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## Increase time, increase learning: the impact of an after-school program on the reading achievement of at-risk students

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Increase Time, Increase Learning:  
The Impact of an After-School Program  
on  
The Reading Achievement of At-Risk Students

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by

Cheryl Ann McWilliams

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### **Dedication**

I dedicate this research to my family for their unwavering support. I am forever grateful to my dear husband, Timothy, who has been an anchor. His love and support were so vital, and he continued to give me tremendous encouragement throughout this process. I am so grateful for the precious love and support of my children: Kevin and Michelle, Kurt and Jennifer, and Krystle Joy and Timothy. They, along with my grandchildren, Skylar Rae, Jonah Michael, Lily Rose, Noah Gabriel, and Ava Love, have brought me boundless joy, love, and laughter. Finally, I extend my deep appreciation to my parents, siblings, colleagues, and friends for their continual encouragement and support throughout my doctoral program.

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### **Abstract**

During the 2009-2010 school year, PBS Elementary School, located in the northeast, implemented an after-school program, funded by a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Children's Learning Center (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) grant, a government program that provides additional learning opportunities during non-school hours. The after-school program extended the school day by three additional hours for student participants who registered for one or more of the three sessions offered throughout the school year. The three ten-week sessions, which ran during the fall, winter, and spring of the 2009-2010 school year, included both an academic and an activity portion. The one-hour academic part of the program provided students with either homework help in a homework club or reading support in a reading program. This was then followed by an hour and a half activity class chosen by the students from a list of options. The purpose of this research study, entitled *Increase Time, Increase Learning: The Impact of an After-School Program on the Reading Achievement of At-Risk Students*, was to discover whether the additional learning opportunities had an impact on the reading achievement of four at-risk students who participated in both the reading and activity portion of the after-school program over the three sessions throughout the 2009-2010 school year. For the purposes of this study, these four students are referred to as PBS scholars. The PBS scholars were identified as at-risk because they were significantly below the benchmark in reading, based on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Assessment. A major goal of the after-school program was to close the gap in reading achievement for the PBS participants through targeted support in oral reading fluency, decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension, and additional learning opportunities presented in enrichment activities including arts & crafts, athletics, computer skills, music, and theater. This study

examined the effectiveness of this first PBS Children Opportunity Zone (COZ) After-School Program instituted in the 2009-2010 school year as a strategy for closing the achievement gap in reading for at-risk students. Additionally, this study adds to the body of knowledge that supports additional learning opportunities in after-school programs as a method to enhance student learning. Keywords: increase time and increase learning; student achievement; at-risk students; after-school programs and student learning; raising achievement for at-risk students.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

### Introduction to PBS

PBS Elementary School is an urban, Title I school located in the northeastern part of the United States. PBS has a diverse population of five hundred and sixty-four students in grades kindergarten through six. Fifty percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Eighty-eight percent of the students are white, six percent are Hispanic, four percent are African-American, and two percent are Asian or American Indian. The curriculum is standards-based, rigorous, and aligns with national, state, and district standards and expectations for learning. The staff at PBS works diligently to ensure that all students are reading at grade level. However, approximately ten percent of the students are struggling readers and three percent are reading almost two levels below their grade.

#### **The after-school program.**

The first ever PBS Children Opportunity Zone (COZ) After-School Program was implemented in September of 2009. A major reason for establishing an after-school program was to provide additional learning opportunities, including reading support and enrichment activities, as a strategy for closing the school's achievement gap in reading. Therefore, the program was designed by this researcher/school principal, the program coordinator, school staff, and parents, to incorporate reading support and other rich experiences for student learning.

#### ***Program funding.***

Funding for the PBS after-school program was secured through a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) grant. The school district received a 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant under an umbrella program entitled, Children Opportunity Zone (COZ). This umbrella program provides

funds for a variety of programs and services that support children and families in the city. These include integrating health, education, and social services within the district's schools, and after school programs. (After-school programs were already operating in three of the district's elementary schools when the first PBS Elementary School program was offered in 2009-2010.) Additional funding for the PBS program included Title 1 funds, which were appropriated for the hour reading program (*Appendix A*).

The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program was established by Congress and operates under the *Title IV, Part B of No Child Left Behind Act* (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). This federally funded program gives students the opportunity to continue their learning in extended opportunities that take place after-school. The goal of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education (2001), is to raise student achievement through community learning centers that serve students in high-poverty, low-performing schools. These centers can be located in elementary, middle, or secondary schools or other community-based facilities. These federally funded learning communities must provide a range of opportunities for student participants such as: academic support that compliments the regular academic program, tutoring, homework help, enrichment activities including physical activities, music, art, and other cultural activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

### ***Background.***

It was determined by the school principal/this researcher that PBS' first after-school program would commence in the fall of 2009. An after-school program coordinator was appointed by the school principal. This coordinator was compensated through the grant funding. The program coordinator designed and distributed flyers to inform parents and students of the program. The

flyers were sent home with students on the first day of school in August, 2009. The flyers advertised that the program was open to all students, and would consist of opportunities for academic help and enrichment activities. These flyers included information about the date, time, and location for registration, and included a tear-off slip for a parent to enter a checkmark indicating whether or not they would be interested in having their child/children participate.

The parents of the PBS students in this study returned the slip indicating their interest in the program. After slips for these students were received, they were encouraged by their classroom teachers, privately, to enroll in the after-school program. The teachers shared with their students that the program was offering them help in reading and other enrichment activities.

***Program format.***

The after-school program format was designed by a group consisting of this researcher/school principal, the program coordinator, school staff, and parents. The after-school program format, content, curriculum, and activities were tailored to the needs of the school and its students. The general parameters of the program were guided by the requirements of after-school programs as funded under the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Federal grant.

There were three ten-week long after-school sessions of the PBS COZ after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. The program operated Mondays through Thursdays throughout the 2009-2010 academic year, excluding holidays and school vacations. The program format included a twenty-minute snack time (snacks were provided), followed by the hour-long reading program or homework club, and then an hour and a half activity class or club. All students reported to the cafeteria, at the end of the school day, where they were given a snack. After the twenty-minute snack time, all students in the after-school program, who had

been previously assigned to a teacher/classroom, went to their designated classroom for either reading support or homework club. Activities or clubs were offered the hour and a half following the one hour of reading instruction or homework club.

The activities were held in different classrooms, depending on the nature of the activity, i.e., the computer class was held in the computer lab, basketball was held in the gym, arts & crafts were held in the art room, etc. The student participants in this study, were two third and two fourth graders. They attended the reading support with teachers 1 and 2 in this study, and then they went to the designated classroom for their activity class.

### ***Reading support.***

The focus of this research study was on the four at-risk students, PBS scholars, who attended the program for all three sessions. They received the hour-long reading support, followed by the various activities they selected to participate in. They chose their activities at the beginning of each session from among options offered. There were two teachers who taught the reading support classes. One taught the two third grade participants and the other the two fourth grade participants.

The hour-long reading portion of this after-school program was designed around the specific needs that the at-risk students had. The ORF DIBELS Assessments were administered in the baseline phase, at the beginning of the school year, before the program commenced. The ORF DIBELS assessment consists of various increasingly difficult passages that students read in a timed test. The recorder (teacher) marks the words read, the accuracy of pronunciation, and notes any pattern of errors. Additionally, at the end of reading the text, there is a re-tell section. This section gauges whether or not the student comprehended the text that was read.

The after-school program teachers used the September ORF DIBELS scores to determine what specific area or areas of need the students had. The reading support portion of the after-school was taught by certified teachers. Based on the PBS scholars' ORF DIBELS scores, it was determined that each struggled with fluency, the ability to read a text quickly and accurately. Students who have difficulty reading a text usually struggle with the skills of encoding or decoding a word and/or lack of familiarity with vocabulary. The instruction was geared to help students in these areas.

This reading support had the following components: skills-based practice; teacher-led read aloud; partner reading; and discussion. The lessons were designed by the individual teachers and the curriculum consisted of the extra support materials from the core reading program used during the regular school day. The skills-based practice was specific for each student and included practice with fluency skills, vocabulary, and comprehension.

#### ***Homework club.***

When students registered for the program, they indicated whether they would be attending the reading support program, or the homework club. Most of the students, who registered, even those who were identified as struggling readers, chose to participate in the program's homework club. The reasons for this are unknown. This is discussed further in the section below, *Scope of the program*. Students who were in the homework club were grouped by grade level, assigned to a club leader, and a designated classroom.

#### ***The activities.***

Prior to the start of each of the three ten-week sessions, at the time of registration, the program coordinator and teachers were present to collect registration forms. The students

checked off on the form the activities they would be interested in attending. After registration, the coordinator organized the registrations and placed students in the activities that they indicated were of interest. The class size was limited to no more than twelve students. If there were many students who wanted to take the same activity, then the activity was run on two different days or an additional instructor was hired to accommodate the students. For example, computer classes were held on two different days in order to accommodate student interest. The activity leaders were teachers, teaching assistants, student teachers, parents, and recent college graduates who applied to work in the after-school program for one or more sessions.

***The first ten-week session.***

The first ten-week session of the program offered limited enrichment activities from which students could choose because the program was in its developmental stage and the process was still being fine-tuned. The activities offered for the first session included: arts & crafts, basketball club, baton twirling, computer club, sewing, stories & crafts, and theater. The difference between an activity and club was that an activity was held once a week and a club was held more than once a week. For example, the basketball and computer clubs were held twice a week, each on two different days while the theater activity class was held once a week. Additionally, the homework portion of the program was referred to as a club, because it was held every day.

***The second and third sessions.***

The second and third sessions included additional activities such as games (board games, Jeopardy, minute-to-win-it), cheerleading, chorus, cooking & cake decorating, karate, girly-girls, girl scouts, sand art, and science. (NOTE: The “girly-girls” activity, offered once a week for the

ten weeks of the second and third sessions was named by the participants themselves after the start of the activity, which was designed to study famous women. The participants, all girls, wanted to use the word “GIRLS” as an acronym, standing for a word about each one of the famous women they were studying. Eventually, they started referring to the activity class as “girly-girls,” and the title stuck. The activity provided them with lessons in history and literacy (reading and writing), and hands-on activities connected to the famous women being studied: Supreme Court Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg; First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy; 1911 Nobel Prize Winner Madame Curie; and Author/Teacher/Missionary, Elizabeth Elliot.)

Some of the activities offered in the second and third sessions were suggestions that students proposed to the program coordinator at the end of the first session, while most of the first session activities were offered based on the instructor’s area of expertise. For example, the teacher of the stories & crafts activity class held on Mondays also had experience as a baton twirler in a marching band, so she conducted a baton twirling class on Wednesdays as well. Another example: the teacher who instructed the cheerleading and theater activities did so because of her expertise in those areas.

### ***The scope of the program.***

Nearly one hundred students participated in one or more of the three PBS COZ after-school sessions held during the 2009-2010 school year. For various reasons, most students participated in only one session. Additionally, the majority of students did not participate in the reading portion; rather they attended the home work club, followed by an activity class.

A few students who had been identified as at-risk in reading attended only one of the three sessions offered, and they opted to attend the homework club rather than the reading program. Moreover, there were six students in grades first, second, and fifth who attended the reading support offered by their classroom teacher, but did not register for the after-school program because they went home after the hour-long reading, instead of participating in the hour and a half activity class. Students who were not at-risk, or those who did not fully participate in both the reading and activity portions of the after-school program, were not included in this study.

The focus of this study was on four at-risk students who attended the after-school program, including the reading support and activity portion, for all three sessions, throughout the 2009-2010 school year. For the purposes of this study, these students were referred to as PBS scholars. They were two third grade and two fourth grade at-risk students.

### **Background on the Reading Program at PBS**

Student achievement, especially in reading, is of utmost importance to instructional leaders. Reading is a skill upon which other skills are based. It is the foundation of all educational experiences and essential to student success. Schools are responsible for providing quality instruction that meets the needs of all students in reading, including struggling readers, and ensuring their success. To this end, PBS and the school district have implemented a balanced literacy program, which utilizes a 3-tier reading intervention model, and an assessment system.

This 3-tier reading intervention model emphasizes the critical elements of reading for all students, as well as those with reading difficulties. It is a systematic reading approach that identifies struggling readers, provides them with targeted support in the area(s) of need, based on benchmark assessments, and on-going progress monitoring.

The first tier of this model is reading instruction (using a core reading program adopted by the school district) provided by the classroom teacher, for all students, in whole and small group settings. The second tier of this intervention model is additional instruction, provided by the classroom teacher, for individual students, or small groups of students. This support targets specific areas of need in one or more of the critical areas of reading. The third tier of this model is intensive support, for those students who have not made adequate progress in the first two tiers, and who are substantially below the benchmark, designated by the assessment system. This more explicit instruction is provided by a highly qualified reading specialist for individual students or smaller groups. A highly qualified reading specialist is one who has obtained significant graduate level coursework from a college or university and has achieved state certification as a reading teacher.

The assessment program implemented by the PBS Elementary School to identify students' needs is Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). DIBELS is a research-based, criterion-referenced, assessment program that is administered individually to students in grades kindergarten through grade 6. DIBELS benchmark assessments and progress monitoring are conducted by the regular classroom teacher, reading specialist, or special educator.

DIBELS assessments are used nationally by many schools. This early literacy assessment was developed from the measurement procedures of Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM), which was created by many researchers through the Institute for Research and Learning Disabilities at the University of Minnesota in the 1970's. The first research about this type of assessment was originally conducted at the University of Oregon over twenty years ago. Since then, there has been on-going research through the Dynamic Measurement Group (Good &

Kaminski, 2009). According to Dr. Roland Good and Dr. Ruth Kaminski, the two co-authors of DIBELS, “ongoing series of studies on DIBELS has documented the reliability and validity of the measures as well as their sensitivity to student change” (Good & Kaminski, 2009, “History of DIBELS,” para 2).

DIBELS was developed with the purpose of identifying young children who may have difficulties in basic reading skills. The assessments are meant to identify what additional instruction or interventions are needed in order to ensure that all students achieve success in reading. DIBELS assessments are administered three times a year: fall, winter, and spring. Teachers may also use them to monitor student progress throughout the school year.

DIBELS assessments measure the “big ideas” in early literacy identified by the National Reading Panel. These include phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Phonemic awareness is measured by Initial Sounds Fluency (ISF) and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) sub tests. Alphabetic principle is measured by Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) sub test. These ISF, PSF, and NWF sub tests are administered to students in the primary grades including kindergarten through second.

DIBELS assessments are also administered to upper elementary students, those in grades three through six. Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) is the sub test utilized; it measures accuracy and fluency (Good & Kaminski, Eds., 2002). During the 2009-2010 school year, the PBS Elementary school identified fifty-six students as low performing in reading according to DIBELS assessments. These students received intensive reading support provided in the 3-tier reading intervention model.

### **Approach to the Problem**

In recent years, the focus of the faculty of PBS school has been on literacy and increasing reading achievement to ensure that all students attain high academic standard. A literacy team of faculty and staff meet monthly to examine assessment results, address literacy concerns, and propose solutions for increasing student reading achievement. The team consists of the school administrator, regular and special education teachers, reading teachers, and the reading coach, the speech /language teacher, the occupational therapist, the school psychologist, and the school social worker.

During one of the school's literacy team meetings, as students' reading scores were being analyzed, a reading teacher exclaimed: "What we need is more time!" (Increased learning opportunities in a school environment) The phrase "What we need is more time!" resonated with and compelled this author to investigate ways to increase student time spent on achievement in reading. After much research and reflection, it was determined that a viable solution was an after-school program that would provide students, especially struggling readers, with additional learning opportunities. A committee, consisting of teachers, parents, and this researcher (school principal), was formed and was given the charge to develop an after-school program and procure the needed funding. This was a purely volunteer group. An invitation to participate on this committee was distributed to the entire PBS school community.

Members of this committee met with the district director of after-school programs in January 2009 to proceed with an application for funding. This researcher, who serves as principal of PBS, learned in early spring that PBS was selected as a recipient of a 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant. The

procurement of this grant made it possible to institute the PBS Children Opportunity Zone (COZ) After-School Program for the 2009-2010 school year.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research study addressed the significant gap in reading achievement of four students, PBS scholars, who were considered to be “at risk” and had been receiving the intensive intervention in the tier-3 model. Even with the additional reading support provided during the school day in the 3-tiered intervention model, these students had failed to make significant progress in developing reading skills. The term “at risk” may have different meanings. However, in this study, the term “at-risk” refers to those students who have not made significant improvement in reading. This means that they scored significantly below the benchmark (which is different for each grade level) on DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessment.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the PBS COZ after-school program on the reading achievement of the at-risk students who attended all three of the ten-week sessions offered during the 2009-2010 school year. It examined how the implementation of the after school program effected student achievement, specifically for at-risk students who were below proficiency levels in reading.

Significantly, it also provided much information about how future PBS after-school programs should be designed and implemented, and offered important insights which were subsequently presented to school officials to gain support and continued funding of the program.

## **Rationale of the Study**

While student achievement has long been a central focus of schools, it seems to be even more important ever since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act. The NCLB requires that schools ensure that students are proficient in math, reading and language arts by the year 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The rationale for this study was based on the need to increase student achievement in reading for at-risk students, and to investigate the impact, if any, that the after-school program had on the reading achievement of the at-risk students who attended during the 2009-2010 school year.

