*
11. Student’s number of lessons completed with tutor (Scale) – *Educational*
12. Student’s grade level (Scale) – *Educational*

**Dependent variable.** The quantitative data included the following dependent
variable: reading improvement, operationalized as the difference between pre- and post-
test scores on running record assessments. MNPS uses the Scott Foresman Running
Record Assessment and Rigby Benchmark Assessment Reading Levels. These types of literacy assessment scores are determined by the student’s age and/or grade. Testing is just one method of assessment that helps identify a struggling reader. This assessment is used throughout the MNPS district and recorded on students’ report cards every nine weeks (quarterly). The data for this research were analyzed using quarterly reading scores from second to third quarter and third to fourth quarter.

**Participants**

The study involved both a student population and a tutor population. The students were those being tutored in the program at various schools. The tutor population consisted of preservice teachers in university preparatory programs, high school students, and community volunteers.

**Setting.** The reading clinics serve more than 400 students. This study looked specifically at seven elementary schools in MNPS. These seven schools represent six of the twelve clusters grouped together for system organization. Two of these seven elementary schools belong to the same cluster. These schools also represent significant areas of poverty in MNPS. All seven schools averaged 95% eligibility for FARL. One school’s FARL eligibility was 99.5% (Metro Nashville Public Schools, 2011b).

All of these schools represented highly diverse populations. Many of these schools were characterized by large international populations where several languages are spoken. As standardized tests are offered in English only, these factors contribute to the performance or underperformance of the schools’ adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Another statistic worth noting, due to its impact on student achievement in the area of reading, is each school’s mobility rate. The average mobility rate for these schools is 39%, which means that of the students who start school at the beginning of the year, 39%
are not there at the end of the year. If a school’s enrollment is 422 students, which was the average for all seven schools, approximately 165 students transferred in or out during the school year.

According to the 2010-2011 School Improvement Plan taken from each school, only 28% (mean) of the students taking TCAP (third and fourth grades) scored proficient or advanced in reading. Therefore, more than 70% of these schools have struggling or failing readers. Six out of seven schools fall significantly lower than the overall district average which documented 39.7% of students scoring proficient or advanced. The seven schools had a status of school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. Two of the schools in this research are in good standing.

**Students in TLP reading clinics.** MNPS students were selected for the TLP reading clinics if they were performing two or more reading levels below benchmark. These students came from eleven different reading clinics varying from kindergarten through high school. Many of these students came from Title I schools representing low-income families, poor literacy skills, English language learning families, and students with poor academic performance. The pool of student participants was narrowed to only elementary students for this study. Other students were omitted from this study because of the following reasons:

1. The student’s respective tutor chose not to participate in this study.
2. The students did not have reading scores from second to fourth quarters.
3. The students’ tutors did not participate in the reading clinic during the second to fourth quarters.

There were 181 student scores that were matched with their respective tutors’ data. The students’ gender was comprised of 104 boys and 77 girls with scores from second to
fourth quarters. The average number of sessions each of the 181 students had in the TLP was 13.59 and the average number of lessons with each student’s respective tutor was 9.14. There was no statistical significance in reading gains based on the number of lessons students had in the TLP.

Figure 5 depicts the ethnicity of students in the TLP reading clinics. However, an explanation needs to be given how these categories are comprised in MNPS data. The white category represents any white student regardless of origin. For example students from Middle Eastern countries such as Kurdistan are also included in this category. The black category represents any black student regardless of origin. For example international students from Somali or Sudan would also be counted in this category. Because of the diversity of this district, this is important to report.

**Figure 5**  TLP Participating Student Ethnicity

![TLP Participating Student Ethnicity](image)

*Figure 5. Ethnicity of the 181 TLP students whose data were used in this research.*
The grade levels of students whose running records were used in this research as the dependent variable are represented below in Figure 6.

**Respondents of the questionnaire.** Tutors for the TLP reading clinics were comprised of preservice teachers in university preparatory programs, high school students, and community volunteers. All volunteers had been trained in the TLP reading clinic using a lesson framework formatted similar to reading recovery practices (Lipsey, 2009). There were 197 tutors from a pool of 400 volunteers that participated in this research.

The preservice teachers were from four local universities: Belmont University, Lipscomb University, Tennessee State University, and Trevecca Nazarene University. The community-based volunteers were mostly from business and non-profit organizations. The high school volunteers represented four local high schools of various backgrounds. Two of the high schools are magnet schools of MNPS. One of the high schools is a Magnet School of Science and Technology. The students served an average of 20 hours per week at one TLP clinic for the duration of the study. There were 197 tutors from a pool of 400 volunteers that participated in this research.

**Figure 6** TLP Participating Student Grade Level Distribution

![TLP Participating Student Grade Level](image)

*Figure 6. Grade level distribution of the 181 TLP students whose data were used in this study.*
schools is an at-risk school that is also part of MNPS and mirrors the populations of the students participating in the TLP. The final partnering high school is a private religious school located in north Nashville.

All members of the volunteer tutor population were accessible through their connection with the TLP reading clinics. Accordingly, broad-based random sampling was not necessary because the population parameters of the TLP. Table 4 reveals that there were 197 K-4 tutors with the majority of them concentrated in the 16 to 20 year old and 21 to 30 year old groups representing 30.5% and 33% respectively. It was surprising to the researchers that 14.7% of participating tutors were 51 years or older, indicating that there is a significant number of older people who are investing time and energy into tutoring.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 yrs.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 30 yrs.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 40 yrs.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 50 yrs.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 yrs. and above</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Adapted from SurveyMonkey showing age groupings of all tutors completing the questionnaire (N=197).
Table 5 reveals the ethnicity of the participating tutors. The respondents were not as diverse as the pool of students being tutored. Sixty-three percent were Caucasian (N=123). Twenty-six percent were African American (N=52). The remaining 11% were comprised of Asian, Bi-racial, Latino, Native American, or Other ethnicities (N=22).

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-racial</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Adapted from SurveyMonkey showing ethnicity of all tutors completing the questionnaire (N=197).
Table 6 describes the educational backgrounds of the tutors completing the questionnaire. Their educational backgrounds ranged from being a current high school student to holding a Postgraduate degree. Nearly 50% of the tutors in the TLP reading clinics do not have a college degree. They are, however, active students in high school or college.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently High School</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently College</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate Degree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.7 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Adapted from SurveyMonkey showing age groupings of all tutors completing the questionnaire (N=197).
Figure 7 shows how tutors became involved with the TLP reading clinics. Preservice teachers had the highest representations of tutors from several local colleges and universities (N= 83). Community (N= 60) and High school student volunteers (N= 54) had only a slight difference in those participating. When tutors were asked if they felt they had been in a low-socioeconomic family environment as a child, the majority of the tutors responded no (N=162, 82.2%). Of those who responded yes, a normal distribution of all three groups was indicated.

**Figure 7**  TLP Participating Student Reading Gains

![TLP Participating Tutor Type](image)

*Figure 7. The background of the 197 TLP tutors who completed a questionnaire.*
The pool of tutor participants was narrowed to only those tutoring in elementary
schools. Other tutors were omitted from this study because of the following reasons:

1. The tutor chose not to participate in this study.
2. The tutor’s student did not have reading scores from second to fourth quarters.
3. The tutor did not participate in the reading clinic during the second to fourth
   quarters.

Once participants were identified, tutors were matched with their respective student’s
average gains from second to fourth quarters, resulting in 181 viable cases used for this
research.

Focus group participants. There were four focus groups: one comprised of
preservice teachers, one with community volunteers, and two consisting of high school
students who had volunteered in the TLP reading clinics. There were a total of 21
members participating in the focus groups from the 197 tutors completing the
questionnaires, which represented 10% of participating tutors.

The preservice group was represented by two males and four females, all
Caucasian. All preservice teachers were majoring in education, except for one. One tutor
from this focus group was a Teach for America student.

The focus group of community volunteers consisted of four Caucasian members,
two male and two female. One focus group member represented a faith-based
organization, two were from corporate organizations, and the final member was a retired
non-profit corporate employee.

There were also two high school focus groups. The first group had six members,
four female and two male. All participants were African American except for one
Caucasian female. These students also represented demographic likenesses to the
students being tutored because they were from the same communities. The second high school group was comprised of four students, one male and three female. Three students were African Americans and one was Middle Eastern.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

In order to understand the systemic workings of the TLP reading clinics, the researchers attended one of the mandatory tutor training sessions. This four-hour session covered the procedures and lesson framework tutors used in the TLP reading clinics. The researchers also visited various reading clinics and observed tutors and students working together. All three types of tutors (preservice teachers, high school students and community volunteers) were observed. Because this research is designed to support the TLP reading clinics, there were several meetings with Dr. Lipsey and her staff to assist the researchers in the design of this study.

Questionnaire. After reviewing the related literature, the researchers prepared a questionnaire (Appendix C) to gather information from tutors, including demographics, perceptions of tutoring, and their individual temperaments. The questionnaire was divided into two general sections. The first section consisted of eleven questions identifying demographic information (quantifiable data) and opinions of tutor effectiveness (qualitative data).

Temperament quiz. The second half of the instrument was a temperament quiz embedded within the questionnaire consisting of 40 questions (Appendix C). The temperament quiz is a free access instrument. It is found in various forms via the internet. The temperament questions were simply a way to identify a part of one’s personality and how she or he relates to others most of the time. This instrument was chosen for several
reasons, which include: reliability, validity, long-standing history, and ease of completion and scoring.

The temperament quiz has four temperament categories from which to choose. It is arranged in a multiple choice format with four word choices that best describe one’s personality. The respondent can only choose one word for each question. The first 20 questions have descriptive words pertaining to strengths of the temperaments. The last 20 questions have descriptive words pertaining to weaknesses of the temperaments.

Pilot testing. In an effort to ensure validity, the questionnaire instrument was pilot tested by 22 people of various backgrounds, ages, and educational levels on three different occasions (Appendix C). Participants were teachers, administrators, high school, and college students. Additionally, there was one sales representative, an interior designer, a chamber of commerce employee, a secretary, and an insurance adjuster.

The first changes made were related to question seven, which addressed the tutors’ perspective on their socioeconomic status when they were younger. The intent of this question was to find out if the tutors viewed their childhood family environments as low-socioeconomic or low-income as school-aged children. Changes were made to the question to solidify interpretation.

A second revision was made concerning how to list ethnicities. Latino was added in place of Hispanic to better define a specific ethnic group as opposed to a regional label. Both terms have been used interchangeably in the literature reviewed but based on the feedback from those who took the pilot test, Latino was a better description.

There was also considerable discussion concerning whether to have a few open-ended questions versus questions of forced-choice. These questions were the only qualitative ones in the instrument. Questions nine, ten, and eleven solicited the opinions
of the tutors toward their perceived strength as a tutor, what promotes student growth in reading, and what constitutes an effective tutor. Two of the questions remained open-ended to allow for in-depth analysis, coding, and grouping by the researchers. Question ten offered five characteristic choices from which the tutor could choose. Participants could also choose “other” and list a different characteristic.

Valuable data were obtained from the responses from these three questions. All feedback was positive regarding the first part of the questionnaire. All participants stated that the format was easy to understand.

Development of the second section of the questionnaire consisted of the temperament quiz. Tutors were asked to identify characteristics matching their strengths and weaknesses. There were a few comments about this section being confusing, but the piloting group all finished the questionnaire. However, the researchers chose to not change the format of the questionnaire to preserve the validity of the existing temperament quiz. Also, the overwhelming majority of the participants completed the questionnaire with ease. Overall, the feedback was positive from the participants and valuable information was gained from piloting the instrument.

Focus groups. Another method for data collection was the use of focus groups. Questions for the focus groups were derived from the questionnaire. Specifically, in questions nine, ten, and eleven, tutors gave their opinions about their perceived strength as a tutor, what promotes student growth in reading, and what constitutes an effective tutor. These questions were designed to use a constant comparative approach through focus groups and interviews with all three types of tutors. It was also designed to prompt discussions about self-efficacy and to understand the influence of the tutor and student relationship (Appendix D). Consent forms were developed for those who volunteered to
participate in the focus groups (Appendix E). If the participant was a minor, a parent or legal guardian provided written consent.

