**Chapter 3: Methodology**

Traditional literacy instruction methods have failed to improve students’ reading abilities, as evidenced by stagnant Georgia Milestones scores, with only 39% of students meeting proficiency on the Georgia End of Year Literacy Benchmark (Georgia Department of Education, 2023a). This trend is mirrored in declining national reading proficiency levels, with the 2019 and 2022 NAEP assessments revealing a concerning three-point decrease in fourth grade reading proficiency since 2019 (NCES, 2023), highlighting the urgent need for innovative approaches to literacy instruction.

The problem this qualitative case study will explore is low achievement scores on literacy benchmarks among elementary students in a suburban public Georgia school district. As a result of the low achievement, Georgia's public education system is currently experiencing significant pedagogical literacy shifts in how teachers approach literacy education. Following July 2023, lawmakers passed House Bill 538, also known as Georgia’s Early Literacy Act, into law. All K-3 educators must undergo training based on research in the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy methods by July 2025. This legislation mandates that all teacher’s complete science-backed training in the Science of Reading called Structured Literacy by July 2025 (Georgia Department of Education, 2023b). The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the effect of implementing structured literacy training on low achievement scores of literacy assessments among elementary students in a suburban public school district in Georgia.

The research question guiding the study is as follows:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of elementary teachers on the effect of implementing structured literacy professional learning on literacy assessment scores among elementary students in a suburban school district in Georgia? By examining teacher perspectives on training, schema shifts, and instructional strategies, this qualitative study will provide valuable insights to school, district, and state leaders as they navigate this new approach to teaching, to improve low literacy assessment scores in Georgia.

The remaining segments discussed will be research methodology and design, the role of the researcher, research procedures, and data instruments. Research methodology and design will be explained based on the problem, purpose, and research question. The researcher’s role will be clearly defined, ensuring objectivity and adherence to ethical guidelines. Research procedures will be established, detailing the steps involved in conducting the study, from data collection to analysis and interpretation. Data instruments will be carefully selected or developed and validated to gather relevant information from subject matter experts (SMEs). The ethical procedures section will discuss how the researcher will ensure reliability and validity while navigating ethical considerations throughout the study. Finally, a summary will be provided to encapsulate the key points discussed.

**Research Methodology, Design, and Rationale**

The selection of a study’s methodology and design is shaped by the problem, purpose, and research questions (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), this process involves steps ranging from broad assumptions to more specific methods for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. When choosing a research methodology and design, it is crucial to consider the researcher’s experience and the intended audience (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The selected methodology and design guide researchers in determining appropriate data collection, preparation, analysis, and interpretation. (Yin, 2018).

**Methodology**

To investigate teacher perceptions regarding the implementation of structured literacy practices, this study conducts a qualitative approach. As described by Cresswell and Poth (2018), qualitative methodology allows researchers to explore personal accounts and capture genuine perspectives through inquiry. Using qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and open-ended surveys, researchers can gather rich, descriptive data that provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, successes, and overall perceptions of teachers concerning structured literacy implementation.

**Design**

When the goal is to provide a comprehensive description and analysis of a bounded system using various data sources, a case study approach is suitable (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2023; Cresswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design is suitable for answering the research questions in this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of elementary teachers’ perceptions regarding the effect of implementing structured literacy training on literacy benchmark scores. The case study design enables the researcher to gather rich, detailed data from multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, and focus groups, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the case (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Based on the information encompassing a qualitative case study approach, it leads to the idea that this case study is exploratory in nature. Exploratory case studies are used when the researcher aims to investigate a phenomenon or situation that has not been thoroughly studied before, and there is a lack of clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 2018). Structured Literacy mandates are currently beginning to be implemented in Georgia because of House Bill 538 (Georgia Department of Education. (2023b, April 13). While low achievement scores in literacy benchmarks have been studied, the teacher perceptions centered on the new mandate of Structured Literacy Training and the implementation thereof have yet to fully be explored. Exploratory case studies will generate new ideas, hypotheses, and theories about this subject under investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Rationale for Design**

This study aims to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and identify potential factors that influence it (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Specifically, it seeks to understand teachers’ perspectives on how this training influences literacy benchmark outcomes in their classrooms. The exploratory case study design can provide practical implications and expected benefits of the research into recommendations for educators, administrators, and policymakers (Yin, 2018). By acquiring a deep understanding of elementary teachers’ perceptions and experiences with structured literacy training, the researcher can identify best practices, challenges, and potential solutions that can inform future implementation efforts and support the improvement of literacy benchmark scores. This research aims to offer insights for leaders at the local, district, and state levels in Georgia by exploring teacher viewpoints on training methods, mindset shifts, and implementation of teaching strategies to enhance literacy performance. exploring teacher viewpoints on training methods mindset shifts and implementation of teaching strategies this research aims to offer insights for leaders at the local, district and state levels as they embrace this new instructional approach with the goal of enhancing literacy performance, in Georgia.