## **Significance of the Problem**

The lack of progress among at-risk students was a significant problem of practice that this researcher deemed necessary to investigate. There is a correlation between reading achievement and student success. Students who are at-risk are more likely to struggle in all academic areas. As a school principal, this researcher recognized what other education experts have reported: students who are at-risk often have poor school attendance, high drop-out rates, behavior issues, low self-esteem, and limited career opportunities.

PBS' School Improvement Team, which consists of teachers, parents, and community members, is commissioned by the state to develop action plans for school improvement in each school year. One of the improvements identified by the team for the 2009-2010 academic year was the need to address the gap in reading achievement for struggling readers, i.e. those students identified as at-risk. Many schools struggle to raise student achievement in reading. Schools are held accountable for student achievement and could potentially suffer serious consequences for

lack of improvement. For example, schools that fail to show academic improvement could be sanctioned for corrective action from the Department of Education.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the Nation's Reading Report Card 2009 indicate that 36% of the state's 4<sup>th</sup> graders tested at or above the proficient level. This is up from the 31% in 2007. However, there was no significant difference in the score gap of 47 points between students at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile and students at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile percentage from that of the score gap of 45 in 1992. The NAEP Reading scale range of 0 to 500 classified scores as follows: *Below Basic*, 207 or below; *Basic*, 208-237; *Proficient*, 238-267; and *Advanced* 268 or above. Although the average score for this state's 4<sup>th</sup> graders was 223, higher than the national average score of 220, over one-third of the state's fourth grade students were classified as being below the *Basic* benchmark for reading (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010).

Struggling readers or students who have reading disabilities may also lack passion for reading. Reading is a necessary skill that will assist them in daily life. Laura Bush, in the foreword to her *Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Initiative*, stated the following: "Each of us has a duty to help our children achieve their full potential. By working together, we can shape the destiny of America's children with our hands and hearts. Children who are able to read will be ready to learn and ready to lead" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Literacy is essential for learning, and learning is the key to life-long success. The Education Commission of the States (2005) reprint of *Prisoners of Time* states "the human ability to learn and grow is the cornerstone of a civil and humane society" (p. 8). It is of the utmost importance for educators everywhere to provide opportunities for at-risk students to develop grade-level

literacy skills. Certainly, at PBS Elementary School, at-risk students who made insufficient progress were the cause of great concern.

### **Research Questions**

The following are the research questions that were addressed in this study:

- 1) What impact did the additional reading instruction opportunities offered in the after-school program at PBS Elementary School during the 2009-2010 school year have on reading achievement for at-risk students?
- 2) What impact did the enrichment activities, offered in the after-school program at PBS Elementary School during the 2009-2010 school year, have on reading achievement for at-risk students?
- 3) What was the behavioral impact (meaning student's school attendance and student's behavior at school) of the PBS after-school program on student learning for at-risk students?
- 4) What benefits did parents of at-risk students perceive for their children who participated in the after-school program?

### **Definition of Terms**

*Academic Achievement.* Student academic progress measured by the report card, standardized testing, as well as parent/teacher perception (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

*Achievement gap.* In this study, evaluating student performance against specific achievement standards such as DIBELS Assessment benchmarks.

*After-school program.* A structured program that starts after the end of the regular school day and ends at 5:30 p.m.

*At-risk Students.* In this study, at-risk students refers to those who have are below benchmark in reading according to DIBELS Assessment. Also referred to as tier-3 students.

*Children Opportunity Zone (COZ).* This is an umbrella program in the PBS school district that provides a variety of programs and services that support children and families in the city.

*Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).* This is a research based, criterion-referenced assessment program adopted by the school department. It is administered individually to students in grades kindergarten through sixth. It measures the “big ideas” in early literacy identified by the National Reading Panel. These include phonemic awareness, alphabetic principal, accuracy and fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. (Good & Kaminski, Eds., 2002).

*Evaluation.* According to Trochim (2006), evaluation is the systematic gathering and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some object or program.

*No Child Left Behind Act.* The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is a federal law that requires public schools to ensure students are proficient in math, reading, and language arts by the year 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

*Highly Qualified Teacher.* A significant provision in the NCLB requires that all K-12 core content teachers are highly qualified. The law identifies the core content areas as English/language arts, mathematics, science, geography, civics, government, economics, foreign language and the arts (music, theatre, dance and visual arts). This school’s state requires reading specialist to obtain specific graduate level coursework from a college or university to be certified as a reading teacher or pass the reading content area test.

*Latch-key kids.* Children who spend some amount of time after school without supervision.

*Oral Reading Fluency (ORF).* Reading fluency is the ability to read text at a quick pace with accuracy and expression (National Reading Panel, 2000).

*PBS Scholars.* Those students who form a case study group for this study are referred to as PBS scholars. These students participated in reading and activity portion of the after-school program.

*School Improvement Team.* An organization commissioned by the state to develop action plans that indicate what advances will be made towards school improvement for the school year.

School Improvement team members are comprised of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members that meet regularly with the focus of developing and implementing the action plans to improve the learning environment of the school.

*Tier-3 Students.* Those students who have been identified as needing intensive intervention in reading from reading specialists based on the DIBELS Assessment. (referred to as at-risk students).

*Three-Tier Intervention Model.* A systematic reading approach that identifies struggling readers and provides them with targeted support in the area(s) of need based on benchmark assessments and on-going progress monitoring. The first tier of this model is reading instruction based on a core reading program. This instruction is provided by the classroom teacher to all students in whole class setting. The second tier of the model is additional instruction that is provided to individual students or small groups of students by classroom teacher using supplemental materials that targets specific skills or areas of need. The third tier of this model is intensive support for those students who have not made adequate progress in the first two tiers and who are substantially below the benchmark designated by the assessment system (in this case,

DIBELS). This more explicit instruction is provided by a reading specialist for individual students or smaller groups.

*Title I School.* A school identified as Title 1 receives federal funds for educational programs that benefit economically disadvantaged students who are in a low socioeconomic community (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

*21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center.* The 21st CCLC program is a federal grant program initiated in 1998. Grants are given to local education agencies that provide out-of-school services to children and community members. It was reauthorized under the No Child Left Behind Act.

The program is guided by the U.S. Department of Education with the following goals:

- 1) to provide out-of-school time opportunities for academic enrichment and/or tutorial services to help students, (particularly those in high-poverty areas and who attend low performing schools) meet state and local performance standards in core academic subjects such as reading, mathematics, and science.
- 2) to offer students a variety of out-of-school time services, programs, and activities such as youth development activities; drug- and violence-prevention programs; counseling programs; art, music, and recreation programs; technology education programs; and character education programs. These services and programs are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students.
- 3) to offer families of students served by community learning centers that provide opportunities for literacy and related educational development. (Naftzger, Margolin, & Kaufman, 2005).

## **Assumptions and Limitations**

The following assumptions were made:

- Participants in the study were reliable and honest in their responses to interview questions.
- Findings, insights, and lessons learned would provide this researcher with valuable information that could be used in planning future PBS efforts to improve reading scores.

The following were the limitations of this study:

- The study was of only one after-school program in one elementary school.
- Research data was based on a small sample size of four students.
- Generalizations are limited to similar schools seeking to close the achievement gap for at-risk students through additional learning opportunities offered in an after-school program.
- This researcher is the school principal of the PBS Elementary School, the site of this study and was the one who conducted the interviews with participants.

## **Nature of the Study**

This research study is a mixed approach as it incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative data collected was parent, teacher, and student responses to oral interview questions asked by this researcher in person. The quantitative data consisted of DIBELS assessments that were administered at three intervals during the 2009-2010 school year: before the program started in September, 2009, at the mid-point of the program, January, 2010,

and at the end of the program, May, 2010. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data provided for greater validity.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A number of studies served as models for the PBS after-school reading program and this thesis. First and foremost is that of Spielberg and Halpern, with Pitale, Nelson, Mello-Temple, Ticer-Wurr, and Brunt (2002), who conducted an in-depth study on children's literacy development and the role of after-school programs. Their study provides an anchor for this study. The authors discuss the increasing concern of schools, parents, and policy makers to foster children's literacy. The focus of the study is on how print-rich environments in after-school programs provide additional support for literacy development. The study consisted of two components: literacy experiences of more than 200 after-school programs in two urban areas, Chicago and Seattle, and case studies of sixteen after-school programs with innovative approaches to literacy located in Chicago, New York, and Seattle (Spielberger, Halpern et al, 2002).

The case studies were conducted at sites that serve low-income children whose primary language is other than English. These programs provided exemplary activities in the area of literacy, the visual and performing arts, and cultural enrichment. They included activities such as "art and literacy" (using art as a tool to teach culture, history, and traditions), poetry writing, creative writing, photography, homework help, tutoring, reading lab, reading for enjoyment, and story boards, graphic organizers that provide visual pictures to assist students in their writing (Spielberger, Halpern et al., 2002).

The authors' findings suggest that there are principles and purposes that hold across all after-school settings for supporting children's literacy development. These include: helping children to see how and why reading and writing are important and relevant to their lives, strengthening children's self-efficacy with respect to reading and writing, and fostering social and cultural dimensions of literacy. Consistent among the case studies of exemplary after-school programs was the commitment and compassion of the staff in their work with children. They were very much attuned to the interpersonal dimensions of after-school programs, holding a genuine interest in the children's well-being (Spielberger, Halpern et al., 2002).

Literacy experiences as described in the above study constitute a complementary approach to learning. Experiences such as reading a script to prepare for a dramatic play or writing and reading poetry help students to make connections in meaningful and enjoyable ways. Furthermore, opportunities such as those described provide students with cooperative experiences in a social learning environment.

#### **Bandura's theory provides perspective.**

Albert Bandura's social learning theory provides a theoretical perspective for this study. His social learning theory is based on the understanding that people learn from each other. This occurs by observation, imitation, and modeling. The three variables that influence learning are the person, the behavior, and the environment. Social learning includes observing others, processing and interacting with that knowledge, reproducing or responding to it, and then internalizing and reinforcing it (Bandura, 1977).

### **Gardner's multiple intelligences theory applied.**

Additionally, the theory of multiple intelligences informs this study. This theory was first proposed by Howard Gardner, a renowned Harvard professor, author, and psychologist. His theory encourages teachers to incorporate a variety of ways to instruct students, including cooperative learning. Gardner's theory challenges schools to focus on students' unique gifts or intelligences and not only on linguistic and mathematical intelligences. His theory supports extracurricular or enrichment activities that build social skills and self-esteem, and that result in increased learning (Gardner, 1993).

The theories of social learning and multiple intelligences illuminated this study because students not only received reading support, but participated in various social activities. Many of the activities available provided at-risk students with additional opportunities to apply reading in a social learning environment.

### **Organization of the Remainder of the Paper**

Chapter I has clearly stated the problem and its significance, purpose and rationale for this study, research questions, and theoretical framework. Additionally, the assumptions and limitations of the study and definition of terms were included. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature relevant to this study. Next, Chapter 3 identifies the methodology and procedures used for this study. Then, Chapter 4 describes the findings for each research question in the form of data analysis, which includes both qualitative data from interviews and quantitative data from DIBELS Assessments. Finally, Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings, summary, recommendations for improvement of practice, and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter II. Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The following review of literature was selected as identifying key factors that clarify the inquiry and process questions for this research study. Articles that focus on federally funded, 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC After-School Programs, provided a significant perspective to this particular study.

### **Slavin and Madden**

Over a decade ago, prominent educators such as Robert Slavin focused their efforts on addressing literacy and student achievement. Slavin and Madden (1989) in their research synthesis address the seriousness of the problem of students at-risk of academic failure. Their study identifies the principles of preventative programs, which include those that focus on a comprehensive approach. Some of the identified ways in which to help at-risk students include the providing of intensive resources, tutoring, small group instruction, cooperative learning programs, computer-assisted instruction, and extended learning (Slavin and Madden, 1989). The work of Slavin and Madden was important to this study as a foundation for understanding the need to help at-risk students and ways to do so that include extended learning like that of the PBS after-school program.

### **Snow, Burns, and Griffin**

It is essential for young children to develop literacy skills. Editors Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) provide a comprehensive review of research regarding preventing reading difficulties in young children. They examine a broad outline of strategies to assist young children in developing reading skills. They focus specifically on children at risk for learning to read. Emphasis is placed on opportunities for students to have what they need to learn and practice

reading skills. Recommendations are given, some of which include instructional practices, strategies, reading instruction, early intervention, professional development, supplemental programs, tutoring, small group learning, and extended learning (Snow et al., 1998). This research review provided a good resource in the early stages of development of the PBS program. Snow et al (1998) not only emphasize strategies to help struggling readers but recommend extended learning opportunities like those offered in the PBS after-school program.

### **Aronson, Zimmerman and Carlos**

In *Improving student achievement by extending school: Is it just a matter of time*, Aronson, Zimmerman, and Carlos explore the ways *time* can be a resource. As American schools struggle to ensure students will be competitive with their counterparts in other countries, consideration is given to the amount of time students are in school and whether or not extending school will increase student achievement. Aronson et al. conclude that time is but one of many variables to be considered for raising student achievement and that time alone may not result in improvement in learning; it is also about what takes place during the extra time. Consideration should be given to the effective use of time and the quality of students' learning experiences (Aronson et al., 1999). This article emphasized the need for educators to focus on what learning experiences are provided during student extra time spent at school. Reflecting on this article, helped this researcher/school principal gain a better understanding of the need to assess the content of the after-school time and whether or not the additional time spent contributes to student learning.

### **The Need for After-School Programs**

The passage of the NCLB Act holds schools accountable for ensuring that students are meeting high academic standards. Additionally, the NCLB Act increased school accountability

for closing the achievement gap for all students. Many public schools are offering after-school programs to provide supplemental services as a way to close the achievement gap. The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant has made it possible for schools in low-income and urban areas to have after-school programs.

### **Models for Future After-School Programs at PBS**

Daniel Duke (2006) discusses the dynamics of low-performing schools and the need for those schools to be transformed or suffer serious consequences for continued low academic achievement. He identifies interventions found in low-performing and turnaround schools, such as extended learning time, supplementary programs, after-school tutoring and homework clubs. Additionally, he notes that the mere presence of these programs is not a guarantee of improved student achievement (Duke, 2006). Duke, in his article, puts a spotlight on current issues in out-of-school time programs.

Bodilly and Beckett (2005) refer to the issue of accountability in their report commissioned by The Wallace Foundation. They state that future funding of after-school programs, specifically 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant, may be tied to that programs ability to meet educational goals (Bodilly and Becket, 2005). This focus on academic goals is particularly important to the future development of after-school programs at PBS Elementary School.

The National Institute of Out-of-School Time, author of the *2008 Fact Sheet on Children and Youth in Out-of-School Time*, indicates positive outcomes for students who participate in after-school programs. This research based fact sheet reviews the findings from an eight state study known as the Promising Afterschool Programs. It notes that the study proposes: disadvantaged elementary and middle school students who attend after-school programs are academically

further ahead of peers who spend more out-of-school time in unsupervised activities. A key point of this suggested advantage is dependent on the following: students who attend regularly and the program being a high quality one (NIOST, 2008).

Britsch, B., Martin, N., Stuczynski, A., Tomala, B., and Tucci, P., in their literature review on literacy in after-school programs, determined that research established “enough positive findings to indicate that after-school literacy enrichment does have benefits for participants’ reading achievement and some studies demonstrated stronger gains for struggling students who attended after-school programming at higher rates” (Britsch et al., 2005).

The above literature identified crucial points for this study: the importance of at-risk or struggling students to participate in after-school programs that offer literacy, such as the PBS after-school program; and that the program be one of high quality. The final chapter of this study recommends that future research and practice focus on program content (curriculum and activities) and the need to attract consistent participation from at-risk students.

### **Other Advantages of After-School Programs**

Rinehart (2008) stresses the need for after school activities for middle school students in order to keep students safe. This article highlights research studies with findings that students participating in after-school programs have improved attendance, academic achievement, and lower participation in crime. Rinehart states the need for after-school programs for all students, not just for elementary students who are low-achievers or at-risk, but especially for middle level learners. The importance of a variety of activities for middle school students is essential to keep them engaged. Rinehart states that “parents lack good alternatives for care after the school day ends” (Rinehart, 2008, p.1). The article identifies studies done by the Mott Foundation, which

found that a quality after-school program for elementary and middle school students produced academic gains. Additionally, the study indicated middle school students' use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs had declined (Rinehart, 2008). This article has merit especially in its stressing the importance of after-school programs that engage students and keep them in a safe environment. The issue of a safe place for students to go after-school is one that resonates with parents. This study identified one parent who commented how important the after-school program was to her and her child because it provided a safe place and additional learning.