Once the questionnaire was closed to tutors, focus groups were formed by randomly selecting from those tutors who had responded. There were four focus groups: one comprised of preservice teachers, one with community volunteers, and two consisting of high school students who had volunteered in the TLP reading clinics. There were a total of 21 members participating in the focus groups from the 197 tutors completing the questionnaires, which represented 10% of participating tutors.

The four focus groups were posed with the same questions (Appendix D). All focus groups were recorded, and the dialogue was transcribed for reporting purposes. The researchers reviewed all responses for common themes through focus group conversations. The researchers also reviewed all responses to discern distinct characteristics that may have set one experience or focus group apart from another.

**Interviews.** Interviews questions were designed to support themes that resulted from focus groups (Appendix F). These questions helped define themes that were coded from the focus group discussions. The interview questions also gave the researchers an opportunity to further understand the unique relationships that formed between tutor and student. Consent forms were developed for those who volunteered to participate in the interviews (Appendix G). If the participant was a minor, a parent or legal guardian provided written consent.

**Procedures**

Tutors were emailed an invitation from the TLP office manager to participate in this study. A link to the questionnaire was included in this invitation. The questionnaire was offered to all tutors on-line through SurveyMonkey and via hard copy at each
elementary school reading clinic site for three weeks. Informed consent was required
before the tutor completed the questionnaire. All completed hard copies were placed in a
sealed envelope and entered into the SurveyMonkey site manually by the researchers.
After two weeks, a follow-up email was sent to remind participants of the upcoming
deadline. It took approximately fifteen minutes to complete the online questionnaire.

TLP assisted the research team in identifying each tutor who participated in the
research with his or her respective student. Student information was obtained and
recorded by accessing assessment records kept by the TLP reading clinics. Data from
tutors were matched with their respective students’ scores. The tutors’ responses to the
survey were used to understand the tutors’ demographics, perceptions of tutoring, and
their general temperament characteristics.

Descriptive statistics were used to organize and summarize all variables. Statistical
Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the purposes of data
analysis. The anonymity of the participants was protected. All student and tutor
information was coded with case numbers and computers were locked. After the data
were entered into SPSS, all names were deleted and records became designated by an
identification number.

Once the research team received tutors’ questionnaires, random selection
participation for the focus groups or interview sessions began. For qualitative purposes
focus groups and interviews of tutors were conducted. Consent forms were completed
(Appendices E & G). Four focus groups were determined from those that responded to
the invitations from the research team. These groups were constructed of two student
tutor groups, one preservice teacher tutor group, and one community volunteer tutor
group. Individual interviews were determined from the focus groups participants. Each
focus group lasted one hour. It took approximately thirty minutes to complete an
interview.

Qualitative data were collected through questionnaires, observations, focus
groups, interviews, and reflections. The qualitative portion of the research utilized a
constant comparative approach through focus groups and interviews from the tutors of
the community volunteers, preservice, and high school students and the students being
tutored. The researchers developed a system for decoding tutors’ responses from the
focus groups and interviews.

Within the SurveyMonkey program, the researchers were able to develop
categorizes based on themes and then each individual response was coded into the
corresponding categories. These categories were then discussed at a deeper level within
the focus groups and interviews. Both focus groups and interviews were recorded and
later transcribed. Themes from the questionnaire, focus groups, and interviews were
blended to include all communal categories. Opinions and perspectives specific to the
different types of tutors were also recorded. These findings contributed to the overall
experiences of the tutors which offered varying insights.

The data from both focus groups and interviews were transcribed without tutor’s
identity. Any quote used from these resources were recorded as focus group, 2012 or
TLP tutor, 2012. The transcribed data from focus groups and interviews were stored in
the researchers’ secure, password protected database and erased from the recording
device.

Research Ethics and Approvals

Confidentiality. Participation in this study was voluntary. Although there are
risks involved in all research studies, this study included only minimal risks such as
volunteers were asked to provide their names on the questionnaire. All participants were assigned a random identification number to protect their identity. The researchers signed agreements with MNPS to protect the identity and information included in the study. Focus group and interview participants were asked to sign a consent form to participate. If the tutor participant was under the age of 18, written consent from a parent or legal guardian was required. There were no financial obligations to participants.

**Memorandum of understanding.** A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was established between Lipscomb University and the Tennessee Literacy Partnership. The MOU established the relationship and guidelines regarding this study (Appendix A).

**Internal review board.** This study was conducted under the supervision of Lipscomb University College of Education’s doctoral program and received approval from its Internal Review Board (Appendix H).

**MNPS.** This study received approval from the Executive Director of Research, Assessment and Evaluation associated with MNPS (Appendix I). In addition, the researchers agreed to abide by MNPS External Researcher Statement of Assurances (Appendix J).

**Certification.** All researchers successfully completed the course, *Protecting Human Research Participants.* They were certified by the National Institutes of Health of Extramural Research in October, 2011 (Appendix K).
Chapter Four

Results and Analysis

Introduction

Findings in this chapter were based on the mixed method approach of using quantitative and qualitative analysis. The data sources used were: (a) students’ documented reading scores from the Tennessee Literacy Partnership reading clinics, (b) temperament questionnaire, (c) focus groups with volunteer tutors, (d) and interviews with volunteer tutors.

Response Rate

In an effort to collect data for this research, a link to questionnaires was sent out electronically to more than 400 tutors working with the TLP reading clinics by the office manager. The total number of tutors participating in the TLP reading clinics fluctuates quarterly. There were 197 participants who completed the questionnaires. Then, each tutor was paired with the student’s data whom he or she had tutored. After the pairing of student and tutor, data from tutoring sessions were gathered including time frame of tutoring, number of sessions with tutor, and the student’s reading scores. Of those responding (197), it was discovered some of the tutors worked in a middle school setting and these participants were excluded from the study since this research focused on elementary students in Kindergarten through fourth grades.

Because respondents were not selected at random from a larger population, the statistical tests reported below are interpreted not as inferences about some larger population. The data were interpreted as indications of how likely it is that a random process pairing the dependent and independent variables in question could produce similar or stronger patterns of association between the two.
Quantitative Analysis

Students participating in the TLP reading clinics had documented reading scores. There was a beginning score and then there were four additional scores from each quarter where students were monitored for progress. These quarterly scores were recorded in October, January, March, and a final score in May. Students came into the TLP program at different intervals. Therefore, the student’s scores were only used from the specified period the tutor worked with his or her respective student. All other scores were omitted. The majority of tutors who chose to participate in this study worked with students from second to third quarter or third to fourth quarter. These two periods were averaged and labeled in SPSS as average gains 2 to 4, the dependent variable.

MNPS has chosen to use the reading level benchmarks found in Table 7. This table reveals the grade level, type of assessment given, and the beginning and ending scores for the school year. After each assessment is completed, the student’s level is recorded and compared to the expectancy reading level according to grade. Students’ growth is then measured by his or her beginning score for the year. These numbers can vary from 0-40 as assigned to the appropriate grade level.
Table 7
MNPS District Reading Benchmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Type of Assessment</th>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Ending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Scott Foresman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Scott Foresman</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Scott Foresman</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Rigby Running Record</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Rigby Running Records</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Adapted from MNPS’ district benchmarks for reading achievement for the 2011-2012 school year.

There was a beginning score and then four additional scores from each quarter in which students were monitored for progress. These quarter scores were recorded in October, January, March, and a final score in May. These quarterly reading scores were used to operationalize reading progress, the study’s dependent variable. Specifically, each reading score for each student was subtracted from the next-available reading score for that student. The result indicated the change in each student’s reading score during each quarter for which data were available. However, only a subset of these quarterly reading score changes were used in the study.

Students came into the TLP program at different times during the year that the study covered. Tutor influence obviously could not be a contributing factor in reading progress that occurred prior to the onset of tutoring. Therefore, for the accuracy of recording student performance with a specific tutor, the student’s reading progress scores were used only from the specified period the tutor worked with his or her respective student. All other scores were omitted.
The majority of tutors who chose to participate in this study worked with students from second to third quarter or third to fourth quarter. These two periods were averaged and labeled as average gains 2 to 4. After tutor and student data pairing, there were 181 cases between second to fourth quarter scores. If a student had only one pair of reading scores during the period, the average was computed to equal the difference between the two available scores.

Figure 8 reveals the frequency and average reading score gains of the students in this research. The mean growth for students was 2.40 with a standard deviation of 2.266. Additionally, because about 20% of these average reading gains were zero, an alternate operationalization of the dependent variable was computed to distinguish between no reading gain at all and at least some reading gain.

**Figure 8  TLP Participating Tutors Types**

![Graph showing average reading score gains](image)

*Figure 8. TLP Participating Student Reading Gains. In this figure the frequency of students is revealed with their average reading gains in the 2 to 4 quarters including the frequency of students with zero gains.*
Research question one. Do the reading assessment scores of students participating in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership differ significantly based on the temperament of the tutor? The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. No statistically significant gains exist between a student’s reading scores and the tutor’s temperament.
2. No statistically significant correlations exist between a student’s zero gain in reading scores and the tutor’s temperament.

Using SPSS, a one-way ANOVA was performed using average reading gains (average gains 2 to 4) as the dependent variable and temperament as an independent variable. No statistically significant differences were found ($F= .909$, $df= 4$, $p = .460$). The means are ranked from highest to lowest: Sanguine, 3.12; Phlegmatic, 2.58; Melancholy, 2.38; and Choleric, 2.30. A cross-tabulation was performed to check for an association between tutor temperament and zero student reading gain. Again, no statistically significant association was detected ($\chi^2=4.15$, $df= 3$, $p = .246$).

Null hypotheses results.

1. No statistically significant gains exist between a student’s reading scores and the tutor’s temperament. The null hypothesis is retained ($p= .460$).
2. No statistically significant relationships exist between a student’s zero gain in reading scores and the tutor’s temperament. The null hypothesis is retained ($p= .246$).

Research question two. Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized reading gains in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership? The following null hypothesis was tested:
3. No statistically significant gains exist between a student’s reading scores and the common characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, education attainment) of the tutor.

A combination of t-tests and one-way ANOVA analyses were computed to compare average reading gains (average gains 2 to 4) across tutor characteristics including tutor socioeconomic background as a child, tutor gender, tutor age, and tutor ethnicity. The analysis also examined whether reading gains differed for tutor-student pairs that were matched for gender or matched for ethnicity.

Tutors and students that had the same gender or the same ethnicity were compared to those who were not gender matched or not matched by ethnicity. Of all these tutor characteristics analyzed, the only significant difference that appeared was between gender-matched tutors and tutors who were not gender matched. Reading gains for the 83 students of the same gender as their tutors averaged 2.80, while reading gains for the 98 students of a different gender than their tutor averaged 2.06 ($t=-2.17$, $df=163.485$, $p=.032$) as reported in Table 8. When the student's gender was matched with the tutor's gender, there was a statistically significant gain.

**Null hypothesis result.**

3. No statistically significant gains exist between a student’s reading scores and the common characteristics of the tutor. The null hypothesis is rejected ($p=.032$).
Table 8

Gender Matching and Student Average Reading Gain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender matching</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>163.485</td>
<td>-2.17</td>
<td>.032*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matched</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * significant at the .05 level

**Research question three.** Are there common characteristics of tutors who students realized no reading gains in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership? The following null hypothesis was tested:

4. No statistically significant relationships exist between a student’s zero gain in reading scores and the common characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, education attainment) of the tutor.

Cross-tabulation analyses were performed contrasting zero-gain students and other students across the same tutor characteristics described above: tutor socioeconomic background as a child, tutor gender, tutor age, and tutor ethnicity, gender-matched tutor, and ethnicity-matched tutor. Table 9 reveals that none of the relationships were significant ($p = .076$), including the association between zero-gain students and gender-matched tutors.

**Null hypothesis result.**

4. No statistically significant relationships exist between a student’s zero gain in reading scores and the common characteristics of the tutor. The null hypothesis is retained. In these analyses, $p$ ranged from .076 for tutor socioeconomic background to .916 for ethnicity-matched tutor.
Research question four. Will the background of tutors (preservice teachers, high school students, and community volunteers) participating in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership relate to varied effectiveness of reading achievement gains? The following null hypotheses were tested:

5. No statistically significant gains exist between the average reading scores of students who were tutored by preservice teachers and the average reading scores of students who were tutored by community volunteers.

