Give Back, Give Books: A Formative Program Evaluation

Wendy Lynn Fritz
St. John Fisher College

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Give Back, Give Books: A Formative Program Evaluation

Abstract
For over a decade, the Rochester City School District (RCSD) has reported substandard test scores and graduation rates. In 2007, in response to negative press regarding academic achievement, Rochester Mayor Robert Duffy launched a city wide campaign designed to eradicate illiteracy in the city of Rochester. Part of Mayor Duffy's literacy initiative involved engaging the community in this effort. In conjunction with the Mayor's campaign, the Rochester Education Foundation (REF), a non-profit organization whose primary goal is to improve learning and success among Rochester city schoolchildren, began its Give Back, Give Books program. REF was established in 2005 and their most prominent initiative is the Give Back, Give Books program. Since the establishment of the program in 2006 REF has donated more than 22,000 new books to RCSD students. This study examined the utility and feasibility of the Give Back, Give Books program, through interviews with RCSD personnel who applied for and received books from the REF in 2009 and 2010. Using a qualitative research methodology, the researcher created a formative assessment of the aforementioned program based upon the data generated from the interviews with RCSD teachers, librarians, and principals. Because REF has no means to evaluate its most prominent program, the Executive Director, the Board of Directors, and various donors consider the results of this study to be valuable information that addresses the utility and feasibility of the Give Back, Give Books program. Interviews also provided suggestions for program improvement.

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Give Back, Give Books:
A Formative Program Evaluation

By

Wendy Lynn Fritz

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by
Dr. John Travers

Committee Member
Dr. Michael Wischnowski

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
St. John Fisher College

December, 2010
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Patricia Braus, The Executive Director of The Rochester Education Foundation, Dr. Larry Ellison, Principal School #33; Dr. Idonia Owens, Principal School Without Walls and Dr. Shelia Marconi, Vice-Principal of School #28, all of whom are committed to making the lives of Rochester City School District children brighter.

If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to write a dissertation. The title Dr. is only achieved with the unconditional support of loving friends, mentors, and family members. The following people supported me throughout this journey. Love and thanks to:

Mom, Dad, and Todd, you are my trinity. Every "Aha!" moment, every mistake, and every profound moment of discovery, I share with you.

To my sisters at Fisher, Bosch, Idonia, Duffy, Flood, Sherri, and Christine, we held each other up.

To my guys, Brendan, Tyler, Steve, Bill, and Gary, thank you for the laughter.

To the steadfast leadership of my professional mentor and friend, Diane Dimitroff.
Finally, profound thanks to the unwavering commitment to scholarship, leadership and kindness that my Committee Chair, Dr. John Travers, and my Committee Member, Dr. Mike Wischnowski, have shown throughout this journey.
Biographical Sketch

Wendy L. Fritz is employed by Barnes & Noble College Booksellers at The College at Brockport. She attended Loyola University, New Orleans from 1987 to 1991, where she completed her undergraduate degree in Sociology. She attended Loyola University, Chicago from 1991 to 1992, where she completed her Masters Degree in Pastoral Ministry. She began her doctoral work at St. John Fisher College in May of 2008. Her research is in the area of program evaluation, specifically looking at the utility and feasibility of the Rochester Education Foundation’s, Give Back, Give Books program. Her dissertation was chaired by Dr. John Travers, Ph.D. Dr. Michael Wischnowski was her committee member.
Abstract

For over a decade, the Rochester City School District (RCSD) has reported substandard test scores and graduation rates. In 2007, in response to negative press regarding academic achievement, Rochester Mayor Robert Duffy launched a city wide campaign designed to eradicate illiteracy in the city of Rochester. Part of Mayor Duffy’s literacy initiative involved engaging the community in this effort. In conjunction with the Mayor’s campaign, the Rochester Education Foundation (REF), a non-profit organization whose primary goal is to improve learning and success among Rochester city schoolchildren, began its Give Back, Give Books program.

REF was established in 2005 and their most prominent initiative is the Give Back, Give Books program. Since the establishment of the program in 2006 REF has donated more than 22,000 new books to RCSD students. This study examined the utility and feasibility of the Give Back, Give Books program, through interviews with RCSD personnel who applied for and received books from the REF in 2009 and 2010.

Using a qualitative research methodology, the researcher created a formative assessment of the aforementioned program based upon the data generated from the interviews with RCSD teachers, librarians, and principals. Because REF has no means to evaluate its most prominent program, the Executive Director, the Board of Directors, and various donors consider the results of this study to be valuable information that addressees the utility and feasibility of the Give Back, Give Books program. Interviews also provided suggestions for program improvement.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The Rochester Education Foundation (REF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to “provide resources to improve learning and success for all Rochester city public school students through the cultivation of partnerships between education, business and the community” (REF, n.d.). REF, a 501C3 organization, is funded through grants and private donations. Central to the REF mission is the belief that community partnerships can bridge the gap between what school-aged children need and what city school funding provide. Books and musical instruments are two resources that the REF provides for Rochester City School District (RCSD) students. Books and reading are cornerstones of the REF. As such, two of REF’s most visible programs are Give Back, Give Books and A Book and a Blanket. Both programs are designed to provide new books to RCSD students.

Since the inception of the Give Back, Give Books program in 2006, REF has donated more than 22,000 new books to students in the Rochester City School District (RCSD). However, because REF has not developed a plan to measure the impact of this program, this study investigated the effectiveness of the Give Back, Give Books program, by interviewing a select group of teachers in the RCSD who applied for and received gifted books from the REF during the 2009-2010 school year.

In the spring of 2009, REF formalized the distribution process of its Give Back, Give Books program. The Teachers’ Choice Application was designed to review and
manage the book distribution process (see Appendix A), while also ensuring that the new books, donated for classroom use, would be used to support creative teaching and learning and, promote the shared reading experience.

In early 2009, more than 200 teachers applied for and requested books from REF. Of those requests, 26 teachers, representing 21 schools and two RCSD support schools, received a total of 1,513 new books from REF. As part of the application process, applicants committed to creative engagement with the texts, as well as shared reading with classmates, friends, and/or family members. Whereas anecdotal data suggested that providing RCSD students with free books is a worthwhile initiative, REF has not developed a system for evaluating the effectiveness of this program. This study addressed the gap in the evaluation of the Give Back, Give Books program through the use of a qualitative methodology. Interviews were conducted with teachers, librarians, and principals who have received books from REF. The study provided the Executive Director, the REF Board, and donors with important formative assessment data concerning the utility and feasibility of the program, as well as its strengths and weaknesses.

Problem Statement

Definitions of Literacy

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Give Back, Give Books program, an understanding of reading literacy is necessary. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) defines reading literacy as, “... the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate
in communities of readers in school and everyday life, and for enjoyment” (Martin, Mullis, & Kennedy, 2007, p. 2). This definition, as with most definitions of literacy, implies comprehension. Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti (2005) expand this definition by identifying literacy as a cultural product and a social practice. In this context, literacy is measured in terms of an individual’s ability to adapt to his or her cultural setting, interpret meaning from that setting, and ultimately make sense of his or her role within that setting.

In each of these definitions, comprehension and application become key components of literacy. Neuman (1999) confirms this view of literacy, defining literacy as a child’s ability to “explore and express his or her own natural curiosity” (p. 289). She advocates for reading and literacy as a shared experience. Literacy, in this context, takes into account efficacy, attitudes, interest, motivation, community, access, and autonomy. In each of these definitions, reading literacy involves the technical skill of reading, and the comprehension and application of what is read. In this model, “knowing” and reading are social processes. To this end, the National Adult Literacy Survey and the New York State Adult Survey measure adult literacy, “based on [an adult's] performance on diverse tasks that reflect the types of material and demands they encounter in their daily lives” (Jenkins & Kirsch, 1994, p. 1).

Examination of Illiteracy in the United States

A quantitative examination of illiteracy in the U.S. is necessary to understand the present problem. Data from The National Right to Read Foundation (NRRF) indicates that 42 million adults cannot read, and that 50 million adults read at the fourth or fifth grade level (Sweet, 2009). This number is congruent with the data reported by the
National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2009). In 1993 and 2003, the NCES used the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) to measure literacy in adults 16 years or older living in households or prisons. The NAAL and the Educational Testing Service (ETS) measure literacy across three scales: (a) Prose Literacy, (b) Document Literacy, and (c) Quantitative Literacy. Prose literacy measures how well an individual understands and uses information found in “newspapers, magazines, novels brochures, manuals or flyers” (http://www.ets.org/literacy/research/literacy_types/, p.1). Document literacy measures how well an individual finds and uses information in “forms, schedules, charts graphs and other tables of information” (http://www.ets.org/literacy/research/literacy_types/, p.1). Document literacy includes searching, comprehending, and using information from non-continuous texts, such as train or bus schedules, permission slips, maps, job applications, and payroll forms. Quantitative literacy measures, how well an individual can, “use numbers found in ads, forms, and flyers, articles or other printed materials” (http://www.ets.org/literacy/research/literacy_types/, p.1). Quantitative literacy differs from prose and document literacy because, in addition to text, mathematical computation is also necessary to obtain salient information.

The cumulative results of the 2003 assessment indicated that 30 million Americans (14%) were considered “Below Basic” in their reading and comprehension levels and could only perform the simplest tasks in each of the three categories. Twenty-nine percent, or roughly 63 million Americans, could only function at the “Most Basic” level required to complete simple everyday literacy activities. Adults compromising these categories disproportionately represented populations who did not graduate from
high school, had multiple disabilities, were African American, Hispanic or did not speak English before starting school (NCES, 2009). To conceptualize even the most conservative number reported by either the NRRF or the NCES, thirty million people is greater than the entire population of Texas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

**Examination of Illiteracy in New York State**

Illiteracy worsens as the focus narrows to New York State. Results from the 2003 New York State Assessment of Adult Literacy indicated that 39% of adults living in New York State are *at or below* the basic levels of document literacy, while 50% were at or below basic levels of prose literacy (Pryor, 2006). Specifically, 25%-28% of adults demonstrated skills in the lowest level (*Below Basic*) of all three categories (document, prose, quantitative), and 26%-29% performed at the Basic Level. At its most conservative, these results are 10 percentage points lower than the national assessment. Jenkins and Kirsch (1994) reported that, “The average prose, document, and quantitative proficiencies of adults in New York State were significantly lower than those of adults in the Northeast and nationwide” (p.2). To put things in perspective, the U. S. Census Bureau reports that there are 19,306,183 people living in New York State (2009). Accordingly, the number of New Yorkers who are only able to read “brief, uncomplicated tasks,” for example “locate the time or place of a meeting on a form” at 4.8 million (Jenkins & Kirsch, p.1). As with the national numbers reported by the NCES in 1993 and 2003, the New York State residents who demonstrated literacy skills at the most basic level disproportionately represented adults who were foreign born, had not received a high school diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), or suffered from mental and physical ailments.
Examination of Illiteracy in Rochester, New York

Although an adult’s ability to read and function at the most “Basic Level” is of concern across the state, the numbers worsen in the city of Rochester. Whereas the NCES did not measure literacy specifically for the city of Rochester, the Rochester Literacy Summit used the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) to measure reading in a “Functional Context.” The Functional Context is similar to Document Literacy as measured by the NAAL. The results indicated that 29% of Rochesterians fell below the most Basic reading level. As the U.S. Census Bureau report (2009) reveals that the population in the city of Rochester is 206,886, the number of people who fell below the most Basic reading level reached approximately 60,000 (Pryor, 2006) or he entire population of Schenectady, New York (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). State reporting, using the same assessment tool, revealed that 24% of New York State residents fell below the most basic reading level. Again, Rochester fares worse than the state by about 5%. This assessment closely resembles the NAAL percentage that suggests that the number is between 25-28% (NCES, 2009).

Examination of Illiteracy and Children

The situation deteriorates further when the focus is on children. Reports from the New York State Department of Education indicated that in 2009, 23% of all fourth grade students tested in New York State did not meet state standards in English Language Arts (ELA). In the same year, the number of students who did meet state standards in ELA increased to 31.5% for eighth-graders. Appendix B illustrates this data. By comparison, the number of students in Rochester who did not meet state standards in ELA approached 43% in the fourth grade and 56.9% in the eighth grade (New York State Education
Department, n.d.). Table 1.1 reflects the ten year trend substandard ELA test scores of RCSD students in grades four and eight from 1999-2009.

Table 1.1

| ELA Test Scores 1999-2009 for 4th and 8th Grade Students in Rochester City School District |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Did Not Meet the Standard (Levels 1 & 2) |
| 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
| Gr. 4 | 60% | 62% | 52% | 54% | 57% | 57% | 43% | 49.8% | 52.6% | 47.7% | 43% |
| Gr. 8 | 76% | 73% | 75% | 82% | 83% | 82% | 82% | 73.7% | 72.1% | 68.9% | 56.9% |

These numbers not only represent a pattern of substandard performance that spans nearly a decade in the RCSD (See Appendix C), but they also represent fourth grade and eighth grade ELA scores in Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, and Yonkers. Table 1.2 reflects these trends and patterns.
Table 1.2

**ELA Test Scores for 4th and 8th Grade Students in the BIG 5 New York State Districts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>4th Grade ELA Scores - 2009</th>
<th>8th Grade ELA Scores - 2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 1 %</td>
<td>Level 2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albany</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yonkers</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
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**Contravening Data from the National Endowment of the Arts**

The Rochester data pattern contravenes data recently reported by the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA). For the first time in more than 25 years, the NEA has reported that reading is “on the rise” (Gioia, 2009, p.1). The NEA survey, administered in 2008, indicated that from 2002 to 2008, the percentage of adults in the U.S. who read literature increased by 3.5%. The number of 18-24 year olds who read literature for the same period increased by almost 9%, the highest increase for any age group. Additionally, literary reading increased for Caucasians, African Americans, and Hispanics. Hispanics showed the greatest rate of increase, but still read literature at a lower rate than any other group (Gioia, 2009). If reading is on the rise in the United States, as the NEA reports, then why are reading and literacy outcomes for students in the RCSD so poor?

**Economics and Demographics of Illiteracy**

The roots of illiteracy are tangled in a complicated knot that is not easily unraveled (Baker, Afflerback & Reinking, 1996; Hart & Risley, 1995; Neuman, 2008).
The problem must be dissected socio-economically. In terms of academic achievement, poor children do not perform as well as their middle and upper income peers do. A number of research studies suggest that this issue is not one of cognitive ability, but of access to the resources that enhance learning (Farkas, 2000; Neuman & Celano, 2001; Neuman, 2008).

A 2002 longitudinal study, conducted by the U.S. Department of Education indicated that cognitive abilities of children at age 4 in the lowest socio-economic groups scored 60% lower than children from middle and upper-income homes when measured on standardized tests of literacy and mathematics (Lee & Burkham, 2002). Research from the National Assessment of Educational Progress is consistent with the research from the U.S. Department of Education that concluded that, economically disadvantaged children score at or below the basic level of reading at nearly twice the rate of children who are economically advantaged (Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005). This finding is also supported by Lee and Burkham (2002) who note that economically disadvantaged students begin school with fewer cognitive skills than do students from middle and upper income level homes. Lee and Burkham note that the problem of inequity is magnified when such disadvantaged children are placed in low-resource schools. In 2004, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that the gap between academic achievement between the middle and low income families had not changed in over 40 years. The problem appears to be intractable.

Illiteracy then becomes, at least in part, a class issue. Children who come from poverty are resource poor. Poor households lack the resources that are typically associated with reading and literacy development. Not only are there fewer books and
reading materials (Constantino, 2005; Fryer & Levitt, 2002; Lee & Burkham, 2002; Neuman & Celano, 2001), but there is a scarcity of the resources that enhance reading. Items such as computers, paper, pencils, crayons, and magic markers are largely absent from these homes (Lee & Burkham; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Families and children from resource poor environments are likely to take fewer trips to museums, libraries, and zoos (Gioa, 2009; Hart & Risley, 1995; Lee & Burkham; Neuman, 2008). Activities such as these are commonly associated with cognitive stimulation, academic achievement, and an increase in vocabulary. Children who do not have access to these resources will not perform as well in school as their middle and upper income peers (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Hart & Risley; Neuman & Celano, 2001; Neuman, 2007). As adults, these children are less likely to volunteer in their communities and less likely to vote in presidential elections (Gioa, 2009).

Vocabulary Development and Literacy

The relationship between income level and intellectual impoverishment has been studied by Hart and Risley (1995). In an effort to understand the differences in children’s academic growth, they spent 2.5 years studying the vocabularies of 42 families from three different economic backgrounds. For 1 hour each month, Hart and Risley went into homes where one and two- year old children were learning to talk. The goal of the observation was to discover what was happening in early childhood development that could explain the difference in rates of vocabulary growth. While in each home, Hart and Risley recorded everything that was done by the children, to the children, as well as everything that went on around the children. This comprehensive research approach allowed the researchers to capture the full early childhood experience.
Hart and Risley (1995) found that, for almost every child, significant learning was derived from their family life. Both IQ potential and language abilities correlate to the amount of talk that children hear from birth to age 3. To this end, they discovered that children on welfare were exposed to an average of 616 words per hour, children from working class families were exposed to 1,251 words per hour, and children whose parents were from a professional class were exposed to 2,153 words per hour. Extrapolated over the course of 4 years, just when a child is ready to begin school, a child living with professional parents will have been exposed to 45 million words, a child living with middle class parents will have been exposed to 26 million words, and a child who lives with parents who are on welfare will have been exposed to 13 million words.