There are other factors that connect after-school programs to achievement, such as the building of skills and confidence in a collaborative and social environment. An increase in confidence and further development of skills builds student efficacy. Students who are confident in their learning will be more successful. The Boston After-School For All Partnership commissioned a report on the needs of students in Boston schools and how those needs can be met in after-school programs. According to Hall, G., Yohalem, N., Tolman, J. and Wilson, A., "when after-school programs root their work in a youth development approach, they support the development of a range of non-academic competencies and characteristics that, in turn, support young peoples' academic learning. For instance, the social and critical thinking skills that young people learn in a project-based, collaborative after-school learning experience help young people succeed during the school day" (Hall et al., 2003, p. 17). This report is particularly important to this study because of the following: it supports Bandura's social learning theory discussed in the theoretical framework, and it identifies the transference of social and collaborative learning in after-school programs to the regular school day. Each of the students, in this current research study, assent to the value of the social aspects as contributing to their overall success in school.

## **The Effects of After-School Programs**

Nancy Protheroe, in *Successful Afterschool Programs*, outlines what research says about effective after-school programs and the need for those programs to be evaluated based on student achievement. The article includes valuable information on how to design a good program and what elements it should contain. Protheroe identifies the importance of communication between the school day staff and after-school program staff. She addresses the need for after-school programs to support and expand upon the curriculum of the regular classroom (Protheroe, 2006). This article gives credence to the discussion in the final chapter of this study. One vital piece that was uncovered in this study was the need for more communication between the school day teacher and after-school staff. Going forward, this is a component that will enhance planning for future PBS after-school programs and increased collaboration.

Jacobson (2007) highlights California schools' development of after-school programs after the passage of Proposition 49. This act titled, "The After -School Education and Safety Program Act of 2002, makes funding available for before and after-school programs. Jacobson outlines how the state of California has instituted and funded after-school programs. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's efforts and support led to the passage of Proposition 49, which became the driving force behind California's creation of after-school programs. The California Governor pushed for the passage of the After-School Education and Safety Program Act, which gives schools \$550 million in grant funds for after-school programs. This law targets after-school programs for elementary and middle schools across the state. Prior to the passage of this law, the schools had limited programs funded by the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant of \$120-\$130 million per year. Governor Schwarzenegger wanted to ensure that children of working parents had a safe

environment and the extended learning opportunities that after-school programs provide (Jacobson, 2007).

A key concern of after-school programs is whether they are quality programs with measurable learner outcomes. California lawmakers addressed this by requiring schools to work towards improving school attendance in both the regular school day as well as after-school programs. Jacobson identifies other factors that California lawmakers require to be considered in determining the effectiveness of after-school programs. These include social and emotional development, improvements in behavior, as well as academic progress. The schools who receive funds through Proposition 49 must also choose another outcome such as skill development, improvement in behavior, or homework completion. Traditionally, the success of after-school programs has been measured by increase in student achievement and/or academic progress in the regular school day (Jacobson, 2007).

The article also highlights the expert opinion of Jennifer Peck, executive director of the Bay Area Partnership for Children and Youth in Oakland. This organization supports after-school programs for low-income communities. Ms. Peck, commenting on the credentials of those who teach in after-school programs, stated credentials required for paraprofessionals under NCLB may not be necessary for those who teach in after-school programs (Jacobson, p. 20). She observed that those hired to teach and/or mentor students may include regular school teachers, but they might also include paraprofessionals, parents, community members, and retirees (Jacobson, 2007). Her observations were useful as plans were made for the first PBS program. Several paraprofessionals were hired to instruct after-school activities.

Although this article is limited to what is happening or recommended in the state of California, there is a general understanding that California is often the leader in education, and that what happens there usually has an impact on educational efforts in other states. This article provides an overview of many of the issues that are important in developing effective after-school programs. It also identified a key point, the importance of measureable learner outcomes, which this researcher used in this study to help determine the effectiveness of the PBS COZ after-school program.

### **Implementing and Evaluating After-School Programs**

Successful after-school programs, according to Protheroe (2006), should be based on what research in education has found. “More attention has been paid recently to developing better-designed evaluations of after-school programs, which are starting to indicate their impact on student learning,” she writes (p. 34). The program design must meet its mission, purpose, and goals. It must be based on the needs of the students as identified by assessments and teacher reports. The program should be evaluated based on an increase in student achievement and include pre- and post- tests (p. 36).

This literature provided a guide for this study that helped this researcher identify essential components of after-school programs and the importance of programs being researched-based. The after-school program in this research study was being fine-tuned throughout its first year, and many of the adjustments made were based on the knowledge this researcher gained from previous research. The exploration of past research provided sufficient data to determine the effectiveness of the PBS after-school program in increasing student reading achievement.

## **Student Behavior and After-School Programs**

James-Burdumy, Dynarski, & Deke, (2008) in their article, *After-School Program Effects On Behavior: Results From The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program National Evaluation*, addresses whether or not behavior improves or declines for students who participate in after-school programs. This article contained the findings of a national evaluation study of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Programs. The study was conducted by Mathematics Policy Research, Inc. to evaluate after-school programs related to behavior of elementary and middle school students. Some previous studies reported findings that after-school programs reduced negative behavior, while other studies found no effect of after-school programs on behavior (James-Burdumy et al., 2008).

The James-Burdumy et al. study included a treatment group of 1258 elementary students and a control group of 1050 students. Included in the study was a comparison group of middle school students. The data collected for the study included grades, test scores, classroom behavior, classroom effort, absences, suspensions, location and supervision after school, social development, parental involvement, negative behaviors, and feelings of safety after school. Some evidence of increased behavior problems was found for the elementary students who participated in after-school programs. However, analysis indicated that the negative behavior was among male students who already had a high baseline level of poor discipline. The study found similar results of increased negative behavior of middle school students who participated in the after-school program. According to James-Burdumy et al., possible reasons why student behavior declined during the school day could include the following: students were more tired

due to the extended day, negatively impacted by peers, or perhaps the after-school program staff tolerated the negative behaviors (James-Burdumy et al., 2008).

The results of this particular study could be attributed to the possibility that the participants studied had a previous history of exhibiting negative behaviors. The study analyzed only 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs, which usually have attendees from low-income and poverty stricken communities. This could be a significant factor of this study. What is not identified in the study was information about the quality of the program. Students who are engaged in meaningful learning activities are less likely to misbehave (James-Burdumy et al., 2008).

This study raised another topic in regards to after-school programs and that is, the behavior of students in after-school programs. One of the research questions addressed by this researcher in this current study was whether or not there were any behavioral changes in the student participants, and none were identified. However, it was noted that the student participants in this study all were well-behaved students who attended school every day. This is in contrast to the students identified in the James-Burdumy (2008) study, who already had a baseline of negative behaviors. James-Burdumy (2008) notes possible reasons of increased behavior of students, one being that perhaps students were tired due to the long day. This researcher agrees that this could have had an impact, and it is noted in this current study that one of the student participants mentioned that there times when she was very tired at the end of the long school day. This student also stated that sometimes in the computer class, she felt a little frustrated. This student was one with excellent school behavior. Perhaps, students who have behavioral issues, or who are fatigued, may not do well in after-school programs where they are academically

challenged—something which PBS after-school program planners will have to keep in mind in the future.

### **Another Study That May Impact Planning**

A seminal study that illuminated this study is one conducted by Chatterji, Kwon, & Sng (2006), *Gathering evidence on an after-school supplemental instruction program: Design challenges and early findings in light of NCLB*. This study examined student achievement of students who attended an after-school program in Harlem, New York. A two-way ANOVA was used to examine student achievement. It was conducted using skills test that compared treatment and control groups. It took into account the grade level of the students and the alignment of the reading and math curriculum offered in the supplemental programs (Chatterji, Kwon, & Sng, 2006).

Although no statistically significant (at 5% error) difference for primary grades was found, outcomes in reading were better than in math. Primary grade students in the treatment group were .50 SD units ahead of control in math and .58 SD units ahead in reading. ANOVA,  $F(1, 56) = 2.42, p = .125$ . Treatment group in the intermediate grades for mathematics, SD  $-.40$ , had a significant difference (10% error). The treatment group for Grade 5 had a  $0.86$  SD while the grade 4 students were  $-0.86$  SD below control group. This generated an effect size of  $0.035$ .

These opposite results have a significant interaction effect ( $p < .01$ ). The achievement outcomes were mixed for students in intermediate grades of 4 and 5. They responded differently to the program (Chatterji et al., 2006). Is it possible to see mixed results for different age groups? Perhaps there are extraneous variables that would cause opposite results for students in

the middle grades. This could be attributed to social or behavioral issues of the students in the study.

The Chatterji et al (2006) study was important to this study in that it examined a 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC after-school program in an urban school. It is the opinion of this researcher that the Harlem school may be significantly more of an inner-city school than the one in this current study. However, the methodology of the study is one that this researcher recommends for future studies of the after-school program. The use of a larger sample and a treatment and a control group in future research would be beneficial in determining the program's effectiveness.

A 2006 article by Sharon Chappell brought another perspective into focus and provided background information on the federal government support of after-school programs with the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant. In the Chappell study, the author indicates that after-school programs serve as forums for adult control over children's time, place, and experience. The focus of the Chappell article was on early evaluations of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs and initial expected outcomes with the understanding that programs in their infant stages need time to develop (Chappell, 2006).

This article identified what the program lacked as being the great need to provide a safe haven for students. It discusses the policies and funding of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Federal After-School Programs. The focus was on the concept that such programs are centered on adult control over children's time, place and experience (Chappell, p.9). The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC targets low-performing schools in poverty stricken communities. Expectations include increased achievement and decrease in discipline problems of students who participate in after-school programs. It is noted that evaluation of the first year of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC had not resulted in meeting the intended objectives. It is important to understand that programs in their infant stages

may not meet all the intended outcomes but will develop over time (Chappell, 2006). This is something that was kept in mind by those developing the first PBS COZ after-school program, those reporting on its effectiveness, and those who will help craft future after-school programs for the school.

The article notes that 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs incorporate arts in after-school programs in hopes that “art saves lives” (Chappell, 2006, p.13). However, Chappell states “educators often employ a deficit model, providing the arts for at-risk youths to help them become what they are not and experience what they cannot from their own communities” (Chappell, 2006, p. 13).

Additionally, Chappell (2006) concludes that, “educational policymakers and curriculum developers would benefit from exploring a more localized and historically situated view of childhood” (p. 14). She goes on to state that “rather than place children at an already-formed school center, education may be crafted outward from the child and his or her community” (p.14). Chappell states that it would more beneficial to define learning as growth and change through lifelong participation rather than focusing strictly on closing the achievement gap between high-poverty and non-poverty schools (Chappell, 2006, p. 14).

The Chappell (2006) article emphasizes a differing viewpoint and that is, there is too much emphasis on closing the achievement gap and not enough focus on defining learning in terms of growth. Additionally, she brings attention to the fact that at-risk youth, those who live in low socio-economic communities, are less likely to have the same opportunities than their more affluent peers. She states the need to provide opportunities that aren't school-centered. The Wallace Foundation, a philanthropic organization that focuses on strengthening educational leadership and improving student achievement, improving after-school learning opportunities,

and building appreciation for the arts, has done just that. This group, established by The Reader's Digest Association founders DeWitt and Lila Wallace, recognized that disadvantaged students may miss out on activities that may cultivate talent, boost self-confidence, and improve social skills. Over the years, this foundation has focused efforts to address this issue by expanding and enhancing out-of-school opportunities in areas such as urban parks, libraries, and museums (The Wallace Foundation, 2008). Chappell (2006) challenges educational policymakers and curriculum developers to return to the more traditional view of children and what they need to grow to become life-long learners. Although this researcher agrees, in part, there is a significant need for schools to continue to pursue out-of-school time opportunities that are meaningful and advance learning for all students.

### **Summary**

This review of literature has provided this researcher with a broad perspective of after-school programs and how they benefit students. One theme is the importance of identifying specific learner outcomes and determining whether or not they are met by the after-school programs. The examination of prior research helped this researcher to know what to look for in interpreting the findings of this study. Additionally, the information about after-school programs provided this researcher/school leader with research-based knowledge. This researcher/school principal shared many of the insights gained from this literature with the after-school program coordinator, hoping that it would be valuable to the development of this new endeavor being undertaken.

### **The importance of literacy.**

Literacy should be a key component of after-school programs, especially those that strive to raise reading achievement. The significant study by Spielberger, Halpern et al. (2002) address

the important role of literacy in after-school programs. They state that after-school programs should provide complementary literacy experiences for students that are different from those offered during the regular school day. After-school programs that provide additional resources, such as access to writing tools and materials, lending libraries, computer and word processing capabilities, language-rich board games, and dramatic play opportunities, can strengthen children's literacy skills.

Their study produces findings that suggest that after-school programs foster both social and cultural dimensions of literacy. The social aspect includes opportunities for children to share ideas, collaborate, respond to each other, and solve reading and writing problems together. The cultural dimensions include opportunities for children to explore the literacy traditions of their families and communities which they can then transfer to their literacy experiences in the regular school day (Spielberger, Halpern et al., 2002).

#### **Components of a quality after-school program.**

This research study may give further credibility to the importance of developing an after-school program with specific learner outcomes and a rich curriculum that incorporates activities that support student learning and achievement. The learner outcomes for this research study are identified in the methodology section and further discussed in the final chapter.

## Chapter III. Methodology

### Introduction

This research study is based on the collection, review, and analysis of data from those students identified as at-risk who participated in the first PBS COZ after-school program. The after-school program was developed as an intervention to provide increased learning opportunities for at-risk students. This study focused on determining the effectiveness of the PBS COZ after-school program instituted in the 2009-2010 school year as a strategy for closing the achievement gap in reading for at-risk students. This chapter defines the design and methodology procedures utilized for this study (*Figure 1* Methodological Map). Additionally, it identifies and describes the participants, instrumentation, data sources, collection, and analysis.

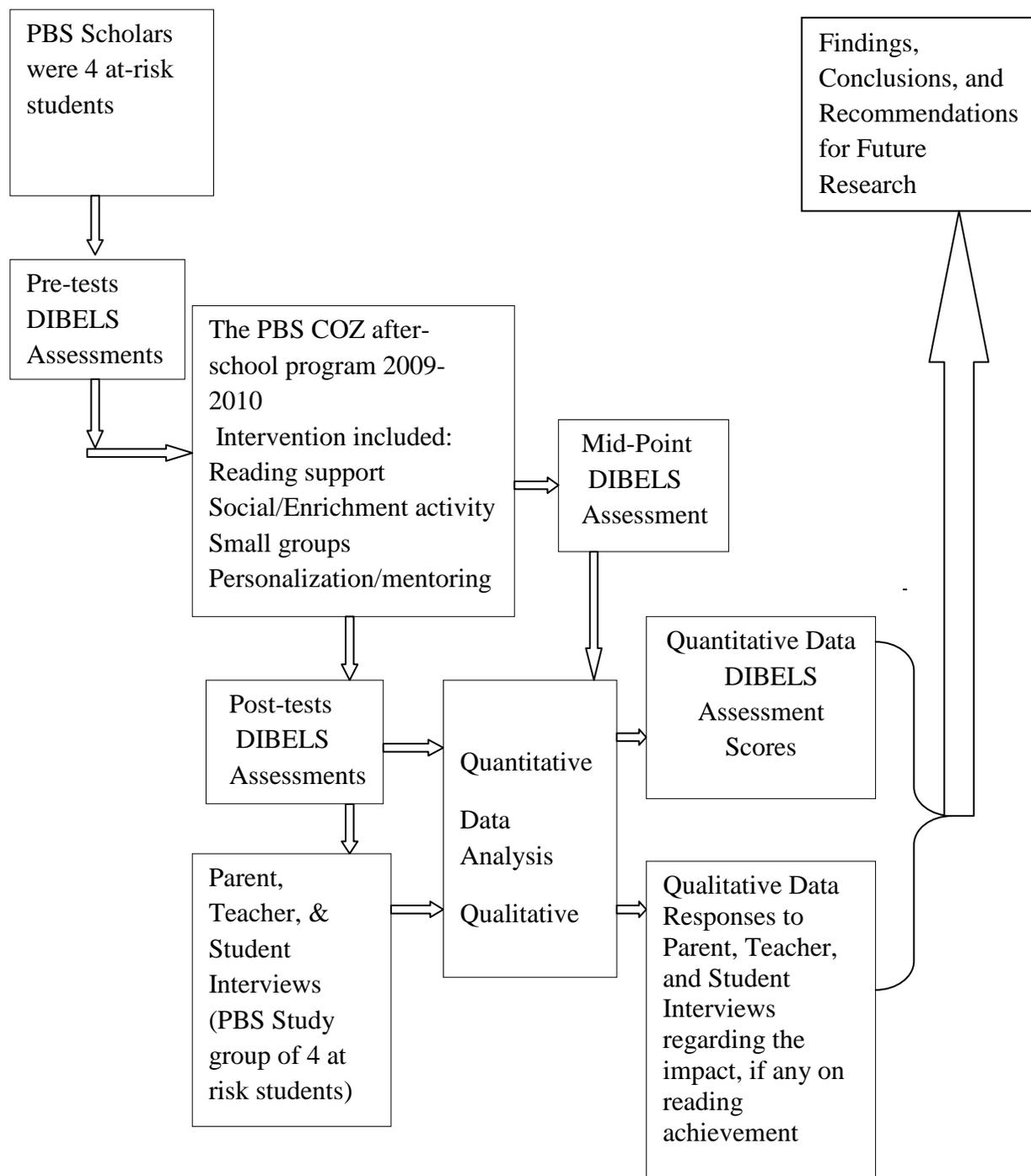
### Problem Statement

The effectiveness of the first PBS COZ after-school program in improving achievement in reading for those students identified as at-risk during the 2009-2010 school year was unknown. Therefore, this researcher deemed it important to examine and determine its effectiveness by analyzing data that had been collected in 2009-2010, and adding a qualitative element that included more recent interviews with those students who participated in the entire program, their parents, and their teachers.