6. No statistically significant gains exist between the average reading scores of students who were tutored by preservice teachers and the average reading scores of students who were tutored by high school volunteers.

7. No statistically significant gains exist between the average reading scores of students who were tutored by high school students and the average reading scores of students who were tutored by community volunteers.
A one-way ANOVA was performed contrasting average reading gains for each of the three tutor types: preservice teachers, high school students, and community volunteers. The analysis found significant differences ($F=4.01$, $df=2$, $p<=.02$). A Dunnett’s T3 post-hoc test indicated a significant difference ($p= .008$) between the average for high school student tutors (3.01) and for community volunteers (1.85). The average for pre-service volunteers (2.49) did not differ statistically from either of the other two averages.

A similar, although statistically not significant, pattern appeared when zero-gain students were contrasted with other students across tutor type. Only 9.8% of high-school tutors’ students showed no gains in reading compared to 20.6% of community volunteers’ students and 27.4% of preservice teachers’ students ($\chi^2=5.483$, $df = 2$, $p = .06$). Figure 9 shows the average reading gains of students and the backgrounds of their tutors. As the analysis has already proven, the bar graph is a visual representation of the variance of average student gains among the tutors.

**Null hypotheses results.**

5. No statistically significant gains exist between the average reading scores of students who were tutored by preservice teachers and the average reading scores of students who were tutored by community volunteers. The null hypothesis is retained ($p=.296$).

6. No statistically significant gains exist between the average reading scores of students who were tutored by preservice teachers and the average reading scores of students who were tutored by high school students. The null hypothesis is retained ($p=.603$).
7. No statistically significant gains exist between the average reading scores of students who were tutored by high school students and the average reading scores of students who were tutored by community volunteers. The null hypothesis is rejected \((p=.008)\).

**Figure 9** TLP Student Reading Gains and Type of Tutor

*Figure 9.* TLP Student Reading Gains and Type of Tutor. Students served by the high school tutors had the highest reading gains in this study followed by preservice teachers and community volunteers.
Path analysis. A path analysis was conducted to further investigate the relationship between gender-matched students and tutors and average reading gains among students. The analysis was undertaken after exploration of the data found that, of the students for whom average second-through-fourth-quarter data were available, the 77 females showed a higher average reading gain (3.01) than the 104 males ($M = 1.94$). The difference was statistically significant ($t = -3.224$, $df = 179$, $p = .002$).

Additionally, student gender was found to be highly associated with student-tutor gender matching ($\chi^2 = 74.696$, $df = 1$, $p = .00$) as depicted in Table 10. Specifically, 81% of female students had female tutors, while only 19% of the male students had male tutors. The pattern likely was a result of the preponderance of female tutors (81%) compared to male tutors (19%).

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Matching</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1 (177)</td>
<td>74.696</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*significant at the .05 level
In order to perform a path analysis, the following equations were used after the path analysis revealed the coefficients:

1. \(0.000 + 0.876\) (Female Student) = Average Gain
2. \(0.000 + 0.583\) (Female Student) + \(0.245\) (Gender Matching) = Average Gain

Figure 10 shows the path analysis with coefficients for student gender and gender matching. Dummy coding was used to represent the categorical variables involved in the analysis. Specifically, student gender was represented with a zero for males and a 1 for females, while gender matching was represented with a zero for gender mismatching and a 1 for gender matching. The two paths to the higher reading gains were being female and females being gender matched.

**Figure 10  Path Analysis**

*\(p<.05\)*
Qualitative Analysis

Findings from the questionnaire. In question number nine on the questionnaire, tutors were asked to share their opinion concerning the most influential factor in student growth in reading. They were provided with five topics from which to choose. The options included one-to-one tutoring, training, consistency of the sessions, curriculum and/or materials, or the environment. Fifty-seven percent of the tutors responded the most influential factor was the one-to-one ratio ($N=112$). The other statistically frequent response was the consistency of the tutoring sessions ($N=56, 28.4\%$). Training, the lesson framework, and the environment had less than 15% of the respondent’s choice as the reason for student success.

The tutors had an opportunity to answer an open-ended question regarding what they felt was their greatest strength or best strategy as a tutor. Responses were coded and categorized into six groups. The groups were relationship, enjoyable/fun, motivation, nice/helpful, patient, and structure of the program. The top two categories were relationships and the structure of the program. Forty percent of the tutors reported comments with words or phrases such as being nice, having fun, listening to them, being helpful, being patient and understanding, learning games, complimenting them, gently correcting, having eye contact, making the child feel like they have accomplished something, making connections, and being friendly and kind. Patience and being encouraging were the two most frequently listed attributes.

One insightful comment made by a tutor was, “Knowing when to help and when to let go of the reins. Many children learn by doing and they may need to make mistakes in order to learn” (TLP tutor personal communication, 2012). Other selected quotes and
“Be there every week.”

“Be positive and encouraging with words and touch.”

“I like to see where the child is in his learning so that they do not feel that I am ‘dumbing’ him down if I move too slow or being inconsiderate of their needs if I move too fast.”

“Digging deep to make sure that the student is learning and can reflect once done.”

“Being excited for and with the child strategies are making student feel comfortable and encouraging (him or her) to keep trying.”

“I feel like I not only helped the children improve their reading ability, but I tried to form a relationship with them as well by asking them questions about their life when I walked them to and from class.”

“I also felt I was very encouraging and didn't just tell them the answer, but encouraged them to answer with hints and clues so they could use their brain.”

“Willing to stick with the program over the long-term to achieve results.”

“My greatest strength is getting the kids comfortable with me and making them realize that I am there for them in terms of making reading (in this case) fun and not so much of a frustrating thing.”

“Caring—I care a great deal that the child progresses in his abilities. I consciously put effort into helping the child learn.”

“ Asking them if they know about the same things in real life (basically relating book content to real life), or asking them their opinion on the plot and what they would do if they were in the protagonist's place.”

“The best strategy for tutoring is to first engage the child and get on their level so that they are excited about learning/reading, etc.”

“Making the student feel comfortable and not afraid to make mistakes.”

“Helping the child believe he/she can learn and accomplish the task relating to the student and finding common interest and building a relationship upon that.”

Figure 11. Adapted from responses TLP tutors provided from question number ten in the SurveyMonkey questionnaire about the tutor’s greatest strength and best strategies when tutoring. TLP tutors, 2012.
comments recorded by tutors on the questionnaire are included in Figure 11. Question
number ten was open-ended. This question asked about the tutor’s greatest strength or
best strategy when tutoring. As one can see from the list of comments, a myriad of ideas
from feelings to methodology were reflected by the tutors.

The final section of the survey transitioned to 40 questions pertaining to the
tutor’s temperament. The first 20 questions were related to temperament strengths. The
last twenty questions dealt with temperament weaknesses. Descriptive analysis on the
temperament section of the questionnaire showed an evenly balanced distribution, and the
Cronbach’s Alphas ranged from .665 to .778, indicating the results were reliable.

The four categories in the temperament quiz were choleric, sanguine, melancholy,
and phlegmatic. Choleric and Melancholy had the highest frequencies followed by
Sanguine and Phlegmatic respectively. Figure 12 reveals that 9% (N = 17) ended up in a
mixed category indicating an exactly equal scoring for two or more temperaments.

**Figure 12  TLP Participating Tutor Temperaments**

![Bar chart showing the distribution of Tutor Temperaments.](Image)

*Figure 12. The distribution of the four temperaments plus the 17 respondents who had a mixture of two temperaments.*
The more melancholy or phlegmatic a tutor scored, the less likely he or she was choleric or sanguine. Melancholy correlated negatively with choleric ($r = -.375, p< .05$) and sanguine ($r = -.614, p< .000$). Phlegmatic correlated negatively with choleric ($r = -.644, p < .05$) and sanguine ($r = -.248, p< .05$). Phlegmatic correlated positively with melancholy ($r = .185, p< .05$), indicating some tendency toward the blending of these two temperaments. The only other pair, sanguine and choleric, was not significantly correlated ($r = 103, p<.05$).

**Findings from the focus groups.** All four focus groups were asked prepared questions that were developed by the researchers (Appendix D). All focus groups were recorded and the dialogue was transcribed for reporting purposes. The researchers reviewed all responses for common themes through focus group conversations. The researchers also reviewed all responses to discern distinct characteristics that may have set one experience or focus group apart from another.

Effective tutor characteristics. For the first question, tutors responded to the following, “What factors seem most important in your understanding of one-to-one tutoring?” Although there were many differing opinions, common themes existed among the groups:

1. help students feel comfortable;
2. patience;
3. understanding each student’s knowledge or academic level;
4. have an understanding of background/home life.

All four of these themes were mentioned in each focus group.

Same ethnicity. The researchers asked if likenesses of ethnicity with student and tutor would make a difference. All focus groups deemed ethnicity of the student and tutor
irrelevant. Community volunteers felt strongly about the irrelevance of ethnicity for one-to-one tutor effectiveness. This finding is relevant because most of the tutors’ ethnicities were recorded as Caucasian (62%), and many of the students had a minority ethnicity. The majority of the students in the TLP reading clinics are Hispanic and African American.

**Same gender.** The researchers asked, “What if both tutor and student had the same gender? Does this affect the outcome?” Preservice teachers suggested gender likeness may help students and tutors connect. To a lesser degree, high school tutors agreed. Community volunteers felt strongly about the irrelevance of gender or ethnicity for one-to-one tutor effectiveness. There were a significantly higher number of female volunteers (N=165, 84%) in comparison to male (N=32, 16%) volunteers.

**Small talk.** “How important do you think small talk is for student achievement?” All tutors from all focus groups considered small talk extremely important. Tutors mentioned small talk builds trust, increases confidence, and provides an opportunity for a connection with the student. Many tutors reported that most small talk occurred while escorting students to and from classrooms. The community volunteers suggested that more time should be allotted for small talk. A community volunteer commented thirty minutes for tutoring was not enough time for tutoring and for small talk. Another volunteer stated “students had stories that needed to be heard, which builds connections” (TLP tutor personal communication, 2012).

**Socioeconomic background.** Question number seven in the questionnaire asked if tutors considered themselves socioeconomically disadvantaged as a child. This question was the basis for a focus group question about matching student and tutor backgrounds. Most students in the TLP reading clinics come from disadvantaged homes (95% FARL),
with many at-risk factors. When further probing was done in the focus groups about this concept, community volunteers and preservice groups felt that background likeness was of little importance. However, both high school focus groups, where students and tutors shared similar demographics, felt differently. Theses tutors believed they understood the struggling reader on a deeper level. The high school volunteers described themselves as hope, encouragement, and role models for the students they tutored.

The high school tutors communicated that they were from similar backgrounds and had a connection with the students they were tutoring. Two tutors in this same group admitted to being struggling readers themselves and identified the essentialness of connections. All tutors said in one form or another that background differences offered different perspectives. A powerful thread brought up by all groups was the attitude of the tutor. All groups communicated that a child’s perception of how the tutor came across was more important than background likenesses.

**Lesson Framework.** When the lesson framework was discussed, community and high school tutors agreed on the importance of a good plan and the training for implementation. These groups reported feelings of confidence and preparedness because of the structure of the reading clinics. They also said it created a sense of expectancy with students. Students knew what needed to be accomplished when attending the reading clinics. Tutors said it encouraged students to stay focused and offered redirection for students when needed.

Preservice teachers had a completely different perspective about the lesson framework. They did not see it as important. These tutors wanted greater liberties to try their own strategies. They did feel the lesson framework offered continuity to students in the reading clinics and for the tutors who were not preservice teachers.
Computer tutorial vs. one-to-one tutoring. One question petitioned tutors’ viewpoints on computer tutorials versus one-to-one tutoring. This question was posed because many reading interventions are computer-based tutorials in schools today. All tutors agreed that human interaction for the students served in the TLP reading clinics is a critical component for struggling students. Some comments included the following:

1. Students need and want relationships;
2. Humans encourage;
3. Human interaction is important;

Although technology drives today’s culture in many ways, Payne’s (2005) work on understanding poverty states, “Two things that help one move out of poverty are education and relationships” (p. 3). The author also lists relationships as being one of the four reasons a student leaves poverty (p. 3). It was communicated consistently by all focus groups that relationships for the students being served in the TLP reading clinics were vital for the students.