The size of a child’s vocabulary is related to the cumulative experiences of that child’s life. A child’s vocabulary increases as his or her life experiences expand—this includes such excursions as trips to zoos and museums. Children from higher income homes have more access to these experiences and, in turn, have more opportunities to increase their vocabularies. Additionally, the amount of talk that a child hears from birth to age 3 is a direct indicator of that child’s academic success at age 9 or 10. The link between economics and academic achievement is substantial (Hart & Risley, 1995).

The correlation between vocabulary development and behavior associated with literacy is further supported by research from Ingham (1981), who noted that when the “language in a child’s relationship with his mother is limited or impoverished he will be poorly equipped to meet the expectations and demands of teachers in nursery and infant schools” (p.1). This finding is corroborated by the conclusions of the Bullock Report (1975) which noted that disadvantaged children who lack appropriate language
development may also lack the ability to compare, explain, inquire, analyze, and deduce if language is seldom or never used for these purposes at home. Additionally, Neuman (2007) reported that quality childhood experiences such as reading and communication are positively associated with language and literacy outcomes. This assertion is further supported by her work with Dickinson (2006, 2001), which linked quality preschool language experiences with “school readiness” (p. 159).

Reading at Grade Level: An Educational and Economic Imperative

To minimize the impact of illiteracy, there is concern that children should read at grade level by the end of third grade. Third grade is the last year to include instruction in the basic technical skill of reading (Farkas, 2000). By the end of third grade, students are expected to be able to read and to decode words (Kim, 2007). Fourth grade is the year when students transition from the technical skill of reading (e.g., decoding, blending) to the more sophisticated skill of comprehension (summarizing, sequencing, predicting outcomes, and drawing inferences). In this transition, a child moves from learning to read to reading to learn. If a child has not developed the technical skill of reading by the fourth grade, he or she will likely fall behind in many content areas. From a cultural perspective, fourth grade is considered “the watershed year” (Literacy Statistics, retrieved from http://www.begintoread.com/reserach/literacystatistics.html, 2008, p.1). The U.S. Department of Justice reports that students who cannot read at grade level by the end of the fourth grade are likely to be incarcerated or on welfare (NCES, 2008).

Students who cannot read at grade level by the fourth grade are at risk of dropping out of school before graduation. Nationally, over one million children drop out of school each year, costing tax payers approximately $20 billion each year in lost earnings and
social service expenditures (Education-Portal.com). Additionally, 90% of welfare recipients are high school drop-outs. In Rochester, 29% of adults score below the Basic Literacy levels as determined by the comprehensive adult student assessment system. This statistic is consistent with the 32% of Rochester families with children under the age of 18 who live below the poverty line (Pryor, 2006). As states like Arizona and Texas use fourth grade reading scores to determine how many prison beds they need in a given community, the impact of illiteracy becomes a sociological problem (Education-Portal.com).

**Poverty and Illiteracy**

Research from educators and sociologists identifies a link between poverty and illiteracy (Lee & Burkham, 2002; Neuman, 2008; Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005). This link is apparent in Rochester, NY, where nearly 26% of city residents live below the poverty line. Compared to the state average of 14.6%, and the national average of 11.9%, Rochester continues to suffer (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Because the population has declined by more than 5% since 2000, the tax base that supports public education has simultaneously eroded. As a result, school enrollment in the RCSD has declined from 38,261 students in 1999 to 32,717 students in 2008. Enrollment projections for 2015-2016 school year are estimated at 25,000 students, a decrease of approximately 30%.

From 2000-2007, job creation in Rochester has declined by 28.6% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). To this end, Rochester is experiencing the highest unemployment rate since 2000. The city’s current unemployment rate is 7.3% against a nine year low of 4.5% in 2000 and a national average of 9.5% (Federal Reserve, 2009).
Forty-one percent of all children in Rochester live in poverty. This number is more than 50% higher than that of surrounding counties such Monroe, Ontario, and Wayne counties, where 17% of their children live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). New York State reports that roughly 20% of all children live in poverty. Nationally, approximately 18% of U.S. children live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). In terms of child poverty, Rochester exceeds both New York State and the national statistics. These statistics are illustrated in Appendix G. Eighty-eight percent of the students in the RCSD are eligible for the free and reduced price lunch program. Additionally, of the “Big 5” districts (Albany, Syracuse, Buffalo, Yonkers, and Rochester), Rochester has the second highest percentage of children under the age of 18 living below the poverty level (Pryor, 2006). Appendix E illustrates the percentage of children in the “Big 5” districts with children under the age of 18 who live below the poverty level.

Theoretical Rationale

This study is about program evaluation. The study focused on REF, a small, recently formed education foundation. Through interviews with RCSD personnel who have received books from REF, this study is a formative assessment of the Give Back, Give Books program. Data collected from interviews with teachers, librarians, and principals who directly received resources from REF provided the Executive Director, the Board, and donors with valuable information about the worth and utility of the program. This data also helped to inform REF about ways to improve its largest, most publicly visible program.

These studies were conducted at university research centers with university faculty, research assistants, and ample grant money. However, a gap exists in the literature. Much less is known about the impact that smaller, more modest book donation programs have in school classrooms. Small-scale book floods initiated and funded by Education Foundations are not frequently reported in the scholarly literature. To this end, the literature is devoid of scholarly work that explains how an education foundation can initiate, fund, promote, and/or launch a meaningful book flood program. This study addressed those gaps. It is important to note that the literature provides rich information about best practices in establishing and sustaining Local Education Foundations (LEF).
Additionally, informal interviews and correspondences with small, non-profit organizations who donate books to under resourced communities have provided the candidate with data about book collection processes and measurement techniques. These findings are discussed in Chapter 2.

Significance of the Study

In 2007, the RCSD experienced negative press coverage for its low graduation rates for the 2005-2006 school year. With local headlines announcing the city’s 39% graduation rate as “the worst in the Big 5” districts across the state, Rochester found itself under the microscope, not only for poor graduation rates, but for low test scores as well (Loudon & Mclendon, 2007). In response to these reports, Mayor Robert Duffy launched a city-wide campaign designed to eradicate illiteracy in the city of Rochester. These efforts have provided modest improvements. Increases in graduation rates and ELA scores since 2007 represent such improvements (RCSD, n.d.). Appendix F illustrates the graduation rates of RCSD students from 2003-2008.

Part of Mayor Duffy’s literacy initiative involved engaging the community in this effort through increased enrollment in Universal Pre-K Programs, increasing Family Literacy Programs in the public library system, and the development of a work scholarship program to increase graduation rates. In concert with this initiative, the REF began its Give Back, Give Books program. To this end, the first distribution of free books to students in the city school district took place in the fall of 2006. More than 12,000 new books were distributed to approximately 15 schools and two non-profit organizations in the city school district. Books were distributed in 26 book fairs, and to individual teachers and librarians. Since the establishment of Mayor Duffy’s program,
student performance has been measured and quantified and the news is positive. Graduation rates have improved from 45% in 2007, to 52% in 2008. Cumulative ELA scores of students meeting standards in Grades 3 through 8 have increased from 47% in 2008, to 56% in 2009 (RCSD, n.d.).

Unfortunately, REF has not established a way to measure whether or not its continued contribution to this initiative has impacted the children and teachers who receive donated books. Books are being donated and their impact is not being measured. Through interviews with RCSD teachers, librarians, and principals, this study evaluated the effectiveness of REF’s Give Back, Give Books program. Because the first point of contact for teacher engagement with REF is the Teachers’ Choice Application, there is value in collecting data from teachers and principals who have received books from REF. Information from the direct recipients of REF resources will provide the Executive Director, the Board, and donors with valuable information about ways to improve, modify, or refocus the program for increased effectiveness.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Rochester Education Foundation’s Give Back, Give Books program, which collects and donates new books to city school students in the hopes of creating interest in reading and curtailing the adverse effects of illiteracy. However, because REF does not currently have any tools in place to measure the effectiveness of its program, there is no way of knowing if there is any value or utility gained by the recipients of the donated books. Additionally, feedback from teachers who receive books has never been formally collected or analyzed. This lack of data makes it
impossible for REF to improve upon the current program, or redirect its resources altogether.

*Research Questions*

The research questions this study sought to answer are the following:

1. How do urban teachers, principals, and librarians describe their experiences of participation in a book flood program?

2. For the purposes of program improvement, what do urban teachers, principals, and librarians identify as the book flood program’s goals, benefits, and limitations?

3. What is the intersection, if any, of the intended goals identified on the book flood application, and any goals articulated in the participant interviews?

*Definition of Terms*

The following definitions provide a context for the major concepts in this study:

1. *The Program* refers to the Rochester Education Foundation’s, Give Back, Give Books program.

2. *Gifted Books* are books donated to teachers in the Rochester City School District who have completed a Teachers’ Choice Application, and were chosen to receive books from the Rochester Education Foundation.

3. *Book Floods* are the process of saturating classrooms with new books.

4. *Impact* refers to the positive or negative outcomes that result from the donation of new books to teachers in the Rochester City School District.

5. *Teacher Responses* are the comments or actions related to the changes in knowledge or behavior after books were used in the classroom and then given to the students.
6. *English as Second Language* (ESL) refers to a program of instruction designed for limited English proficient students who are learning English as a second language.

7. *Education Foundations* are non-profit organizations created by local citizens with the mission of supporting and improving education in local communities. These organizations are independent from the districts they serve.

**Summary**

This study endeavored to provide REF with a formative assessment of its Give Back, Give Books program and utilized a goal free model with a qualitative data collection process to achieve this goal. Three essential questions formed the centerpiece of the study. Results of the data collection and analysis provided REF with important information about the utility and effectiveness of its Give Back, Give Books program. Since 2006, more than 22,000 new books have been distributed to RCSD students, yet little is known about the impact of this distribution on the teachers who use the books, or the students who receive them. The donation of these new books by businesses and citizens in the Rochester community, suggests that there is great concern about poverty in the city school district, the alarmingly low graduation rates, poor standardized test scores and high rates of illiteracy. However, because until now, no part of this intervention has been measured or evaluated, donors are concerned about the suitability and effectiveness of the program.

The study employed a qualitative methodology to answer the questions of interest. Interviews were conducted as a way to collect data about the experiences of the teachers who participated in the program. Common themes and practices have been identified. The intent of this research was to provide a measurement process with corresponding
data. Such information will either validate the program and reassure donors, the Executive Director, and the Board that their work is making a difference or, it will inform its constituents that the program is ineffective, and needs improvement or restructuring. In either case, this investigation made an important contribution to the body of knowledge of such initiatives in Rochester, New York.

Chapter 2 of the dissertation provides an historical overview of book floods and their outcomes, both internationally and nationally. The chapter also includes a discussion of the effects that access to books has on reading behaviors. A brief over-view of Education Foundations, as well as a history of program evaluation is also presented as a contextual prelude to the research design in Chapter 3. The findings of the research are illuminated in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 addresses the literature review and the identified themes, as well as the implications of the unanticipated findings, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

The literature explicitly associated with the implementation and effects of book floods is scarce. Conversely, numerous studies have documented the impact of summer reading programs, family literacy initiatives, reading frequency, and the impact of reading and new book ownership on test scores and motivation to read (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996; Allington, McGill-Franzen, Camilli, Williams, Graff & Zeig, 2007; Neuman, 1996, 1999; Mcquillan 2001). However, very few studies have measured the practice of distributing books to specific classrooms in a concentrated way. A preponderance of the research literature is situated in international contexts and originates in the Pacific Isles, where the practice of “book floods” was born. One prominent U.S. study that measured the impact of flooding classrooms with new books, is Susan Neuman’s, Books Aloud Study (1999). This study specifically addressed the candidate’s research question of how book floods inform teacher practice and classroom instruction.

Book Floods: An Overview

Flooding school classrooms with books in an effort to advance behaviors associated with reading and learning is a fairly new phenomenon. The practice was accidentally born in Fiji in the 1970’s, when actor and Fijian resident Raymond Burr donated books to an elementary school in his village. The donated books were an attempt to advance English proficiency for second language learners. In a very non-scientific
way, over the course of a few years, the teachers whose students received books noted that, not only did their students’ English improve, but their native language, Fijian, did as well (Elley, 2000). Once noted, that this practice advanced reading competencies for both languages, scholars began to adopt and to study the practice of “saturating” or “flooding” schools with “good quality” books that reflected “children’s interests” (Elley, 2000, p. 236).” From 1977-1998, no fewer than 12 book floods were conducted and studied in non-industrialized countries. The schools were primarily located in the Pacific Isles and Africa. Data from the floods consistently indicated that it was possible to increase “reading acquisition” of third world school children with quality English books (Elley, 2000, p. 233).

Elley (2000), a primary researcher in the area of the impact that book floods have on literacy, adopted four research hypotheses:

1. Saturating classrooms with books will increase “children’s exposure to language.” By increasing student exposure to “vocabulary and grammatical structures,” it will also increase experience and give more topics to talk about without requiring much from their teachers.”

2. The books need to be of good quality and relevance such that students are motivated to read.

3. Children can learn “directly from the books if the teachers read and explained words.” Teacher interaction is necessary.

4. The books provided “an additional model of English for the children to emulate” (p.236).
The Fiji Book Flood

The Fiji Book Flood was perhaps the most well-known study of the book flood phenomenon. Conducted by Elley and Mangubhai (1983) in rural Fiji from 1980 to 1981, eight fourth and fifth grade classrooms (about 400 children) were flooded with “over 200 high interest books” (p.239). Training was provided to 50% of the teachers in the study in the form of a 3 day workshop, whereby they were taught effective ways to use the books in their classrooms. The remaining teachers did not attend the training, but gave students time for daily reading and also engaged students in “read aloud” sessions (p.239). These two treatment groups were compared to a nontreatment group that did not receive books or any additional teacher training.

In both cases, when English and reading competencies were measured on standardized tests, the results indicated that the book flood pupils made gains in reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and mastery of English. The growth in reading was twice that of the nontreatment group. Results from the English Exam revealed that the pass rate of the treatment group was three times that of the nontreatment group. What is interesting and relevant to this study is that students whose teachers used the books sparingly, “showed no more improvement than the nontreatment group” (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983, p.239). The authors noted, “The positive impact of quality books, used daily and constructively, was clearly evident from the study” (p.239).

Finally, it is important to note that this study was initiated by Elley--a university professor who had access to the resources and data that support the ‘best practices’ that advance English and reading competencies in under resourced communities. The study was also supported by the local Ministry Curriculum Officer and the Fijian Institute for
Educational Research. This is noteworthy because, as with most documented book
floods, the Fiji Book Flood received financial support and resources from the government
and the academic community. By contrast, REF’s modest Give Back, Give Books
program is largely dependent upon donations, grants, and volunteers for its sustainability.
This disparity may, be in part, explain the gap in the scholarly literature that, if present
would address the impact of small book floods initiated by LEFs.

A Book Flood in Singapore

Using a modification of the Fiji study, a similar study was conducted in Singapore
(Ng, 1987). The study was initiated by the Singapore Minister of State Education after
he observed the success of the Fiji Book Flood. At the time of the study, surveys
indicated that English achievement for pupils studying English in Singapore was lower
than the norms of other countries (Ng, 1984). The study began in 1985, when 30 first
grade teachers received 60 books for their classrooms. Later in the year, the students
were given another 150 books for independent reading. Additionally, teachers attended
training and in-service work-shops designed to help teachers use the books effectively.
The REAP (Reading and English Acquisition Program) system was adopted for the study
conducted in Singapore.

The following year, second grade students participated in the program. By 1989,
third grade classrooms were also included. When compared to students in nontreatment
classes who did not receive books, and whose teachers did not participate in the REAP,
standardized tests measuring 65 comparisons, showed improvements in 53 different
reading and language competencies for all three grades in the treatment groups. It is
important to note that teacher dispositions were not reported and that the study received
financial and administrative support from the Ministry of Education. This study is yet, another example of a large-scale book flood being funded and supported by the government. Again, this example speaks to the gap in the literature regarding the lack of reporting one of well-funded and supported book floods, and ones initiated by modest non-profit organizations.

A Book Flood in Sri Lanka

In a similar book flood study conducted in Sri Lanka, 100 high-interest books were distributed to 20 small fourth and fifth grade schools. Ten schools were located in the city of Colombo and 10 schools were located in the city of Kegalle. Books were distributed in sets of 20 throughout the year. Students participated in shared reading of the texts for 15-20 minutes each day. When compared to the 10 schools that did not receive books, the “flooded schools” reported gains in reading comprehension, and vocabulary testing that was three times that of the nontreatment schools (Elley & Foster, 1996).

The gains were noted on pre and post English tests that contained 18 questions evaluating English reading skills and students’ attitudes about reading. At the time of the study, standardized tests did not exist in Sri Lanka. Fourth-grade students were evaluated in reading and listening, and fifth-grade students were evaluated in writing and reading.