Below, in Figure 1 is a methodological map that was used by this researcher. This visual representation helped guide the course of action for this study.

*Figure 1*

*Methodological Review Map*



## **Research Questions**

Both quantitative data (ORF scores) and qualitative data (interview responses) were used to address the following research questions:

- 1) What impact did the additional reading instruction opportunities offered in the after-school program at PBS Elementary School during the 2009-2010 school year have on reading achievement for at-risk students?
- 2) What impact did the enrichment activities, offered in the after-school program at PBS Elementary School during the 2009-2010 school year, have on reading achievement for at-risk students?
- 3) What was the behavioral impact (meaning student's school attendance and student's behavior at school) of the PBS after-school program on student learning for at-risk students?
- 4) What benefits did parents of at-risk students perceive for their children who participated in the after-school program?

## **Research Design**

The design of this study involved a post-evaluation of the after-school program using a mixed method approach as described by Creswell (2003). This post-evaluation study has also been described by Campbell, Stanley, and Gage (1966) as ex post factor quasi-experimental. The purpose of this post-evaluation research design was to study and document the impact of the PBS after-school reading program instituted during the 2009-2010 school year on the four students who participated in the three segments of the program. This study looked back on what took place, and collected data about the program and participants in order to help determine the

program's effectiveness, or the value of the program, specifically for at-risk students. It also provided much valuable information about the planning, conduct, and implementation of the first PBS COZ after-school program.

This researcher considers this post-evaluation to be summative in design, with an inclusion of a formative piece. The formative part of this post-evaluation is the inclusion of a learner outcome, which is described later in this chapter in the summative evaluation section. Additionally, in this case, a study of this new after-school program allowed for feedback for future planning of programs and other possibilities to help struggling readers.

As in this study, post-evaluation studies examine what the participants experienced and data collected is utilized to support the conclusions made about the program. The use of open-ended interview questions in this post-evaluation allowed for the participants to describe their experiences. This approach can make it difficult to determine whether there was a causal effect of the program or whether the program caused a particular outcome, however the gathering of evidence from multiple methods can help with explaining and describing what took place and whether or not it was determined to be successful (Shackman, 2008).

### **Phases of study.**

There were three phases of this study. Quantitative and qualitative data for the PBS scholars was collected and analyzed. Quantitative data included the DIBELS Assessment scores of PBS scholars. Students took the DIBELS Assessment during the first week of school before the program began. These scores were considered baseline or phase one. The second phase of this study was the intervention phase. Students took the DIBELS Assessment in January (mid-point of program), and again in May (end of program) and these scores were considered part of the

intervention phase. The final phase of this study consisted of interviews, which were conducted during the spring of 2011, and the analysis of the DIBELS Assessment scores.

### Site and Participants

The site for the study was PBS Elementary School, located in the northeastern part of the United States.

#### Participants.

- Sampling was purposive, small in size, PBS scholars/students (n=4)  
(see *Figure 2 Demographic Chart*).
- Parents (n=4) of the PBS scholars/students
- Teachers (n=2) of the PBS scholars/students

**Table 1** *Student Demographic Chart*

| Group        | Grade |     | Gender |        |
|--------------|-------|-----|--------|--------|
|              | 3rd   | 4th | Male   | Female |
| PBS Scholars | 2     | 2   | 2      | 2      |

#### *Participant background information.*

The four at-risk student participants were identified in this study as PBS scholars. They included one third grade boy, one fourth grade boy, one third grade girl, and one fourth grade girl. Additionally, parents and teachers of the PBS students participated in this study as interviewees.

These students are all eager learners and work hard to do well in school. They each have had excellent school attendance and behavior. They have been students at PBS since kindergarten. They live within the neighborhood of the school. They have older and younger siblings collectively. Student participants 1 and 3 both have older siblings in high school and student participants 2 and 4 have siblings that attend PBS. Prior to the implementation of the after-school program at PBS Elementary School, three of these students (students 1, 2, and 3) attended a child care program after-school, since their parents worked full time.

### **Data Collection**

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected by this researcher from the site of this study. The DIBELS Assessment scores from the 2009-2010 school year were collected, analyzed, and exported from excel spreadsheets during the spring of 2011. Parent, student, and teacher interviews were conducted during the spring of 2011. Initial contact with each parent was made by phone and a meeting was scheduled. The interviews were held at the school in the school office. The first meeting, with the parent but not his or her child, gave this researcher the opportunity to review the consent form, obtain the necessary signature, and schedule a time for conducting the interview with them and their child. Initial contact was made with the teachers in person, and a meeting was scheduled to review the teacher/participant consent form and schedule an interview time. This researcher/interviewer scribed responses to interview questions. These answers were then read back to the interviewees for accuracy of response. These interviews provided data which helped this researcher determine the effectiveness of the after-school program. Additional data collected included: student report cards/progress reports, attendance

and discipline records. It was noted that there were no discipline records on any of these students.

### **Quantitative data sources.**

The quantitative data that was collected and analyzed were the ORF DIBELS Assessment scores of the student participants. DIBELS Assessments were administered at three intervals during the 2009-2010 school year: before the program started (September 2009), at the mid-point of the program (January 2010) and at the end of the program (May 2009). The PBS students were in third and fourth grades. Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) was the DIBELS Assessment administered to students in third and fourth grades. The September ORF scores were used to identify whether a student was considered at-risk. ORF DIBELS scores were analyzed for changes over time, that is, the three different intervals that they were administered (September, January, and May). Each student's scores were compared to the benchmark, and analyzed for changes over time, which was reported as percentage of growth over the three administration periods. Additionally, the scores for students in the same grade were compared.

### **Qualitative data sources.**

The qualitative data collected for this study consisted of parent, teacher, and student responses to oral interview questions asked by this researcher in person. Interviews were conducted between March 16<sup>th</sup> and April 4<sup>th</sup> of 2011. The interview questions (Appendices D, F, & H), consisted of both closed and open ended questions. The face-to-face oral interview allowed for follow up and clarifying questions. The strength of open-ended questioning strategy, according to Patton, is that data is collected for each person and the respondents answer the same questions, which increases the comparability of responses (Patton, 2002, p. 349).

Cross-interview analysis was the analysis method for the standard open-ended interview questions. This approach grouped the responses from interview questions and allowed their similarities and differences to be analyzed (Patton, 2002, pp. 349-440). For example, this study grouped the perceived benefits and weaknesses of the after-school program. The interview scripts also contained closed-end questions. Closed-end questions, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), are easy to use, score, and code for analysis. Additionally, they can be used to measure opinions, attitudes, or knowledge (pp. 438-439). The close-end questions in this study provided this researcher with answers that verified the student's attendance in the program, specific area of reading support needed, and knowledge of what activities in which they participated, after the hour-long reading program.

### **Instrumentation.**

Scripts for parent, teacher, and student interviews were used for this study (Appendices D, F, & H). These interviews were conducted in person by this researcher. Each student was interviewed with his/her parent present. Prior to the start of the student interview, the student was invited to participate in an interview (see Child Assent Script, Appendix G).

The instrumentation used for the interviews was a standardized format that included both closed-end and open-end questions as outlined in Frankel and Wallen (2000, pp. 436-441). The scripts of specific interview questions were utilized for each interview (Appendices D, F, & H). Additionally, the interviewer/researcher scribed answers to questions and they were read back to interviewee for accuracy of response.

## **Data Analysis**

This design allowed for analysis, description, and presentation of quantitative and qualitative data, using words, pictures, and statistical charts. Data were analyzed in the spring of 2011. The data analysis was aligned to the protocols outlined in Fraenkel and Wallen (2000, pp. 504-506). Analyzing qualitative data involves a synthesis of all information obtained, and from many different sources. The qualitative data analysis of interviews for this study relied on description, as opposed to inferential statistical procedures. The triangulation of data, used for this research, enhanced the validity and reliability of this study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000, p. 506).

The quantitative data collected included DIBELS Assessment scores for three administration periods, September, 2009, January, 2010, and May, 2010. The analysis of the students Oral Reading Fluency scores permitted this researcher to assess quantitatively the academic impact of the after-school program for those at-risk students who participated. The analysis of these scores is presented in the next chapter.

### **Summative evaluation.**

The quantitative and qualitative data analysis of this study provided in-depth, research-based knowledge that was used to help determine the impact of the after-school program on student learning, specifically in reading for at-risk students. This researcher attests that the investigation of this problem of practice: 1) added to the body of knowledge of after-school programs, specifically those that incorporate literacy experiences and 2) helped determine whether the additional support in reading and learning activities enhanced reading skills. Additionally, the data collected and examined provided valuable information to help evaluate the program based

on its impact on reading scores, behavioral impact on student school attendance or behavior, and any perceived benefits or insights, intended or unintended.

An evaluation of the after-school program was based on the following data and comparisons:

- 1) Existing DIBELS (ORF) reading scores of at-risk students (PBS) who participated in the program during 2009-2010.
- 2) Qualitative data gathered from interviews with the students, their parents, and their teachers in the after-school program. Analysis of the interview data allowed this researcher to consider the value each assigned to the program. Truth statements and divergent findings of the value each interviewee assigned to the program are presented in the following chapter.

### *Learner outcomes.*

The expected learner outcomes for the at-risk student participants included:

- an increase in their reading skills which were measured by their DIBELS ORF reading scores
- an increase in their confidence and desire to read, which was determined from interview responses

### **Validity, Credibility, and Possible Future Uses of the Results**

There are two obvious threats to validity. First, this study is based on a small sample of four students. Second, the site of the study was the researcher's school where the researcher's is the school principal. Additionally, this researcher was the one that conducted the interviews.

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study was to discover the impact of the after-school program on student learning, specifically for at-risk students. Although the sample size (n=4) in

this study is small, the findings provided insights that will help in future planning of school programs or endeavors for extended learning. The findings may be transferable or generalized to a population or school that is similar to the school in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected were analyzed, which enhances validity. This study could also have an impact on future studies conducted at PBS, specifically those involving reading achievement and additional learning in an after-school program.

The use of the DIBELS standardized assessments and triangulation of data (various data collection and analysis methods) decreased threats to validity of the study. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), when conclusions are supported with data obtained from a number of different instruments and data collection methods, validity is enhanced (p. 506). This is referred to as triangulation of data, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000, p. 506).

Upon approval from Northeastern University College of Professional Studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the school district, and participants, this researcher conducted interviews, and analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data. As stated earlier, the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) DIBELS scores from the three administration periods (September, January, and May) were analyzed for changes over time.

#### **Qualitative portion of the study.**

The qualitative data collected and analyzed from interviews conducted in the follow-up phase provided additional information that was valuable to this study. The instruments and protocol used for interviews strengthened the validity of this study. It is important for the interviewer to be consistent and neutral (Patton, 1987). This researcher, who was the interviewer, was careful

to be consistent and followed the same procedure for each interview. The following procedures were followed:

- instructions were read to each participant
- questions were asked as stated in the same order
- interviewer avoided agreeing or disagreeing with a participant's responses
- interviewer avoided giving personal opinions

(Kiernan, Kiernan, & Goldberg, 2003)

The following procedures as outlined in Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) were followed:

- use of variety of collection methods, triangulation of data
- verifying accuracy of responses to interviews through use of "checking"
- note taking, writing down responses to interview questions and noting any personal thoughts while conducting interviews
- documenting sources and remarks
- conclusions based on one's understanding of the situation and those conclusions were supported by the data collected from the variety of instruments and methods used.

(Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000, pp. 506-507)

This researcher believes that the above stated protocol enhanced the validity and credibility of the study. Additionally, the combination of both quantitative and qualitative data helped to reduce the threats to validity and challenges posed by the researcher's relationship to the participants in the study.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Prior approval of this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Northeastern University College of Professional Studies, and the school district. This researcher followed IRB protocol for the protection of the human subjects and all data were kept confidential. Approval and consent was obtained from all participants in this study (Appendices C, E, & G). Names or other identifiable information were excluded. All data collected was coded by this researcher in order to avoid any identifiable information such as students' names. All data remained in the care of this researcher, and were kept in a locked filing cabinet when not in use.

## Chapter IV. Report of Findings

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of the PBS COZ after-school program on the reading achievement of at-risk students during the 2009-2010 school year and to gain information about after-school program planning that can be used in the future by the PBS administration. Quantitative (DIBELS ORF scores) and qualitative (responses to interviews) data were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The program was evaluated based on DIBELS ORF scores from the three administration periods of DIBELS Assessments. The focus of the analysis was on changes in scores over time (the three administration periods).

The interview responses were grouped based on perceptions of parents, teachers, and students regarding the value they placed in the program. Grouped responses identified benefits of the program, any changes in student behavior or attendance, and any additional comments. Supplementary data collected by this researcher included attendance and behavior records, and report cards/progress reports from the 2009-2010 school year. This data provided supplementary information for determining the behavioral impact of the after-school program on student learning for at-risk students. This researcher deemed it important to not only examine DIBELS scores and whether or not and to what degree they increased or decreased, but also whether there was any positive benefit of the after-school program recognized by parents, teachers, and students. The following is a report of the qualitative and quantitative data. A full discussion of the findings is presented in the final chapter.

## **Quantitative Data**

The quantitative data reported in this chapter are the Oral Reading Fluency scores of the DIBELS Assessments. There were three sets of scores per student, one for each of the three administration periods (September, January, and May). The ORF scores were analyzed for changes over time, which was: before the after-school program began (September), at the mid-point of the after-school program (January), and at the end of the program (May).

### **PBS DIBELS assessments.**

Oral Reading Fluency is the DIBELS sub-test administered to third and fourth grade students. The ORF scores, of the student participants (PBS), were measured for percentage of growth over the three administration periods based on the benchmark score for that grade and administration period. Additionally, a student's score was compared to the score of the other student in that same grade.

### ***Student 1 results.***

Student 1 was a third grade female student who attended the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. She attended on a regular basis with an attendance record of 95%. This student had no behavior slips for the 2009-2010 school year. This participant's report card indicated that she was at or approaching grade level in all areas (math, science, social studies, writing, music, art, physical education, and library), with the exception of oral reading fluency, which indicated that she was below grade level.

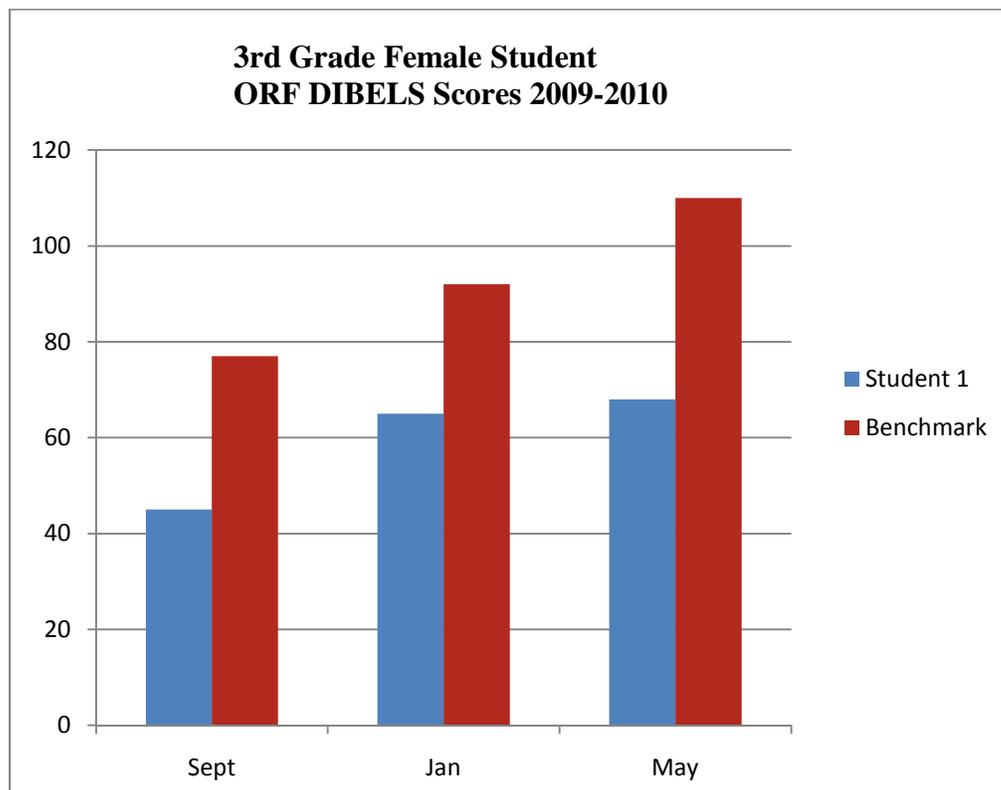
This student has always been dedicated, conscientious, and one who takes school work seriously. She is also a very active and sociable student. In addition to her attendance in the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year, she was involved in a competitive sports

programs outside of school in the evenings and on the weekends. During the interview with student 1, she reported that sometimes she was tired at the end of the day. A follow-up comment was noted indicating that she often got home late because she had a game following the after-school program. One could speculate the possibility that perhaps on days when she was tired, her academic performance or assessment scores may have been affected.