Relationships. Tutors stated that relationships between student and tutor became a motivation and a sense of self-gratification for the volunteers. Nearly all tutors had a story concerning the amazing feeling they experienced when picking up their students from class and watching the students’ reactions of excitement. When referring to students, all tutors in the focus groups used possessive descriptions such as my student, our time, our games, and even our growth. It was clear that the value of relationships ran both ways. Some stories were even shared with tears.

Other common threads discussed. Members of the focus groups were asked to generate additional characteristics of effective tutors. There were several common threads
from all four groups: consistency, patience, compassion, and modeling. Most tutors felt these four characteristics were significantly important as these characteristics affected their own behavior during the tutoring sessions. Being on time, attending all sessions, being patient with the student, demonstrating compassion when the student indicated a bad day, or reporting a difficult dilemma were all discussed as crucial components for successful tutoring.

The two high school focus groups and the community group shared a common thread of the value of communicating on a student’s level. When asked for clarification, they indicated tutors must communicate on a student’s level in the areas of conversation and interests. Preservice teachers talked about the importance of using teaching strategies. They indicated this component as being one characteristic of an effective tutor. These strategies were related to the teacher training they received from the respective universities as opposed to the strategies taught in the TLP training.

**What tutors offer to students.** When dialoguing about greatest assets tutors offer to students, very little differences were noted. All groups mentioned instilling confidence in students. It was the group members’ opinion that deficits in reading produced students with low self-esteem. The focus group participants felt they became a caring person in the student’s life. The community volunteers mentioned that opportunities became available to talk about other issues relevant to the students’ lives. They gave an example of the students learning manners by the interaction between the tutor and student. The high school groups mentioned that tutoring created a social network for both the tutors and the students.

**Closing.** In closing the researchers asked all group members if there were any factors not discussed that should be included on this topic. Both high school groups
mentioned the impact participating as a tutor had on their own lives. Serving as tutors allowed them to give back and make a difference even though they are still in high school. Preservice teachers commented on the pride they felt when seeing their students make growth in reading. They also saw participation in the TLP reading clinics as good practice for their teaching careers. One preservice teacher commented, “This was real world; being with these types of students is practical for our learning” (TLP tutor personal communication, 2012). The community volunteers made the following recommendations:

1. Having facilitators at the clinics is the best thing for organization and time management.
2. TLP could give tutor feedback on students’ progress and how tutoring is helping.

“Most days in tutoring I feel…” The final activity in the focus group was for the tutors to finish the following sentence: “Most days in tutoring I feel …” Some very powerful threads came from this prompting. High school students used strong terms such as accomplished, excited, determined to make a difference, and empowered. The community volunteers said they felt blessed, rewarded, excited, and also used the word accomplished. It was clear to see a different motivation existed for the preservice group. While the community volunteers and high school students gave very qualitative responses throughout the group time, preservice teachers were focused almost exclusively on outcomes. These were some of their responses as it pertained to the prompt, “Most days in tutoring I feel…”

1. Am I doing this right?
2. Defeated when students do not show growth;
3. Frustrated with curriculum. (TLP tutor personal communication, 2012)

These preservice tutors also mentioned feeling motivated to work harder with students because their own lives were opposite of the students. As reported earlier, 95% of the students in the TLP come from low-income families. Very few of the preservice tutors shared this same upbringing.

The focus groups were invaluable to this research project in gathering perspectives. The researchers heard comments from the volunteers, visibly saw the added body language, and experienced their emotion. Various themes, ideas, and meanings were developed because of this interaction.

**Findings from the individual interviews.** Two of the tutors randomly selected and invited to participate in a focus group were unable to attend one of the scheduled focus groups offered. Instead, they agreed to participate in individual interviews. One interview was conducted at a TLP reading clinic, the other via telephone. Both participants were community volunteers and fairly new to the tutoring program. One tutor became acquainted with the TLP reading clinics program through her place of employment, while the other through her local church. They both stated serving as a tutor was a great opportunity to share their time with struggling readers.

When asked about what they liked best about tutoring, responses included the following: making a difference in a child’s life, helping the children develop a life skill such as reading was very rewarding, making a personal connection with the child, and the experience of making the child feel comfortable with reading. They made important connections with their students during the transition time to and from the tutoring sessions. The use of small talk helped make personal connections by getting to know each other better. One tutor suggested the importance of providing a positive influence,
making sure students see reading as a fun activity, and helping them with basic word identification. Being animated, positive, listening to the students, showing understanding, and getting on their level are important characteristics for being a good tutor, in their opinions.

Both tutors mentioned the structure of the lesson provided accountability to make sure they stayed on track during their limited time together. One tutor mentioned the time of the session as being an important piece to consider because of the attention spans of certain students. One participant noted that when she tutored in the late afternoon sessions, the child seemed tired and less focused. Both volunteers felt the set-up of the clinic was a favorable learning environment. The tutors also felt wrapping up the lesson with words of affirmation and the reward of a sticker and snack was beneficial for a job well-done.

Both interviewees suggested follow-up training for tutors after they had tutored for period of time. One tutor suggested a more in-depth training on reading strategies. The other tutor thought it would be helpful to have some behavior management training for those students struggling with attention issues or lack of motivation. Both tutors planned to continue their relationship with the TLP next school year.
Chapter 5

**Summary and Discussion**

In this study, the pursuit of identifying characteristics or indicators of an effective tutor has been examined through a questionnaire, temperament test, focus groups and interviews, and through measurement of data using statistical analysis in hopes of finding answers to the proposed research questions. If identifying effective characteristics were possible, guidelines for best matches to maximize reading gains could assist in aiding schools who rely heavily on volunteers for student achievement. The significant findings from this research could bridge the gap more quickly for students failing in reading and other academic areas. If considered and strategically implemented, these findings could enhance a tutor’s effectiveness and increase student learning.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section recaps this study. The second section of the chapter discusses all findings according to the indicated research questions. The third section lists the limitations of the study. The fourth section offers recommendations for the Tennessee Literacy Partnership and other educational organizations working with tutors and students. The final section concludes with further research suggestions.

**Summary of Research**

**Review of literature.** The review of literature gave an overview of the educational background in America and how it has contributed to the path where public education finds itself today. Several explanations, according to research, were given as to why children cannot read: early years of disparity, English learners’ backgrounds and immigration, culture of reluctant readers, poverty, race subgroups, disparity in schools, and parental influences. The literature review also carefully considered the setting for this
study and the demographics of Metro Nashville Public Schools. This district encapsulates what many metropolitan schools confront in providing education to all students in a tough economy, diverse circumstances, and many uncontrolled variables outside the classroom. Because of numerous districts like MNPS and the nation’s percentage of students reading below grade level, the need for interventions and effective tutors, like the TLP reading clinics, are crucial. The literature also covered types of tutors, service-learning, and what was hoped to be a possible predictor of effective tutors, temperaments.

**Methodology.** The research was performed using a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative data. There were four research questions addressed with at least one null hypothesis for each. Questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews provided the data for analyses. The study involved both student and tutor populations of 197 cases. Detailed procedures were given as well as results of the study’s pilot test. Independent and dependent variables were listed with clear SPSS labels.

**Results and analysis.** The quantitative section of the study was first reviewed, analyzing all independent variables with the dependent variable of averaged reading gains or no reading gains. Qualitative analysis was reported from the questionnaire, four focus groups, and interviews. All data from these resources were transcribed and categorized into themes, subgroups, and repeated patterns of dialogue.

**Discussion of Findings**

**Research question one.** Do the reading assessment scores of students participating in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership differ significantly based on the temperament of the tutor? Both of the null hypotheses were retained; no statistically significant gains existed between a student’s reading scores and the tutor’s temperament, and no correlations existed between a student’s zero gain in reading scores and the tutor’s
temperament. The open-ended questions on the survey indicated there were certain characteristics tutors not only mentioned but said they practiced while working with students. Some of these were caring, patient, helpful, friendly, encouraging, compassionate, understanding, and respectful. These characteristics are not necessarily associated with any one temperament, but they do suggest the attitude of the tutor. Even high school tutors, who are part of the same generation of students being tutored, reported the attitude of the tutor and how a child feels with the tutor is of extreme importance. With at-risk students embodying several known predictors for reading failure according to the literature review of why children cannot read, it is no wonder these simple characteristics demonstrated by tutors can help encourage children’s self-esteem and motivation to learn.

It is also worth noting that there was no one temperament indicating success over another with students’ gains or with students’ zero scores. Cocoris (2009) proposed that everyone has traits of all four temperaments; therefore, helping tutors understand their own temperaments and recognize that characteristics such as caring, patient, helpful, friendly, encouraging, compassionate, understanding, and respect do make a difference and are important.

The tutor session should demonstrate a good fit for both the tutor and the student. Students may have to attend tutorial sessions, but progress cannot be forced. In the focus groups, some tutors indicated they struggled to make connections with students due to tutors’ lack of understanding of students’ backgrounds. The focus groups also strongly emphasized the importance of making connections through small talk. Regardless of characteristics, a healthy tutor relationship with his or her student can fuel improvements and jumpstart student’s success (A+ Home Tutors, 2008).
**Research question two.** Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized reading gains in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership? The tutor characteristic that revealed statistical significance with gains in students’ reading scores pertained to gender-match and being female. When the student's gender was matched with tutor's gender, there was a statistically significant gain. No other characteristics were found significant. Reading gains for 83 students of the same gender as their tutors’ averaged 2.80, while readings gains for the 98 students who did not have a tutor with the same gender averaged 2.06.

The researchers looked for explanation in the data. One explanation identified was females in general did better than males in the reading clinics (females=3.01, males=1.94). The pool of female tutors represented in this study would have also contributed to same tutor/student gender. The difference between the gender-matched students and those who were not matched was .74, representing nearly a one gain advantage. This reading gain is a representation of one of four assessments; therefore with four quarters of documented growth, this gain has the potential to represent a gain of 2.96 over the school year or three reading levels. Further studies in the area of gender matching between students and tutors could help maximize student’s reading potential in TLP reading clinics.

Although the female tutors significantly outnumbered the male tutors by more than five to one, research indicated a possible alternative to this to maximize gender matching. In a study conducted by Vaughn et al. (2003), it was discovered there was not a statistical difference between tutor student ratios of 1:1 to that of 1:3 in reading (p. 301). Vaughn’s finding is significant for schools with a lack of resources or male tutors. This would allow one male tutor to work with one to three male students at a time. By
doing so, more male students could be gender-matched. This is especially pertinent to the study due to the fact that females made greater gains than males in reading. Offering gender-matched small groups could be a remedy to close the gap between male and female students.

**Research question three.** Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized no reading gains in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership? No statistically significant correlations existed between a student’s zero gain in reading scores and the common characteristics of the tutor. Although it was significant for gains, there were no indicators for zero gains. Research revealed early intervention offered the greatest promise for helping children who are at-risk of reading failure (Allington & Walmseley, 2007). Lipsey (2009) discovered that seven lessons for first through fourth grade students contribute to a gain in reading. Why might a student not show a reading gain? According to the review of literature, various indicators could impede students’ reading growth. Depending on the school, it is possible that a student with no gains could be an English learner (EL) since “The school system English Language Learning (EL) services continued to expand to more than 80 schools in order to better serve the 22% of MNPS students who come from a home where English is not the first language” (Chamber Education Report Card Committee, 2011, p. 13). Several of the schools in the TLP reading clinics have many EL student represented.

It was also established through the literature review that poverty correlates to low literacy skills. “Researchers have long pointed to the ravages of malnutrition, stress, illiteracy, and toxic environments in low-income children’s lives” (Toppo, 2008, para. 3). Poverty also effects vocabulary. Additionally, the findings revealed a significant gap existing in vocabulary during a child’s impressionable years that was extraordinary. The
Another contributing factor to students’ zero gains may be the high rate of student mobility within the district. The average mobility rate from the schools participating in the TLP reading clinics was 39% (MNPS, 2011b). These students’ education is often disrupted. Students may be enrolled in a specific school one day and transferred the next without any notification.