**Role of the Researcher**

As a researcher conducting an exploratory case study, I will be responsible for designing and conducting the study, gathering and analyzing data, and presenting the findings (Yin, 2018). Being the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, my role is crucial in shaping the study’s outcome (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I will develop the open ended questionnaire protocol, protect participants identities and analyze the data to investigate elementary teachers’ perceptions of how implementing structured literacy training affects literacy benchmark scores. Throughout the study, it is my duty to maintain impartiality, objectivity, and transparency to ensure the credibility and of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

While researching in one’s own workplace can offer valuable insights and access to participants, it is crucial to recognize and address potential biases and power dynamics that may affect the study’s results (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In this study, I am a classroom teacher working alongside some participants in one school, and I do not hold a position of authority. My relationships with the participants are strictly professional. I will conduct the study at my school, as well as other schools that have taken part in structured literacy training.

To address factors that may undermine the reliability of data and validity of interpretations and conclusions, I will implement several strategies. First, subject matter experts will review the questions on the questionnaires to ensure their suitability and alignment with the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This expert review will help to establish the face and content validity of the data collection instruments (Yin, 2018). Second, I will engage in member checking by sharing questionnaire results with participants to confirm the accuracy of their responses and allow them to provide clarification or additional information (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

This process will enhance the credibility of the findings by ensuring that I have accurately captured the participants’ perspectives. Last, I will employ data triangulation, which will involve diverse candidates and settings, to corroborate findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2018). Triangulation will strengthen the validity of the study’s conclusions by providing multiple lines of evidence to support the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Research Procedures**

To establish trust in the results of an exploratory qualitative case study, researchers must conduct a well-structured and methodical approach that addresses key aspects, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2020). The research procedures outlined in this section will detail the step-by-step process of conducting the study, including the population and sample selection and recruitment. By providing a clear and transparent description of the research procedures, readers will understand how the study was conducted and evaluate the trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Yin, 2018).

**Population and Sample Size**

This qualitative exploratory case study focuses on elementary school teachers within a suburban public school district in Georgia as the defined population. The suburban public school district comprises 61 elementary schools, with over 1,800 classroom teachers. Elementary schools within the district that have participated in structured literacy training programs like LETRS, OG, Cox Campus, or REAP (Reading is Essential for All People) are potential sites for the study. The elementary schools must be currently implementing the training within their building for at least 1 full year.

The study will focus specifically on a sample of teachers who meet the following inclusion criteria: currently teaching grades K-3 (phonics), teaching in a school actively implementing a structured literacy curriculum and being available to participate in questionnaires and interviews. Out of the 61 elementary schools in the district, 16 have completed formal REAP training, 61 have completed LETRS training, and all 61 schools will have completed Cox College Training by the data collection date of January 2025. This represents an estimated pool of 500 K-3 teachers who meet the primary criteria for participation.

The total target sample size for this study is 15-20 participants. Participants will consist of 4 or 5 teachers from at least four different schools within the suburban county. Ideally, the schools will be in different demographics in the county. This sample size is consistent with recommendations for qualitative research, as it allows for the collection of rich, in-depth data and attempting saturation while remaining manageable for the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Yin, 2018). Purposive sampling will be employed to select participants who meet the inclusion criteria and can provide valuable insights into implementing structured literacy training and its impact on student outcomes (Patton, 2015). This non-probability sampling method is appropriate for qualitative research, as it helps the researcher to select information-rich cases that will help to answer the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Recruitment**

Recruitment for this qualitative exploratory case study will occur in a Metro Atlanta, Georgia, suburban school district. The chosen school district in Georgia’s suburbs has set procedures for conducting research that needs to be followed. The researcher has reached out to the research office of the district and acquired a research application. This application will be filled out and submitted to secure permission for the research site (see Appendix A). Once the district approves the application, a list of potential research sites within the district will be provided by the research office for recruitment purposes. Principal approval at each elementary school needs to be obtained after the district office approves the application. The emails to each principal will be sent out in August 2024, as future administration assignments have not been disclosed.