This participant took the ORF DIBELS Assessment sub-test, which was administered in September (before program began), January (half-way mark of program), and May (end of the program). Her Oral Reading Fluency scores over the three administration periods are presented below in *Figure 2*. The raw scores of 45 (September), 65 (January), and 68 (May) indicated an increase. However, they are still significantly below the benchmark for this third grade student: 77 (September), 92 (January), and 110 (May).

The ORF DIBELS benchmark increases over the three administration periods. In this case, student 1 had a baseline ORF score of 45, which was still 42% below the benchmark. The second administration score was 30% below the benchmark. This shows a growth of 12% from the first and second administration periods. At the third administration period, the student's score was 38% below the benchmark with an 8% decrease in the second and third administration periods. However, there was still an increase in scores from September to May administrations, which resulted in a decrease in the reading achievement gap and overall growth of 4%.

**Figure 2**      *Student 1 ORF DIBELS Scores*



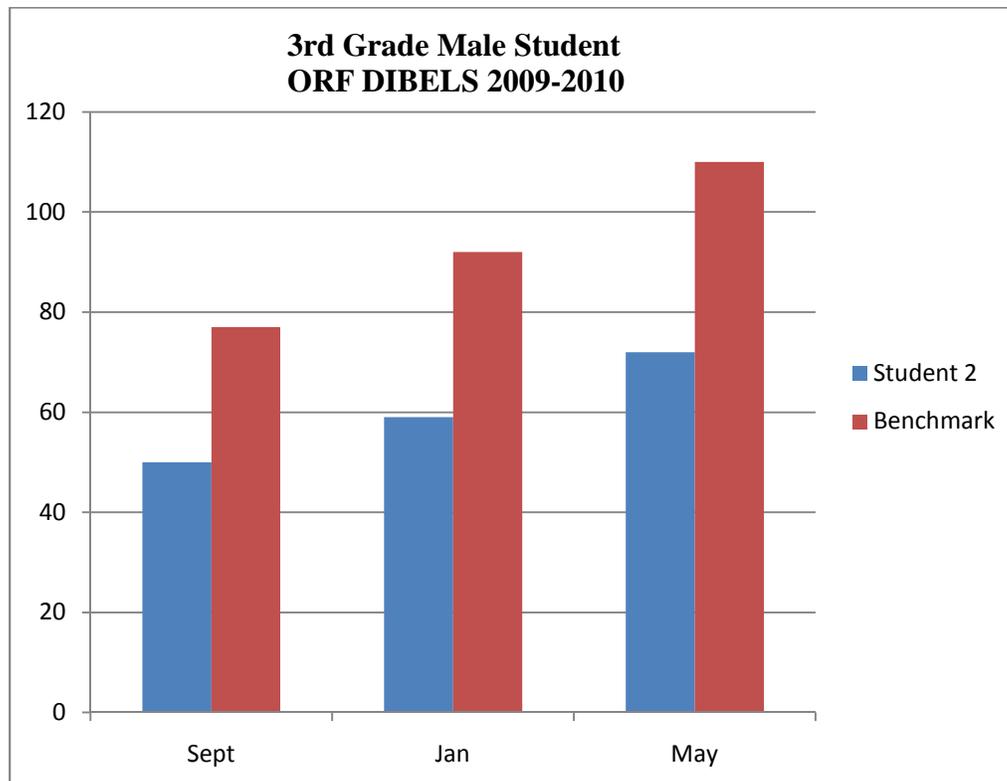
***Student 2 results.***

Student 2 was a third grade male student who attended the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. He attended on a regular basis with an attendance record of 95%. This student had no behavior slips for the 2009-2010 school year. His report card indicated that he was at grade level in all areas (math, science, social studies, writing, music, art, physical education, and library), except oral reading fluency, which indicated he was below grade level. This student is a considerate young man who has been at the school since his first year in kindergarten. One of his favorite subjects has been science. He expressed that he enjoys reading more when it is about something in which he is interested, such as sports or science. He tends to

be a bit of a shy student. Both his parents work full-time, however they remain involved in his education as they attend school functions and activities as much as feasible, given their work demands.

This participant took the DIBELS Assessment sub-test, which was administered in September (before program began), January (half-way mark of program), and May (end of the program). His Oral Reading Fluency scores over the three administration periods are presented below in *Figure 3*. The raw scores of 50 (September), 59 (January), and 72 (May) indicated an increase or a movement in the right direction. However, they are still significantly below the benchmark for this third grade student: 77 (September), 92 (January), and 110 (May).

**Figure 3**      **Student 2 ORF DIBELS Scores**



The first (Sept.) DIBELS administration of ORF score for student 2 was 35% below the benchmark while the second (Jan.) ORF score was 36% below benchmark. The third (May) administration of the ORF score was 35% below the benchmark. This student's scores moved in the right direction; however the overall gap in achievement for student 2 remained the same from the first to the third administration periods.

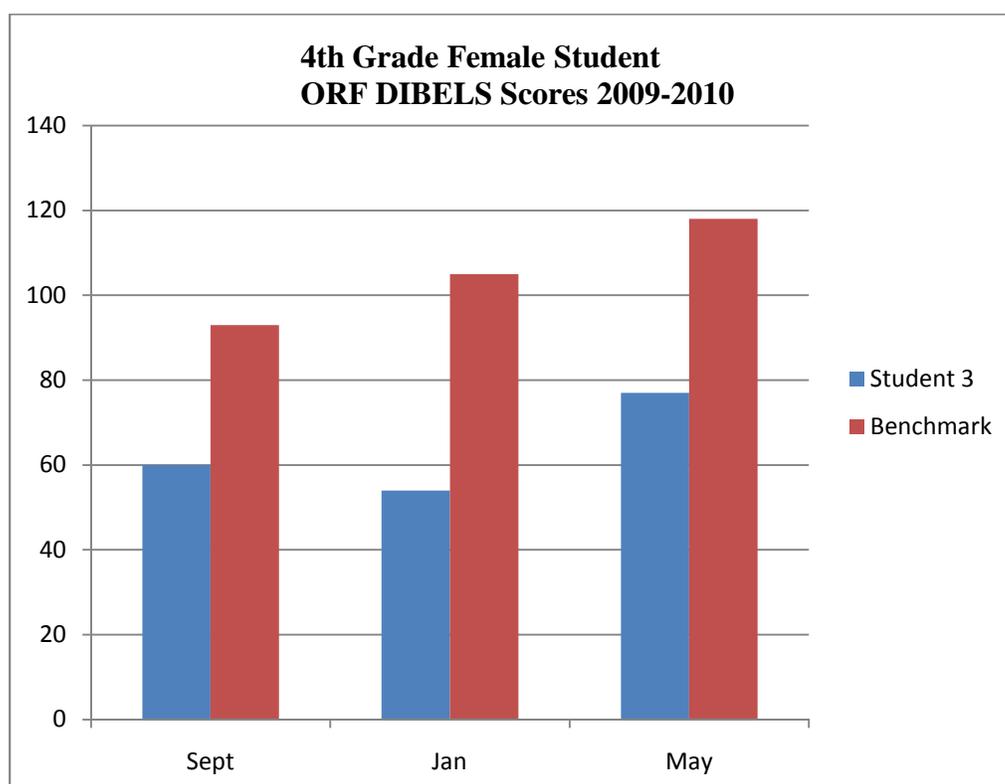
***Student 3 results.***

Student 3 was a fourth grade female student who attended the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. She attended on a regular basis with an attendance record of 98%. This student had no behavior slips for the 2009-2010 school year. Her report card indicated that she was at grade level in all areas (math, science, social studies, writing, music, art, physical education, and library), except oral reading fluency, which indicated she was below grade level. This student has also been at this school for all her schooling thus far. She is a very out-going, likeable young lady. She has worked hard over the years and has made great improvements in her academics, including reading.

This participant took the DIBELS Assessment sub-test, which was administered in September (before program began), January (half-way mark of program), and May (end of the program). Her Oral Reading Fluency scores over the three administration periods are presented below in *Figure 4*. The raw scores of 60 (September), 54 (January), and 77 (May) appeared to indicate an increase from September to May but there was a significant decrease in the January score from the September score. The scores were still below the benchmark: 93 (September), 105 (January), and 118 (May).

The ORF score for student 3 was 36% below the benchmark for the first administration, 49% below the benchmark for the second administration, and 35% below the benchmark for the third administration. Although there was a decrease in this student's second administration score, there was an overall growth of 1% from the first to third administration periods for this fourth grade student.

**Figure 4**      **Student 3 ORF DIBELS Scores**



***Student 4 results.***

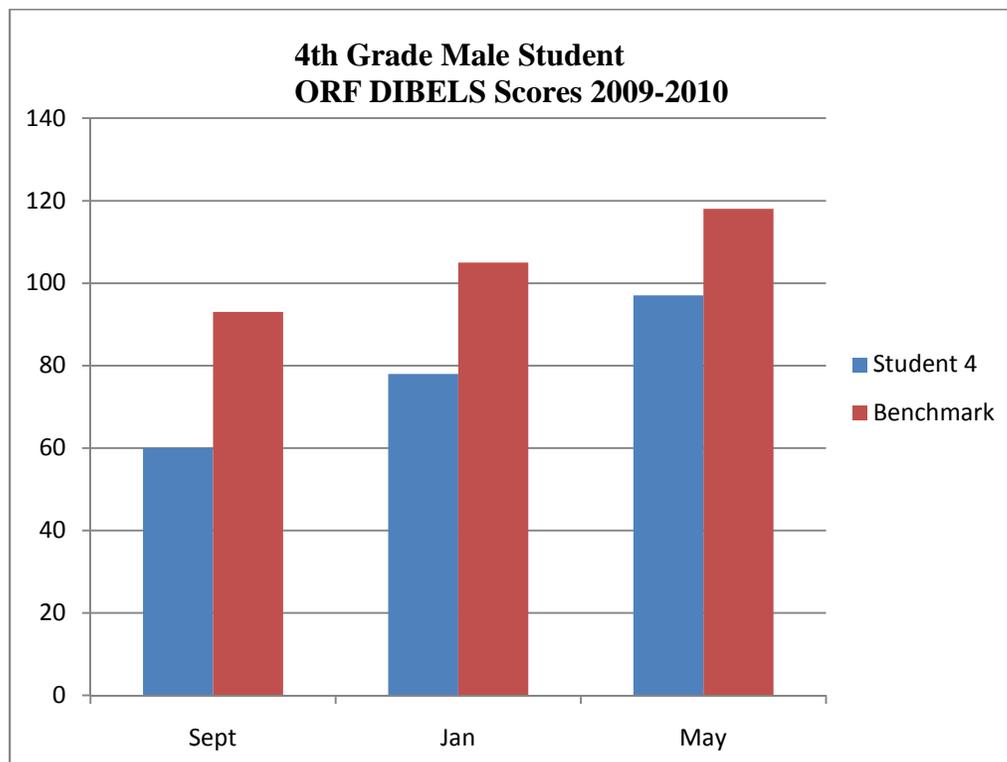
Student 4 was a fourth grade male student who attended the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. He attended on a regular basis with an attendance record of 97%. This student had no behavior slips for the 2009-2010 school year. His report card indicated that he

was at or approaching grade level in all areas (math, science, social studies, writing, music, art, physical education, and library), except oral reading fluency, which indicated he was below grade level. This student has been at this school since his kindergarten year. He is a student who remains focused on school work. He has always sought out help to make improvements in his academics. Prior to the after-school program, in previous years, he would often stay after-school with his teacher to get extra help. He is a very kind, considerate, and respectful young man.

This participant took the DIBELS Assessment sub-test which was administered in September (before program began), January (half-way mark of program), and May (end of the program). His Oral Reading Fluency scores over the three administration periods are presented below in *Figure 5*. The raw scores of 60 (September), 78 (January), and 97 (May) indicated an increase from September to May. However, the scores were still below the benchmark for fourth grade students: 93 (September), 105 (January), and 118 (May).

The first administration of ORF score, for student 4, was 36% below the benchmark, while the scores from the second and third administrations were 26% and 18% below the benchmark, resulting in a significant growth of 18% from the first to third administration periods.

**Figure 5 Student 4 ORF DIBELS Scores**



***Grade 3 comparison.***

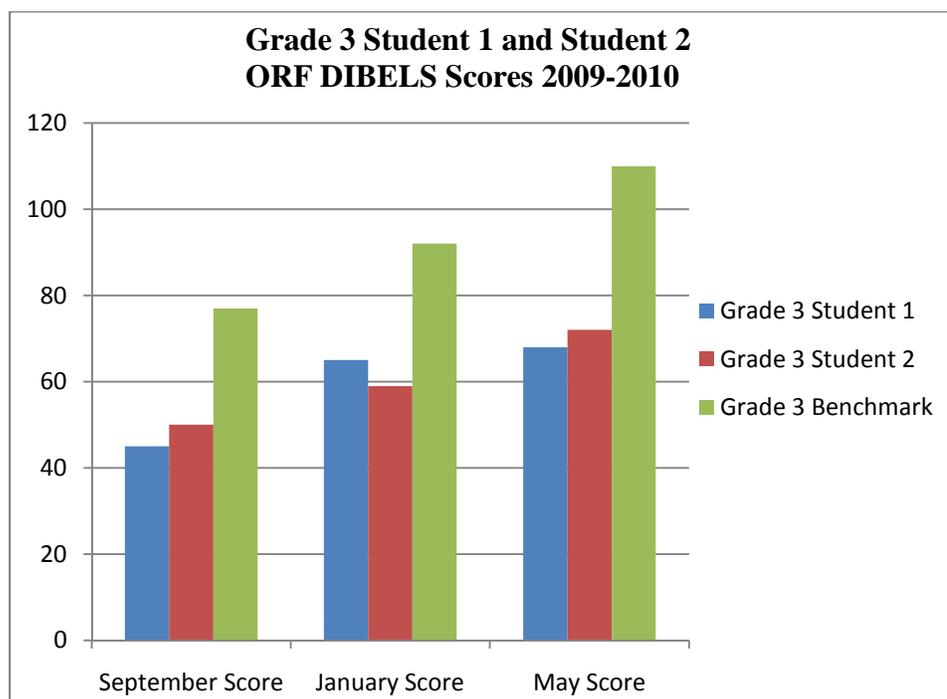
The chart in *Figure 6* compares the two third grade student participants, one female and one male. Although an increase in scores over the three administration periods is evident, the following comparisons exist:

- The first administration period score for student 1 was 42% below the benchmark and the score for student 2 was 35% below the benchmark. The baseline score for student 1 was 8% below the baseline score for student 2.
- The second administration period score for student 1 was 30% below the benchmark and the score for student 2 was 36% below the benchmark. The growth from the first to

second administration periods was greater for student 1 at 12%, while student 2 decreased by 1% from the first to second administration periods.

- The third administration period score for student 1 was 38% below benchmark and the score for student 2 was 35% below the benchmark. Student 1 moved in a positive direction, closing the achievement gap by 4% while the overall scores for student 2 did not result in growth, but remained the same.

**Figure 6**      **Grade 3 ORF DIBELS Comparison**

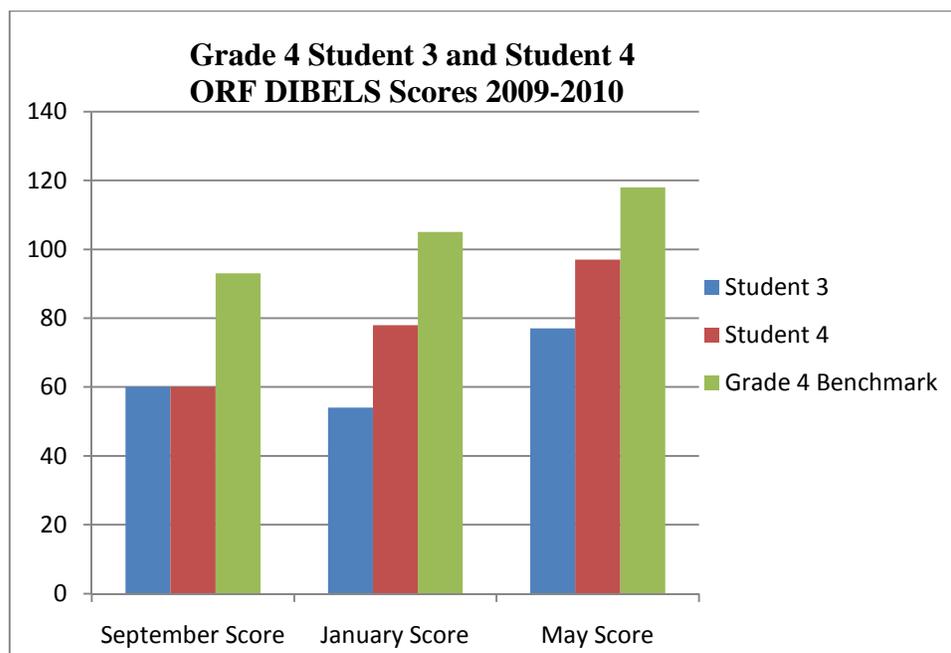


***Grade 4 comparison.***

The chart in *Figure 7* compares the two fourth grade student participants, one female and one male. Although an increase in scores over the three administration periods is evident, the following comparisons exist:

- The first administration period scores for both students 3 and 4 were 36% below the benchmark. These students were at the same distance from the benchmark.
- The second administration period score for student 3 was 49% below the benchmark and the score for student 4 was 26% below the benchmark. Student 4 made a 10% gain in achievement or movement towards the benchmark, while student 3 dropped an additional 13% below the benchmark for this administration period.
- The third administration period score for student 3 was 35% below benchmark and the score for student 4 was 18% below the benchmark. Both students made positive gains towards the benchmark, while student 4 made the greatest gain of 18% and student 3 made an overall gain of 1%.