**Research question four.** Will the background of tutors (preservice teachers, high school students, and community volunteers) participating in the Tennessee Literacy Partnership relate to varied effectiveness of reading achievement gains? There were three null hypotheses tested for this research question. Each group of tutors was compared to the other with average reading scores as the independent variable. One-way ANOVA post-hoc tests were performed. The first one was preservice teachers and community volunteers. The average for preservice teachers was 2.49 for student growth and community volunteers’ average gain was 1.85 respectively. The null was retained with these two groups. The next null hypothesis tested preservice teachers (2.49) and high school tutors, which had an average gain of 3.01 overall. The null was retained. The final null hypothesis tested were groups of community volunteers (1.85) and high school tutors (3.01). This null was rejected because the analysis found significant differences. High school students had higher student gains than the other two types of tutors.

The researchers pondered this finding and descriptive statistics for all three groups were reconsidered. If there were significantly fewer high school students tutoring less children, smaller cases could influence average scores. The tutor population in this
study was comprised of community volunteers (31.5%), high school students (27.4%), and preservice teachers (42.1%).

Interestingly, when a cross-tabulation was performed, these three groups of tutors were compared with the 36 cases of zero-gain students. High school tutors had the least amount of students with zero gains. Only 9.8% of high school tutors’ students showed no gains in reading compared to 20.6% of community volunteers’ students and 27.4% of preservice teachers’ students. High school students had the highest average gains and the least amount of zero-gain students.

According to Allen and Feldman (1976) high school aged youth may have certain advantages over adults. This method of tutoring where an older student tutors a younger one is called cross-aged tutoring. These adolescents may pick up on academic problems in the younger student more quickly and may have experienced similar problems just a few years earlier.

Cross-age tutoring has exponential impact. Furco (2009) determined that young people had the strongest outcomes when they were engaged in meaningful service activities that challenged and interested them, or gave them high levels of accountability. Furco’s research supports how high school students viewed their tutoring experience.

The other component to be considered with these finding is how high school students viewed these tutor sessions in the TLP reading clinics. During the focus group, high school volunteers referred to themselves as hope, encouragement, and role models for the students with whom they served at one elementary school. They talked about the importance of making connections. Two of the high schools, working directly with TLP reading clinics, are in the cluster of the elementary schools where they volunteer. Within this proximity, a high school and its feeder schools (elementary and middle schools) often
have many demographics in common. One student said “when you bond, you find that
you have things in common” (TLP tutor personal communication, 2012). Another said,
“You make tutoring about them” (TLP tutor personal communication, 2012). When one
researcher asked how you make it about the students you are tutoring, the consensus was
small talk about everyday life. As these high school students came from the same
neighborhood as the students they are tutoring, small talk becomes more meaningful with
greater understanding of struggles, unspoken rules of the neighborhood culture, and the
art of getting on their level to which so many referred in the focus group. Tutors
demonstrated empathy.

These high school students tutored from a unique experience. They do not tutor
with the experience a preservice teacher possesses coming from an educational setting;
nor do they benefit from the many life lessons and job experiences as community
volunteers have acquired. Some of these high school students have the experience of
being struggling students and/or the understanding of living in poverty. They may have
attended the same school where they currently tutor. They offer connections in the
students’ world. This environment is often much different for most preservice teachers
and community volunteers. The high school students and the students being tutored share
a community. One tutor said, “I like giving back to my community” (TLP tutor personal
communication, 2012). Of all four focus groups, the high school groups perceived their
tutoring time as personal. After all, most of them came from the same community.

Hirsch argued that “you can’t learn to read without context. You can’t understand
what you read without knowing about the broader world” (Whitmire, 2011, p. 142).
Students in poverty must have broader connections. They do not live in a text world (p.
143). Payne (2005) states “One of the biggest differences of classes is how ‘the world’ is
defined for them” (p. 44). Students of poverty not only lack exposure to text but also see the world in a very different context than others. When the world is viewed in the same context for tutor and student, one cannot help but wonder if reading gains are impacted.

Discussion of Other Findings

There were two other significant findings in this research. As reported in Other Findings in chapter four, the relationship between gender-matched students with tutors and average reading gains among students must be considered. The analysis was explored further after the data revealed that, of the students for whom average second-through-fourth-quarter data were available, females showed a higher average reading gain than males.

The difference in the average reading gains between females and males was 1.07. This average gain represents one quarter of tutoring. If females are making a 1.07 gain per quarter, they potentially could gain more than four reading levels than males over the course of a school year. Precisely 81% of female students had female tutors, while only 19% of the male students had male tutors. The pattern could be attributed to the majority of female tutors (81%) compared to male tutors (19%). However, with tutor/student gender matched reading gains, and females achieving higher averaged gains than males, MNPS and TLP reading clinics should consider recruiting more male tutors to create more gender-matched pairs for male students.

It is also worth noting that more males are in the TLP reading clinics than females. Therefore, with a greater amount of males in the reading clinics and a 1.07 average difference, raising the scores of male students must be addressed. With most of the volunteers being female, it is essential that TLP reading clinics look for innovative
ideas to engage and recruit more male tutors. In making this intentional effort, TLP reading clinics could possibly close the achievement gap between males and females.

Another finding in this research that must be mentioned is the immense validation that volunteers felt when working with students in the TLP reading clinics, especially voiced by the community volunteers and the high school students. There were two distinct motivations within these two groups. Community volunteers understood the importance of reading and how the inability to read would impede success for students while in the education system, but as an adult. Their motivation was very much a consequentialism approach to volunteering. Community volunteers were motivated in service for the greater good.

High school students approached volunteering quite differently. They identified with the students. Other researchers have found similar motivations. Leal et al. (2004) stated tutors who invested themselves into the lives of struggling readers impacted their lives as well as their reading and writing accomplishments (p. 63). Understanding what students strive to learn in their lives outside of the school environment is crucial (Brozo & Simpson, 2007). Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2009) found in the area of mentoring that evidence clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of reading interventions aimed at children at-risk. Cross-aged tutors may more easily understand the academic challenges the younger students face because they are cognitively closer (Allen & Feldman, 1976). At-risk children may more easily identify with a student closer to their age, particularly one of the same ethnic or social backgrounds, than with an adult (Cohen, 1986).

Adolescents who tutor younger children benefit from learning by teaching (Paolitto, 1976). This meaningful experience is powerful and has even been shown to
improve the behavior choices of the tutors (Gaustad, 1992). Tutors who have struggled
themselves academically are typically more patient and understanding with the younger
students because they can relate to them (Lippitt, 1976). Helping struggling students has
provided purpose for the high school students. Loehr & Schwartz (2003) stated “Purpose
becomes a more powerful and enduring source of energy in our lives in three ways: when
its source moves form negative to positive, external to internal, and self to others” (p.
135). The qualitative results of this study demonstrate what Albert Einstein once said,
“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be
counted” (Inter-American Foundation, 2009, para. 1). Qualitative themes that are nearly
impossible to measure demonstrate the impact of the tutoring experience on both the lives
of the tutors and the students they themselves tutored.

This research generated four significant findings. First, the temperament of the
tutor made no statistical difference in student achievement, suggesting the TLP program
is designed to work across a variety of personality types. Second, gender-matching
predicted higher reading gains, but student gender predicted both reading gains and
gender matching. After controls, gender-matching was not significant. Third, the use of
high school student tutors was associated with higher reading gains. Finally, the
investment of tutors is evident in their dialogue. They communicate commitment,
motivation, and empathy. While the impact of these specific characteristics on student
gains was not assessed, it seems evident that tutors with these attitudes and drives create a
positive learning environment for struggling students.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations that need to be mentioned so that the project remains as
transparent as possible with the least amount of ambiguity.
• Student start dates: It was difficult to isolate data timeframes where student and tutor were actually tutoring together. Several students did not have the same tutor all year. Students’ start dates were entered into the data base through the middle of March.

• Ending date: This study ended at the same time as the MNPS school year; therefore, acquiring end-of-the-year reading data was difficult. Fourth quarter scores from one reading clinic were excluded. Because of the timeframe of the study, there were constraints on deadlines.

• Record keeping: It was difficult to gather data because of the various methods of record keeping in the different reading clinics. TLP is understaffed; therefore data entry was delayed.

• Data points: If there had been more data points (cases), the relationships would be even more evident. Extreme cases are less influential when there is simply more data available.

• Exclusion of student characteristics in research: This research did not evaluate students’ characteristics which could have contributed to students’ reading gains. The research questions were addressed to tutor characteristics.

• TLP/Lipscomb University partnership: This study was a continuation of Dr. Lipsey’s research where she currently serves as the director of the TLP reading clinics. The personal bias of the researchers and the client is evident.

Recommendations for TLP Reading Clinics

• Recruitment of male tutors: There are significantly more female volunteers than male. Gender-matched students showed more gains than non-matched students. To aid male students, additional male tutors are needed.
- Increase number of student tutors from cluster schools: High school tutors had significantly higher gains than other groups, and the least amount of students with zero gains. This research discovered how important the reading clinics were to the high school tutors. The clinic provided a place for them to serve in the community. High school students experienced a sense of self-worth and felt as if they were giving back and making contributions to their communities. Finally, it was evident that learning and teaching were relevant to their lives and future.

- Gender bias: TLP must consider if there is any approach, resource, or method that is being practiced or used that might give advantages to females producing higher gains.

- Preservice Teachers: More than 40% of all tutors in the study were teachers in preparatory training from local universities. These tutors are an essential part of the TLP reading clinics. However, in our findings preservice teachers seemed less connected with the students because they viewed tutoring as a means to fulfill a teaching requirement. TLP would benefit from continually working with partnering universities to provide a meaningful foundation for service-learning, cultural diversity, and empathy for students being tutored.

- Site Coordinator: Tutors stated there were clear benefits from the presence of a site coordinator. Focus groups (high school and community volunteers) talked about the importance of this person in time management of the session, the availability of support for the student or the tutor, and the overall appearance of the learning environment.

- Soft Skills Training: Because many of the students come from very diverse backgrounds, focus groups (community and preservice teachers) discussed the
importance of training in the following areas: soft skills, small talk, warm-up conversations, and learning what this research discovered about tutor effectiveness.

- Documented subgroups: Students profiles should indicate if the student is an EL student or Exceptional Education student. These factors could possibly offer explanations to inconsistent reading gains or may give further insight for zero scores.

- Data management: The reading clinics would greatly benefit from a computer program that kept all data organized and contained in one area that could be available and accessed at any reading clinic. Volunteers and students could have an identification card scanned by a computer which would log attendance and allow volunteers to record notes of the session. All data could be centralized and easily accessible by TLP reading clinics.

**Recommendations for Future Studies**

- Family Literacy: It would be interesting to research and build a program for family literacy. Many struggling readers are products of their homes. How do the home lives of these students influence their reading success? What if parents were also learning to read with their struggling readers?

- Middle School: This researched focused solely on elementary schools. Would the findings in this study, be the same in a middle school setting?

- Same gender study: This research could be replicated with two comparable groups of male and female tutors for a year’s time. If the same gender tutoring does produce greater gains for female students, it merits its own study for both genders.
- Reading gains of female students verses male students: Females did better in the overall reading gains than male students. This finding would be the basis for a future study on gender differences in reading achievement.

- Zero Scores: This study provided less insight into factors distinguishing zero-gain students from students who made gains in reading achievement. Future studies can, and should, look more closely at factors that contribute to zero-gain outcomes.

- Quantify soft skills: A future study could be done that quantified the soft characteristics such as attitude, empathy, commitment, patience, etc. that the participants in this study said were important characteristics for effective tutoring. If these characteristics could be isolated, some of them might deem more important than others to student reading gains.

- Computer-based tutorials compared to one-to-one tutoring: Many schools all over the country put educational funds into computer-based tutorials rather than human capital. Would the reading scores of students using a computer-based tutorial have greater gains than students in one-to-one tutoring?

- High school tutors: The development of a partnership between high schools and their feeder schools could be phenomenal and greatly benefit not only struggling readers, but offer significance and purpose to the efforts of the high school students serving in the TLP reading clinics. This project could be a catalyst in building community and connectedness between school clusters and communities.

- Research-based personality inventories: This study utilized a free-access temperament instrument based in personality theory. There are more reliable research-based personality inventories that would give a possible stronger
measure to test against a dependent variable. Another study could be done using one of these instruments.