To recruit participants, a recruitment flyer (see Appendix B) will be included in the weekly newsletter of the schools involved. The recruitment flyer will summarize the study’s objectives, the participant eligibility requirements, and the contact details of the researcher. A QR code will be on the front of the recruitment flyer for convenience. Once participants scan the QR code the recruitment letter (see Appendix C) will appear. The letter will outline the research study’s problem and purpose, provide researcher details, and include another link to the IRB-approved informed consent form for participants' review. Participants will decide whether to participate in the study based on its benefits and risks as outlined. Each participant will then have the opportunity to electronically sign the informed consent form (see Appendix D), containing information about the study’s purpose, methods, potential benefits, and risks. The recruitment letter, informed consent, and participant information, including emailed letter dates, and consent acceptance, will be securely recorded and tracked using a password-protected Microsoft Excel spreadsheet stored in OneDrive that only the researcher has access.

**Data Instrument**

In this qualitative case study, data collection instruments are used to gather rich, detailed information from participants and other relevant sources. The primary data collection method of this study is a 10 question open ended questionnaire. This instrument serves a specific purpose and aligns with the research question to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015; Tomaszewski et al., 2020; Tracy, 2020).

**Questionnaire**

Questionnaires are useful in qualitative research as they allow researchers to collect data from a larger sample than would be possible through interviews alone, while still providing opportunities for participants to share their thoughts and experiences in their own words (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The questionnaire will gather initial information from participants regarding their background, teaching experience, and exposure to structured literacy professional learning. This instrument is crucial for collecting baseline data that will inform the development of the interview protocol and help the researcher acquire a better understanding of the participants' contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roberts; 2020; Yin 2018). The questionnaire will comprise open-ended questions, allowing participants to provide elaborative responses. The choice of a questionnaire as a data collection instrument is justified by the ability to gather a wide range of information efficiently and systematically (Staller, 2022; Tomaszewski, 2020). To draft the questions for the questionnaire, the research question, which serves as the foundation for forming the interview questions, key concepts, and keywords were developed (see Appendix G). The initial draft of the questions was developed (see Appendix H). A set of questions, after incorporating revisions from SMEs was finalized (see Appendix J). The final questionnaire protocol consists of open-ended questions that are simple for participants to understand and aligned with the research question. Using these criteria ensures that the collected data effectively addresses the study's objectives (Roberts, 2020; Staller, 2022).

**Field Testing**

Using SMEs in field-testing and refining researcher-created instruments is a well-established practice in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015) To establish content validity and refine the researcher-created instruments, a series of field tests were conducted using three SMEs not affiliated with the American College of Education. The use of SMEs with diverse expertise and experiences related to the research topic is extremely valuable in establishing content validity through the SME review process (Patton, 2015).

These experts were chosen for their extensive knowledge and experience in implementing structured literacy programs and evaluating their effectiveness. One SME was a director of structured literacy professional learning. Another SME was a District Leader for ELA in grades K-5, who provided valuable insights into the alignment of the instruments with the district's literacy goals and initiatives. A third SME was an ELA School Lead who had recently completed a qualitative case study for his doctorate. With their expertise in qualitative research methodology and experience with similar studies, the SMEs offered guidance on refining the wording of questions to ensure they were open-ended and would elicit rich, detailed responses from participants (Kallio et. al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The SMEs were provided with the draft questionnaire (see Appendix H). The two draft revisions of the questionnaire were made because the first draft did not meet the level of openness desired by the third SME. SME feedback was carefully considered, and adaptations were made to the instruments based on the SMEs recommendations (see Appendix I). For example, based on the feedback of the first SME, questions about specific assessments were added. The third SME helped specify educational wording of formative or summative adding more clarity and guidance. Additionally, the second SME suggested changing the wording of training to literacy professional learning. Throughout reflective editing, final drafts of the questions were produced (see Appendix J).

**Data Collection**

Before beginning data collection, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at ACE and the district will be obtained to ensure ethical standards are met throughout the study. First, the IRB ACE approval will be obtained followed by the Metro Atlanta district where the study will be conducted. The Metro Atlanta district mandates that all applicants receive approval through a district IRB application. This process needs to be applied for after the IRB at ACE has been approved. The tools used for gathering data and the data collection procedures were carefully planned to suit the participant's needs and availability (Gray et al., 2020).