**Figure 7**      **Grade 4 ORF DIBELS Comparison**



## **Qualitative Data**

This researcher conducted interviews with student participants, their parents, and teachers. All interviews were held at the school during the spring of 2011. The interview process was previously described in the methodology chapter of this study. In order to gather additional or clarifying data from interviewees, the last few interview questions used an open-ended format. Participants were asked to respond to “...what benefits, if any, do you perceive the after-school program had.....and is there anything that you would like to share .....that would be helpful to this study?” Interview scripts for parents, teachers, and students were followed. (Appendices D, F, and H). These IRB approved scripts were created and used by this researcher to ensure that there was consistency among all interviews conducted. The remaining sections of this chapter (student interviews, parent interviews, and teacher interviews) display the answers of the respondents. A synopsis of the qualitative data collected from participants’ interview responses is listed by student in *Tables 2, 3, 4, and Table 5* at the end of this chapter. A discussion of interview responses in relation to the problem, research questions, literature review, and theoretical framework is presented in Chapter 5.

### **Student interviews.**

Prior to student interviews, parents signed a consent form giving permission for their child to participate in this study. This researcher made initial contact with parents by phone (Appendix B), at which time an appointment was scheduled for this researcher and parent to meet at the school (site of the study) to review the Parent Consent (Appendix C) and obtain signatures. This gave the researcher permission to collect and analyze data and conduct interviews with the students. Each student interview took place in the school office with the parent present. As

described in the methodology section, before conducting student interviews, each student was invited to participate in the interview and the interview script was followed for each interview.

These student participants, identified throughout this study as PBS scholars included: two third grade students, one female and one male; and two fourth grade students, one female and one male. Each student attended all three sessions of the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year, according to their own responses and verification from school attendance data. Additionally, the interviewer/this researcher scribed responses to questions and those answers were read back to each interviewee for accuracy of response.

### *Student 1 results.*

An interview was conducted with student 1, a third grade female student. When this researcher/school principal saw the student the day after the initial phone contact was made with her parent, the student expressed enthusiasm and excitement about participating in the study. The interview took place the following week. This is a very ambitious student. She is active in school functions and events, and also community activities/sports programs. She wanted to let it be known that although she really enjoyed the program, she was tired, sometimes, when she participated. This may have been because she often had a sports game after being picked up from the after-school program. The following were her responses to interview questions.

1. "I attended all three sessions of the after-school program on a regular basis, absent only a few times due to illness or doctor appointments."
2. "Yes, the additional reading after-school helped me with vocabulary, knowing words, and comprehension."

3. "I did better when I went to reading....I like to read a lot now....we read a lot of books....my favorite were Amelia Bedelia books."
4. "Yes, I chose the activities that I wanted after reading....arts and crafts, board games, computers, basketball, baton twirling, girly-girls, and Jeopardy." "I took computers for two different sessions. I liked it...but when we did research it was too difficult...we did a lot of research...I found it a little frustrating."

Open-ended Response: "I liked the after-school program though because we had small group and we worked together." "But sometimes, I was a little tired by the end of the day."

#### ***Student 2 results.***

An interview was conducted with student 2, a third grade male student. He seemed very interested in participating in the interview process. This boy is a conscientious student. It was noted by this researcher that during the interview, the student had turned to his mother and expressed that he liked the reading portion of the program better than the activities. This could be attributed to a number of things: possibly he has very specific interests (science and computers), he is also more of a timid student and the reading class had just himself and the other third grade student, while some of the activities in which he was involved had up to ten students of various grade levels. The following were his responses to interview questions.

1. "Yes, I attended all the COZ sessions and all the time....I think I may have been absent once."
2. "Yes, it helped but in the beginning it was easier and then the reading got harder".

This response was related to the fact that as the year progressed, the teacher increased the level of books that students read. This student's reading level was almost two levels

below his grade. So over time, this student, as well as the other students, was challenged with more difficult reading, that is, text that was on-grade level.

3. “Yes, it definitely helped me....I needed help in everything..fluency, decoding pronunciation, comprehension, and spelling.” (Mom asked if he knew what decoding meant and he said, “yea...it is how to pronounce letters and words”)
4. “I chose my activities...I did arts and crafts, board games, computers, minute-to-win-it, Jeopardy, and science.”

Open-end response: “I liked the reading part of the program and it helped me a lot. I didn’t really like when we read....some of the trade book stories....because I like to read about sports or action. I liked being with my friends. I didn’t really like some of clubs/activities after reading but I went so I didn’t have to get baby sat....I liked science and computers but not arts and crafts as much.” Students chose the activities at the beginning of each session. This student chose to participate in the arts and crafts activity, but didn’t seem to enjoy it as much as the science and computers. Students were allowed to change their activity if space was available in another activity. This was important to manage consistent enrollments and to ensure no class had higher than ten or twelve students.

### ***Student 3 results.***

An interview was conducted with student 3, a fourth grade female student. She was also very excited about participating in the interview process. After initial contact with her parent to set up a first meeting, she stopped in the office a few times to make sure the meeting for the following week was still set. The following were her responses to interview questions.

1. “Yes, I went to all three sessions and went to it every day.”

2. “Yes, I went to the after-school program, all the time...I think.” (She asked mom if she was absent...mother said “I think you were out a few times when you were sick.”)
3. “Yes, the reading really helped me...I use to struggle with vocabulary and knowing what the words are.”
4. “Yes, I did a lot of activities different days of the week and at the different sessions. I did arts and crafts, baton twirling, board games, chorus, girly-girls, science, sewing, Jeopardy, and minute-to-win it. The activities were fun and I learned stuff too.”

Open-ended Response: “I think I am better at reading now....I like reading..I didn’t use to like it.” I think I am a better student. I liked the small group and working together in the reading and in the clubs. I like school more and I pay attention more. We did some math like word problems in reading and I really liked that. The reading class helped me be a better reader. I am more organized too. I even like to read directions now....I built a cabinet at home by reading the directions. I also had more reading practice reading when I read the music lyrics in the chorus activity class.”

#### ***Student 4 results.***

An interview was conducted with student 4, a fourth grade male student. He was very interested in participating but didn’t really expound too much on the open-end interview questions. He tends to be a somewhat timid student. His teachers would refer to him as hard-working and dedicated. He expressed that he enjoyed both the reading and all the activities and he believed he has done better in the program because of it. The following were his responses to interview questions.

1. “Yes, I went to all of them and I came everyday...well not on Fridays, it wasn’t on Fridays.”
2. “Yes, I think the reading helped me a lot.”
3. “I improved in comprehension”.
4. “Yes, I picked my own activities. I took computers, basketball, board games, stories and crafts, and theater. I chose these because I wanted to learn about computers and I wanted to learn how to play basketball. I wanted theater cause I wanted to read scripts.”

Open-ended Response: “This program helped me be a better student. It makes school fun. My attendance stayed the same...I always go to school. I think I am doing better in school. I am growing up and getting smarter. I think the after-school program really helped me....by teaching me how to do fun things but that was still learning. We got to work with our friends and that was fun too.”

### **Parent interviews.**

Parents were initially contacted by this researcher via the telephone using the phone script (Appendix B). Face-to-face meetings were scheduled to review and obtain signatures on a consent form (Appendix C) and conduct interviews (Script for Parent Interviews, Appendix D). This was done fairly effortlessly and the initial phone contact was made after IRB approval. All of the meetings and interviews were conducted over a two week period, from the last week and a half of March through the first few days in April of 2011. The interviews were held at the school, in the school office. The phone contact with parents was very positive and all the parents expressed an eagerness and enthusiasm to participate in this study through the interview process.

*Parent 1 results.*

An interview was conducted with parent 1, the mother of student 1. This was the first interview conducted and it was held at 8:00 PM in the evening at the school. This mother is very involved in her child's education. She and her husband work full time but always make time to attend parent meetings and school functions. She definitely was interested in participating in the interview with this researcher. The questions consisted of both closed-end and open-end (Appendix E). The responses to the questions were as follows:

1. "Yes, my child attended the three sessions of the after-school program and her attendance was good. She was only absent a few times for illness or doctor appointments."
2. "Yes, my child was recommended by her classroom teacher to attend the after-school program."
3. "She picked the clubs she was interested in and they were different each day. She took computers twice."
4. "She chose the activities on her own."

Open-end response: "I think the additional reading support helped her...and the teacher that worked with my daughter really helped her. She had difficulty reading but she got help with reading fluency and comprehensions. It is important to have an after school program."

*Parent 2 results.*

An interview was conducted with parent 2, the mother of student 2. This interview was held the following week after school. The responses to the questions were as follows:

1. "Yes, my son went to the after-school program and he had good attendance."

2. "I think my son has definitely done better in reading because he got extra help in reading after-school."
3. "He participated in computers and arts and crafts but I can't remember the other clubs"
4. "He chose the clubs himself and liked the ones he was in."

Open-end response: "He has always struggled with reading. His interest in reading has piqued since he went to the program and received the extra help. He liked going to reading and getting the help. I think the small size of the class and one-on-one help has made a difference. It is super important to have reading part of the after-school program. Also, because he got help, he has less anxiety about reading and better self-esteem. He has gotten better at blending sounds. As a matter of fact, this year he hasn't attended the program and I find that he is sliding back some."

### ***Parent 3 results.***

An interview was conducted with parent 3, the mother of student 3. This interview was held the same day and followed the interview with parent 2. Parent 3 is a very sincere and pleasant person. She is a single parent who works full time. She has always been very involved in her daughter's education and she attends many school events. The responses to the questions were as follows:

1. "Yes, my daughter attended all three sessions of the after-school program and she loves it."
2. "She was recommended by the teacher to help her in reading oral fluency."

(Note: Oral reading fluency was described earlier. It is the ability to read a text quickly and with accuracy).

3. “She was in different activities on each day. She took sewing, art, and science.”
4. “She chose her own activities to take each day and each session.”

Open-end response: “The additional reading did help her. It is much better to have the hour of academics before the activities instead of just homework club.” This has also helped her confidence in learning and her self-esteem is better. I think she is more competent in reading now. She also can focus more on expression when she reads because she is reading better. This has really helped her confidence and motivation to read. Now she likes to read and write poems.”

***Parent 4 results.***

An interview was conducted with parent 4, the mother of student 4. This parent is about eight years younger than the other three parents interviewed. She is a stay-at-home mother and has three other children. She lives close by the school and is very active in school events. She was enthusiastic about participating in this study and at the end of the interview she expressed her thanks and gratefulness for the opportunities that the school provides for her son. The questions consisted of both closed-end and open-end (Appendix E). The responses to the questions were as follows:

1. “My son went to the after-school program and I don’t think he missed a day (son reminded her that he did when he was sick back in the fall).”
2. “He was recommended by his teacher to go to help him with his reading.”
3. “For activities, my son took computers, basketball, and theater.”
4. “He picked his own activities. He really liked the theater club.”

Open-ended response: “The reading support helped him. The benefit of this program was that it gave my son more one-on-one and individual attention. He struggled with reading and also homework. The program gave him the supported he needed. It gave him more opportunities to learn and it increased his desire to learn. It was fun way to learn that was different than the regular school day. Also, it does keep him off the streets because there is nothing for kids to do after-school.” This mom was thankful that the school now had an after-school program. She liked the fact that her son had something to do after-school to keep him busy in something positive instead of just hanging around the neighborhood.

#### **Teacher interviews.**

The two teachers interviewed were the teachers of the student participants. These teachers applied to teach the reading program in the after-school program. They were selected because of their experience teaching the grade level of the student participants. These teachers were initially contacted by this researcher, at which time they were invited to participate. Consent was obtained before interviews were conducted (Appendix G). Teacher 1 taught reading for the two third grade students in the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. Teacher 2 taught reading for the two fourth grade students in the after-school during the 2009-2010 school year. Both teachers were asked the same closed-end and open-end questions (Appendix H).

#### ***Teacher 1 results.***

Teacher one, a female teacher, has been a teacher at PBS Elementary School for the past four years. She is a hard-working, dedicated teacher. She has experience working with regular and special education students. She holds a master’s degree in teaching elementary and special education students. She has an effective teaching style with a strong ability to use appropriate

strategies that enhance student learning because of her special education knowledge and experience. Additionally, she has developed a great rapport with her students and their parents. Her teaching position for the 2009-2010 school year was at the third grade level, so it was most appropriate for her to instruct the third grade student participants. Her responses to the interview questions were as follows:

1. "I taught in the after-school reading program during the 2009-2010. These students were recommended to attend because they were low-performing in reading based on DIBELS scores."
2. "The two third grade students attended every day. Each of them was only absent a couple of times and that is only if they were sick or had a doctor's appointment."
3. "The extra support for these students definitely helped them build reading skills. Oral reading fluency was a specific targeted support because these students were below benchmark on their DIBELS ORF scores."

Open-end response:

Benefits of the program: "There are a lot of benefits to the after-school program for both the students and the teachers. There is extra time that we don't have in the regular school day and because of the small number in the after-school reading class, I could really hone in on specific skills that the students needed and work with them on an individual basis. I think it is better to give extra support after school so students are not pulled out of class during the regular school day when they may miss another academic area. I found the students to be more active learners, and they focused on learning. This could be because they were getting the individualized support and attention from me, the teacher. I think that they worked well

together and this was a positive social aspect of the program. The activities they had after reading gave them time to work cooperatively. As far as their school attendance, I didn't find any difference in their attendance because these students have always had good attendance. They generally would only miss school for illness or doctor appointment."

"Other than what I already stated, I would just say that having children participate in after-school programs does help them especially if the program provides the academic support that they need."

#### ***Teacher 2 results.***

Teacher 2 has been teaching at PBS Elementary School for the past eighteen years. She is an outstanding teacher and has taught both third and fourth grade over her career. Her teaching position during the 2009-2010 school year was fourth grade, therefore it was most appropriate for her to teacher the two fourth grade reading student participants. This teacher referred to how enjoyable it was for her to teach just a few students in the after-school program. This is very different than the regular school day as her class size was twenty-nine students. Her responses to the interview questions were as follows:

1. "Yes, I definitely recommended and encouraged these two students to attend the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. I can say it definitely made a difference in their ORF DIBLES scores over the school year."
2. "Yes, my students attended all the sessions for the year and they attended regularly. They were absent only a few times."
3. "Yes, the DIBELS scores were impacted. I saw their scores increase over the school year."

Open-end response:

Benefits of the program: “I like teaching in the after-school program because it is nice to work with a small number of student. I had time to give each one individual help. The after-school program gave the students the extra support that they needed in reading. These two students were doing poorly on their oral reading fluency which is measured by the DIBELS Assessment and the support and practice made a difference. I didn’t find that there was any impact on their attendance one way or another, because they are two students that always come to school every day and they would tell me that they liked going to the after-school program. They also enjoyed the clubs and activities that they went to after the reading program. I think that also is good for students, socially. I don’t think that the activities had an impact on their reading achievement...if they are reading directions or doing something like that it would help, but the targeted reading support is really what made a difference. When I am able to sit one-on-one with a student who is having difficulty, I can find out where the struggle is...whether it’s not having a good phonics base, little skill in breaking down the words, or just not having enough experience with vocabulary, or many times students don’t look for context clues.”

**Synopsis of qualitative findings.**

The following tables provide a synopsis of qualitative data for each student participant.