Fourth-grade writing tests assessed students’ ability to match a sentence with 1 of 13 pictures, listen to two stories, and answer multiple choice questions about the stories. Grade 4 students in the Colombo schools showed a mean gain of 10.5% in reading between the pre-test and the post-test. Test scores for Kegalle students improved by 11.27%. Test scores for the nontreatment students only improved by 3.88%. Results for
listening in Grade 4 were questionable, because no pretest in listening had been administered. Because there was no pretest given in listening, pretest reading scores were used as a predictor of post test listening. Colombo students showed a mean test score gain of 2.80% over prediction, compared with 3.58% for Kegalle students, and a decrease in test scores of -1.58 for the nontreatment students. Not surprisingly, teachers who read aloud, tended to have more students with larger gains in listening.

The fifth-grade writing test required students to study five pictures. Students were given a model sentence to describe the first picture. Students were then asked to write sentences describing the remaining four pictures. The Colombo project schools produced a mean test score gain of 3.07%. Mean test scores for students in the Kegalle schools increased by 1.33%. Nontreatment schools reported an increase in test scores of 0.72%.

Reading scores for students in the fifth grade resembled those of fourth-grade students. The Colombo and Kegalle schools produced mean test score gains of 10.3% and 8.78% respectively. Test scores in reading for nontreatment schools increased by 3.17%. The researcher noted that, “At both grade levels, the pupils who had regular access to books improved their reading skill at approximately three times the normal rate” (Kuruppu, 2001, p. 6). In this example, as with all the studies, the issue of access becomes a factor in student academic success.

Teacher response to the program was “very enthusiastic” and “over 90% of the teachers who participated, recommended that the program be expanded to all schools in Sri Lanka” (Elley, 2000, p.243). The impact of the book flood was significant in instances when the “teacher resigned, or became ill, or when the school was about to
close” (p.243). This is similar to the findings of the 1980-1981 Fiji (Levu) book flood. In both of those instances, it appears that simply providing the books does not create an increase in test scores. Teacher participation and student engagement appear to impact test scores.

It is important to note that this book flood was supported by the Sri Lankan government after a survey by International Book Development (IBD) revealed a lack of books in the schools. The IBD contracted with Wendy Pye, a New Zealand Publisher, who provided books for the book flood, along with teacher training. The project was organized by the staff of the National Institute of Education, and the research was conducted by faculty members from the University of the South Pacific. The Sri Lankan book flood differs from REF book floods in the extent to which the flood was funded and supported by a large business, the national government, and the academic community.

A Book Flood in Niue (Small Island in the South Pacific)

Using the book flood model, but focusing extensively on the shared reading experience, De’Ath (1980) flooded six third-grade classrooms in Niue with 45 books during the 1978 school year. After one year, students were tested in basic reading and speaking skills. When compared to students of the previous third-grade cohort who had not received books, pupils in the treatment group improved in word recognition by greater than 98% over the previous cohort. Oral language skills improved by 67%, and sentence comprehension improved by 33% (De’Ath). These gains represent effect sizes of 1.21, 0.88, and 0.63 respectively. Teacher dispositions were not measured. It is important to note that The Niue Education Department sponsored the study with
assistance from Elley. This is yet another example of a large scale book flood that was supported by the national government and the academic community.

*A Book Flood in South Africa*

Elley, Le Roux, and Schollar (1997) conducted a book flood study in South Africa. The study was similar to Elley’s Fiji Book Flood. At the time of the study, government statistics indicated that about one half of the Black population in South Africa was illiterate. Elley partnered with a non-government organization known as The READ Education Trust. The trust raises funds from businesses and companies in order to buy books for disadvantaged children in schools with a predominately Black student enrollment.

The READ program targeted second-grade and third-grade students between the ages of seven and nine who were trying to learn English, but did not have exposure to books in English. A READ coordinator provided students with a starter pack of READ books. Each starter pack contained 64 new books. Teachers who participated in the program received 3 days of training that focused on how to use the books effectively in the classroom. Twenty-two schools in six different provinces participated in the study, while thirteen schools from the same provinces served as nontreatment schools. Students in the nontreatment schools used traditional textbooks to learn English.

Tests designed to measure reading, listening, and writing, were administered before and after books were distributed. The literacy test required students to match simple words with pictures, e.g., cat, fish, clock. The reading test required students to complete unfinished sentences in a meaningful way. The listening test required students
to listen to sentences and then cross out one of four pictures that the sentence described. The writing test required students to write sentences that described a set of pictures.

Reading results for the treatment schools in both grades exceeded nontreatment group scores. More specifically, second-grade students showed a mean gain of 20.2%, and the nontreatment groups showed a gain of only 7.5%. Third-grade students showed a 17.0% gain against nontreatment gains of 10.3%. Listening scores for the treatment students indicated a mean score of 43.4% for nontreatment group students and 37.6% for treatment students. A pretest was not administered to evaluate listening. Elley, Le Roux, and Schollar (1998) indicated that there were “difficulties in the administration of listening tests” (p.6).

Writing skills were difficult to assess as pretests were not administered. However, in a previous study, Elley and Foster (1996) noted a strong correlation between reading and writing ability in young ESL learners. As a result they, used pretest reading scores to estimate pretest writing skills. Following the book distribution, students in the treatment group showed a mean test score increase of 16.9%. Mean test scores for students in the nontreatment group increased by 10.8%. The effect of the treatment group was much stronger than the effect of the nontreatment group.

An important part of this study included the provision of a teacher study guide for all teachers whose students participated in the program. Teachers were monitored regularly to ensure that the books were being used in a way that was supported by the study guide. The research indicated that most teachers used the books as they were intended. Problems with teacher participation relative to the social and political instability in South Africa during this time period were noted, “staff changes, community
protests and school closures” (Elley, 2000, p. 245). The success of this program was so significant that the South African government institutionalized the program, and the initiative has been expanded to other schools.

*Additional International Book Flood Studies*

The success of the book flood model was replicated in South Africa with increases in reading and writing (Hugo, 1998). Using the same model initiated in Singapore, a similar study was conducted on the island of Borneo. An increase in test results, “enthusiastic” students and “motivated” teachers were all reported (Ng, 1996). Finally, flooding 100 classrooms in Thailand with books showed gains of 60% in standardized tests that measured diction, writing, and reading against nontreatment group students who did not receive books (Walker, Rattanavitch, & Oller, 1992).

*Second Language Acquisition: The Educator’s Voice*

Consistent with other research in the area of international book floods is the work of U.S. scholar Stephen Krashen, who has studied second language acquisition extensively (Schütz, 2007). Like Elley (2000), De’Ath (1980), Mangubhai (2001), Fader (1967) and Neuman (1999), Krashen advocates for increased exposure to high interest non-textbooks for English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students and teachers (see Cho & Krashen, 2001; Shütz, 2007; Krashen, n.d.). Additionally, like the aforementioned scholars, Krashen found that EFL teachers frequently lack the knowledge, confidence, and interest to effectively teach their students English (Cho & Krashen, 2001). In their 2001 study of Korean teachers of EFL, Cho and Krashen sought to determine “the impact of a single positive experience with easily
comprehensible texts” for teachers enrolled in a training course in English language teaching” (p.170).

Cho and Krashen (2001) divided 86 Korean elementary teachers from approximately 50 schools into four groups and provided each group with 80 elementary level reading books. The teachers engaged in two hours of silent sustained reading (SSR). During the two hours, teachers were encouraged to read at their own pace and recommended the books they enjoyed to other teachers participating in the study. Following the two hours of SSR, a questionnaire was distributed to all participating teachers. Four questions were asked in order to gain insight into teachers’ experiences with English reading books, and their dispositions about using English reading books to teach EFL students. Cho and Krashen found that 92% of the teachers originally said that they did not read English for pleasure, 95% reported that they enjoyed participating in the SSR experience, 98% said they were more motivated to read, and 99% said that they “now intend to implement a SSR program in their classrooms if books and time were provided” (Cho & Krashen, p.172). It is important to note that prior to the study, the participants were enrolled in a “short term teacher training program focusing on improving their English and on methodology in English language teaching” (Cho & Krashen, 2001, p.171).

Additionally, teachers were asked to write about their reactions to their time spent reading. Teachers reported that they enjoyed the freedom to choose their own books and that the books were a break from the “drill” of traditional teaching methods (Cho & Krashen, 2001, p.172). Other teachers noted that they would be purchasing English
reading books for their own children. Overall, Cho and Krashen reported that teacher dispositions about reading and teaching English to EFL students changed for the better.

**Conclusions about the International Studies**

The findings of these international studies are relevant for several reasons. First, in each of the above instances, all of the books were distributed to students for whom English is a second language. Whereas the RCSD does not serve an exclusive second language student population, it serves students from 35 different language groups. Ten percent (approximately 3,400 students) of the total student population are identified as limited English proficient (LEP). Next, all of the classrooms receiving books in the international studies were poor. In a meta-analysis of international book floods, the author referred to the countries as “third world” (Elley, 2000, p. 233). Whereas Rochester is not located in a third world country, the vast majority of RCSD students live in poverty. Eighty-eight percent of the students are eligible for free/reduced-price lunches, 50% of the schools serve students who are at 90% poverty or higher. Rochester has the highest poverty rate among the five largest school districts in New York State (RCSD, n.d.).

Next, the teachers who participated in the international book flood studies all attended teacher training. The teacher training was a critical element in the program, as many of the teachers did not have advanced English skills (Elley, 2000). Additionally, the teachers engaged in the reading and learning process with the children. As such, books were not simply handed to the students without instruction. Learning and reading were shared between the teacher and the students. Furthermore, book flood books were considered central to the classroom curriculum, not merely considered “supplemental” to
the classroom experience (Elley, 2000, p. 250). In most instances, book flood books remained in the classrooms. Books were then accessible to students at all times. The issue of access and proximity is a noted factor of success not only in ESL book floods, but in English Language book floods as well (Ingham, 1981).

It is important to note that it is REF’s intention, that after the donated books are used in the classroom, the books will be given to the students to take home so they may build their own home libraries. Next, more is known about the student outcomes of this practice, than is known about the teacher outcomes. Finally, although the book floods noted above were situated in second and third world countries, they had the financial and administrative support of publishers, universities, and local and National Ministries. Elley (2000) posited that although the cost to administer and to initiate book floods is a concern, the overall cost is modest compared to other educational programs.

*Bradford Book Flood Experiment*

The Bradford Book Flood Experiment research study differed from the previously mentioned studies in that the recipient students were not second language learners, but were native English speakers. From 1976 to 1979, a comprehensive study on the impact of book floods upon children’s reading skills, habits, and interests was conducted in England (Ingham, 1981). The *Bradford Book Flood Experiment* identified two pairs of middle schools: one pair was located in the “inner city,” which drew upon a large population of second generation immigrants, whereas the other pair of schools was in the “outer city,” and drew upon a working class population. One school in each pair served as a treatment school while the other served as a nontreatment school. During the course of two years, treatment schools were flooded with approximately 5,600 books.
At the core of the original treatment design, was a series of standardized tests which were administered at the beginning and at the end of the experiment. The intent of the pre-test/posttest design was to assess the effect, if any, on test scores during the period of the experiment. The standardized tests measured a variety of reading competencies, student interest, attitude, and efficacy in reading. In addition to collecting data from the standardized tests, the researcher: (a) interviewed children individually, (b) talked with groups of children, (c) interviewed the headmaster of each school, (d) had children maintain a reading journal known as a Reading Record Form, and (e) interviewed all of the teachers in a focus group setting in order to understand what they believed had been the effect of the book flood.

Interpreting some of the quantitative data proved to be quite challenging. For example, when analyzing the Cattell Culture Fair Test of general intelligence, Ingham (1981) noted that the pre-test scores for each pairing of schools were disproportionate. She writes:

Since our schools were chosen for us by the Chief Advisor we anticipated that the children in each pair of schools would be closely similar in social background and consequently in their performance. . . . It was a considerable disappointment, therefore, to discover that . . . the average difference in the Culture Fair Test for one pair was almost 10 points and for the other pair about 5.5 points. An average difference of 2 or 3 points would have been acceptable, . . . but a difference so great as 10 points. . . is substantial and is likely to affect all scholastic comparison not only prior to, but also during, the experiment . . . treatment and nontreatment schools were selected by “lots” before the extent of the differences were known;
and so it happened that in each case the school where pupils’ performance was superior was chosen to receive additional books. (p. 196)

In an attempt to manage the disparity between the students in the treatment and nontreatment groups, Ingham introduced other comparisons. First, students who had not originally been involved in the investigation were introduced into the sample. Second, matched pairs of children were selected from each pair of schools and their standardized test scores were compared. Third, an analysis of co-variance was completed whereby adjustments are made to the criterion measures on the basis of the pre-test scores. After these comparisons were introduced, the pre-test and post-test scores revealed the following quantitative outcomes.

Differences on the National Federation for Educational Research Reading Test that measured sentence completion were nominal. Students in both treatment groups outscored their nontreatment peers by as much as 5% points on the Edinburgh Standardized Test of reading. Finally, the Schonell test, which measures a student’s ability to read words, indicated only minimal differences between the treatment group and the nontreatment group. Minimal differences were noted in the Teacher Attitude Assessment Scale, and the Student Reading Scale.

Changes in reading dispositions and interest as measured by the Askov Inventory and the Sharples–Reid Scale were interesting. In the inner-city treatment group, reading volume increased from 8 to 14 books per year for each child. Reading volume increased from 6 to 15 books per year in the nontreatment group. Gutherie (1982) hypothesized that the increase in reading from both the treatment and the nontreatment groups could be explained by the fact that students in both groups had to complete a reading log. In the
outer schools, reading volume also increased in the nontreatment school from 5 to 10 books per year. Ironically, reading was reduced in the outer-city treatment school from 14 to 6 books per year. Gutherie notes that the reason for the decline may be attributed to the fact that longer or more difficult books were chosen.

In a discussion with the teachers, Ingham (1981) noted six common themes. First, “children’s enthusiasm” had “exhausted the supply of book flood books” (p. 37). Initially, there was great excitement about the book flood, but the excitement waned after the students had read all of the books. Poor readers and non-readers were not “well cared for” in the book flood process. It is likely that the poor readers became more familiar with books in general, but the book flood did not improve their reading. Children, who were initially attracted to book covers, were discouraged when they opened the books and found much of the content too complex for their reading level.

Second, the Reading Record Form encouraged students to read books from cover to cover. Third, more unprompted silent reading was also reported by the teachers. Fourth, teachers noted that they did not feel “prepared for recommending authors and titles to children” (Ingham, 1981, p. 37). The deluge of the 5000 books was somewhat overwhelming for teachers. Initially, they did not feel that they knew enough about children’s literature to make the book flood experience as meaningful as it could have been. They did admit that as time progressed, their understanding of children’s literature improved. Fifth, children were more apt to borrow books from the classroom libraries than they were from the school library. The convenience and lack of formality that the classroom libraries provided were appealing to the students. Finally, the teachers thought that “their teaching practice had changed” (Ingham, 1981, p. 37). Teachers were more
likely to give students time to select and to exchange books in the classroom. Teachers also found that displaying books in the classroom created student interest in borrowing books.

Finally, Ingham (1981) was clear to note that “reading affects people in ways other than those that are measurable by reading tests” (p. 227). She noted, that “reading skills can be affected in ways in which reading tests fail to register” (p. 227-228). She also noted that there is a need for in-service training to teach teachers about current children’s literature. Teacher enthusiasm, by displaying and talking about the books, impacts student enthusiasm to read. She also noted, that socio-economic status of a family strongly correlated with the student’s reading success. She added that avid readers were almost entirely from working class families, and that reading is not isolated in the home environment. Reading in the home environment is impacted by the parents’ level of education, and their own interest and enthusiasm for reading. Finally, she suggested putting a small bookstore in the schools for students who do not have bookstores in their communities.

Conclusions about International Book Floods in English-Speaking Countries

There are three significant similarities between the Bradford Book Experiment and the international book floods designed to improve English language acquisition for ESL students. First, teacher enthusiasm in both projects mattered. Teachers who displayed, organized, and used books on a daily basis, found their students to be more engaged with the texts. Next, in both instances, teacher training mattered. Teachers who received instruction on how to use the donated books felt more confident in their ability
to engage students. Finally, in both international populations, all of the studies had financial, institutional, and administrative support.

**Book Floods in the United States**

This researcher found only one U.S. study whereby the practice of explicitly saturating classrooms with books was used (Neuman, 1999). However, the most comprehensive and relevant study that specifically addresses the candidate’s research question in regards to teacher interaction with gifted books is Neuman’s *Books Aloud Study* (1999). Neuman (1999) received a $2.1 million dollar grant from the William Penn Foundation to study the impact of flooding 337 non-profit child care centers with “high quality children’s books” (p. 287). Not only was she able to flood child-care centers with 88,960 books at a rate of five books per child, but she was able to provide book cases and storage racks so that the books could be displayed. Additionally, the study was able to provide teachers with 10 hours of training in read aloud strategies. One post doctoral fellow and ten research assistants helped implement the study.

The study employed a classic experimental design involving a random assignment of participants to treatment and nontreatment groups. Neuman (1999) also collected data by observing students in their classrooms. Additionally, she had teachers complete a survey at the end of the experiment with the intention of answering these questions: “What do people (teachers, aides, and children) do with greater access to books? How do social practices change? How does the child-care community fit early literacy in to its ongoing history? And, what are the shorter and longer term effects of greater access on children’s literacy abilities?” (p. 290).
What Neuman (1999) found was that when teachers received the books and the shelves, they enthusiastically rearranged their classrooms to create reading corners. Some teachers even added comfortable pillows to their reading corners. She noted that the change in the physical environment of the classrooms helped “set the stage for children’s greater access to literacy activity” (p. 297). This is consistent with the findings of the international studies that note teacher enthusiasm as a way to keep students engaged with books. She also notes that “literacy interactions” almost doubled (p. 297). These interactions included more one-on-one discussions with children about books, more singing, and more counting. It should be noted that these findings were not measured against a nontreatment group. Lack of a nontreatment group is a limitation of any research study.