**Reflection of the Researchers**

Upon the completion of this study, the researchers feel this capstone generated four significant findings that will be a contribution to the TLP reading clinic and other tutorial programs. The formation of best practices with intentional relationship enhanced the overall educational experience for the student and the tutor. Second, education truly is power. Although children in poverty have many obstacles, it is no excuse for student failure. The TLP reading clinic has recognized the hindrance of poverty and offers children educational success in spite of their indigenous background. Third, these reading clinics offer what Payne (2005) suggested as the only way out of poverty: education and relationships. Both are crucial components and should be intentional when working with at-risk students. Finally, this research team was transformed by the influence and power of relationships in education and the impact it has on student growth. The investment of the tutors is evident in their dialogue. These tutors communicated commitment, motivation, and empathy.

One section of the literature review, *Why Children Cannot Read*, offered a description of students who are failing. It provided an understanding of the students and influences beyond the realm of the classroom that impede certain children from reading or making adequate reading gains. Also beyond the realm of the classroom are influences of hope, encouragement, and role models as the high school tutors referred to themselves. When one considers equity for all students in education, especially struggling students, the right framework of lessons and a tutor empowered by the motivation to make a difference offer immeasurable gains for both the student and the tutor.


http://www.mnps.org/Page56779.aspx


CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TUTORS


*The Reading Teacher, 48*(1), 30-39.


(doi: 10.3102/0091732X023001001)


Therrien, W., Gormley, S. & Kubina, R. (2006). Boosting fluency and comprehension to

special education classrooms under varying student-teacher ratios. *The

Retrieved from USA Today website http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-
12-07-childrens-brains_n.htm?loc=interstitialskip

*Childhood Education, 84*(1), 15-20.

country.* Retrieved from UNHCR website
http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16b1676.html

U.S. Census Bureau. (2009). *Current population reports.* Retrieved from

http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/47/47037.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2003). *No Child Left Behind, Accountability and
Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).* National Title I Directors' Conference.
Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/ayp203/edlite-
slide017.html


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY’S MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
AND
TENNESSEE LITERACY PARTNERSHIP

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes the relationship and guidelines between the above parties regarding the research partnership described below.

The College of Education (COE) of Lipscomb University offers the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree in Learning Organizations and Strategic Change. This degree is focused on preparing leaders for public and private organizations and academic settings. The program culminates with a practical, collaborative capstone research project with a partner organization. Tennessee Literacy Partnership, (TLP) has requested a Capstone Team to address a real research need in an authentic setting. Successful completion of this capstone project will fulfill part of the requirements for completion of the Doctor of Education degree.

The Tennessee Literacy Partnership is a model for merging university, community and school resources to improve academic achievement of both P-12 and college students. The Partnership will promote promising practices in literacy that will significantly raise the level of literacy achievement for all students. This partnership will also provide literacy opportunities that serve the needs of the community.

The mission of the Tennessee Literacy Partnership is to promote promising practices in literacy that will significantly raise the level of literacy achievement for all students, and to provide literacy opportunities that serve the needs of the community.

Students identified as “at risk” within their schools have an opportunity for ongoing one-on-one tutoring with students in neighboring universities’ teacher education programs. Each pairing of student and post secondary tutor remains static, and professional mentoring and role modeling relationships are encouraged.

The College of Education at Lipscomb University and TLP are entering into and operating under this MOU for a research partnership and agree to the following.

I. REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

TLP has submitted a Request for Assistance (RFA) outlining the following research need:

1) Identify and measure the importance of the mentoring relationship between the tutor and the MNPS student in maximizing reading achievement gains

2) Determine the number of lessons needed to achieve reading gains in grades 5-8.

II. PROJECT PARAMETERS

The COE will supervise and direct a team of two to four doctoral students who will frame and conduct the research and form recommendations for TLP’s research need.

The COE will provide the training for the Ed.D. students to complete the requested research project through its curriculum and capstone project support structures. This training and support includes but is not limited to quantitative and qualitative research techniques, instrument design, development of specific timelines, benchmarks, and processes pertaining to conducting research, and the assignment of a capstone faculty adviser who will oversee the team throughout the research project.
TLP will supply a database of reading scores and retelling scores from 2009-present, the files of student lessons as well as consultation with Dr. Tamera Lipsey, Coordinator of District Reading, and other TLP or MNPS faculty, administrators, or staff as needed.

Students will not be identified by name, number, or school. Individual schools will not be identified.

III. PROJECTED RESEARCH TIMELINE

- TLP will present a 15-minute presentation (including Q & A) of the RFA to the Fall 2010 Cohort on Client Presentation Day, which is scheduled for the morning of Saturday, July 30, 2011.

- Capstone Team will be assigned to TLP no later than August 10, 2011.

- The Capstone Team will have an initial meeting with TLP’s assigned contact person or his/her designee no later than August 22, 2011.

- The Capstone Team will develop and submit a project proposal to TLP no later than October 4, 2011.

- TLP will approve or request revision of the project proposal no later than October 10, 2011.

- The Capstone Team will submit the approved project proposal to Lipscomb University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) by October 11, 2011. Substantive changes requested by the IRB will be discussed with TLP prior to implementation.

- The Capstone Team and TLP will submit the proposal to the MNPS Executive Director of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation no later than October 24, 2011. The format should follow the guidelines found at http://www.mnps.org/AssetFactory.aspx?did=51524

Teams should reference sections A.1 through A.8 and B. 1 through B.3. in determining appropriate formatting.

- Upon receiving approval from the IRB and the MNPS Executive Director of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation, the Capstone Team will formally begin the research with a May 3, 2012 target date for completion of analysis.

- The Capstone Team will submit a written draft of the report to Lipscomb’s Juried Review Committee by June 8, 2012.

- The Capstone Team will schedule and give a presentation to TLP and to the Juried Review Committee by August 1, 2012.

- TLP and the Team shall jointly submit a written report to the MNPS Executive Director of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation.

- TLP will provide a Client Project Evaluation of the Capstone Team and research project within one week following the presentation.

IV. LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY’S INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

Capstone students are required to gain approval from Lipscomb’s IRB prior to conducting research. All capstone teams will submit a research proposal to the IRB for their capstone projects. The research proposal will be submitted to and approved by TLP prior to submission to Lipscomb’s IRB (see Project Research Timeline).

The following outline may serve as a guide for students in building a research proposal to be sent to TLP and the IRB.
Title Page

Table of Contents

Introduction (2 – 3 pages)
- A statement of the research topic
- A statement of the research problem
- The purpose of the study
- The research question(s)

Methodology (2 – 3 pages)
- Design or strategy for research
- Research participants (describe participants, description of risk, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity)
- Procedures to be followed

Data Analysis (1 page)
- Describe data collection, storage, and analysis procedures
- Describe disposition of the data after the study has concluded

References

Appendices
- Informed consent letter
- Apparatus and/or instruments to be used (questionnaire, interview questions, etc.)
- Documentation from client granting permission and access for research

V. FUNDING

The Capstone Team, the COE, and TLP will make every reasonable effort to minimize costs associated with this project.

As of the date of the signing of this document, the project presented by TLP is expected to require no funding by either the COE or TLP.

Capstone Team members are expected to be responsible for normal and customary costs associated with doctoral students engaging in doctoral research (i.e. cost of mailings, printing, paper, envelopes, postage, transportation, phone calls, email, etc.). However, should the Capstone Team members identify what they consider to be an out-of-the-ordinary funding need, then the team members should seek funding from TLP during development of their project proposal and prior to submission of the proposal to Lipscomb’s IRB. Regardless of when the funding need is realized, written approval and agreement to provide funding should be received from TLP prior to any expenditure being made. Expenditures incurred without expressed written approval from TLP will be the responsibility of the Capstone Team members. Team members will be provided a copy of this MOU.

VI. RESEARCH PRODUCT and DISSEMINATION

The Capstone Team will prepare a full report and presentation to TLP and a COE Juried Review Committee. This report and presentation must meet or exceed all the requirements of the capstone project as outlined in the COE’s Capstone Project Manual (see addendum). The Capstone Team will submit the full report to the MNPS Executive Director of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation.

Hard-bound copies of the report manuscript will be submitted to TLP, the COE, and Beaman Library on Lipscomb University’s campus, and to each Capstone Team Member. The COE may make the
manuscript accessible in electronic format through conventional venues that provide access to culminating research projects for doctoral programs.

TLP may distribute the report manuscript to all shareholders including MNPS School Board members, United Way, HUD, YMCA, and the universities whose pre-service teachers participate in the partnership: Trevecca University, Vanderbilt University, Lipscomb University, MTSU, and TSU. TLP will further include the results in grant applications as appropriate.

TLP may request an alternative manuscript format for the client’s purposes. Within reason, the Capstone Team is expected to meet the client’s needs and produce a copy of the manuscript in the format requested. An alternative manuscript format may be sent to TLP electronically or as a loosely bound hard copy, but will not be included with the final manuscripts that are to be submitted to the COE for binding.

All rights and obligation related to interests in and ownership of the Capstone Project shall be subject to the Lipscomb University Intellectual Property Policy (a copy of which is attached hereto).

VII. FAILURE TO MEET RESEARCH OBLIGATION

If the Capstone Team members cannot produce the requested research product they shall present their concerns to their faculty advisor. The faculty advisor will discuss the matter with TLP and attempt to craft a remedy to continue the project. If a remedy exists that will materially alter the research product, then TLP, the COE designee, and the Capstone Team shall meet and develop an altered research product that meets the needs, goals, and objectives for all parties. In that case, an addendum to this document shall set forth the new parameters of the adjusted research project.

If no remedy is available, the COE may unilaterally remove the Capstone Team from the research project, and TLP will hold the COE, the Capstone Team, and Lipscomb University harmless.

Should either the Lipscomb IRB or the MNPS Executive Research Committee deny this project, all parties will put forth their best efforts to meet the requirements of both bodies. If those requirements cannot be met, neither Lipscomb University College of Education nor MNPS is obligated under this Memorandum, and this Memorandum shall be completely void and without effect.

VIII. AUTHORIZATION

On behalf of the Lipscomb University College of Education and the Tennessee Literacy Partnership, the undersigned agree to the above stipulations and pledge that the organizations will strive to the best of their abilities and in good faith to complete these objectives.

Further, we pledge that should the need for modifications arise, we will in good faith attempt to make such changes or additions as the situation dictates and as are further detailed in subsequent mutually agreed upon addendums to this document.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS TERMS

The following terms shall apply in the interpretation and performance of this MOU:

Relationship of the Parties – This MOU shall not be construed to create a relationship of partners, brokers, employees, servants or agents as between the parties.

A. Advertising and Publicity – Neither party shall use the other’s name, or any name that is likely to suggest that it is related to the other institution, in any advertising, promotion or sales literature without first obtaining the written consent of the other
party. Any publications regarding this MOU must be reviewed and approved by the parties.

B. **Governing Law: Forum** – This MOU shall be governed by and construed under the laws of the State of Tennessee, which shall be the forum for any lawsuits arising from an incident to this MOU.

C. **Waiver** – A waiver of any breach of any provision of this MOU shall not be construed as a continuing waiver of said breach or a waiver of any other breaches of the same or other provisions of this MOU.

D. **Non-Assignment** – This MOU may not be assigned by either party without the advance written consent of the other.

E. **Severability** – In the event one or more clauses of this Agreement are declared illegal, void or unenforceable, that shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Agreement.

The authorized representatives of both parties have executed two copies of this Memorandum of Understanding on this 28th day of July, 201

TENNESSEE LITERACY PARTNERSHIP

By: [Signature]
Title: [Title]

LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

By: [Signature]
Title: [Title]

W. Craig Bledsoe, Provost
APPENDIX B

MNPS READING CLINICS TUTOR RESPONSIBILITIES
MNPS Reading Clinic Tutor Responsibilities

1. Communication:
I am responsible for responding in a timely manner to the Program Coordinator by email, school phone number or in person regarding students who have been assigned to me, the progress or status of my current student or any schedule changes.

2. Tutor’s Role:
I understand that I am to follow all five parts of the tutoring method. I will alert the Program Assistant or School Reading Specialist -if I find that I do not feel competent with any part of the tutoring method or need support with the materials. I also understand that it is the tutor’s responsibility to come to each tutoring session prepared.

3. Confidentiality:
I am responsible for keeping any information about my students, their issues, and their progress confidential at all times. The only person with whom I should discuss my student(s) is the Dr. Lipsey, Program Coordinator or School Reading Specialist located in each school.