**Table 2** *Qualitative Findings Student 1*

| Student   | Parent   | Teacher   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reading helped</li> <li>-Enjoys reading now</li> <li>-More confident</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Daughter benefited from reading help</li> <li>-Believes after-school programs are important</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Opportunity to provide individual support with more time to hone in on skills</li> <li>-Found students to be focused</li> <li>-Cooperative learning and social aspect of program were a plus</li> </ul> |

**Table 3** *Qualitative Findings Student 2*

| Student   | Parent  | Teacher  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reading helped him</li> <li>-Sometimes the reading was hard when the text was more difficult</li> <li>-Liked the reading part better than the other activities, but did like computers and science classes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reading support with one-on-one and small group benefited her son who has always struggled in reading</li> <li>-During the program, she noticed his reading piqued</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Opportunity to provide individual support and more time to hone in on skills</li> <li>-Found students to be focused</li> <li>-Cooperative learning and social aspect of program were a plus</li> </ul> |

**Table 4** *Qualitative Findings Student 3*

| Student  | Parent   | Teacher   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reading helped</li> <li>-Better reader</li> <li>-Likes school more and pays attention</li> <li>-Liked small group and individual help</li> <li>-Read lyrics in chorus activity</li> <li>-Read directions in order to assemble a cabinet at home</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Daughter benefited from extra reading help</li> <li>-Daughter gained confidence</li> <li>-More competent reader and can focus more on expression</li> <li>-After-school programs are very important</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Opportunity to provide individual support</li> <li>-Targeted specific needs</li> <li>-Targeted reading support had a greater impact than the activities which did not necessarily focus on reading</li> </ul> |

**Table 5** *Qualitative Findings Student 4*

| Student   | Parent  | Teacher   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reading helped improve comprehension</li> <li>-Enjoys reading now</li> <li>-More confident</li> <li>-Participating in the program made school fun</li> <li>-Enjoyed the activities, especially theater where he read scripts</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Son benefited from the reading support</li> <li>-Program gave him more opportunities to learn</li> <li>-After-school programs give kids something to do after school</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Opportunity to provide individual support</li> <li>-Targeted specific needs</li> <li>-Targeted reading support had a greater impact than the activities which did not necessarily focus on reading</li> </ul> |

## **Chapter V. Discussion, Summary, Recommendations**

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this research study are discussed in respect to the research questions, theoretical framework, and literature review. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the PBS COZ after-school program on the reading achievement of at-risk students during the 2009-2010 school year and to gain information that can be used in planning and implementing future after-school reading programs at the school. This study examined how the implementation of the after school program impacted student achievement, specifically for at-risk students who were below proficiency levels in reading. It also provided information about positive results and benefits of the program that were shared with school officials to generate continued support and funding of the after-school program.

This program was funded through a 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant. The guidelines for recipients of this grant require that schools assess their programs. This research study provided quantitative and qualitative data that was shared with the program coordinator and district COZ director by this researcher, at a meeting held in late spring of 2011. The meeting was to discuss the program and ways to improve it. At this meeting, the director mentioned that she would like to include the findings of this study, as supplemental information, when she re-applies for the grant in the future. Additionally, the results of this study were shared with parents, teachers, and community members who attended the most recent PTO meeting in late spring of 2011, providing the researcher/school principal with an opportunity to showcase the after-school program and to generate interest in it.

The research questions that drove this study sought to discover the following: the impact of additional reading instruction and enrichment activities on the reading achievement of at-risk student participants; the impact on the behavior and student attendance of participants; and any perceived benefits of the program. This was accomplished by examining the ORF DIBELS scores of participants and interview data from student participants, their parents, and teachers.

### **Student interviews.**

Interviews with students were insightful for this researcher. Each student described the after-school program as having had a positive effect on them. These students all attended the program each day with minimal absences. Each student offered positive remarks regarding the reading portion of the program. They all were emphatic that the extra reading support helped their learning. Their responses were what this researcher expected, because these were students who chose to attend the program, and wanted the extra help. They are diligent students, and strive to do well in school. Nevertheless, their positive impressions of the program were incorporated into reports made to the school community and Pawtucket education officials.

### ***Reflections.***

This researcher did learn some things that were unexpected. For an example, student 1 expressed that she found the after-school program made for a long day and she was often tired by the time it ended. This student is involved in many different activities and often gets home later in the evening than most students. For example, the interview for this student and parent was held in the evening because the student had softball practice right after the after-school program ended. Additionally, student 2 had expressed that he liked the reading but wasn't as interested in some of the activities, particularly, the arts & crafts. This student also commented that "he went

so he didn't get baby sat". Although he expressed overall satisfaction with the program, this researcher wondered if perhaps he would have preferred to go home after school but was unable to because his parents were at work. In the future, when planning after-school activities, PBS planners will have to take into account the variety of student motives for participation in such programs.

### **Research question 1.**

The first research question addressed: What impact did the additional reading instruction opportunities offered in the after-school program at PBS Elementary School during the 2009-2010 school year have on reading achievement for at-risk students? This researcher concluded that the after-school program, which offered additional reading instruction, had a positive impact on the reading achievement of the at-risk student participants. This researcher had been expecting that there would be an increase in the students' ORF scores. Although the four student participants ORF scores were still below benchmark at the end of the program, they had made strides in the right direction, and improvements were noted overall.

According to the National Reading Panel (2000), reading can be gauged by a student's ability to read quickly and with accuracy. The ORF DIBELS Assessment, which measures a student's ability to read quickly and accurately, was administered to the student participants at the beginning, middle, and end of the program. The same protocol for testing is followed each time the assessments are administered. Although their ORF scores were still below the benchmark for each time period, there was an increase in their scores and scores for students 1, 3, and 4 indicated growth over time from the beginning of the program to the end of the program. The

benchmark for each administration period increases and the passages also are more difficult in the second and third administrations of the assessment.

According to responses from parent interviews, the reading support had a positive impact on achievement. Parent 3 stated that her daughter was more competent in reading and “can focus more on expression when she reads because she is reading better”. Additionally, according to teachers’ responses, the reading portion of the after-school program gave extra support that the at-risk students needed and “helped them build reading skills”. These teachers observed, as they worked with their students, an increase in their ability to read fluently, read aloud with confidence, and grow as a reader. A not insignificant benefit was the pleasure these teachers took in being able to see firsthand how the extra “time on task” aided the students.

### **Research question 2.**

The second research question addressed: What impact did the enrichment activities, offered in the after-school program at PBS Elementary School during the 2009-2010 school year, have on reading achievement for at-risk students? The enrichment activities that students participated in varied. The students selected the activities at the beginning of each after-school session when they registered.

### ***Insights gained from student responses.***

Each student chose the activities in which they wished to participate. Student 1, student 2, and student 4 took computers. There were seven other students who were in the computer class. These seven were students who also participated in the after-school program, but who attended the homework club while the PBS scholars attended the reading program. All of the students in the after-school program went directly to the cafeteria after-school at 2:40 PM. They sat at the

cafeteria tables according to grades and ate their snack. They were able to talk with their friends. Then, at 3:00 PM, the students, who were already assigned to an adult leader, went to a designated classroom where they had homework club. The four PBS scholars went to their designated classrooms for the reading program. At 4:00 PM, all students moved to their activity classroom.

During the computer activity, the students met in the computer lab. The instructor for the first session of this activity was a recent college graduate with an education major. During the second session of the after-school program, the computer instructor was a PBS teaching assistant who had expertise in computer software. Both activity leaders instructed the students in conducting research and using Microsoft Word and Excel programs. Most of the PBS students are familiar with the computer lab because their teachers take them to the computer lab on a regular basis, especially when they are completing their final draft for writing assignments.

Student 1 indicated that she enjoyed the activities and small group, but also that the research part of the computer club was “difficult... and a little frustrating”. This class was offered twice a week, thus, it is referred to as a club. Generally, students do not find that working on the computers and learning the programs are difficult or frustrating. This student is the same one who mentioned being tired sometimes because she had evening activities to attend after the program was over. One could speculate that her fatigue was a contributing factor at those times when she felt frustrated. Student 2 stated that he really “liked the reading part of the program.....but didn’t like some of the clubs.

### *Insights for Future Planning of After-School Programs.*

These comments provided this researcher with valuable information for planning future enrichment activities offered in the after-school program. This was the first year of this program and there were so many things to learn and to improve, from what kinds of snacks were provided, to what activities would students mostly likely to enjoy, etc. The first PBS scholars were students who are focused on school work and in particular reading, and perhaps in the future, more activities that are centered on reading would be beneficial, at least for students like these.

Other activities in which students participated included: arts and crafts, basketball, board games, baton twirling, girly girls, minute to win it, sand art, science, sewing, sand art, and theater. Prior to the inception of the PBS COZ after-school program, there was no such program of this kind. The students responded that they enjoyed these activities, liked working in small groups, and being with friends. This program allowed the students to have more time with their classmates, whom they referred to as their friends. The pleasure students took in the extra bonding time that was afforded by these activities will be considered when future after-school activities are decided upon.

### *Social insights.*

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory is based on the understanding that people learn from each other, observing, imitating, and modeling. The three variables that influence learning are the person, the behavior, and the environment. This after-school program provided learning opportunities in a social environment. This researcher believes that the social aspect of the

program had a positive effect on the student participants. This insight is based on parent, student, and teacher responses to interview questions.

Each student mentioned that they really enjoyed working in classes that had small numbers of students. They referred to these students as their friends. In addition to the small number of students in the classes, the structure of the activity lent itself to a social learning environment. Parent responses indicated that their children enjoyed the activities and according to parent 4, “it was a fun way to learn that was different from the regular school day”.

#### ***Favorable responses from teachers.***

Furthermore, the teachers stated that they liked working with a small group of students. This allowed for more time for personalization than they would normally have during the regular school day. Regular class size for third and fourth grade teachers is twenty-three to twenty-eight students. Additionally, Teacher 1 indicated that the activities gave the students “time to work cooperatively”. Teacher 2 attested to the fact that the students “enjoyed the clubs and activities”. This teacher did state during her interview that she didn’t think that the activities or clubs had an impact on the students’ reading achievement, but certainly did have a positive impact on them socially.

#### ***Social aspect of the problem.***

The positive references by the students, their parents, and teachers lead this researcher to conclude that the social aspect of the program was an important one. Perhaps, the positive feelings or beliefs held by students about the program and the school may ultimately have a positive influence on their learning. Renowned psychologist Howard Gardner’s multiple

intelligence theory supports extracurricular or enrichment activities that build social skills and self-esteem, and that result in increased learning (Gardner, 1993).

### **Research question 3.**

The third research question addressed: What is the behavioral impact (meaning student's school attendance and student's behavior at school) of the PBS after-school program on student learning for at-risk students? Responses from interviews with student participants, their parents, and teachers, indicated no change in their attendance and behavior at schools. Teachers specifically responded that student behavior and attendance was not impacted because these students had excellent behavior and attendance prior to entering the after-school program.

Student attendance ranged from 95% to 97%. Report cards of students 1, 2, and 3 indicated they were at grade level in all subjects with the exception of reading. Student 4's report card indicated that he was at or approaching grade level in all subjects, except for reading. It is significant to note that student 3 indicated that the after-school program helped her to be a "better student...better reader... and more organized". Additionally, the parent of student 2 stated that the after-school helped her son. She said that he always struggled with reading, but getting the extra help made a difference in his reading, and also his self-esteem.

Students' grades are reflective of assessments and the culmination skills that they have demonstrated to their teacher in specific subject areas. Reading is the thread that runs through every elementary school subject. At PBS Elementary School, students receive a grade in each individual subject of reading, writing, listening, math, science, social studies, art, music, physical education, and library. The grades are assigned according to the following:

- 1- Significantly below grade level

2- Approaching grade level

3- At grade level

4- Above grade level

It is not surprising that a student may have a 1 or 2 in reading but a 3 in math and/or science, as in the case of PBS student 2; because, if that student can demonstrate the subject knowledge of what is expected at grade level, the fact the student is a struggling reader would not diminish his/her grade in that subject area. Furthermore, struggling readers are provided with help or accommodations in subjects where their reading may impede their learning of that subject. For example, the teacher would ensure that a student who struggles in reading understands the concepts being taught in math, science, social studies, etc.

#### **Research question 4.**

The fourth research question: What benefits do parents of at-risk students perceive for their children who participated in the after-school program? The parent responses to this question affirmed the after-school program. These parents attributed the following benefits to the after-school program:

- Increased opportunities to learn
- Increased desire to learn
- The extra reading support helped with reading fluency and comprehension
- Interest in reading piqued because of increased confidence
- Small group and one-on-one help made a difference
- Less anxiety about reading

- Better at blending sounds
- Fun way to learn
- Different than the regular school day

Furthermore, parent 4 stated another advantage of the after-school program was that it kept her son off the streets because “there is nothing for kids to do after-school”. This may be an additional benefit of such after-school program. As stated in the article by Rinehart (2008), “parents lack good alternatives for care after the school day ends” (p.1). This parent found merit in the program, which helped her child learn while also providing a safe environment in the after-school hours.

#### **Post evaluation.**

This evaluation includes truth statements and divergent findings regarding the value of the program according to parents, teachers, and students (based on interviews); insights gained that ascribe a positive impact of the after-school program; and any other effects of the program, intended or unintended. The responses regarding the activities and clubs were insightful for future planning of activities for students. The responses to interview questions from the student participants, parents, and their teachers were supportive of the after-school program, but also insightful regarding things that needed to be adjusted. For example, student 1 expressed enjoying the computer class, but that at times she was frustrated because “it was too difficult”. This same student expressed enthusiasm for the program; however she did say that at times she was tired because it was such a long day. The school day is from 8:30 AM to 2:40 PM and the after-school program went until 5:30 PM. This student did indicate that she also has sports teams that she is on and would have to go to a game after the program. Sometimes, she didn't

get home until 8:00pm. That does make for a very long day for a third grade student, and must be factored into future planning.

***Connections to previous and future research.***

Spielberger & Halpern (2002) suggest that there are principles and purposes that hold across all after-school settings for supporting children's literacy development. After-school programs that provide additional resources, such as access to writing tools and materials, lending libraries, computer and word processing capabilities, language-rich board games, and dramatic play opportunities, can strengthen children's literacy skills (Spielberger & Halpern, 2002). This researcher sees the importance of planning activities in future after-school sessions with a central focus on literacy.

Furthermore, Daniel Duke (2006) notes that it is not just the presence of an after-school program that guarantees increased student achievement, but the curriculum and content of the program. He stresses the importance of strengthening children's self-efficacy in respect to reading and writing (Duke, 2006). The PBS students and their parents did state that they enjoyed the reading and that it helped them. These positive feelings about the program and their own experiences with receiving the reading support may play a role in the student's confidence about school, in particular, their reading ability.

***Impact on curriculum in future planning efforts.***

Protheroe (2006) in her article, *Successful Afterschool Programs*, outlines what research says about effective after-school programs and the need for those programs to be evaluated based on student achievement. This issue has been addressed in a meeting held just recently with the

program coordinator and the after-school personnel. This effort had led to future meetings being scheduled to further discuss the content and curriculum of the after-school program.

*Learner outcomes.*

The findings of this study and the evaluation of this program have led this researcher to conclude that the program yielded a positive impact on the at-risk student participants. This is based on the following outcomes:

- an increase in ORF DIBELS reading scores of at-risk students who participated in the after-school program; scores for students 1, 3, and 4 indicated growth over the three administration periods, closing the achievement gap by 4%, 1%, and 18%, respectively. Scores for student 2 indicated a growth of 1% from the first to the second administration periods while the overall gap in achievement remained the same from the first to the third administration periods.
- a positive benefit was assigned to the program based on qualitative data gathered from interviews (parent, teacher, student participants).

A longitudinal study and/or a study that includes a greater sample size may confirm the insights and conclusions of this study, which were based on the after-school program in one elementary school during the course of one academic year.

**Summary**

Schools are charged with raising student achievement. The America Reads Challenge Act (1997), No Child Left Behind Act (2001), and State Departments of Education, hold schools accountable, challenging them to seek ways in which to meet standards and raise student achievement. American schools must consider providing students with increased opportunities

for learning, mentoring, and interaction in a social environment different from that of the regular school day. It is the responsibility of America's schools to prepare students for the future and provide for them opportunities that foster a life-long interest in reading and learning. This is important because, no matter what path students take as they mature in to adulthood, it is vital that they become literate. Otherwise, they may have difficulty obtaining employment and achieving their goals. Reading is essential for success in every aspect of life.

Student achievement, especially in reading, is of the utmost concern to the instructional leader. Reading is essential to student success. Failing to address this significant problem will only widen the achievement gap for at-risk students, placing not only the children but also educators and schools in danger of serious consequences. Children must be provided with all possible resources and opportunities that enhance their literacy skills. Doing so will increase learning and result in an enriched life.

#### **Knowledge and important insights.**

This study was a worthy investigation and contributed knowledge and insights regarding the PBS COZ after-school program. The primary goal of this study was to see if the gap in reading could be closed by providing at-risk students with increased opportunities for learning in an after-school program. This study explored the impact of an after school program on the reading achievement of at-risk students, that is those below proficiency levels in reading. Spielberger, Halpern et al. (2002) address the role of literacy in after-school programs. They state that after-school programs should provide complementary literacy experiences for students that are different from those offered during the regular school day. Their study produces findings that suggest that after-school programs foster both social and cultural dimensions of literacy. Some

of the activities offered in the PBS COZ after-school program were literacy-rich. For example, the computer class taught students how to conduct research and write reports. Additionally, the girly-girl activity was not only literacy-rich with reading about famous women, but also it was culturally-rich because the students learned about the culture of the famous women.

*Need to help students make connections.*

An interesting fact discovered through this study was that the students made very little, if any, connections to reading in the activities portion of the program. They acknowledged the reading support that they received, but didn't make significant reference to any reading experiences that may have been part of an activity class. One student, student 3, did refer to reading lyrics in the chorus activity class. Student 4 stated he took the theater activity because he "wanted to read scripts". Other than these comments, the students did not relate to the activities as additional opportunities for reading or literacy experiences. This was something that was discussed with the after-school staff in a follow-up meeting. It would be beneficial for teachers/activity leaders to help students make connections with the activity they are engaged in and reading. This would demonstrate to the students the need for reading, and that it is the thread that runs through everything that one does.