Surveys completed by both the treatment and nontreatment groups indicated an increase in story book activities (singing and talking to students) before and after reading, as well as an increase in children reading on their own. The study also revealed that the teachers in the treatment group regarded story book reading as an “interactive event” (p. 300). Finally, teachers in the treatment group reported reading more to children than did the teachers in the nontreatment group.

This study is similar to the international studies in the same ways that the ESL and English book flood studies were similar. For example, in all three cases, teacher enthusiasm impacted student engagement with the books, reading and learning. Additionally, teacher training played a role in the success of the book floods. Finally, all three populations (especially Neuman’s) had financial and administrative support. This study differs from the studies in the Pacific Isles, because the students in Neuman’s
(1999) study spoke English, and this study focused specifically on changes in teacher practice with increased access to books.

An ESL Book Flood in the U.S.

The findings of this study are consistent with an earlier study conducted by Pilgreen and Krashen (1993) whereby 125 ESL high school students participated in a 16 week program of silent sustained reading (SSR). During the course of the investigation, the researchers added approximately 250 new books to each of the five participating classrooms in order to increase student access to high interest English Language Arts books. Students participated in SSR for 12-15 minutes per day. Pre-test and post-test results from the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test indicated that students participating in the program gained an average of 15 months of improved reading, averaging nearly one month gained for every week in the program (Pilgreen & Krashen). It is important to note that even though this study’s results are encouraging, they can only be considered “suggestive” due to the lack of a comparable nontreatment group (Pilgreen & Krashen, p. 23).

Both of these studies are consistent with the work of Elley (2000), De’Ath (1980), Mangubhai (2001), Fader (1967), and Neuman (1999), in that they support the notion that access to interesting and comprehensible reading material, in a non-threatening environment, can produce favorable dispositions about reading and an increase in academic performance. Additionally, as with the previously noted researchers, Krashen advocates that saturating classrooms with quality print material is a cost effective way to improve academic performance (Cho & Krashen, 1983; Pilgreen & Krashen, 2007).
Hooked on Books: An Iterative Book Flood

U.S. researcher Daniel Fader (1967) advocates for an iteration of book flood in his 1967 publication *Hooked on Books*. Fader proposes a process of *saturation* and *diffusion* in classrooms. When employing the saturation, Fader suggests that, whenever possible, traditional textbooks should be replaced with high interest, easily accessible reading material (magazines, newspapers, paperback books). When referring to diffusion, Fader advises that reading and English language skills should be taught in every classroom, irrespective of discipline. Like the saturation portion of Fader’s model, the diffusion portion champions high-interest, accessible reading material over traditional texts. Fader contends that replacing textbooks with easily accessible paperbacks removes the drudgery from traditional learning and increase students’ interest in reading.

Like Ingham (1981) and Neuman (1999), Fader (1967) recognizes that when classrooms are saturated with books, the books should be attractively displayed, easily accessed and refreshed with new titles on a regular basis. Additionally, like Ingham and Neuman, Fader also argues that replacing textbooks with a variety of high interest books warrants teacher training, and a reassessment of lesson plans and daily activities. Although Fader’s work is largely anecdotal, and does not use the term *book flood in its language*, it follows a book flood model.

In one instance, Fader (1976) devised an experiment whereby he established a treatment group, saturating a boy’s detention home with books. A similar facility does not receive books, and serves as the nontreatment group. After a year of saturating one of the facilities with books, and administering pre-test and post-test assessments to both groups of young boys, Fader noted that, when self-esteem was measured, boys in the
treatment groups reported higher self-esteem than boys in the nontreatment group. Boys in the treatment group also reported “more positive feelings about their own literacy efforts and attitudes about reading material” (p. 182). These positive feelings translated to feelings of decreased anxiety about the educational process in general.

From an academic standpoint, Fader (1976) noted that students’ capacity to comprehend paragraph meaning in treatment groups out-paced the nontreatment groups. Fader measured academic achievement comprehensively using The Stanford Achievement Test and The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children. However, he concluded that the results were not reliable because the test is skewed for Caucasian students and so many of the participants were African American. It is important to note that Fader’s results lacked sufficient quantitative data and were not peer reviewed. Rather, the findings were simply reported and published. However, Fader finds that African American boys scored lower on cognitive tests, as well as tests of self-perception as learners. He characterizes this phenomenon as deserving of academic and sociological investigation.

Finally, Fader (1976) suggests that the *Hooked on Books* program that advocates saturation and diffusion may be difficult to implement in all schools because it challenges current teacher philosophies and behaviors. Conversely, he identifies books as an affordable way to improve reading dispositions and academic achievement. When Fader published *Hooked on Books* in 1976, his home state of Michigan apportioned $400,000 from state funds to purchase paperback books for school classrooms.
Access to Books in Under-Resourced Communities

The issue of access to quality print material is not only a key to creating academic success for ESL and EFL students, but it is a critical component for understanding the reading behaviors and dispositions of English-speaking students in under resourced communities (Ramos & Krashen, 1998). One common theme addressed in the previously mentioned studies is student access to books in under-resourced communities. Whereas, the literature explicitly uses the phrase “book flood” to describe the process of exposing students and teachers to quality print material in an effort to increase academic performance, the lack of books in poor communities undergirds the important role book floods can play in building literate environments in poor communities.

Neuman and Celano (2001) conducted ecological research similar to the work of Hart and Risley (1995), who connected vast differences in children’s vocabularies to variations in parental income level. The research of Neuman and Celano not only confirms the discrepancies in the number of books in the homes of poor and non-poor children, but it also reports that children living in middle income communities have increased access to stores that sell children’s reading material. They also note that print signs, public places for reading, and libraries are more prevalent in middle income communities than in lower income communities. This data suggests that access to reading material increases the likelihood that people will read (Kim, 2004; McQuillian & Au, 2001).

Studies consistently report that access to reading materials impacts how much students read (Kim, 2004; McQuillian & Au, 2001). Additionally, the amount of time spent reading is strongly linked to achievement (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni,
1996; Walberg & Tsai, 2001). In previous studies, access to quality print material has been defined as broadly as number of trips made to the library (Ramos & Krashen, 1998), proximity of books to students in the classroom (Neuman, 1999), number of books in the home (McQuillian & Au, 2001), geographical proximity of students’ homes to bookstores (Neuman & Celano, 2001) and book ownership (Kim; McQuillian & Au). To this end, there is value in briefly reviewing the literature that addresses how access to books impacts children’s lives.

**Summer Reading: Access and Academic Achievement**

Summer reading improves academic achievement. Additionally, students without access to quality print material during the summer months experience drops in achievement by as much as a grade and a half (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996). This is especially true of low-income students (Allington al., 2007). To combat these performance drops, much attention has been given to bridging the summer reading gap and exposing children to books in the months of June, July, and August.

A recent study in the RCSD reported an increased interest in reading and student self-perception as readers, after 209 first and second grade students received a total of six new books during the course of the summer (Yarmel & Schwartz, 2007). The study was based on a modification of two studies that also distributed new books to low income children during the summer months.

One study, conducted in a multi-ethnic suburban school district, distributed 10 books to 331 children in Grades 1-5 during July and August. Each child's preferences for book content was considered. A pretest was administered in June and a posttest survey
evaluated changes in attitude (Elementary Reading Attitude Survey) and achievement (SAT). The study revealed no significant difference in academic achievement, but it increased summer reading and the number of books in low income homes. Books were distributed without any academic intervention (Kim, 2007). Research strongly supports the notion that a child's reading and literacy achievement is most effective when shared with an engaged adult (Neuman, 1996).

In a similar study, 842 low-income students received 12 books over the course of three summers. One result of this program was an increase in test scores on Florida’s Comprehensive Assessment Test (Allington et al., 2007). The participants in the study were randomly selected, primary-grade students from low-income elementary schools. The books were self-selected by the students at book fairs. When the three-year study concluded, reading achievement for the treatment group was “significantly higher” (p=.05) than that of the nontreatment group (Allington et al.). In a smaller study, eight books were mailed to 252 randomly selected, low-income 4th graders during the months of July and August. The study found small increases on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, but noted significant gains among African American students (Kim, 2006).

Summer reading programs, designed to engage children with texts via new book ownership, have proven to be effective in increasing reading skills and some test scores. These same programs have also been effective in decreasing summer reading loss for students who do not have access to quality print materials in the summer months. Based on the positive results that summer reading book distribution programs have yielded on student achievement, there is value in exploring how new books inform and transform
teacher practice. Such exploration might further engage students in reading and increase student learning.

*Dollywood Foundation*

In 1996, The Dollywood Foundation established its Imagination Library. The Imagination Library is a non-profit organization committed to building home libraries for children up to five years old. Children registered with the Imagination Library program are eligible to receive a total of 60 free books (one book a month for five years). Since 1996, the Imagination Library has donated over 23 million books to children across three countries.

During November of 2007, the Tennessee Board of Regents and the Dollywood Foundation evaluated the impact that their book distribution program had on children who received books once a month from birth to five years. The resulting internet-based survey was designed to gather teachers’ professional judgments about the readiness and performance of kindergarten children who had received a total of 60 books from the Dolly Parton Foundation. The comprehensive survey included responses from 153 teachers, and included an analysis of 1,178 student participants and 1,454 non-participants. The survey was divided into six parts and teachers were asked to evaluate entire classes of children rather than individual performance. Teachers noted a greater level of school readiness (reading, speaking, thinking, and staying on task were measured) for students who received books from the Dollywood Foundation.

*Conclusions about Access to Books*

Several research studies have informed the candidate’s research, because in most instances, book floods aim to help students in under-resourced communities. Like the
candidate’s research, all of the studies noted teacher engagement with the texts. Teachers and students used the books together as a means of pedagogical engagement, as opposed to the practice of handing a book to a student without offering any instruction or direction. The books became part of the curriculum. The REF application requires teachers to design creative lessons before receiving books. Teachers who receive books from REF have outlined their intended use with the texts on their Teachers’ Choice Application. This prerequisite holds the teachers accountable for facilitating the most effective use of the books.

Absent Teacher’s Voice

Research explicitly addressing the impact that modest book floods exert on teacher and classroom practice is insubstantial at best. This deficit is not surprising, since the existing literature that addresses small, non-profit book donation programs also lacks compelling research data. However, a wealth of scholars have studied the impact of access to books and student test scores, access to books and student motivation to read, access to books and frequency of student reading and access to books and student ELA competencies. Additionally, a number of studies measure student outcomes after a district initiates a curriculum change. However, none of these studies address changes in the behaviors or dispositions from the teacher’s perspective.

Teacher behavior and teacher practice, in general, is regularly studied. Veenman (1984) noted that the problems of beginning teachers have been studied since the turn of the century. A number of longitudinal studies measure changes in teacher attitudes (Hoy, 1968, 1969; deWijs 1980; Hinsch, 1979; Lacey 1977). The literature is rich with studies on successful classroom management and student engagement (Moskowitz & Hayman,
1976, 1974; Emmer & Evertson, 1981). Rudd and Wiseman (1962) have studied teacher dissatisfaction. College grade point average and success in the classroom has been studied (Adams & Martay, 1980). Difference in perceived challenges between urban and suburban beginning teachers has been studied (Taylor & Dropkin, 1965). Additionally, the problems of beginning teachers as perceived by principals have also been studied (Taylor & Dale, 1971; Anderson, 1963, Penrod, 1974). The research findings about teacher attitudes and dispositions are dense. However, the teacher’s voice is largely unheard when changes in classroom practice are investigated.

*Teachers’ Voice in Book Floods*

It stands to reason that teacher dispositions about book floods are more commonly made explicit in non-scholarly literature. Although these findings are not published in peer-reviewed journals, they are made public for the purposes of funder credibility, and program evaluation and improvement. For example, in a review of 10 nationally recognized book drive programs (nine non-profit, one for-profit), only five measured teacher perception and classroom impact of donated books. Of those five, only one produced data worthy of publication. This is not a criticism of the book drive process, but rather a reality of under resourced non-profit organizations absent the necessary tools to evaluate their programs effectively (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004; Patton, 1997).

*Conclusions*

These results and findings are certainly not the most reliable, and one cannot conclusively say that, if a child receives a book once a month for their first five years, they will be more ready for kindergarten than a child who does not receive books. What
is important to note here, is that there was an inquiry into teachers' perceptions of this program. It is also important to note that, in this context, teachers had no engagement with the books in the classroom. Books were mailed to students, but teachers did not explicitly interact with the books and the children.

Elley et al. (1998), Ng (1996), De’Ath (1980), Mangubhai (2001), Krashen (n.d.), Cho and Krashen (2001), Pilgreen and Krashen (1993), Fader (1967) and Neuman (1999), all acknowledged that new books change a classroom environment by, not only changing the appearance of the classroom, but by improving student dispositions and increasing reading frequency. However, in all of the aforementioned studies, only Neuman and Ingham explicitly considered how book floods change and inform teacher and classroom practice. Because teachers are the conduit through which students receive new books, there is value in understanding the teacher’s role in a book flood and their perceptions of the book flood process.

Local Education Foundations (LEFs)

Understanding the role that REF plays in the book flood process warrants an overview of education foundations. A Local Education Foundation (LEF), a phenomenon recently evidenced in public education, is a non-profit organization designed to provide support for students and schools in a given district. An analysis of education foundations, by Merz and Frankel (1995), found that most foundations were formed within the last 20 years. The birth of the Local Education Foundation was prompted by changes in tax laws that reduced revenue to school districts (De Luna, 1998). Early examples emerged in California in the late 1980s, when tax laws changed and school budgets were cut. Currently, approximately 2000 local public education
foundations in the U.S., support their respective school districts with resources, programming and finances. To this end, fundraising and grant writing are primary activities of LEFs (Merz & Frankel, 1995; De Luna 1998).

LEFs are independent from the districts they serve, and, in theory, build strong partnerships with their local school boards (Merz & Frankel, 1995; De Luna, 1998). Pressley & Markland, 1989). These partnerships are the bridge whereby the district can communicate its goals, needs, and mission to the LEF. Strong community relationships are cornerstones of successful LEFS (Smith, 2001; Pressley, 1989; DeLuna, 1998). Smith writes, “Leaders of education foundations must establish a rapport with school boards and school administrators as soon as possible, aggressively pursuing community involvement” (p.1). Pressley adds that “The community should be informed via press and media releases that clearly state the goals of the foundation. Prominent members of the community should serve as directors of the foundation. . .” (p. 1) DeLuna notes that strong community relationships can open up doors to donors and “reinvigorate taxpayer support of the schools” (p. 387).

The National School Foundation Association (NSFA), the U.S. professional organization of LEFs, reports that, of the 2000 LEFs in the United States, 23 LEFs are located in New York State. This number is unreliable as many more LEFs exist, but are not registered with the NSFA. For example, neither the Rochester City School District or the West Irondequoit School District is registered with the NSFA, but both districts have education foundations. The only Monroe County School that is a member of the NSFA, is the Hilton Central School District.
A national study found that LEFs that raise up to $10,000 annually spend their money on “mini-grants and scholarships” (De Luna, 1998, p. 387). LEFs that raise between $20,000 and $50,000 “tend to spend their money on curriculum enrichment programs, teacher training and teaching resources.” Additionally, “LEFs that raise more than $100,000 annually often pay for teaching positions” (DeLuna, p. 387). Foundations that fund teacher salaries are rare and represent only 7% of all the LEFs surveyed. In some instances, LEFs at this level have purchased computers labs, microscopes, and research libraries for the districts they serve.

Considering funds of this size, it is important to look at the presence or absence of LEFs of the Big 5 districts in New York State. Buffalo does not report having a LEF. Syracuse has an LEF, but its website posts a message that indicates that the education foundation is being reorganized. The Albany Central School District has an active education foundation. The education foundation appears to be a location where district personnel can apply for grants for individual programs. Fundraising, rather than programming, appears to be the focus of the Albany education foundation. The Yonkers Central School District has an education foundation that focuses on family literacy, college access, and community engagement. To this end, of the four Big 5 New York State districts that report having an education foundation, none support initiatives as large as teacher salaries or computer laboratories. Of the same four, only one (Yonkers) appears to make community relationships a priority.

Because LEFs are not-for-profit organizations, they rely on volunteers to facilitate daily operations. Some foundations receive “start-up” money from their local districts. In some instances, districts may even pay the salary for the Foundation’s Executive
Director. This is not the case for the REF. The REF was started with money from the now defunct Center for Educational Development. Operating in Rochester in the 1980’s, The Center for Educational Development was a non-profit organization designed to benefit urban children. That group's remaining funds were housed at the Rochester Area Community Foundation (another local non-profit). REF’s initial financing came from the bank interest accumulated from that fund. REF’s total operating budget is just under $105,000. The $25,000.00 annual salary of the Executive Director’s is provided through a combination of grants and the organization’s endowment. The importance of this overview is to note the modesty of REF. It is a small organization with modest goals. It cannot fund two and three-year longitudinal book flood studies, and it cannot fund teacher salaries or computer laboratories. What REF can do is support reading and literacy initiatives through semi-annual book floods.