4. Submitting Tutoring Hours:
I am responsible for entering a record of each tutoring session and submitting that to designated area. I am responsible for submitting all my hours by logging onto the schoolvolunteer.org database for each semester.

5. Tutoring Meeting Location:
I understand that all tutoring sessions must be held in the clinic.

6. Student No-Show:
I understand that I can assist others in the clinic or observe if my student is not available and that I will get full credit for my time.

7. Tutor and Student Feedback:
I understand that surveys will be completed at the beginning and end of the semester and it is my responsibility to submit to the Program Coordinator or place in appropriate location.

Date: ___________________________

Signed: ___________________________
APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE
Tennessee Literacy Partnership Tutors

Informed Consent

By completing this survey, I volunteer to participate in this research project. I understand there are minimal risks to my well being by completing this questionnaire. All data collected during the research process will only be reported as aggregate (group) data and my anonymity will be protected as my name will be assigned a number for reporting purposes. I may withdraw from participating in this project at any time during the data collection period. I agree to voluntarily participate in this research project. If I have concerns or questions, I may contact Dr. Bill Talton, Chair Lipscomb IRB at bill.talton@lipscomb.edu or 615-966-5825.

General Information

*1. What is your first and last name? Your name will be assigned a random number to protect your confidentiality.

*2. In which school(s) did you tutor?
- [ ] Amqui
- [ ] Charlotte Park
- [ ] Hattie Cotton
- [ ] Napier
- [ ] Tom Joy
- [ ] Whitsitt
- [ ] Other

*3. What is your gender?
- [ ] male
- [ ] female

*4. Which best describes your age group?
- [ ] 16-20 yrs.
- [ ] 21-30 yrs.
- [ ] 31-40 yrs.
- [ ] 41-50 yrs.
- [ ] 51 yrs. and above
**Tennessee Literacy Partnership Tutors**

**5. Which best describes your ethnicity?**
- African American
- Asian
- Bi-racial
- Caucasian
- Latino
- Native American
- Other

**6. Which best describes your highest level of education attainment?**
- Currently a High School student
- Currently a College student
- Associates Degree
- Bachelors Degree
- Post Graduate Degree

**7. When you were a school-aged child, did you consider yourself to be in a low socioeconomic (low income) family environment?**
- yes
- no

**8. Which best describes how you came to be involved with the Tennessee Literacy Project/Reading Clinic?**
- Community volunteer
- High School student volunteer
- Preservice teacher (college student)
- Other (please specify)

**9. In your opinion what are the characteristics of effective tutors?**
**Tennessee Literacy Partnership Tutors**

*10. In your opinion what is the most influential factor for student growth in reading?*

- one to one (tutor to student ratio)
- training
- consistency of the sessions
- curriculum and/or materials
- environment

Other (please specify)

---

**11. In your opinion, what is your greatest strength or best strategy when tutoring?**

---

**Temperament Quiz**

The Four Temperaments Quiz
Consider each of the four adjectives provided for each question and select the one that BEST describes you. The first twenty questions are related to your strengths and the last twenty questions are related to your weaknesses. First impressions are generally most accurate.

*12. Which best describes your strengths?*

- adventurous
- animated
- analytical
- adaptable

*13. Which best describes your strengths?*

- persuasive
- playful
- persistent
- peaceful
**14. Which best describes your strengths?**
- strong-willed
- sociable
- self-sacrificing
- submissive

**15. Which best describes your strengths?**
- competitive
- convincing
- considerate
- controlled

**16. Which best describes your strengths?**
- resourceful
- refreshing
- respectful
- reserved

**17. Which best describes your strengths?**
- self-reliant
- spirited
- sensitive
- satisfied

**18. Which best describes your strengths?**
- positive
- promoter
- planner
- patient
Tennessee Literacy Partnership Tutors

* 24. Which best describes your strengths?
   - Independent
   - Inspiring
   - Idealistic
   - Inoffensive

* 25. Which best describes your strengths?
   - Decisive
   - Demonstrative
   - Deep
   - Dry humor

* 26. Which best describes your strengths?
   - Mover
   - Mixes easily
   - Musical
   - Mediator

* 27. Which best describes your strengths?
   - Tenacious
   - Talker
   - Thoughtful
   - Tolerant

* 28. Which best describes your strengths?
   - Leader
   - Lively
   - Loyal
   - Listener
Tennessee Literacy Partnership Tutors

29. Which best describes your strengths?
- chief
- cute
- chartmaker
- content

30. Which best describes your strengths?
- productive
- popular
- perfectionist
- pleasant

31. Which best describes your strengths?
- bold
- bouncy
- behaved
- balanced

Temperament Quiz: Areas of weakness

Questions numbered 31-50 are related to your perceived weaknesses.

32. Which best describes a weakness of yours?
- bossy
- brassy
- bashful
- bland

33. Which best describes a weakness of yours?
- unsympathetic
- undisciplined
- unforgiving
- unenthusiastic
34. Which best describes a weakness of yours?
   - resistant
   - repetitious
   - resentful
   - redissent

35. Which best describes a weakness of yours?
   - frank
   - forgetful
   - fuzzy
   - fearful

36. Which best describes a weakness of yours?
   - impatient
   - interrupts
   - insecure
   - indecisive

37. Which best describes a weakness of yours?
   - unaffectionate
   - unpredictable
   - unpopular
   - uninvolved

38. Which best describes a weakness of yours?
   - headstrong
   - haphazard
   - hard to please
   - hesitant
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*39. Which best describes a weakness of yours?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- proud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- permissive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- pessimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- plain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*40. Which best describes a weakness of yours?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- argumentative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- angered easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- alienated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- aimless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*41. Which best describes a weakness of yours?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- nervy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- naive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- nonchalant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*42. Which best describes a weakness of yours?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- workaholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- wants credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- worrier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*43. Which best describes a weakness of yours?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- tactless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- talkative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- too sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- timid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tennessee Literacy Partnership Tutors**

**44. Which best describes a weakness of yours?**
- domineering
- disorganized
- depressed
- doubtful

**45. Which best describes a weakness of yours?**
- intolerant
- inconsistent
- introvert
- indifferent

**46. Which best describes a weakness of yours?**
- manipulative
- messy
- moody
- mumbles

**47. Which best describes a weakness of yours?**
- stubborn
- show-off
- skeptical
- slow

**48. Which best describes a weakness of yours?**
- pushy
- loud
- loner
- lazy
Tennessee Literacy Partnership Tutors

*49. Which best describes a weakness of yours?
- short-tempered
- scatterbrained
- suspicious
- sluggish

*50. Which best describes a weakness of yours?
- rash
- restless
- revengeful
- reluctant

*51. Which best describes a weakness of yours?
- crafty
- changeable
- critical
- compromising

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The time you have committed to volunteering to be a reading tutor in Metro Nashville Public Schools is much appreciated. The input you have provided will help the clinics future success by gaining more insight into successful tutoring relationships.
APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP GUIDELINES
Appendix G

Tennessee Literacy Reading clinics
Ennamorato, Holland, Thompson
Lipscomb University

Focus Group Guidelines

All students focus group (Location and date - TBA)
All preservice teachers focus group (Location and date - TBA)
All community volunteer focus group (Location and date - TBA)
Mixed focus group (Location and date - TBA)

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study! We are here today to get a better understanding of tutors’ perceptions on how relationships or “connections” may enhance tutoring time for students. We will ask you to respond to and discuss different scenarios which are common in tutoring. In your responses, should you choose to share any personal stories, which involve individuals other than yourself, please do not use the individual’s name. Please be both honest and respectful of each other’s perception throughout this discussion.

It is important to reiterate participation in this focus group is completely voluntary. Should you feel uncomfortable at any point with the content of the discussion or interactions with other participants, feel free to leave the room or ask that the conversation be re-directed. Thank you again for your participation!

The discussion will be facilitated by one of our research members.

What factors seem most important in your understanding of the one to one tutoring?

> What if both tutor and student are of the same ethnicity? Does this affect the outcome?

> Would your opinion change if the tutor and student were of different ethnic backgrounds?

> How important do you think small talk is for student achievement?

What are your perceptions regarding characteristics of an effective tutor?

How important is curriculum to successful tutoring?
- Does it affect your response to the situation?
- What is the greatest asset the tutor offers to a student?
- Does the tutor/student relationship matter for reading achievement?

How would perception change if you knew the tutor and student were opposites? (For example: personality differences, socioeconomically different)
- If they had similar childhoods?
- What parameters might be used to “match” tutors and students to improve
student achievement outcomes?

Finish the sentence: Most days in tutoring I feel…

Do you think one-on-one tutoring is more effective than a research-based computer tutorial?

Are there any factors we did not discuss which you think are important to consider about “effective” tutors and/or tutor/student relationship?

**Italicized questions are to be used as probes: If the discussion needs prompting or needs to change direction.
APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM
You are invited to take part in a research study regarding “effective” tutors.

**What the study is about:** With this capstone project, we hope to discover what makes a tutor effective. Are there certain characteristics, soft skills, personality traits, or dispositions of tutors that contribute to the success of a student’s achievement?

**What you will be asked to do:** As a participant, you will be asked to participate in an approximately one-hour long focus group with other tutors from the Tennessee Literacy Reading clinics. The group will discuss effectiveness and relationships as it relates to tutoring. The groups will be facilitated by one member from the research team.

**Risks and Benefits:** This part of our research is qualitative. The primary focus will be how you feel and perceive the tutor/student relationships. The session will be recorded for the purpose of transcribing and aggregating this information. The benefit of “hearing your voice” gives credibility to our research. The topic addressed in this study allows the researchers to document your perceptions, ideas, and experiences as tutors working with students. By participating in this study, you will be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card to Target. Results from this study will be used to expand on the literature and knowledge of indicators of effective tutors and the importance of tutor/student relationship.

**Taking part is voluntary:** Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to be in the study you can also choose to withdraw at any time without consequences. Participating in this study does not mean that you are giving up any of your legal rights.

**Your answers will be confidential:** The records of this study will be kept private. Data will be kept on tape recorders and then destroyed once the discussions have been fully transcribed. Transcriptions of the discussion will be kept on a personal computer to which only the researcher has access. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified.

**If you have questions or want a copy or summary of the study results:** Contact the researcher at the email address or phone number above. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records. If you have any questions about whether you have been treated in an illegal or unethical way, contact Dr. Bill Tallon, Chair Lipscomb IRB at bill.tallon@lipscomb.edu or 615-966-5825.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions. I consent to take part in the research study of **Tennessee Literacy Partnership Reading clinics**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s Signature (if under 18 years)</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDELINES
Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study! We are here today to get a better understanding of tutors’ perceptions and understanding on how relationships or “connections” may enhance tutor time for students. We would like to ask you to respond to some questions that are related to your tutoring experience. In your responses, should you choose to share any personal stories that include individuals other than yourself, please use a false name or do not use the individual’s name. Please be honest throughout this interview.

I want to reinstate that participation in this interview is completely voluntary. Should you feel uncomfortable at any point with the content of the discussion, feel free to leave the room or ask that the conversation be re-directed. Thank you again for your participation!

1. How long have you been a tutor for TLPRC?

2. What prompted you to become a tutor? (Are there any qualities about these kids that you personally feel connected to? (struggling learner, socioeconomic)

3. What do you like best about tutoring?

4. How did you typically begin your tutoring sessions?

5. Was it ever a struggle to maintain the student’s focus during a session? If so, what strategies did you use to do so?

6. How did you typically end your tutoring sessions?

7. Do you plan on continuing to tutor for the TLPRC?

8. What advice would you give to a new tutor?

9. What do you think is the most important thing a tutor can do with their student?

10. What do you think makes you a good tutor?
APPENDIX G

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM
You are invited to take part in a research study regarding “effective” tutors.

**What the study is about:** With this capstone project, we hope to discover what makes a tutor “effective”. Are there certain characteristics, soft skills, personality traits, or dispositions of tutors that contribute to the success of a student’s achievement?

**What you will be asked to do:** As a participant, you will be asked to participate in a 30-minute interview with a researcher from Lipscomb University Tennessee Literacy Reading clinics. The interview will cover effectiveness and relationships as it relates to tutoring. The groups will be facilitated by one member from the research team.