Questionnaires with open-ended questions will be prepared using Microsoft Forms and sent out to participants through their work email addresses. The initial question will serve as a consent form, allowing only those who agree to proceed with the survey. Participants who provide consent will then move on to the main questionnaire, consisting of ten questions related to the research topic. Time for the questionnaire to be completed is estimated between 10-15 minutes.

After submission, the questionnaires will be saved on a secure drive with password protection, ensuring each participant's privacy through unique identifiers. All recordings will be saved in the same secure OneDrive folder with a password after using the transcription tool available on Microsoft Teams. The Microsoft Forms site used for data collection is under Office 365 through the district's email and is a password-protected login that only the researcher has access to. Protecting research data confidentiality is a top priority (Brinkmann, 2020; Kallio et al., 2016).

Digital files, including questionnaires and consent forms, will be kept securely in a password-protected folder on a personal computer accessible only to the researcher. Throughout the study, the utilization of pseudonyms in the form of identification numbers will protect participants' confidentiality. All data collected during the study will be securely stored on the researcher's password-protected personal computer and backed up on the personal OneDrive cloud storage account, both of which are accessible only to the researcher.

To further safeguard participant privacy, all data will be securely stored on a password-protected external hard drive for three years. Upon completion of the study, all digital data files will be permanently deleted by the researcher using a secure data erasure software, CCleaner, to ensure that the files cannot be recovered. After the three-year period ends, digital files will be permanently removed from the external hard drive. Any physical copies of data, such as printed questionnaires or handwritten notes, will be locked in a filing cabinet the researcher only has access to, and these documents will be shredded using a cross-cut shredder after 3 years, following ACE policy, to maintain participant confidentiality. By taking these precautions, dedication to upholding confidentiality and maintaining data integrity throughout the study is evident.

**Data Preparation**

Each participant and their respective schools will receive unique pseudonym numbers to ensure confidentiality. To keep things organized in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, participants from the same school will be color-coded. For example, if participants 1 and 2 attend the same school, they will be given matching colors in the spreadsheet. This will be helpful for future analysis to see recurring or common themes among schools.

After each interview, participants will be provided with a copy of the submitted copy of the answers recording for review and verification. This step is crucial for ensuring data accuracy and allowing participants to clarify or expand on their responses if needed (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Any necessary corrections based on participant feedback will be made for accurate capture of the questionaries. Once the participant has confirmed the accuracy of the transcription, verified transcripts will be imported into the NVivo qualitative data analysis software, and the data analysis will proceed.

Protecting research data confidentiality is a top priority (Brinkmann, 2020; Kallio et al., 2016). The Microsoft Forms site used for data collection is under Office 365 through the district's email and is a password-protected login that only the researcher has access to. To further safeguard participant privacy, all data will be securely stored on a password-protected external hard drive for three years. After this period ends, digital files will be permanently removed from the external hard drive, which will then be crosscut shredded. By implementing these rigorous precautions in data management, a strong commitment to maintaining confidentiality and preserving data integrity will be upheld.

**Data Analysis**

Using Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis framework is justified in this study as it provides a flexible yet systematic approach to analyzing qualitative data. This method allows for a rich, detailed, and complex account of the data, enabling to identify patterns and themes that apply to the research question. The use of NVivo software will facilitate the organization, management, and analysis of the data, ensuring a rigorous and transparent process. This evidence-based model provides a systematic approach to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data. The six steps of the framework are: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

The data analysis process will begin with the researcher immersing themselves in the data by reading and re-reading the questionaries open ended answers and Excel document that has the answers from the questionnaire to gain a thorough understanding of the content. During this familiarization phase, notes will be taken and initial ideas for coding. Next, initial codes will be generated using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. NVivo will be used for data coding, analysis, and management throughout the study. Using a combination of emergent and pre-set codes, will allow for flexibility in capturing unanticipated insights while ensuring that the analysis remains focused on the research question (Tracy, 2020).

The initial coding process will involve open coding, where codes will be assigned to meaningful segments of data. Following open coding, axial coding will be conducted, which involves identifying relationships and connections among the coded data chunks. This process will help to organize the codes into broader categories and themes.