Program Evaluation: An Introduction

The central question of this study seeks to identify the impact that REF has on the teachers and students who receive donated books. To achieve this goal, the researcher conducts an evaluation of the Give Back, Give Books program. To this end, an understanding of program evaluation is necessary.

Program evaluation is a necessary component of effective leadership. It is the barometer by which leaders measure the worth of a particular program, product, or outcome. Evaluation is critical in the 21st century. The current economic recession, high unemployment, and scarcity of capital encourages leaders to use their limited resources wisely (Fitzpatrick et al, 2004). This phenomenon is especially true for non-profit organizations that are dependent upon donations, grants, and external resources for the
sustainability of their programs. Sound evaluation is an important tool when determining whether an organization is meeting its goals and using its resources effectively.

Fitzpatrick et al (2004) define Program Evaluation as “. . . the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation objects are value, its merit or worth, in regard to those criteria” (p. 27).

*Program Evaluation: A Brief History*

Determining the origins of program evaluation is not an exact science. Scholars in the discipline report that it is a young profession in relation to the disciplines of law, education, sociology, and other social sciences (Fitzpatrick et al, 2004; Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, 2004). Whereas certain scholars consider program evaluation a young discipline, these same scholars refer to program evaluation from the 17th Century, and even more surprisingly, 2000 B.C. That said, contemporary program evaluation is rooted in the 20th Century. Rossi et al, (2004) note that program evaluation found its origins in education and public health before World War I. Prior to World War I, efforts existed to assess “literacy, occupational training programs and public health initiatives” (p. 8). This is consistent with the findings of Fitzpatrick et al (2004), who note that early program evaluation took place in the 1800s as a response to dissatisfaction with “educational and social programs” (p. 31).

During the 1930s, scientists routinely assessed social science programs (Freeman, 1977). During World War II, evaluation boomed as U.S. military officials monitored soldier and civilian morale, as well as “price controls, media campaigns and eating habits” that impacted the war effort (Rossi, 2004, p. 8). Following World War II, federal and private agencies initiated international programs to support “family planning, health,
These programs also warranted evaluation. Finally, the 1957 launch of Sputnik, by the Russians, marked a significant turning point in both program and educational evaluation. Sputnik was the catalyst for U.S. educational and scientific evaluation as a means of staying technologically competitive with the Russians.

*Educational Evaluation: A History*

As general program evaluation has roots in education, it is necessary to provide a brief history of educational evaluation. Madaus and Stufflebeam (1984) segregate Educational Evaluation into five distinct periods.

*The pre-Tylerian period (before 1930).* Marked by its emphasis on educational accountability, this period utilized testing as an approach to accountability. Accreditation is also important to understanding this period. Institutions were evaluated by a group of experts and deemed “acceptable or unacceptable” (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 1985, p. 654). Finally, this period emphasized standardization and efficiency. It is important to note that, during this period, Horace Mann introduced written essay exams in Boston Grammar Schools (1840’s). It was Mann’s “wide–scale assessment of student achievement in Boston” that created the climate for standards based education (Fitzpatrick et al, 2004, p.31).

*The Tylerian age (1930-1945).* Named for Ralph Tyler, who coined the phrase Educational Evaluation, this period marked the conception of curriculum development and evaluation. Tylerian evaluation involved internal comparisons of outcomes with objectives. His focus on outcomes will be important as specific models of evaluation are discussed (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 1984).
Age of innocence (1946-1957). The Age of Innocence was largely a time to forget about World War II and the Great Depression. It was a time when the country was focused on growth and recovery. Following the lead of national norms at that time, schools committed resources to upgrading facilities. Growth was seen in technology and sports programs. Curriculum changes included growth in technical, business, and community education. As technology and curriculum advances were made, normed standardized testing and machine scoring became prominent (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 1984).

Age of expansion (1958-1972). This age marked a turning point in educational evaluation. The Russian launch of Sputnik led the federal government to enact the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (NDEA). The NDEA funded national programs to advance curriculum in the areas of science, language, counseling, and testing. Cronbach (1980) advocated for evaluation to “improve curriculum development” (p. 660). New curriculum required evaluation and assessment. Additionally, during this period, President Lyndon Johnson initiated a program entitled War on Poverty. The need to evaluate social and educational programs such as Head Start received considerable attention. Finally, during this period, the birth of specific models of evaluation moved from standardized testing, and broadened the definition of evaluation to include goals, objectives, theory, and outcomes. Early models of evaluation, such as Stufflebeam’s Context, Input, process, and Product (CIPP Model) caused evaluation to become a professional practice (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 1984).

The age of professionalization (1973-1983). During the age of professionalism, evaluation became a true profession. The models developed during the Age of Expansion
were refined, journals and organizations dedicated to evaluation as a profession emerged, and research centers were established to understand and improve evaluation. During this period, needs assessment became a critical component of evaluation (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 1984).

**Evaluation Models**

Patton (1997) notes no fewer than 42 types of evaluations. Different evaluations are used to answer different research questions. Irrespective of the model used, one principal purpose of a program evaluation is to create accountability for external stakeholders, and/or for program improvement. For the purposes of this study, both stakeholder accountability and program improvement are important outcomes. Five evaluation models will be reviewed; however, the candidate will employ a Goal Free Evaluation (GFE) method to assess REF’s Give Back, Give Books program.

1. Discrepancy Evaluation Model (DEM)
2. Logic Model
3. The CIPP Model (Context Input Process Product)
4. Needs Assessment Model
5. Goal Free Evaluation

**Discrepancy evaluation model (DEM).** Born out of the Tylerian tradition, the DEM was developed by Malcolm Provus to “facilitate development of programs in large public school systems” (Fitzpatrick et al, 2004, p. 74). In this model, Provus (as cited in Fitzpatrick et al.,) views evaluation as a three-step process (a) “agreeing on standards or objectives” (p. 73), (b) determining if a discrepancy exists between performances and actual standards or outcomes of performance, and (c) using the “information about
discrepancies” to decide the future of the program (maintain, improve, or terminate) (Fitzpatrick et al, 2004, p. 73).

Provus (as cited in Fitzpatrick et al, 2004) states that, as programs are developed, they go through a minimum of four developmental stages and one optional stage. During the Definition Stage, goals and objectives are developed. In the Installation Stage, the evaluator determines that discrepancies do not exist between expected and actual implementation of the program, ensuring that the program performs as it is intended. The Process Stage involves data collection to determine if the participants’ behaviors have changed as expected. During the Product Stage, the evaluator determines if the program has achieved its objectives. Finally, the fifth and optional stage includes cost-benefit analysis. In this stage, the evaluator weighs the outcomes against the inputs. In challenging economic times, cost-benefit analysis is an essential part of program evaluation.

In this model, each stage ensures that discrepancies are removed before proceeding to the next stage. When discrepancies exist, Provus (as cited in Fitzpatrick et al, 2004) advocates a “cooperative problem-solving” approach for all participants (p. 77). Fitzpatrick et al, (2004) note that this 30-year-old model continues to influence education evaluation.

Logic model. The Logic Model builds on Provus’s Discrepancy Evaluation Model (Fitzpatrick et al, 2004). The Logic Model is one of the most widely used tools of program evaluation. Like the DEM, the Logic Model frames program evaluation in terms of an orderly process. The Logic Model asks the evaluator to answer specific questions about the project being evaluated, such as “Is what’s supposed to be happening,
actually happening” or “Are the intended participants being reached?” (Rossi et al., 2004, p. 93) The Logic Model takes the evaluator through a series of steps, eliciting explanations of subsequent outcomes. The assumptions about the model and the relationship that exists between each of the steps in the model, build a Program Theory around the particular program that is being evaluated.

The Logic Model requires specification of the following element

1. Situation: The Situation details the setting and provides a statement of the problem

2. Inputs: Inputs are the resources (human, financial, facilities, knowledge) that are invested in the program.

3. Outputs: Outputs include both activities and participants. Activities are the things that the program does (e.g., curriculum, workshops, newsletters, and staff training). The participants are the people the program purports to reach (e.g., students, parents).

4. Outcomes: Outcomes are the desired products of the program. Outcomes are measured quantitatively and qualitatively and are divided into three categories: Short-Term, Middle-Term, and Long-Term. Examples may include increases in awareness or knowledge (short-term), an increase in awareness may lead to changed behavior (middle-term outcome) and changed behavior may lead to an improved economic situation (long-term outcome)

5. External Influences: External influences are the environmental factors that may impact any of the inputs, outputs, or outcomes.
The Logic Model requires the specification of each of the items identified above. Resembling the DEM, the Logic Model works in stages. The ordered process of identifying each of the above specifications, brings to light “significant program issues and questions” (Rossi et al., 2004, p. 96).

*Context, input, process, product (CIPP model).* Stufflebeam’s CIPP Model was established in the Age of Expansion (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 1984; Stufflebeam, 1971; Stufflebeam, 1972). The CIPP Model was developed to provide decision makers with timely information in a systematic way. The intended use of the CIPP model is to “facilitate educational improvement through a proactive approach to evaluation” (Stufflebeam, 1971, p. 2). Two dimensions form the basis for the CIPP Model. The vertical dimension includes three steps: (a) delineating, (b) obtaining, and (c) providing. The horizontal dimension includes four types of evaluation: (a) Context, (b) Input, (c) Process, and (d) Product. The acronym CIPP comes from the four types of evaluation. Because the outcome of evaluation involves making decision about certain programs, four types of decisions that are inherent in the CIPP model include: (a) planning, (b) structuring, (c) implementing, and (d) recycling. Stufflebeam (2002) suggests that these four types of decisions are “respectively served” by content, input, process and product evaluation (p. 5).

Context evaluation provides information about the strengths and weaknesses of a total system. In this dimension, goals, needs, and objectives of the program are examined. Context evaluation seeks to ensure that there is alignment between objectives and identified needs. Input evaluation examines the actual intent and structure of the program. Once the intent of the program is understood, input evaluation describes the
program inputs and resources and provides comparisons about the strengths and weaknesses of comparable programs. Input evaluation proposes a program design and recommends alternative strategies for the program. Process evaluation provides information about the strengths and weaknesses of a program or particular strategy “under the conditions of actual implementation” (Stufflebeam, 1971, p. 6). Process evaluation monitors program performance, audits the program for compliance with ethical and legal guidelines, and identifies defects in the design or implementation of the program. This is the place where evaluators provide feedback about what is actually happening in the program.

Product evaluation examines product outcomes and “provides information for determining whether objectives are being achieved and whether the change procedure which has been employed to achieve them should be continued, modified, or terminated” (Stufflebeam, 1971, p. 6). The CIPP model is thorough and is typically used for high stakes summative evaluation.

Needs assessment model. The Needs Assessment Model determines the “focus of the evaluation” (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2004, p. 21). The goal of this model is to determine whether a “problem or need exists” (p. 21). Fitzpatrick notes the example of a particular intervention on a student or patient. The model describes the problem and recommends ways to reduce or solve the problem. In this model, the evaluator helps the client shape the direction of the study (Cronbach et al., 1980).

Goal free evaluation. Goal free evaluation was born in the Age of Professionalism, when evaluation transcended the simple measurement of “whether or not objectives were attained” (Fitzpatrick et al, 2004, p. 39). Goal-free evaluation
identifies the unanticipated side effects of a program. In this model, the evaluator does not focus on the goals of the program. The evaluator investigates actual outcomes rather than intended outcomes. Through this broad lens, Scriven (1972) notes that the evaluator is able to increase objectivity and reduce bias. In this model, goals should not be assumed; rather, outcomes should be evaluated. Ingham (1981) assumes this approach in her Bradford book flood, noting that “reading affects people in ways other than those that are measurable by reading tests” (p. 227).

The major characteristics of Goal Free Evaluation include the following:

1. The evaluator intentionally avoids knowledge of the program goals
2. Predetermined goals should limit the focus of the evaluation
3. Actual outcomes are more important than intended outcomes
4. The evaluator and the program manager should have minimal contact
5. Goal-free evaluation increases the reality that unintended outcomes will be noted (Fitzpatrick et al, 2004).

Surprisingly, the objectives oriented approach to evaluation, developed by Ralph Tyler, does not exclude Scriven’s Goal-Free evaluation (Scriven, 1967). Although the two may appear to be mutually exclusive, they work well together. Fitzpatrick et al, (2004) note that an internal evaluator is bound to know the goals and objectives of a program (object oriented), and is obligated to observe and measure those outcomes. However, because goal-free evaluation focuses on unintended outcomes, the two models of evaluation provide a comprehensive view of a programs’ outcomes.

For the purposes of this study, goal-free evaluation complements Tyler’s objectives oriented approach for two reasons. First, not one portion of REF’s Give Back,
Give Books program has ever been evaluated, so any noted outcomes are valuable. Second, REF is highly dependent upon grants for its sustainability. Grant sponsors frequently request a completed Logic Model before funds are awarded. This was apparent in 2007, when REF completed a Logic Model, and was awarded money from M&T Bank for its Give Back, Give Books program.

*Semi-Structured Interviews*

Because GFE does not presuppose outcomes, a semi-structured interview format was employed to gather data about the utility, worth, and practicality of the Give Back, Give Books program. Like GFE, semi-structured interviews are a guide for the questions and topics to be covered by the interviewer (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Zorn (2010) notes:

Semi-structured interviews offer topics and questions to the interviewee, but are carefully designed to elicit the interviewee’s ideas and opinions on the topic of interest, as opposed to leading the interviewee toward preconceived choices. They rely on the interviewer following up with probes to get in-depth information on topics of interest. Two underlying principles of the following suggestions are (1) strive to avoid leading the interview or imposing meanings, and (2) strive to create relaxed, comfortable conversation (p. 1).

The notion of avoiding preconceived meanings, as in structured interviews, is consistent with GFE in that it avoids presupposed or expected outcomes. To this end, semi-structured interviews are a fitting compliment to GFE. Additionally, semi-structured interviews are “effective when the researcher will only be meeting with the interviewee once” (MSU, 2009, p. 1).
Semi-structured interviews begin with a prepared list of questions and topics. The prepared list is a starting point for what then becomes a dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. The semi-structured interview relies on open-ended questions whereby interviewee responses lead to previously unanticipated questions (Corbin & Strauss, 1998; Glesne, 1999; Zorn, 2010). Unexpected follow-up questions are an effective way to probe for clarity or further understanding. Probing for further information is what distinguishes structured interviews from semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for richer dialogue and increased understanding. Probing encourages interview subjects to talk more. Following an interviewee response, a probing statement or question might be, “. . .what did you mean when you said. . .?” or, “Can you give me an example of that” (Zorn, 2010, p. 7).

Probing

Two types of probing frequently used in social science research are the silent probe and the echo probe (MSU, 2009). The silent probe allows the interviewee time to gather his or her thoughts in preparation for their next statement. During these moments, the interviewer remains silent while the interviewee prepares to speak. Whereas, the interviewer may be inclined to talk during these seemingly uncomfortable silences, it is best if the researcher remains silent and simply nods or encourages the interviewee with an “uh-huh” (MSU). The silent probe can “produce more information than direct questions because the interviewer does not interrupt the interview subject” (MSU, p. 2).

Next, the Echo Probe occurs when the researcher simply repeats the informants phrase and then asks the interviewee to continue. This process serves two purposes. First, it gives the researcher the opportunity to ensure that he or she has heard the subject
correctly. Second, it encourages the interviewee to dig deeper into, and expand upon his or her own thoughts (MSU, 2009).

Zorn (2010) offers 11 suggestions for conducting semi-structured interviews

1. Carefully plan the interview. Even though the interview is semi-structured, write down topics and questions.

2. When the researcher meets with the subject, the researcher should provide an overview of the purpose of the interview, along with measures taken to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

3. Ask a few background questions such as, “the interviewee’s job title, and amount of time in position.” This will get the interviewee comfortable with answering questions.

4. Focus on developing rapport. Be aware of body language and remain positive about the interview

5. Ask broad open-ended questions that allow the interviewee “latitude in constructing an answer.”

6. Save questions about specific facts and times for later in the interview.

7. Begin to probe when necessary. For example, “What did you mean when you said...?"

8. Continue to probe to get more in-depth answers. For instance, “Can you give me an example of that?”

9. Use silence as a probe.
10. Think about how to end the interview. Asking the question, “Is there anything else you would like to add?” is an appropriate conclusion. Also, asking permission for later contact if further clarification is needed is also valuable.

11. Immediately after the interview, test the recorder to ensure that the entire interview was recorded. Take notes and write down impressions (p. 1).

*Establishing Rapport*

For any interview to be effective, the interviewee must trust the researcher. Glesne (1999) refers to this as establishing rapport, which implies cooperation and harmony. Factors that impact rapport are appearance, behavior, and speech (Glesne). Building rapport such that an interview flows, necessitates that the researcher “fit in” to the culture that is being studied (Glesne, p. 97). Glesne notes that the researcher knows that rapport has been established when the interviewee has gotten something out of the interview. For example, *the interviewee* says, “...no one has ever asked me that before” (p. 98). Conversely, if the interviewee continually looks at his or her watch, it is not likely that rapport has been established.