It was concluded by this researcher that the additional reading support and enrichment activities had a positive impact on student learning for the PBS. The increased time for learning for these students not only resulted in an increase in their reading achievement, but also their confidence as readers. The insights gained and lessons learned were stated earlier in this study. They have given not only given this researcher much to reflect upon, but also valuable information that was shared with the school community. This researcher is confident that

insights gained and lessons learned will have a lasting impact on the planning of future after-school programs at PBS Elementary School, which is further discussed in the following section.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

This study provided the researcher and the school community with data and insights that validates the connections between after school programs and student learning. Students, particularly at-risk students, need increased opportunities for learning in after-school programs that are more than daycare or babysitting providers. Programs like the one described in this study provide students with increased opportunities for learning in a safe environment during after-school hours.

Insights gained and lessons learned will provide valuable information in planning future after-school interventions, and have led to the following recommendations for improving this program:

- This researcher deemed that the most significant issue that arose from this study is one that can best be expressed by the following question: “how does one achieve greater participation in the reading portion of the after-school program for struggling readers?” This is particularly important, because there were students who would have benefited from the reading support offered in after-school program, but they elected to participate in the homework club instead. This issue has generated a discussion among this researcher (school principal), program coordinator, and teachers. Further discussions will likely lead to an additional investigation of this question. A future consideration would be to conduct a study that would include a survey, based on the question posed above. At-risk students and their parents would be the best candidates to participate in a future

study. Their responses to a survey may provide insights as to why students would opt to participate in a homework club, instead of reading support.

- Ongoing assessment of the after-school program to ensure that the academic content and enrichment activities are effective for increasing student learning.
- An investigation of the intervention materials and strategies used for the reading support so that there is greater growth or increase in scores towards the benchmark.
- An examination of the teacher instruction and the teacher's fidelity to implement the program targeting specific needs of the student, especially if the academic gains have not been substantial, or as expected. It is the opinion of this researcher that it would be beneficial for teachers to use different intervention resources than those provided in the core reading program during the regular school day program.
- Collaboration of after-school program teachers/instructors with regular school day teachers would establish better consistency. It is important for on-going communication with the regular school day teachers and after-school teachers regarding the students, their specific, needs, progress, and what works or doesn't work for them. Protheroe (2006) identifies the importance of communication between school day and after-school staff and designing programs that support and expand upon the curriculum of the regular classroom.
- Also, after-school programs that offer enrichment activities that are appealing may result in an increase in student participation. This wasn't as much of an issue in the second and third session, because students did share their interest with the program coordinator.

However, the first session had limited opportunities. Perhaps a survey to gather information from parents and students regarding what they would like to see offered would have been beneficial, before the program began. Specifically, a student survey of what they expected from the program would have been beneficial. A formal survey was not conducted during the 2009-2010 school year. However, the after-school program coordinator and staff did receive verbal suggestions from students after the first session.

- A survey for parents and after-school teachers/instructors to gather information on the suggestions they may have on how to improve the program and improve learning. A formal survey was not conducted during the 2009-2010 school year.

It is hoped that insights and lessons learned will initiate changes, resulting in an increase in student participation and continual support from all the stakeholders. It is important to understand that a program in its infancy stage may not meet all the intended outcomes, but will develop over time (Chappell, 2006). Future planning of the after-school program will include surveys about how the program can be improved. Additionally, soliciting more input from students, parents, and teachers can only make for a better program.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In addition to the study referred to in the previous section, it would be valuable for future studies to use a larger sample size and perhaps a research design that utilizes control and experimental groups. This researcher recommends that a secondary study with a focus on the after-school program content or curriculum would be beneficial in determining the academic support needed to impact learning. Aronson et al. conclude that time is but one of many variables to be considered for raising student achievement and that time alone may not result in

improvement in learning; it is also about what takes place during the extra time. Consideration should be given to the effective use of time and the quality of students' learning experiences (Aronson et al., 1999).

### **Future studies.**

This study was based on the initial year of the after-school program. The program was instituted, and the first session was essentially a learning experience for the program administrators and teachers, as well as students. This after-school program was new to PBS, and although the program coordinator had some experience, having taught in an after-school program at another school, she had never managed such an endeavor. Additionally, there were a few teachers, and some students, who were knowledgeable about after-school programs running in other city schools. For example, a few of the teachers were familiar with after-school programs because prior to coming to PBS Elementary School, they taught at schools that had after-school programs. Some of the students were aware and even participated in after-school programs because they previously attended schools that had after-school programs.

A future study that examines after-school programs in other schools with a focus on program design may provide valuable information for further development of this PBS COZ after-school program. Further study may also examine enrichment activities that are offered in after-school programs to gain insights into their impact on student learning and/or behavior. Furthermore, a cultural change project that analyzes the external factors affecting learning such as attitude, behavior, peer pressure, home environments, and home-school connections could also be a byproduct of this study. Both school culture and a student's home environment are factors in determining how students perform in school.

This researcher concludes that findings from this study did result in an increase in learning for the student participants and for the school administration. These findings and those of recommended future studies may be generalized to other schools that have, or plan to begin, an after-school program as a strategy for raising student achievement, specifically in reading.

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*APPENDIX A*

**THE PBS COZ AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM**

***BUDGET***

**Table 1**

| <b>AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM BUDGET</b> |                  |                |                |                |                   |                     |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>21st CCLC Grant</b>             |                  |                |                |                |                   |                     |
| <b>Position</b>                    | <b>Positions</b> | <b>Rate/Hr</b> | <b>Hrs/Day</b> | <b>Days/Wk</b> | <b>No. of Wks</b> | <b>Expenditure</b>  |
| Program Coordinator                | 1                | \$ 18.00       | 4              | 4              | 30                | \$ 8,640.00         |
| Program Assistant                  | 1                | 18.00          | 3.5            | 4              | 30                | 7,560.00            |
| Activity Teachers                  | 6                | 18.00          | 1.5            | 4              | 30                | 19,440.00           |
| Homework Club Leaders              | 3                | 18.00          | 1              | 4              | 30                | 6,480.00            |
| Program Assistants                 | 2                | 7.40           | 2.5            | 4              | 30                | 4,440.00            |
| Outside Vendors                    |                  |                |                |                |                   | 4,000.00            |
| Supplies                           |                  |                |                |                |                   | 5,000.00            |
| 21st CCLC Grant Sub-Total          |                  |                |                |                |                   | \$ 55,560.00        |
| <b>Title 1 Grant</b>               |                  |                |                |                |                   |                     |
| <b>Position</b>                    | <b>Positions</b> | <b>Rate/Hr</b> | <b>Hrs/Day</b> | <b>Days/Wk</b> | <b>No. of Wks</b> | <b>Expenditure</b>  |
| Reading Teachers                   | 2                | \$ 25.00       | 1              | 4              | 30                | \$ 6,000.00         |
| Title 1 Grant Sub-Total            |                  |                |                |                |                   | 6,000.00            |
| 21st CCLC Grant Sub-Total          |                  |                |                |                |                   | 55,560.00           |
| FICA (\$52,560 x 7.6%)             |                  |                |                |                |                   | 3,994.56            |
| <b>Total After-School Budget</b>   |                  |                |                |                |                   | <b>\$ 65,554.56</b> |

Note. Outside vendors are instructors in specialized areas.

The guidelines for the after-school budget were given to the school principal/this researcher and the program coordinator by the district director. This budget does not include the in-kind support provided by the school district, such as use of the school building, classroom space, and custodians. There was no busing needed as the student participants were from the school and

were picked up at the end of the day by their parents. The committee that developed the program did not require any funding. The on-going professional development provided was funded through COZ, and the federal and state partners that support after-school programs. Staff in the after-school program received basic first aid and safety training through the Red Cross. An after-school alliance organization provided support and advisors to the staff in the after-school program. Additionally, the local university partnered with staff and provided professional development classes for in child development. Two of the activity leaders in this program attended such classes.

### ***SCHEDULE***

***Table 2***

#### **AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM SCHEDULE**

**2009-2010 School Year**

| <b>Time</b>       | <b>Event</b>                     |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2:40 pm – 3:00 pm | Check-in and Snack               |
| 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm | Reading Program or Homework Club |
| 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm | Enrichment Activities or Clubs   |
| 5:30 pm – 6:00 pm | Parent/Guardian pick-up          |

***APPENDIX B*****PHONE SCRIPT FOR CONTACTING PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

Hello Mr./Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_. This is Mrs. McWilliams, the principal of PBS Elementary School where your child attends. I am pursuing a doctoral degree and as part of my student course work at Northeastern University's College of Professional Studies, I am conducting my doctoral research project. The purpose of my project is to examine the impact of the PBS COZ after-school program that was implemented during the 2009-2010 school year. My study will investigate whether the increase time and opportunities provided in the after-school program resulted in an increase in reading achievement for your child who participated in the program. I invite you to participate in this study through interviews that I will conduct with you, your child, and your child's teacher. Additionally, I seek your consent to collect, use, and document data regarding your child and his/her participation in the after-school program. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this study will have no effect on your child's standing at PBS. Would you be interested in participating in this study?

If so, that is great. Thank you. I would like to set up a date and time to go over the consent process and conduct interviews with you and your child. Could you tell me when you are available?

If you are not interested in participating in this study, I thank you for your time.

## *APPENDIX C*

### **REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

**Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Boston, MA**

**Name of Investigators:** Cheryl McWilliams, Doctoral Student, Dr. Lynda Beltz and Dr. David Szabla, Advisors

**Title of Project:** Increase Time, Increase Learning: The Impact of an After-School Program on the Reading Achievement of At-Risk Students.

March, 2011

Dear Parent:

I am inviting you and your child to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but I will explain it to you first. You may ask me any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell me if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate, if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, I will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

#### **PURPOSE OF STUDY**

I am pursuing a doctoral degree and am conducting my doctoral research project. The purpose of my project is to examine the impact of the after-school program on students who are below benchmark in reading. My study will investigate whether the increase time and opportunities provided in the after-school program result in an increase in reading achievement for the students (your child) who participated in the program.

#### **WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

If you decide to take part in this study, I will ask you and your child to participate in an interview with me regarding your child's reading achievement and his/her participation in the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. Additionally, I seek your permission to collect, analyze, and document the following data for your child: test scores including DIBELS assessments, progress monitoring, classroom grades, attendance and behavior records, and interview data regarding your child's participation in the after-school program.

Finally, your review of my interpretations of project data, particularly as it represents your child, is critical to the validity of my research. I will actively seek your review of findings and conclusions. Your verification of my interpretations will be valuable.

**WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW MUCH TIME?**

The interview, which will be scheduled at a convenient time for you and your child, will take place at the PBS Elementary School and will take about 45 minutes. You and your child will be interviewed together.

**WILL THERE BE ANY RISK OR DISCOMFORT?**

I do not foresee participation in the project posing any risks for you or your child.

**WILL WE BENEFIT BY BEING IN THIS RESEARCH?**

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your answers may help us to learn more about the additional learning activities provided in the after-school program and their impact on students who are reading below level.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION ABOUT ME AND MY CHILD?**

Confidentially of data collected for your child and your participation in the study will be maintained. I will use only group data and will not identify you, your child, or anyone by name in any publication of project results.

**CAN I STOP OUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

Your participation in the research project is entirely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a parent/guardian and student at PBS Elementary School.

**WILL I BE PAID FOR MY PARTICIPATION?**

There is no compensation offered for participation.

**WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS?**

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me, Cheryl McWilliams at [mewilliams.c@husky.neu.edu](mailto:mewilliams.c@husky.neu.edu), the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Lynda Beltz at [l.beltz@neu.edu](mailto:l.beltz@neu.edu), the Principal Investigator overseeing the research.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: [irb@neu.edu](mailto:irb@neu.edu). You may call anonymously if you wish.

**I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE AND TO HAVE MY CHILD TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH.**

**Name of child (print)** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of parent/guardian agreeing to take part**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed name of person above**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed name of person above**

*APPENDIX D*

**SCRIPT FOR PARENT INTERVIEWS**

**Researcher:**

Hello Mr. / Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview.

Your child, \_\_\_\_\_ participated in the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. I would like to ask you the following questions in order to gain an understanding of the impact of the after-school program on your child.

***Questions***

- Your child attended the full 3 hour program which included an hour long reading intervention and various enrichment activities/clubs. Did your child attend all the sessions offered during the academic school year? Did he/she attend on a regular basis?  
 Yes  
 No
- Was your child recommended by his/her teacher or school administration to attend the after-school reading program because he/she has been considered at-risk in reading based on DIBELS benchmark data?  
 Yes  
 No
- What enrichment activities/clubs did your child participate in?  
 Session 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Session 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Session 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Did he/she choose these activities on his/her own?

\_\_\_\_\_Yes

\_\_\_\_\_No

- Do you think that the additional reading support provided by a certified teacher helped your child gain literacy skills, based on his/her DIBELS scores and any changes in his/her reading habits?

\_\_\_\_\_Yes

\_\_\_\_\_No

- What benefits, if any, do you perceive the after-school program had on your child?
- Is there anything that you would like to share about your child's participation in the program that would be helpful to this study?

## APPENDIX E

### CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

**Northeastern University, Department of Education, Boston, MA**

**Name of Investigator(s)**: Dr. Lynda Beltz and Cheryl McWilliams

**Title of Project**: *Increase Time, Increase Learning: The Impact of an After-School Program on the Reading Achievement of At-Risk Students*

#### **Request to Participate in Research**

We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the PBS COZ After-School Program instituted in the 2009-2010 school year as a strategy for closing the achievement gap in reading for at-risk students.

**You must be at least 18 years old to be in this research project.**

The study will take place at PBS Elementary School and interviews will take about 45 minutes. If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to answer a series of questions and discuss your opinions about your student's participation in the after-school program.

**There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.**

**There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study.** However, your answers may help us to learn more about the additional learning opportunities provided in the after-school program and their impact on the students who are reading below level.

**Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner.** Only the researchers will know that you participated in this study. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being of this project.

**The decision to participate in this research project is up to you.** You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a teacher employed at this school.

**You will not be paid for your participation in this study.**

**If you have any questions about this study**, please feel free to call Cheryl McWilliams at [mcwilliams.c@husky.neu.edu](mailto:mcwilliams.c@husky.neu.edu), the person mainly responsible for the research.

You can also contact Dr. Lynda Beltz at [l.beltz@neu.edu](mailto:l.beltz@neu.edu), the Principal Investigator.

**If you have any questions about your rights in this research**, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University,

Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: [irb@neu.edu](mailto:irb@neu.edu). You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you.  
Cheryl McWilliams

*APPENDIX F***SCRIPT FOR TEACHER INTERVIEWS****Researcher:**

Hello Mr. / Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview.

Your student, \_\_\_\_\_ participated in the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. I would like to ask you the following questions in order to gain an understanding of the impact of the after-school program on your student.

*Questions*

- Your student attended the full 3 hour program, which included an hour long reading intervention and various enrichment activities/clubs? Did you recommend this student for the after-school reading program because he/she has been considered at-risk in reading based on DIBELS benchmark data?  
\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_ No
- To your knowledge did he/she attend all the sessions offered during the academic school year? Did he/she attend on a regular basis?  
\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_ No
- Do you think that the additional reading support provided by a certified teacher helped your student gain literacy skills?

\_\_\_\_Yes

\_\_\_\_No

What areas of need were targeted?

- What benefits, if any, do you perceive the after-school program had on your student?

Did you notice any change in this student's attendance or social behavior while he/she attended the after-school program?

- Is there anything that you would like to share about your student's participation in the program that would be helpful to this study?

*APPENDIX G***CHILD ASSENT SCRIPT**

Hi, my name is Mrs. McWilliams.

I would like to ask you a couple of questions about your participation in the PBS COZ after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year.

Your mom and/or dad who signed the parental consent form said it was o.k. for you to speak with me.

Even though they said it is o.k., you don't have to if you don't want to. No one will get mad if you say no.

Would you like to answer a couple of questions?

If you do not wish to answer any questions, it is not a problem. That is fine. Thank you for speaking with me.

If you would like to answer some questions, that is great. Let's get started.

*APPENDIX H***SCRIPT FOR STUDENT INTERVIEWS****Researcher:**

Hello \_\_\_\_\_. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. You participated in the after-school program during the 2009-2010 school year. You were recommended by your teacher or school administrator to attend the after-school reading program because of your reading achievement based DIBELS benchmark assessment. I would like to ask you the following questions in order to gain an understanding of the impact, if any that the after-school program had on your reading achievement.

*Questions*

- Did you attend all the sessions offered during the academic school year? Did you attend on a regular basis?

\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_ No

- Do you think that the additional reading support provided by a certified teacher helped you gain literacy skills?

\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_ No

What areas of reading did you need help in? Do you believe you have made improvement in reading, specifically in those areas?

\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_ No

- What enrichment activities/clubs did you participate in? Did you choose these activities? If so, why? Did these enrichment activities incorporate reading skills? If so, could you please describe how?
- What benefits, if any, do you perceive the after-school program had on you as a student? Has there been any change in your school attendance? Behavior? Are you doing academically better?
- Is there anything that you would like to share about your participation in the program that would be helpful to this study?