

Title: Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of the Waterford Early Reading Program, a Computer-Based Instruction Program: A Case Study of the Evidence from Teachers' Interviews and Students' Achievement Data in Selective Pennsylvania Urban Elementary Schools

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The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of the Waterford Early Reading Program (WERP) and of their students' achievements associated with the use of this computer-based reading instruction program. The 20 teachers interviewed for this study were from six large inner-city elementary schools. The methods of inquiry were interviews with the teachers, the teachers' reflective writings, and a review of school documents, which were provided by this district.

Note some of the findings presented here from this study. First, the teachers needed to be well trained to implement the WERP successfully. Some of the teachers were concerned that they had not received technical computer training. Another finding was that, when teachers lacked enthusiasm about the WERP, their students also seemed to be not excited about the program. Conversely, when teachers were enthusiastic about the WERP, their students excelled in the skills that dealt specifically with language acquisition, comprehension, and fluency and the four categories of phonological awareness. It seems, for the WERP to be successful, the teachers needed to believe that the program would help them improve their students' literacy skills.

The findings suggested that the WERP does encompass the Outside-in and Inside-out Theory of literacy. According to this theory, when people read, they make use of information from two interdependent domains – outside-in of and inside-out of the printed word. Information outside the printed word, such as a story’s plot, helps the reader identify the words on a page. Information inside the printed word, such as knowing the alphabet, enables the reader to translate print into sounds and sounds into print. Readers use both these domains all the time. Because the WERP is based on this theory, educators can use the program to identify what is missing when a child is not reading successfully.

The teachers in this study saw the WERP as an effective computer-based reading program that helped them better prepare students to begin reading. According to the teachers, the program appears to provide particular help to low-performing students. All but one of the teachers viewed the WERP as an instructional resource that made a significant difference in the classroom.