*Program Standards*

Irrespective of the model used, program evaluation typically follows the American National Standards Institute of the four basic attributes of sound evaluation: (a) Utility, (b) Feasibility, (c) Propriety, and (d) Accuracy. Known as “Program Evaluation Standards,” the four attributes are important elements in conducting a sound program evaluation (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994, p. 23).

Utility standards are “intended to ensure that an evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users” (Program Evaluation Standards.htm, p. 1). The
utility standard emphasizes stakeholder identification, whereby individuals involved in the evaluation can be identified, such that their needs can be addressed (Program Evaluation Standards.htm). Just as the persons being evaluated should be identified, so too must the evaluator. The evaluator must be identified as trustworthy and competent. In the utility standard, information collected should be relevant to stakeholders, and procedures and rationale should be clear. Finally, reporting should be clear, timely, and the evaluations should be planned and executed in such a way that follow-up is likely (Program Evaluation Standards.htm).

Feasibility standards are “intended to insure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic and frugal” (Program Evaluation Standards.htm, p. 1). In this standard, program evaluation should be practical, cost effective, and cooperative (Program Evaluation Standards.htm).

Propriety standards are “intended to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results” (Program Evaluation Standards.htm, p. 1). Three points are critical to this standard. First, rights and welfare of human subjects should be protected. Next, evaluations should be designed to serve all targeted participants. Finally, evaluation reporting should include an unbiased reporting of the strengths and weaknesses of the program being evaluated.

Accuracy standards are “intended to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the program being evaluated” (Program Evaluation Standards.htm, p. 2). There are several important points to this standard. First, the program being evaluated should be
clearly identified. The context in which the program is being evaluated should be identified as particularly important for this researcher, as it is the Give Back, Give Books program being evaluated, and not RCSD teachers. Data gathered should be valid, reliable, and collected, analyzed and presented without bias (Ramlow, n.d).

**Design Models: Formative and Summative**

Irrespective of the design model, program evaluation can be categorized into two types: formative evaluation or summative evaluation (Scriven, 1967). The primary purpose of formative evaluation is to “provide information for program improvement” (Fitzpatrick et al, 2004). Formative evaluation provides information to judge the merit or worth of part of a program. Formative evaluation invokes a sense of movement and continuous improvement. In contrast, summative evaluation provides information to assist in making judgments or decisions “about program adoption, continuation or expansion” (Fitzpatrick et al, p. 17). Summative evaluations assist with determining a program’s overall worth or merit in relation to specific program criteria. In summative evaluation, there is a “hard-stop,” followed by a decision that impacts the future of the program. Summative evaluation tends towards high-stakes evaluation. For the purposes of this study, REF will be provided with an important formative evaluation.

**Synthesis of Research Literature**

As noted by Patton (1997), each evaluation model answers specific questions. Because REF is a young, non-profit organization with limited resources to dedicate to evaluation, and because the mission statement of REF is vague, there is value in evaluating REF’s Give Back, Give Books program using Scriven’s goal-free evaluation.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This research study sought to evaluate the REF’s Give Back, Give Books program. Sound evaluation is key in determining whether an organization is meeting its goals and using its resources effectively. This circumstance is especially true for non-profit organizations that are dependent upon donations, grants, and external resources for the sustainability of their programs. Since the early 1980’s, program evaluation has emerged as a profession that measures the effectiveness of initiatives in the public, private, non-profit, and educational sectors. Program evaluation is the barometer by which leaders measure the worth of a particular program, product, or outcome (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 1984).

Building on the Teachers’ Choice application process, this study seeks to answer three questions:

1. How do urban teachers, principals, and librarians, describe their experiences of participation in a book flood program?

2. For the purposes of program improvement, what do urban teachers, principals, and librarians identify as the book flood program’s goals, benefits, and limitations?

3. What is the intersection, if any, of the intended goals identified on the book flood application, and any goals articulated in the participant interviews?

Although it may be difficult to apply the answers to these questions to other settings, there is value in determining how the Give Back, Give Books program impacts the
teachers and students who received donated books from REF. Additionally, there is value in determining how the program can be improved.

The study employed a qualitative research methodology to collect and to analyze relevant data. Using Scriven’s Goal Free Evaluation (GFE), the researcher determined the merit of the Give Back, Give Books program by “relating program effects to the relevant needs of the impacted population” (Scriven, 1991, p. 63). This methodology was appropriate because REF has never measured any of the outcomes associated with the Give Back, Give Books program. Additionally, when the program was launched, preliminary research was never conducted to determine if books were the most needed resource in the district. Furthermore, because the mission of REF and the Give Back, Give Books program was so loosely defined, and because academic achievement in the RCSD has been substandard for over a decade, there is value in measuring the how the program addresses the needs of this under resourced population.

This study included collection and analysis of interview transcripts from a sample of the research participants. In addition, the researcher analyzed and compared completed Teachers’ Choice Applications to the interview transcripts. The researcher compared interview transcripts with completed Teachers’ Choice Applications to find agreement or variation in the goals and practices of the intended project. An understanding of how teachers used the books in their classrooms, as well as an understanding of teacher dispositions about the program and the gifted books has provided REF employees with useful information about the utility and value of the program.
Goal Free Evaluation: A Modified Model

To comprehend the implications of the research methodology, a thorough understanding of Scriven’s Goal Free Evaluation (GFE) must be achieved. In its purest form, GFE does not presuppose any outcomes, and the evaluator is not apprised of the intent, or purpose, of the program. This freedom gives the evaluator the opportunity to determine “what the program is actually doing without being cued as to what the program is trying to do” (p.180). Goal Free Evaluation is defined by five major characteristics:

1. The evaluator purposefully avoids becoming aware of the program goals.
2. Predetermined goals are not permitted to narrow the focus of the evaluation study.
3. Goal-free evaluation focuses on actual outcomes rather than intended program outcomes.
4. The goal-free evaluator has minimal contact with the program manager and staff.
5. Goal-free evaluation increases the likelihood that unanticipated side effects will be noted (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, Worthen, 2004, pp. 84-85).

Thus, the primary assumption of GFE is that it does not presuppose outcomes.

Scriven (1991) argued that it is challenging to adopt a pure GFE agenda. However, he conceded that an “approximation can exist whereby there are no efforts to pin down details of real goals” (p. 181). To this end, Scriven offered a hybrid approach to evaluation. In the hybrid model, some of the evaluators assigned to a project are made aware of the goals, and others are not. In this context, the evaluator is goal free, “to a point” (Scriven, p. 181).

Scriven (1991) noted that evaluators who do not know what the program is supposed to do will look more thoroughly at what the program actually does. Critics of GFE argued that, because predetermined outcomes are not identified, there is risk that the
evaluator will be deemed vague or “incompetent” because predetermined outcomes may not have been identified (Scriven, p. 181). For the consumer requesting evaluation, GFE may be threatening, because it “abandons the standards of success that were likely built into the contract for the program” (Scriven, p. 181). Additionally, there is risk that, when the goal free evaluator reports findings that are not directly related to predetermined outcomes, the person who requested the evaluation may be dissatisfied with the report's lack of attention to the intended goals and preconceived outcomes. In extreme cases, the client may refuse to pay the evaluator.

Conversely, GFE is applauded for its inexpensive and non-intrusive process. It is a useful method for any stage of a program. It is also less vulnerable to bias arising from the desire of the evaluator to “please the client because what the client may be trying to achieve is less clear” (Scriven, 1991, p. 181). For this reason alone, GFE is an appropriate tool to report outcomes surrounding the Give Back, Give Books program.

As its name suggests, GFE is different from Goal Based Evaluation (GBE) in its inherent knowledge of expected outcomes. GBE is defined as any type of evaluation based on “knowledge of and reference to the goals and objectives of the program, person, or product” (Scriven, 1991, p. 178). GBE is a detailed approach to evaluation that may include a needs assessment, as well as a cost analysis and comparisons. Whereas these details are important, and may point to the desired outcomes, they may not speak to the relevance of the program's merit the way GFE does.

Using a GFE model, actual outcomes will be determined after data has been collected, coded, and analyzed. The scholarly research on teachers' perspectives of small, non-profit, non-corporate/non-government funded book floods is limited. To this end,
GFE is an appropriate evaluation model. Goal Free Evaluation is broad enough to collect unbiased data, offer insight, and provide a starting place for meaningful program evaluation.

**Summary of Models**

The inductive nature of GFE aligns with Polkinghorne’s *Narrative Model*. Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that *Narrative Expression* is a vehicle for humans to create meaning from events. Polkinghorne writes, “Narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite” (p. 13). He continues, “…oral stories are dynamically different from the written texts of history or fictional narratives” (p. 163). He contended that the spoken word, the audience, and the interpreter create the whole story. In this context, the teller of the story (interviewee), the hearer of the story (interviewer), and the codes used to create meaning are the key elements for the construction of the narrative. In this way, the decision to conduct interviews is deliberate.

Interviews from teachers and principals have provided multiple perspectives, and a narrative of their experiences. During this process, conversation is data. Accordingly, analysis of this data has been interpreted and presented through narrative summaries and reoccurring themes. Both of these approaches are aligned with Scriven’s (1967) notion of GFE whereby outcomes are not assumed or anticipated. Rather, *actual* outcomes and the dialogue that emerges from the narrative expression (Polkinghorne, 1998) are the data that inform the research.

Charmaz (2006) argues that the process of interviewing multiple participants, synthesizing the data, and refining the data into codes, “elevates the codes to conceptual
categories” (p. 391). Dick (2005) expanded on the interview process, when he defined the role of the researcher. He noted that the task of the researcher is to understand what is happening in the research situation. The researcher achieves this goal by observing, conversing, and interviewing. In this context, the researcher constantly compares data. For the purposes of this study, the data was collected from interviews with RCSD teachers and principals who received gifted books from REF.

Seidel (1998) used language that was similar to Dick’s in his discussion of qualitative data analysis (QDA). For example, Seidel separated QDA into three pieces: “noticing, collecting and thinking” (p. 1). This three-step process is dynamic and mobile. Because the cycle “keeps repeating,” Seidel described the process as “iterative and progressive” (p. 2). The process of repeatedly thinking about new things in the data leads to noticing new things in the data. As the researcher notices new things, he or she collects new things. The process of noticing, collecting, and thinking is then self-repeating.

Seidel (1998) also described this process as “recursive” (p. 2). Like its iterative nature, one part of the triad can bring the researcher back to a previous part, and the process of noticing, collecting, and thinking will begin again. Finally, Seidel described this process as “holographic,” as each step in the process “contains the entire process” (p. 2). When the researcher notices something, “he or she is already collecting and thinking about those things” (p. 2). In this process, each step implies the other two steps. Seidel (1998) defined Noticing as, “making observations, writing field notes, tape recording interviews, gathering documents” (p. 3). This gathering of information is a form of data collection. Once the data has been collected, the researcher reads and rereads the data in
an effort to “name or code” the information that has been collected (p. 3). Coding is the process of labeling, naming, and organizing what has been noticed.

Jorgensen (1989) writes:

Coding is a process of analysis, whereby information is broken up into manageable pieces, and organized by patterns, sequences, processes or wholes.

As patterns, sequences, and processes emerge from participant interviews, the result is common themes, from which theories can be derived (p. 107).

Charmaz (1983) elaborates on the relevance of the coding process when she writes:

Codes serve to summarize, synthesize, and sort many observations made of the data. Coding becomes the fundamental means of developing the analysis.

Researchers use codes to pull together and categorize a series of otherwise discrete events, statements, and observations which they identified in the data. (p. 112)

She continues: At first the data may appear to be a mass of confusing, unrelated accounts. But by studying and coding (often I code the same materials several times just after collecting them) the researcher begins to create order (p. 114). Finally, in the thinking process, the researcher examines the data that has been collected. In this stage, the goal is to “make sense out of the data, look for patterns and relationships within and across the collection, and to make discoveries about the phenomena being researched” (1983, p. 5). Figure 3.1 provides a visual representation of this process.
Research Context

The study took place in the city of Rochester, New York, a mid-sized city in western New York with a population of 206,759 (City). Since 1999, the three primary employers that once sustained the city have reduced their workforce by 25% (Federal Reserve, 2009). As a result, when the research took place, Rochester was experiencing the highest unemployment rate it had seen in 9 years (2000-2009). During the study, the unemployment rate was 7.3%, versus a 9 year low of 4.5% in 2000, and the national average of 9.5% (Federal Reserve, 2009). The previously mentioned downsizing led to a 5% decline in the city’s population over 10 years. As the work force declined, poverty rose in Rochester. When the study was conducted, nearly 26% of city residents lived below the poverty line, compared to the state average of 14.6%, and the national average of 11.9% (U.S Census, 2009).
As a consequence of this declining economy, RCSD continues to serve many impoverished children. Eighty-eight percent of the students in the RCSD are eligible for free or reduced price lunches. Fifty percent of the schools enroll students who come from homes with a 90% rate of poverty or higher. Finally, the city of Rochester has the highest poverty rate among the “Big 5” school districts in the state: Albany, Syracuse, Buffalo, Yonkers (Pryor, 2006)

The RCSD supports a total of 119 schools: 60 Pre-K sites, 40 Elementary Schools, 19 Secondary Schools, one Montessori School, one facility for Young Mothers, one Family/Adult Learning Center, and three Parent Information & Student Registration Centers. Sixty-four percent of the students are African American, 22% are Hispanic, 11% are white and 3% are Asian/Native American/East Indian/Other. The district serves 32,000 elementary and secondary students, as well as 10,000 adult students. The number of children served by the city school district has declined by roughly 11% since 1999 (www.rcsdk12.org).

In part, RCSD test scores and graduation rates reflect the relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement, discussed in Chapter 1. Between 2003 and 2008, district graduation rates ranged between 39% and 52%. Standardized test scores in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics remain substandard. Since 2005, only one half of all 4th grade RCSD students have met learning standards on standardized state assessments in ELA (Report Card, 2010). The 2007-2008 New York State District Report Card for the City of Rochester reports that, from Grades 3 to 8, approximately 50% of the students tested met learning standards for their grade. Table 3.1 reflects these percentages.
Table 3.1

2007-2008 ELA Performance Students Who Scored a 3 or 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total Tested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>2361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>2324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>2230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>2134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>2417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>2466</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Tested Total 2322

In Grades 3-8, results from district standardized tests consistently indicated that girls' test scores were higher than boys', and that white students' test scores were higher than those of African American and Latino Students. Finally, drawing on a larger, national data set of academic performance, economically disadvantaged children have lower test scores than non-disadvantaged students (NCES, 2009).

Just as RCSD students struggle to keep pace with their peers academically, so too do RCSD teachers. According to the District Report Card, teacher turnover rate for the last four years has hovered between 18-20%. For the same time period, the state average for teacher turnover is 13%. The percentage of teachers in the RCSD who do not have a
valid teaching certificate is approximately 2%, against the state average of 1%. Finally, only 14% of teachers in the district have a Master’s Degree or 30 or more graduate hours, which is less than half the state average of 33% (New York State Department of Education [NYSED], 2009). Table 3.2 provides additional data about teacher education in New York State.

Table 3.2

_District Report Card 2007-2008_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnover</th>
<th>Albany</th>
<th>Rochester</th>
<th>Syracuse</th>
<th>Buffalo</th>
<th>Yonkers</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Valid Teaching Certificate</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree 30+Hours</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://www.nystart.gov/nystart/u/index.do

Because of these high rates of child poverty, lagging test scores, and poor graduation rates, the Give Back, Give Books programs puts new books in the hands of RCSD students who would otherwise not have access to them. This book flood seeks to positively impact the teachers who distribute the books, in addition to the children who receive them. REF is a fledgling organization with a broad mission statement. The Mission of REF is simply to “. . . provide resources to improve learning and success for all Rochester city public school students through the cultivation of partnerships between, education, business and the community” (rochestereducation.org, 2009, p. 2). Because the mission statement is broad, and because REF does not have any metrics in place to
measure the success or failure of its Give Back, Give Books program, this study’s researcher applied Scriven’s notion of Goal Free Evaluation (1967), in conjunction with Polkinghorne’s Narrative Expression (1988), to collect data from RCSD personnel. The resulting data has provided REF stakeholders with a baseline assessment of the utility and feasibility of the program.

Research Participants

This study examined two groups of RCSD personnel who applied for and received gifted books from REF in the fall of 2009 and/or in the spring of 2010. Categorical variables include: gender, race, length of service, school, grade level taught, and type of reading project. Gender, race, and length of service were determined at the time of the individual interviews. The participating teachers, librarians and principals represented a convenience sample (see Appendix I).

Convenience sampling is a “non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher” (Castillo, 2009, p. 1). In convenience sampling, the researcher understands that the sample does not represent the entire population. Convenience sampling is used when researchers pilot studies in an effort to obtain basic data and trends. This would be representative of the needs of REF.

Convenience samples are praised for their accessibility, and are considered useful for “detecting relationships among different phenomena” (Castillo, 2009, p.1). Convenience sampling is criticized for its bias and lack of representation of the entire population. The opposite of convenience sampling is random sampling, a process whereby participants in a study are chosen randomly. In random sampling, all
participants in the study are given an equal probability of being selected for the purpose of research. Random sampling minimizes the probability of bias and is a better indicator of the variables of interest in the overall population.