After the initial coding, themes will be searched for by collating the coded data extracts and examining them for patterns and relationships. A review of the themes will be conducted to ensure they are coherent, distinct, and relevant to the research question. This step may involve refining, combining, or discarding themes as needed (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Once the themes have been reviewed, the researcher will define and name each theme, capturing its essence and scope. A report will be produced that presents the findings in a clear, concise, and compelling manner. This report will use vivid examples and extracts from the data to support the identified themes, ensuring that the findings are grounded in the participants' experiences and perspectives.

**Reliability and Validity**

In qualitative research, credibility and trustworthiness play crucial roles in validating the study's results. Credibility focuses on the study's robustness and how accurately the researcher measures data, while dependability concerns the consistency and reliability of the analysis and outcomes (Yin, 2018;). To establish these qualities in this qualitative case study, various factors such as reliability, dependability, content validity, internal validity, transferability, credibility, and confirmability will be emphasized.

**Content and Internal Validity**

Content validity will be ensured by involving subject matter experts who will evaluate how well data instruments align with the research objectives. Their input will help refine these instruments to capture information accurately. After the in-depth interviews, this study will employ strategies such as participant verification, where participants review and verify the accuracy of the transcripts. Content validity will also be enhanced by conducting a thorough literature review to identify key concepts and themes that are relevant to the research topic.

Internal validity will be present with a clear audit trail documenting the research process. All documents in relation to the study will be stored in the password-protected OneDrive and external hard drive. The validity will be strengthened by triangulation. Triangulation will occur as participants will be from diverse backgrounds. Data collection will occur from at least 3 different schools within the Metro Atlanta suburban district. By comparing data across varied sources and participants common themes can be identified to solidify internal validity.

**Reliability and Dependability**

When conducting qualitative research, reliability addresses how dependable the results of the study are (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). First, the parameters of methodology and design will be aligned with the purpose and research questions. Transparency will also be a foundational component when collecting the data. When a study is reliable it also leads to being dependable with validity. Dependability is consistency in generating the same results when a study is repeated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To maintain dependability SMEs audited the questionnaire and interview questions to help the alignment and consistency of the research problem, purpose, and question.

**Credibility and Conformability**

Credibility in qualitative research pertains to the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study's discoveries (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Establishing credibility involves various approaches. Initially, there will be a significant amount of time engaging with the data, carefully examining questionaries transcripts multiple times to fully understand participants' viewpoints and gain a profound insight into their experiences, thereby enhancing the credibility of the interpretations made in the analysis. In this process member checking will be implemented, where participants will review their interview transcripts to validate the accuracy of the data and interpretations presented, ensuring that their perspectives have been accurately captured by the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Creswell & Poth, 2018,).

Triangulation will be utilized by incorporating multiple triangulation methods. Triangulation helps to reduce the influence of researcher bias and strengthens the confirmability of the results. (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Patton, 2015). Triangulation will also occur within special bounds, collecting data from different schools within the county. There will be different stakeholders within the teaching profession (Special Ed teachers, Intervention teachers, General ed teachers.) Comparing the findings to identify consistent themes and patterns, helps bolsters the credibility of the outcomes (Patton, 2015).

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings are based on the participant's responses and not influenced by the researcher's biases or perspectives. It is an essential aspect of establishing the trustworthiness and reliability of the study (Zahrabi, 2013). Providing thick, rich descriptions of the study's context, participants, and findings can enhance confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The triangulation methods of diverse population and stakeholders and collecting data from different sources all help in the confirmability of a study.

**Transferability**

The transferability of the study’s findings to other contexts will be supported in many ways. Providing detailed descriptions of the study's setting participants' backgrounds of teaching experiences and experiences with structured literacy professional learning is important to address (Tracy, 2020). This detailed information will help readers evaluate how the findings relate to their own circumstances. Purposeful sampling will be utilized to choose participants who meet specific inclusion criteria, ensuring that the gathered data is relevant to the research question and potentially applicable to similar settings. The study's findings will be shown to key stakeholders, including the district's research office, professional learning department, and principals of participating schools. The research office will receive a report, while the professional learning department will incorporate insights to better assist in future professional learning. Principals will receive highlighting findings relevant to their specific school. By presenting the findings to these stakeholders, the study's insights can be effectively communicated and used to drive meaningful change and improvement across the school district.

**Ethical Procedures**

This qualitative study will comply with legal regulations and ethical standards to safeguard the well-being of human participants involved in the research. The study will uphold the key principles defined in The Belmont Report. These principles are respect for persons, beneficence and justice. (Belmont Report, 1979).