**Risks and Benefits:** This part of our research is qualitative. The primary focus will be how you feel and perceive the tutor/student relationships. The session will be recorded for the purpose of transcribing and aggregating this information. The benefit of “hearing your voice” gives credibility to our research. The topic addressed in this study allows the researchers to document your perceptions, ideas, and experiences as tutors working with students. By participating in this study, you will be entered in to a drawing for a $25 gift card to Target. Results from this study will be used to expand on the literature and knowledge of indicators of effective tutors and the importance of tutor/student relationship.

**Taking part is voluntary:** Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to be in the study you can also choose to withdraw at any time without consequences. Participating in this study does not mean that you are giving up any of your legal rights.

**Your answers will be confidential:** The records of this study will be kept private. Data will be kept on tape recorders and then destroyed once the discussions have been fully transcribed. Transcriptions of the discussion will be kept on a personal computer to which only the researcher has access. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified.

**If you have questions or want a copy or summary of the study results:** Contact the researcher at the email address or phone number above. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records. If you have any questions about whether you have been treated in an illegal or unethical way, contact Dr. Bill Tallon, Chair Lipscomb IRB at bill.tallon@lipscomb.edu or 615-966-5825.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions. I consent to take part in the research study of Tennessee Literacy Partnership Reading clinics.

Participant’s Signature ____________________________ Date ____________

Parent’s Signature (if under 18 years) ____________________________ Date ____________
APPENDIX H

LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
November 21, 2011

Jason Thompson
Mary Holland
Julie Emmamorato

This is to notify you that you have approval to submit your capstone project proposal entitled, The Tennessee Literacy Project: Identifying Indicators of Effective Tutors and the Impact on Students’ Reading Achievement to the Executive Director of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools for MNPS IRB approval.

Please have them contact me directly if they have any questions.

Sincerely,

Tracey S. Hebert, Ph.D.
Director, Doctor of Education
Lipscomb University
tshebert@lipscomb.edu
615-966-5325 (office)
248-918-9563 (cell)
APPENDIX I

MNPS APPROVAL LETTER
December 28, 2011

Julie Ennamorato, Mary Holland, and Jason Thompson
Lipscomb University
Learning Organizations & Strategic Change

RE: Identifying Indicators of Effective Tutors and the Impact on Students’ Reading Achievement

Dear Ms. Ennamorato, Ms. Holland, and Mr. Thompson:

Your research proposal has been reviewed by MNPS and I am pleased to inform you that it has been approved with the following conditions.

- Please modify both the Focus Group and Interview Consent Forms. The section that begins with *Taking part is voluntary* should have the following sentence added to each: “Your choice to take part in the study or withdraw at any time will not impact your ability to continue to serve as a tutor.”
- Please work with Dr. Lipsey to obtain Reading Records data. Access to the Data Warehouse will not be available until later this spring.

We hope that your investigation proceeds smoothly and that your research questions are answered conclusively. As a reminder, participation within external research projects is always optional for students, parents, and teachers. Additionally, the school principal has complete discretion to allow or disallow research projects to occur within his or her school.

MNPS is pleased to approve proposals that are protective of MNPS instructional time, attentive to privacy issues, and aligned with current district instructional efforts. Please address any questions to Dr. Matthew Pepper, Coordinator of Research & Data Quality through email or by phone (Matthew.Pepper@mnps.org, 662-468-8572).

Respectfully,

Paul Changas

cc Tammy Lipsey, MNPS Reading Clinic Coordinator
APPENDIX J

MNPS EXTERNAL RESEARCHER STATEMENTS OF ASSURANCE
## MNPS External Researcher Statement of Assurances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>1. I understand and agree to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Tennessee Public Records Act and Board policy regarding the disclosure of personally identifiable information on any MNPS student. I understand and agree that I will not disclose such information to anyone but the student’s parent/legal guardian or MNPS staff, in accordance with these laws and policy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>2. I agree to access student(s) only at the time and place designated by the school(s) principal(s). I agree to comply with the school(s) visitor policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>3. Every individual associated with this research project who, during the course of research activities, will be physically present on any MNPS property and/or will have any contact with MNPS students while acting in their capacity as a researcher or research assistant will undergo a criminal background check through the MNPS Human Resources fingerprinting process. Fingerprinting will occur at least seven days before the researcher or research assistant is allowed any interaction with MNPS students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>4. Within a reasonable time period after the conclusion of my research I will provide to MNPS Research, Assessment &amp; Evaluation a policy brief including that includes a summary of my study and policy relevant findings. If engaged in a multi-year study I will also provide annual updates during the course of my research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>5. Unless provided with the expressed written permission of the Executive Director of Research, Assessment &amp; Evaluation outlining other arrangements, within one year of the completion of study data collection I agree to permanently destroy all individual paper and electronic records containing individual MNPS student data. Consent forms are excluded from this requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>6. I agree to hold MNPS harmless from and against any claims, demands, actions, liens, rights, subrogated or contribution interests, debts, liabilities, judgments, costs, and attorney’s fees, arising out of, claimed on account of, or in any manner predicated upon by my participation in the research and survey process on MNPS properties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signature**

Julia Shaw Emamati

**Date**

11-22-11

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>MN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>1. I understand and agreed to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Tennessee Public Records Act and Board policy regarding the disclosure of personally identifiable information on any MNPS student. I understand and agree that I will not disclose such information to anyone but the student's parent/legal guardian or MNPS staff, in accordance with these laws and policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>2. I agree to access student(s) only at the time and place designated by the school(s) principal(s). I agree to comply with the school(s) visitor policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>3. Every individual associated with this research project who, during the course of research activities, will be physically present on any MNPS property and/or will have any contact with MNPS students while acting in their capacity as a researcher or research assistant will undergo a criminal background check through the MNPS Human Resources fingerprinting process. Fingerprinting will occur at least seven days before the researcher or research assistant is allowed any interaction with MNPS students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>4. Within a reasonable time period after the conclusion of my research I will provide to MNPS Research, Assessment &amp; Evaluation a policy brief including a summary of my study and policy relevant findings. If engaged in a multi-year study I will also provide annual updates during the course of my research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>5. Unless provided with the expressed written permission of the Executive Director of Research, Assessment &amp; Evaluation outlining other arrangements, within one year of the completion of study data collection I agree to permanently destroy all individual paper and electronic records containing individual MNPS student data. Consent forms are excluded from this requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>6. I agree to hold MNPS harmless from and against any claims, demands, actions, liens, rights, subrogated or contribution interests, debts, liabilities, judgments, costs, and attorney's fees, arising out of, claimed on account of, or in any manner predicated upon by my participation in the research and survey process on MNPS properties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature: [Signature]

Date: [Date]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>1. I understand and agreed to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Tennessee Public Records Act and Board policy regarding the disclosure of personally identifiable information on any MNPS student. I understand and agree that I will not disclose such information to anyone but the student's parent/legal guardian or MNPS staff, in accordance with these laws and policy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>2. I agree to access student(s) only at the time and place designated by the school(s) principal(s). I agree to comply with the school(s) visitor policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>3. Every individual associated with this research project who, during the course of research activities, will be physically present on any MNPS property and/or will have any contact with MNPS students while acting in their capacity as a researcher or research assistant will undergo a criminal background check through the MNPS Human Resources fingerprinting process. Fingerprinting will occur at least seven days before the researcher or research assistant is allowed any interaction with MNPS students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>4. Within a reasonable time period after the conclusion of my research I will provide to MNPS Research, Assessment &amp; Evaluation a policy brief including that includes a summary of my study and policy relevant findings. If engaged in a multi-year study I will also provide annual updates during the course of my research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>5. Unless provided with the expressed written permission of the Executive Director of Research, Assessment &amp; Evaluation outlining other arrangements, within one year of the completion of study data collection I agree to permanently destroy all individual paper and electronic records containing individual MNPS student data. Consent forms are excluded from this requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>6. I agree to hold MNPS harmless from and against any claims, demands, actions, losses, rights, subrogated or contribution interests, debts, liabilities, judgments, costs, and attorney's fees, arising out of, claimed on account of, or in any manner predicated upon my participation in the research and survey process on MNPS properties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature: [Signature]
Date: [Date]

APPENDIX K

RESEARCHERS’ HUMAN SUBJECT FORM CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION
Human Subject Form Certificate of Completion

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Julie Ennamorato** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants.”

Date of completion: 10/02/2011

Certification Number: 777373

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Mary Holland** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants.”

Date of completion: 10/02/2011

Certification Number: 777346

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Jason Thompson** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants.”

Date of completion: 10/04/11

Certification Number: 779248
APPENDIX L

RESEARCHERS’ BIOGRAPHIES
JULIE SHAW ENNAMORATO

Julie Shaw Ennamorato has been a teacher nearly her entire life. From her elementary school years, her earliest memories are of “teaching” her younger sibling and cousins in her “classroom” in the basement. They were not always an overly thrilled student body, but she knew from early on that teaching was her calling.

Julie received a Bachelor’s of Science in Psychology and a Master’s in Education from Middle Tennessee State University and is currently finishing her Ed.D. in Learning Organizations and Strategic Change from Lipscomb University. For the past twenty-two years, she has served in a number or roles in various educational settings. She began as a teacher in a public high school, and then worked in the non-public education and treatment field for juveniles in a publically held company. During her tenure with the company, she held a variety of positions over the course of ten years. She served as a GED teacher, administrator, regional director, and director of education for Tennessee. The work was challenging, yet very rewarding and she gained valuable insight into the non-traditional school settings. The opportunity also afforded her experience negotiating contracts, managing budgets, and human resource management.

For the past eight years, Julie has been teaching the elementary grades. Currently, she serves as a second grade teacher and team leader in Murfreesboro City Schools. She was honored in 2012 by being selected by her colleagues as the Teacher of the Year for her school. She is a member of the Junior League of Murfreesboro where she served as president in 2005.
What Mrs. E. (as her students call her) enjoys most of all is spending time with her husband, Joe and Lauren and Drew, her two beautiful young children. She loves the excitement and challenges her everyday life brings with being a wife, mother, daughter, sister, aunt, friend, and teacher. She feels very blessed indeed.
MARY WILLIAMS HOLLAND

Mary Holland has been in education for the past 20 years working with families and students to maximize the greatest potential for student success. Coming from the show me state, Missouri, and experiencing personally the struggles of an at-risk family, she knows education is a family affair when it comes to students succeeding. Mary, Curt (husband), and three children (Amber, Kelsey, Brooklin), lived abroad (Brasil) for ten years. This experience drives her passion to help families in struggling circumstances to educate their children. She has worked in Nashville’s public school system for the past 8 years as a catalyst in building parent involvement.

Mary received an Associate’s degree in Study of Cultures from Hillsdale College, her Bachelor’s of Science in Elementary Education from Missouri Southern University, Master’s in Professional Family Counseling from Liberty University and is currently finishing her Ed.D. in Learning Organizations and Strategic Change from Lipscomb University.

Mary serves in several volunteer capacities from international trips to teaching English as second language to adults. She trains and consults in areas of her expertise for school districts, nonprofits, and community organizations. She also loves to write and is working on publishing several of her works in the near future.
JASON THOMPSON

Jason Thompson is the Administration Minister at the Harpeth Hills Church of Christ in Brentwood, TN, where he facilitates a comprehensive ministry system including the areas of finance and administration. He also serves as a Senior Consultant with the Carpenter's Plan, assisting churches and non-profits with capital fund raising, strategic planning and governance. His work with churches and nonprofits has raised millions of dollars for good works. Before moving to Nashville, Jason ministered in the Atlanta area for eleven years.

Jason holds religious degrees from Faulkner University and Harding University Graduate School of Religion and completed additional studies at Emory University. Presently, he is completing a Doctorate of Education in Learning Organizations and Strategic Change at Lipscomb University. Jason has served on numerous boards impacting downtown Nashville including Nashville Inner City Ministry and was a founding board member of Bridges Academy, a faith-based inner city school that is now part of a charter school. He presently serves on the Leadership Council for Lipscomb Academy. Nationally, Jason serves as a board member for the Church Administrator’s Network. In 2009, Jason was named by the Nashville Business Journal as one of the 40 leaders in Nashville under the age of 40 making a difference in Middle Tennessee.

Jason is married to Megan, and they have three children: Kelsey Joy, Ella Grace, and Will Hudson.