In the fall of 2009, the Teachers’ Choice Application was revised and a total of 106 applications were received. Ninety-five teachers applied for books, 10 librarians, and 1 Non-Profit organization. Teachers from 34 different schools and librarians from 10 different schools applied for books. A disproportionate number of applications (28) came from one school building (School #33). More than 50% of the teachers who applied for books, served students who read at the elementary level. It is important to note that this does not necessarily mean that the teacher taught elementary school—it simply means that this is the grade level at which the teachers reported that the students read. More than half of the teachers indicated that they were going to keep track of reading by individual reading logs or through creative projects. Approximately 23% indicated that they planned on engaging parents with the books, 14% indicated that they would execute a lesson plan, and 11% indicated that they would develop and monitor a book club. Fifty-one percent of the applicants granted permission to be contacted by an REF representative to discuss data collection and evaluation of the project. None of the applicants who applied for books were currently receiving books from any other sources, and 9% indicated that they had received books from REF in the past.

Of the 106 applicants who applied for books from REF in the fall of 2009, 24 teachers, three librarians and one Non-Profit organization received books. Eleven schools were represented, as well as one non-profit organization. Table 3.3 illustrates the book distribution for the fall of 2009.
Table 3.3

*Fall 2009 Book Distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-for-profit organizations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purposes of this study, all teachers who received books from School #33 were asked to participate in the study. The Principal at School #33 was also asked to participate in the study. The librarian from School #28 was asked to participate in the study, as was the Assistant Principal of School #28. Finally, one Principal and one teacher from the School Without Walls Foundation Academy were asked to participate in the study. This sample accounts for a total of 8 interviews with teachers, 2 interviews with librarians, and 3 interviews with principals, for a total interview number of 13. The researcher hopes for 100% participation, which would account for 46.4% of the total fall 2009 distribution.

Because the candidate has a professional relationship with all of the principals, the issue of bias needs to be briefly addressed. In terms of researcher bias, Glesne (1999) notes that alertness to the researcher’s own bias assists in producing trustworthy interpretations. She further advises that researchers must be aware of their proximity to a study’s participants, data, and the research context. Subjectivity and emotions can cloud interpretations.
RCSD personnel were awarded books based upon the quality of their Teachers’ Choice applications and their commitment to the use the books in a way that supported creative engagement and shared reading. Additionally, RCSD personnel who assessed the Give Back, Give Books program, identified it as a factor that determined whether or not books would be awarded. Applications were reviewed by the researcher, the Executive Director of REF, one board member, and a retired RCSD reading teacher who is familiar with many of the district reading initiatives. No one applicant was awarded books, unless there was agreement between at least two members of the review team.

**Previous Give Back, Give Book Distributions**

In the spring of 2009, a total of 200 teachers, librarians, and personnel from Non-for-Profit organizations requested books through a formal application process. Twenty-eight requests were granted. More than 1,500 books were donated, with each teacher receiving an average of 110 books. The teachers represented 16 Elementary Schools, 5 High Schools and 2 Not-for-Profit organizations that support the city school district.

As a prelude to the current investigation, in the spring of 2009, a preliminary evaluation project was completed with five teachers who received donated books from REF for the spring 2009 semester. The teachers were interviewed and four primary questions were asked:

1. What happened in your book program—what did you do?
2. Could you describe the impact of the program on you?
3. What did you notice about the children’s response?
4. What, if anything, would change for you or the children, if the program did not exist?
Overall, teacher response to the Give Back, Give Books program was positive. Two teachers noted an increase in parent interaction. One teacher requested that curriculum and literature with book related themes be included with the program. Another teacher indicated that she was the only teacher in her school who applied for books. Consistent with this sentiment, another teacher noted that most teachers in her school did not know that the program existed. Finally, a teacher noted that there is a shortage of resources in the school, and that, if books are available, “THEY [the students] WILL READ (Teacher 3, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

Data Collection Instruments

The current study employed three data collection instruments in order to provide a reliable, formative evaluation of the Give Back, Give Books Program and its impact on teachers and students. The data was examined through a process of triangulation. Triangulation is “the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.146). Triangulation of data rests on the assumption that the weakness in a single method can be “compensated by the strengths of another method. Triangulation therefore exploits the assumptions and neutralizes the liabilities of different data collection methods” (Glanz, 2003, p.41). Data collection from multiple resources not only strengthens the study’s usefulness in other settings, but it can provide the researcher with a more complete understanding of the research question (Glanz, 2003).

For the purposes of this study, triangulation of data occurred through interviews with participating teachers, and principals, which served as the initial instrument of data collection. Additionally, completed Teachers’ Choice Applications were compared to the
responses provided by the teacher participants interviewed for the study. Completed applications were analyzed after each interview and responses to interview questions were compared to the completed applications. Teachers’ interview responses were compared to their applications in order to relate each teacher’s original intentions for the books to the actual outcomes.

This data is important for the formative assessment of the program. For instance, 11 of the participating teachers who received books indicated an intention to engage parents. This data is instrumental in helping to confirm or to disconfirm this assertion. An additional 4 indicated that they were interested in starting book clubs in their schools. Uncovering a teacher’s ability or inability to launch their intended program in a meaningful way will be helpful information for REF and future book flood initiatives. For example, when teachers successfully launch their programs, the REF Executive Director can post that success story to the REF website as a ‘best practice’ for teacher engagement with new books. Newman (1999) noted the importance of displaying and organizing books as a way to engage students, helpful information for future Give Back, Given Books book recipients.

Research Procedures Used

Teachers were contacted via email (Appendix H), U.S. post and phone regarding their interest in participating in interviews. Teachers who agreed to participate in the study were asked to take part in a focused twelve question interview. Most interviews took place in the participating teacher’s classroom. Interviewing teachers in their classrooms was not only convenient, but it allowed the researcher the opportunity to
observe whether or not donated books were displayed, organized, and accessible to students.

Glesne (1999) suggested that meeting times and places should be “convenient, available, and appropriate” and that “an hour of steady talk is generally an appropriate length of time before diminishing returns set in for both parties” (p.78). It is important to note that the Teachers’ Choice Application indicated that teachers would be asked to participate in some type of evaluation process.

As the interviewer, the researcher asked the participating teachers 12 questions:

1. How did you hear about the Give Back, Give Books program?
2. How did you use the books?
3. Were the outcomes that you anticipated achieved?
4. What challenges or difficulties did you encounter executing your proposed plan?
5. What changes in children’s behavior or knowledge were observed? What did you notice about student responses?
6. What changes did you notice in your own teaching assumptions/beliefs/practices?
7. What surprised you?
8. What inspired you?
9. How did the children respond when they realized they were able to take the books home at the end of the school term?
10. What can REF do to improve the Give Back, Give Books Program?
11. Is there anything that you would change about The Teachers’ Choice Application?

12. Is there anything that you can suggest to improve the process of picking up your books from the REF office?

Patton (1990) noted that “the way a question is worded is one of the most important elements to determine how the interviewee will respond” (p. 295). To this end, “yes” and “no” questions were avoided and presupposition questions, whereby “the interviewer presupposes that the respondent has something to say,” were employed (Patton, p. 303). All interviews were digitally recorded. Recordings provide “a nearly complete record of what has been said and permits easy attention to the course of the interview” (Glesne, 1999, p. 78). Digital recordings are a succinct and accurate way to capture the content of the interview.

The researcher asked the participating teachers the 12 proposed questions. When responses were unclear, participants were asked for additional information. The researcher concluded each interview by asking participants if follow-up telephone calls would be acceptable. Glesne (1999) refers to this as “leaving the door open” (p. 68), such that if questions arise during the analysis and coding phases of the research, the researcher can call the research participants for clarification or elaboration. Additionally, follow-up calls were necessary for the purposes of member-checking. Member-checking is the process by which the researcher follows-up with the subject. Member-checking gave the researcher the opportunity to check the interpretation of the collected data. It also gave the participant the opportunity to provide additional feedback to the researcher. Following the interviews, all digitally recorded data was transcribed and analyzed.
To increase the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher conducted brief interviews with the principals whose teachers received books from either the fall 2009 or spring 2010 distribution. The individual interviews were conducted at the schools where the principals worked. The interviews were digitally recorded and analyzed. The sample size of the principals was representative of the convenience sample of teachers and librarians from each of the sites who received books.

The following questions guided the interviews with the participating principals:

1. How did you learn about the REF?

2. Did you know that REF existed for the sole reason of supporting students in the RCSD?

3. Did you and your teacher (Mr. or Ms Jones) discuss receiving books from REF?

4. Did you know that REF also distributes refurbished musical instruments to city school district students?

5. Is there something other than books and musical instruments that your school could benefit from receiving: athletic equipment, computers, and general school supplies?

6. What suggestions would you make to the Executive Director of REF, about ways to improve the Give Back, Give Books program?

The interview protocols used with the teachers were also used with the principals. Principals were notified via email and U.S. post office that a teacher or teachers in their building had been awarded books (see Appendix I). The letter requested a convenient meeting time and place for the interview. The researcher made follow-up phone calls and sent email messages to schedule mutually agreed upon interview times and locations.
Informed consent and IRB approval were obtained before the data collection process began. Participation in the study was voluntary. However, all teachers who completed the Teachers’ Choice application, understood that they would be asked to participate in an interview. Additionally, the participants were told that their principals would be interviewed after books were distributed and used in the classroom. Participants were informed that they could terminate participation in the interview at any time, for any reason. They were also told that their names would not be identified with their responses.

Spring distribution of books for the REF occurred in March. Teachers had until the last day of the 200-2010 school year to use the gifted books in their classrooms. Interviews took place in April, May, June, July, and August, 2010. Interviewing teachers and principals in late spring and early summer gave teachers time to use the books in their classrooms. Because teachers and principals were busy, the researcher accommodated any constraints in the interviewee’s schedule. The researcher preferred to interview teachers in the classrooms where the books were being used. The naturalistic setting gave the candidate greater access and information about the teacher’s experience with the books. For example, classroom interviews provided information about whether or not donated books were displayed or organized. This information allowed the candidate to further gauge teacher engagement with the texts.

**Data Analysis**

All digitally recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. A system of Open Coding was used to interpret the data. Coding is the process of organizing qualitative data obtained from interviews into “chunks or
segments” of text in order to develop a general meaning of each segment (Creswell, 2009, p. 227). Strauss and Corbin (1998) note three different types of coding: Open, Axial, and Selective. Open coding is the portion of the analysis that is concerned with “identifying, naming, and categorizing and describing the phenomena found in the text” (Borgatti, 2010, p.1). Each line, sentence, and paragraph is seeks to answer the question: “What is this about?” (p.2) or “What is being referenced here?” (p.2). The Open coding process gives language to the “conceptual word” by naming and labeling “things, categories, and properties” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.225). Strauss and Corbin note the experience of a woman who suffers pain associated with arthritis. In an analysis of the transcripts describing her pain, the researchers devise categories such as intensity of pain, pain relief, duration of pain, and effectiveness of relief (1998). These are broad categories that can be compared to other individuals who also have arthritis.

Axial coding differs from open coding in its process of “relating codes to each other via inductive and deductive thinking” (Borgatti, 2010, p.3). In this process, the researcher looks specifically at causal relationships. For example, a phenomenon is identified and causal conditions are noted that lead to the development of the phenomenon. The conditions that influence the phenomenon are known as the context. The context is composed of variables that determine the causal conditions. Intervening conditions are mediating variables that change or impact the context. Action strategies are the “goal-oriented activities that are performed in response to the phenomenon and intervening conditions” (p.3). The consequences are the unintended outcomes.

Selective coding is the process of choosing one category to be the “core category, and relating all other categories to that category. In this model, the idea is to develop a
“single storyline around which everything else is related” (Borgatti, 2010, p. 4), presupposing that a core concept always exists. Identification of the core concept is the finding that drives the narrative analysis forward. Because GFE is an open-ended process that does not presuppose any outcomes, the nature of selective coding is too prescriptive for the work of this research project.

However, a combination of open coding and axial coding proves appropriate. The nature of Open Coding, whereby categories are identified without restrictions, is consistent with the broad, open ended nature of GFE. Axial coding has its place in this research after Open Coding is complete. Axial Coding provides structure and a framework for the very loose nature of this evaluation and research. For example, if one teacher reports frustration with managing the deluge of books in his or her classroom, it would be valuable to use the Axial model to understand the conditions and context that created the frustration, and then after further analysis, offer suggestions or best practices about ways for teachers to avoid frustration during subsequent distribution. In this example, Axial Coding is appropriate and valuable if, during the open coding stage of analysis, “frustration” was commonly reported by teachers who received books from REF.

It is important to note that, because two different populations of RCSD personnel were interviewed, two separate code books of data were maintained. The outcomes of the interviews with both teacher and principals were compared and analyzed. In this approach, axial coding (drawing causal relationships) was a valuable way to compare the teachers’ and the principals’ experiences with the books in the schools and in the classrooms.
Summary of the Methodology

This study employed a qualitative methodology in order to examine how teachers in the RCSD used gifted books in their classrooms. The study sought to understand what impact, if any, the Give Back, Give Books program had on the teachers and students who received books from the REF. The study also sought to determine ways that the Give Back, Give Books program can be improved.

Interviews with participating teachers and principals facilitated the primary means of data collection. When possible, teachers were interviewed in their classrooms, so the presence or absence of donated books could be noted and analyzed in conjunction with the interviews. Common themes and patterns were identified and discussed using written transcripts of the oral interviews. The analysis of the specified data provided an important formative assessment of the Give Back, Give Books Program. This assessment afforded the donors, the Executive Director, and the Board of Directors with the ability to identify important strengths and weaknesses of the program for future improvement.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The present study was a narrowly focused program evaluation designed to examine the utility and feasibility of the Give Back, Give Book’s program from the perspective of teachers, librarians, and principals. This study attempted to fill two gaps in the research literature. First, the research literature was largely devoid of information that addressed the way that small, modest education foundations initiate, fund, promote or launch a meaningful book flood program. Second, research explicitly addressing the impact that modest book floods have on teacher and classroom practice was rare and largely insubstantial. Not only was the scholarly research literature that addressed modest, non-profit book donation programs nearly non-existent, but so was the research literature that addressed the teacher’s thoughts on the use of such programs in the classroom and their impact on teaching practice.

Give Back, Give Books is REF’s most prominent and significant program. Whereas abundant anecdotal data suggested that the provision of interesting and appropriate books was a worthwhile resource for building literacy in children, REF did not have a formative assessment plan in place to measure either the implementation, or the effectiveness of this program. This study was a preliminary attempt to fill that gap by employing a qualitative methodology to examine the utility and feasibility of the Give Back, Give Books program.
Give Back, Give Books is a bi-annual distribution of new books to teachers, librarians, and non-profit organizations in the Rochester area. In the spring of 2009, a total of 200 teachers, librarians, and personnel from not-for-profit organizations completed the Teachers’ Choice Application. In the fall of 2009, 24 teachers, three librarians, and one Not-for-Profit organization received a total of 2,500 new books from REF. Books were distributed between December of 2009 and January of 2010 for use during the spring semester of the 2009-2010 school year.

Research Method

To better understand the effectiveness of the Give Back, Give Books program, the researcher conducted interviews with a sample consisting of 39% of the participants who received books in the fall 2009 distribution. RCSD personnel asked to participate in the interviews represented a convenience sample of the total population. The researcher had a personal relationship with a portion of the principals whose teachers and librarians were chosen to receive books. The interviewed sample consisted of six teachers, one librarian, and three principals. All the teachers were female and had achieved tenure. Five of the females identified themselves as Caucasian and one female identified herself as Latina. The librarian interviewed was a Caucasian female who had been in public education for more than 30 years. Table 4.1 below identifies specific demographic information about the teachers and librarian who were interviewed. All were female and most were Caucasian. All teachers and the librarian interviewed had a minimum of nine years of teaching experience.
### Table 4.1

*Teacher and Librarian Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Yrs. Teaching</th>
<th>Gr. Level Taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>“One Million”</td>
<td>Ages 10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7</td>
<td>SWWFA</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>7-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>“Over 30”</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principals interviewed for this study were all African American. Two-thirds of the participants were female and one participant was male. One principal indicated that her school was on a School In Need of Improvement (SINI) list.
Table 4.2

Principals’ Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grades Taught</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Years Taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>P-6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>P-6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants were employed at one of three schools in the RCSD. Six of the seven teachers taught elementary school, and one taught middle school. The librarian was employed at an elementary school. The teachers and the librarian received an average of 84.3 books.

Data Collected

The interviews for this study were all recorded using a digital recorder. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist. The transcripts were then read and re-read by the researcher, who examined the texts for common themes and patterns. Following the model suggested by Charmaz (1983), the researcher developed codes that summarized and classified the many insights developed from the data.

Because a GFE approach was used, themes were not presupposed or predetermined. To organize the data, themes were noted on individual index cards. Both new and different themes were identified during the analysis process. Themes and participant names were noted on the top of each card, in order to make the coding process
easier. As common themes emerged they were color coded. Notes were written in three separate colors: one color for each population interviewed (Teachers, Librarian, and Principals).

After the interviews were completed, the index cards were then displayed and organized by common themes. This process clarified the most prominent themes within each participant group. Because there was only one librarian interviewed, her themes were simply identified. After the emergent themes were identified for each population, the themes were then compared between each participant group. Finally, the actual project outcomes, as reported by the teachers, were compared to their intended projects as noted on their Teachers’ Choice Application.