**Respect for Persons**

The Belmont Report refers to respect for persons as a fundamental principle that emphasizes the importance of respecting participants autonomy and decisions (Belmont Report, 1979). In this qualitative case study, evidence of upholding this principle will be demonstrated through various methods.

Before participating in the study, all individuals will be provided informed consent through the linked electronic QR code on the recruitment flyer and letter that will be generated from the Microsoft document. The informed consent document will offer a comprehensive overview of the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and advantages, as well as emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation. Participants will have the chance to seek clarification and ask any questions before digitally signing the informed consent form about how their privacy and confidentiality will be conducted (Nagai et al., 2022). To safeguard participants' anonymity, all gathered data will be securely stored by the researcher alone. Pseudonyms will take the place of real names to protect identities and any personal details will be excluded from the collected data (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The Microsoft Forms site used for data collection is under Office 365 through the district's email and is a password-protected login that only the researcher has access to. To further safeguard participant privacy, all data will be securely stored on a password-protected external hard drive for three years. After this period ends, digital files will be permanently removed from the external hard drive, which will then be crosscut shredded.

**Beneficence**

Beneficence in a research study refers to risks being minimized, and benefits maximized for participants (Belmont Report, 1979). This principle will be upheld through several key actions. First, the study design will be carefully considered to minimize potential risks and discomforts to participants, such as emotional distress or privacy concerns. The qualitative exploratory case study design incorporates opportunities for participants to share their experiences, perspectives and insights giving them a voice aligning to the topic of teacher perceptions of the implementation of structured literacy. Second, all participants will sign informed consent and the researcher will make any adjustments as necessary to minimize harm and maximize benefits for participants providing resources and support that may be helpful in the study. Next, the study design of a qualitative exploratory case study will be conducted in a manner that respects and benefits diverse populations. Different schools in different demographics will be interviewed and sensitivity to cultural, social, and individual will be conducted by autonomy of the data instruments. Lastly, the findings of the study will be shown to relevant stakeholders such as the district professional learning department, and principals of the schools to benefit society, contributing to a deeper understanding of teacher perceptions of the implementation of structured literacy. This study might be able to help future research in this topic and improve student's academic scores.

**Justice**

The Belmont Report (1979) principle of justice emphasizes that participant selection is equitable and vulnerable populations are not exploited. Engaging in research within one's workplace poses distinctive ethical dilemmas, including potential conflicts of interest and differing levels of authority (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). To tackle these challenges, the study uses recruitment methods that will not be limited to age, gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. The voluntary nature of participation guarantees that participants comprehend that their choice to partake or abstain will not impact their job status or professional connections. Different schools in different demographics will be interviewed and sensitivity to cultural, social, and individual will be conducted by autonomy of the data instruments. The only qualifications to take part in the study will be that the participant has been trained in structured literacy professional learning and implementing structured literacy techniques from professional learning in a classroom. This classroom could be a regular education classroom, special education, or an intervention classroom. These criteria are based on scientific principles and do not unfairly exclude certain groups or individuals. To ensure that data collection and analysis are conducted impartially and without bias, a clear boundary will be maintained between the researcher's roles as an investigator and an employee of the school district the researcher does not hold any leadership role over the participants. If the study leads to the development of new resources or professional learning these benefits are distributed fairly among participants and a larger population rather than exclusively benefiting privileged groups.

Throughout the study duration, the researcher will uphold ethical standards and adhere to guidelines established by the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) of ACE and the district. The study initiation is contingent upon securing IRB approval of both agencies, with any proposed alterations to the research design being subject to IRB scrutiny. By giving top priority to safeguarding the well-being of the participants involved and adhering to established ethical standards, the study will be carried out in a manner that upholds both strong scientific rigor and ethical integrity**.**

**Chapter Summary**

This qualitative case study will employ questionnaires and interviews to gather rich data on elementary teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the impact of structured literacy professional learning on literacy assessment scores. The instruments are developed based on the research question and refined through collaboration with subject matter experts. Data collection accommodates participants' needs, and analysis follows Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis framework. Reliability, validity, and ethical procedures are prioritized throughout the study. The methodological approach sets the stage for collecting and analyzing data that will provide valuable insights, which will be presented and discussed in the forthcoming chapter on data interpretation.