Research Questions

This chapter summarizes the overall findings from an analysis of the interview data. The interviews were conducted in a variety of venues--in school classrooms, principal’s offices, libraries, and even coffee shops. The interviews took place before both and after the school day began in order to accommodate the imperatives of the participant’s schedules. Some interviews took place during a teacher’s free period, and others took place over the summer when classes were not in session. Drawing on Polkinghorne’s Narrative Model (1988) that identified narrative expression as a means for humans to create meaning from events, and Scriven’s GFE (1991), that advocated ignoring any presupposed outcomes when engaging in program evaluation, interviews were conducted to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do urban teachers, principals, and librarians, describe their experiences of participation in a book flood program?
RQ2: For the purposes of program improvement, what do urban teachers, principals, and librarians identify as the book flood program’s goals, benefits, and limitations?

RQ3: What is the intersection, if any, of the intended goals identified on the book flood application, and any goals articulated in the participant interviews?

Findings

Research Question 1

How do urban teachers, principals, and librarians, describe their experiences of participation in a book flood program?

Teachers. While interviewing teachers about the Give Back, Give Books program three themes consistently emerged from the data:

1. Teachers positively responded to the program

2. Teachers consistently expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the program.

3. Teachers viewed REF as a positive conduit for parental engagement.

First, and not surprisingly, the program was and continues to be positively received by all teachers who received books. The teachers’ responses about the program and its mission were overwhelmingly enthusiastic. The teachers wanted to talk about their experiences, and all teachers participated in the interview process without hesitation. All teachers willingly signed the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix J), and not one participant seemed uncertain about speaking into the digital recorder. Each of the interviews lasted an average of 43 minutes, and many of the participants found the process to be engaging and thought-provoking. Upon completion of the fifth interview,
one teacher commented, “I enjoyed sharing this time together and, being able to talk…it was fun, and…I was very excited about this [program]…I really was, and you know, I know the kids were too” (Teacher 5, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

One-hundred percent of the teachers interviewed said that they would apply for books again. Additionally, every teacher indicated that he or she had a classroom library, and that reading was both a personal and a professional priority. The comments below are indicative of the teachers’ enjoyment of the program:

“I just hope the program continues; it was great” (Teacher 2, personal interview, June 9, 2010). “This was has been fun; it was fun to see their [the student’s] excitement” (Teacher 5, personal interview, June 9, 2010). “The students clapped when they realized they could take the books home” (Teacher 4, personal interview, June 8, 2010).

One teacher noted that, “The books created classroom excitement, and I was surprised how engaged the kids were” (Teacher 7, personal interview, June 29, 2010). Two other teachers noted that their “non-readers” and “reluctant readers” were, “now reading” (Teacher 1, personal interview, June 8, 2010; Teacher 5, personal interview, June 9, 2010) The same teacher who was excited about our interview also remarked, “I think that the books are gorgeous, for the most part, and I just like the variety, because…some of them are so beautiful [illustrations] you know” (Teacher 5, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

Whereas it was not surprising that the program was well received by teachers who received books from REF, what was surprising was why teachers were so delighted with the program. Many teachers commented on the extent to which they spend their own money on supplies for their students and their classrooms. One teacher estimated that she
spent about “$1000” each school year on supplies for her classroom. Another teacher reported that she hides the receipts from her husband after she buys school supplies for her students. Another teacher said that she spends “a few hundred dollars each year on crayons, colored pencils, and other supplies” (Teacher 7, personal interview, June 29, 2010).

To this end, gratitude became the second reoccurring theme. Teachers were simply grateful and appreciative of the additional support that REF provided in the way of classroom resources. This phenomenon was best articulated by one teacher:

…that there was support out there, because I think a lot of times…I know in Rochester, there’s just like this over-burden, you know, that you’re helping, you’re helping, you’re helping…but then what’s that helping support for you, you know, because there’s the emotional strain and then, but every day when they [students] come in, you’re the face that they see. You’re the one…and when they say they need something, you’re the one handing it out…but who’s the one behind you providing it, you know…and whenever they say they need something, you’re the one who drives to the store that night and gets it for ’em…when they need it…and nobody else is handing it to you, you know…cuz when the cupboard’s empty, and we need pencils, you’re gonna go to the store and get pencils, you know…” (Teacher 1, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

The same teacher commented, “…every day, my students don’t have paper or pencils” (Teacher 1, personal interview, June 9, 2010). A third teacher commented on her classroom library, “Every book you see in here, I have purchased” (Teacher 2, personal interview, June 9, 2010) This theme was consistent with another teacher who commented
that books from REF lightened her work load. She indicated that, because she had new books from REF, she did not have to worry about “filling her book bin” (Teacher 3, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

This practice is consistent with national reports on teacher spending. During the 2009-2010 school year, the National School Supply and Equipment Association (NSSEA) reported that teachers in the United States spent more than $1.33 billion of their own money on school supplies and instructional materials for the classroom. The survey of 308 K-12 teachers in May of 2010 indicated that teachers spent approximately $170 on school supplies and $186 on instructional materials. This totals an annual expenditure of $356 of teacher money (Nagel, 2010).

Because teachers were so appreciative of the books, and the support that REF provided for them, they were not critical about the title selection. Five of the eight teachers/librarians interviewed brought up the fact that, because the books are donated, the title selection was constantly changing. To this end, there were no complaints about the selection, and the teachers were simply grateful to have the opportunity to obtain new books for their students.

Whereas the themes of gratitude and appreciation may appear common and unsurprising, their relationship to the mission of REF is relevant. In all of its marketing publications, REF promotes itself as a student centered organization. For example, consider the REF Mission statement, “…[the mission] is to provide resources to improve learning and success for all Rochester city public school students….” (rochestereducation.org, 2009, p. 2). Also from the REF Vision statement, “… [REF] create[s] tangible way to help city school district students become more
successful…[there is] a focus on helping students in the city schools become more successful adults” rochestereducation.org, 2009, p. 3). From the REF Value Statement: “The greater Rochester community will respond to opportunities to support Rochester school children” (rochestereducation.org, 2009, p. 2).

None of the marketing publications produced by REF mention its support or commitment to teachers. Yet, gratitude for the support that REF provides for RCSD teachers was consistently mentioned by the participants. The gratitude was always expressed within the context of the amount of “out of pocket money” that teachers use to support their students. This finding was so prevalent and eye opening that this researcher has already suggested to the Executive Director and four Board Members that the marketing materials for the organization be revised to include support for RCSD teachers. Without the teachers as channels for the books, and creative classroom engagement, it is hard to see how the new books would find their way into the hands of RCSD children.

Finally, with respect to RQ1, and in tandem with the theme of gratitude, many participants pointed to a theme of improved parental engagement. The books gifted by REF were a conduit for positive communication between RCSD teachers and the parents of the children receiving the books. Of the seven teachers interviewed, five noted that the books gave the teachers and the parents a positive reason to speak to one another, which is particularly relevant when considering that two teachers cited the potentially challenging nature of teacher-parent relationships. One teacher noted:

I think that a lot of our parents have the fear and this wall already set up about school, because of the negative experiences that they had, you know, a lot of them
are very, very young, and have not graduated from high school and that type of thing, and I think it opens it up for them to like, “oh, she [the teacher] really cares, like she’s helping us, she’s not just giving us things to do without the tools

(Teacher 3, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

Another teacher noted:

There’s a lot more parent sense of support, I find, in Kindergarten, first and second grade. By 4th, 5th grade, the parents are getting a lot of negative feedback sometimes from school. One thing I do have to say…this year…I have some parents of some tough kids. I mean I could call them and say, “This is what was going on today, could you please talk to your child?” and they would, but to come in and do more than that was too much.” I’d hate to have to be the child that I talk about sometimes…probably too much, but be the child that’s gone from Kindergarten to 6th grade in a building and happened to have hit all the teachers that have maybe hit the burn out stage, you know, if you were that child that had all of those teachers through 6th grade, you would not be a happy student (Teacher 6, personal interview, June 25, 2010).

The book simply gave teachers and parents a positive reason to speak to each other. Four of the seven teachers sent letters home to parents indicating that the students would be bringing books home. One teacher sent a letter home to parents, inviting them to a morning book club. Another teacher sent home a note encouraging the parents and students to read together. A third teacher sent home a book and a request for permission to allow students to stay after school to participate in a book club. Another teacher sent home a notice indicating to the parents that the students would be working on a book and
blogging project in the classroom. Finally, a teacher noted that after she sent the first set of books home, she received two phone calls from different parents asking if the books were really meant for the child to keep. The same teacher also noted that she received a call from another father who said, “We don’t have time to get to the library, we don’t have any books at home” This teacher noted, “. . .it [REF books] helps definitely communicate with the parents, these books are coming home” (Teacher 3, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

These aforementioned comments support the fact that most teachers remained true to the Mission of REF by sending the books home with the children. In addition, the teachers’ comments provided important evidence of the relationship that books can build between teachers and children, teachers and parents, and schools and homes. Of particular importance, this finding confirmed the National Reading Resource Center’s (NRRC) agenda for home-based reading experiences and practices. The NRRC is a consortium of researchers seeking to advance and understand reading research through an “engagement perspective” which integrates the cognitive, social, and motivational dimensions of reading instruction (Baker, Afflerbach, & Reinking, 1996, p. XVI). In this model, the engaged reader is “motivated, strategic, knowledgeable, and socially interactive” (Baker et al., p.8). Research reported by the NRRC and supported by Rowe (1991) has indicated that for kindergartners, the strongest predictors of reading achievement in school were listening to others read at home and reading to others.

For children in Grade 5, Rowe found that the strongest predictors of school reading achievement were talking about books with family and friends, and reading alone. Consistent with this finding is the work of Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990),
who noted that literacy development of second graders is strongly related to home-based literacy where children have access to books, and adults read to their children. Based on this research, it appears that reading engagement is fostered when parents model reading behaviors and encourage their children to read.

When reading occurs in both the home and the school environment, the child is exponentially exposed to more words and more reading behaviors. As the number of contexts where reading occurs increases, there is greater likelihood that the child will become increasingly literate. The notion of framing literacy within a social context is consistent with the work of Gonzalez, Moll, and Amati (2005) who define literacy as both a cultural product and a social practice. In this context, literacy is measured and understood by the extent to which an individual can adapt to his or her cultural setting, interpret meaning from that setting, and ultimately make sense of his or her role within that setting.

This definition of literacy dovetails with the Ecological Systems Theory advanced by Bronfenbrenner (1979). This theory examines a child’s development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. Each layer of a child’s environment affects that child’s development. The layers of a child’s environment may include his or her own biology, home, school, family, religion, culture, society and community (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The relationships and the interaction that exists between these layers are as important as the layers themselves.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) contends that, as a child develops, the interaction between the layers becomes more complex. As our current economic base becomes more technical and parents are free from industrial work, this new technical model demands
more time away from home. A traditional industrial model, whereby parents worked from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., preserved free time and family life. The current technical model that undergirds the U.S. economy has eroded family time and weakened the layers of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model. Because of this circumstance, children do not have consistent interactions with adults. This theory is critically important to the unanticipated outcome of parental engagement in RQ1. If the interaction and the relationship between parents and teachers break down, the Ecological Systems Theory contends that children will not have the psychological tools to adequately explore the other parts of their environment—in this instance, school.

However because the Give Back, Give Books program created a positive means of communication between teachers and parents, Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory is fortified and not diminished. This pattern of communication between parents and teachers appears to broaden the scope of the REF as a student and teacher centered organization. This finding is particularly important as the success of an education foundation is dependent upon the relationship that it builds with the district it serves (DeLuna, 1998; Pressley, 1989; Smith 2001). This observation will be thoroughly addressed in Chapter 5.Principals.

While interviewing principals about the Give Back, Give Books program, one theme consistently emerged from the data:

1. Principals positively responded to the program.

Not unlike the teachers, the principals expressed strong approval and enthusiasm for the program. Each of the principals recognized that the program supported students and teachers. Additionally, the principals noted that the mission of REF, and specifically
the Give Back, Give Books program, was well aligned with their particular school initiatives. With that being said, one principal did have significant concerns about the execution of the program. Those concerns will be addressed in RQ2. A principal whose teachers received books from REF noted the following:

The teachers talked about expanding their classroom libraries and it opened up opportunities for the students to be able to utilize the book titles in a [way] that would fit into the instructional program. The additional books…I mean it just aligned itself with our overall mission as a school district and certainly the school itself, is to improve literacy…through our children, and unfortunately, sometimes we fall short with…I mean you have a wish list out there,…and not everything on that list…we’re able to take a hold of…but the thinking here is that those who benefitted…it helped, again to increase the classroom libraries and it promoted literacy and, so I think it was a wonderful support. I do know sometimes teachers are very generous and there maybe cases out there and children may be asking for certain things…or parents…and some of them [teachers] may even be responsive in that manner (Principal 2, personal interview, August 4, 2010). This comment provides evidence of the enthusiasm that this principal had for the program. The comment also provides credible data suggesting that principals recognize that REF supports teachers, and that teachers spend their own money on classroom supplies.

The same type of enthusiasm was expressed by another principal:

this is the way to get these kids books in their homes, for God’s sake, and children love to have their own books…they love it…the home libraries are incredible
things…and it’s one of those old-fashioned concepts, I think, but I think it’s still really, really relevant…the kids have their own books to share, to talk about, and they’ll read them…they’ll read them (Principal 3, personal interview, August 4, 2010). A principal who was not necessarily enthusiastic about the program for the sake of her students was enthusiastic about the program for her teachers. Her lack of enthusiasm stemmed from her minimal understanding of REF, and the Give Back, Give Books program. When I explained the program to the principal, she noted that one of her recent initiatives was to celebrate positive things that happened in her school. Publicly recognizing teachers who received books from REF would give her the opportunity to fulfill that initiative.

**Librarian.** While interviewing the librarian about the Give Back, Give Books program, one prominent theme emerged from the data:

1. The librarian positively responded to the program

Not surprisingly, the librarian was as enthusiastic about the program as the teachers and principals were. She was very familiar with REF and had previously received donated books. Her understanding of Give Back, Give Books, resulted in high praise for the program. Her enthusiasm was best expressed when she picked out her books, saying:

> You know, I don’t want to feel greedy when I go in (laugh)…and I went in as soon as you guys opened the date up, so I could get first pick . . . (laugh)…and, you know, it’s like a pig’s picnic, you know, I just go…”oh, I want this and this and this”… and the box is filling and I go, “now, can I pull everything I want.” You know some of the things that you get are gorgeous picture books. I go,
“oh…this is free…I can get this free” (laugh)… I get excited about it (Librarian 1, personal interview, July 12, 2010).

When discussing the children’s reaction to taking out “collections” (several stories contained in one book) from the library, she said:

they [publishers] put it all together in one nice thick book…you know…when the kids take that one out, they’re grinning, you know, it’s almost like they’re getting away with something, because I allow them to take 4 books…well here they’ve got about 15 stories and they know that there are 15 books in this one book, and then they can get 3 other books…you know…their greedy little eyes light right up (laugh)…I really thought was very cool…(Librarian 1, personal interview, July 12, 2010).

Finally, she noted that when she displays the new books, kids will “fight over a book,” and she will have to remind them, “you can have it in a week, when he returns it” (Librarian 1, personal interview, July 12, 2010).

Unanticipated Results

Two unanticipated findings emerged during this research project. First, the interviews provided a robust and nuanced understanding of the extent to which the REF supports teachers. This researcher had not anticipated this outcome. This finding may have remained hidden and may only have been garnered by actually talking and listening to the experience of the participating teachers. Because REF markets itself as a student centered organization, the reality of REF supporting teachers was revealing.

Second, and consistent with this finding, was the notion that gifted books provided a means of communication between teachers and parents. The books allowed
for a positive and engaging interaction between professionals and parents within a much desired and needed partnership. This outcome is supported by the scholarly literature that associates parent and teacher engagement with student achievement (Astone & McLanahan, 1991). When considering both of these findings, REF has the opportunity to broaden its mission statement to include teachers and parents. Additionally, it appears that REF not only serves under resourced students, but REF also builds relationships between teachers and parents in under resourced communities.

*Research Question 2*

For the purposes of program improvement, what do urban teachers, principals and librarians identify as the book flood program’s goals, benefits, and limitations?

*Teachers.* Research question two addressed the procedural aspects of Give Back, Give Books, and the intended and unintended outcomes of the program. While interviewing the teachers about the outcomes and operations of the program, four prominent themes emerged:

1. There was a noted lack of cohesion and marketing of the REF brand.
2. There was an opportunity for improved communication.
3. There was clarity about the goals of the Give Back, Give Books program.
4. Teachers found the operational procedures employed by REF (the application process, the book distribution process and timing of the program) to be convenient and fair.

The goals and the benefits of the program cannot be addressed without first discussing the limitations of the program. As noted above in RQ1, teachers were overwhelmingly supportive of the Give Back, Give Books program. However, teachers
did not know what REF was, the scope of its programs, or how REF fits into the context of the RCSD.

To understand the limitations of the program, the full range of REF offerings needs to be outlined. In addition to Give Back, Give Books, REF also provides refurbished musical instruments to city school district students. Known as *Spring for Music*, REF collects and donates refurbished musical instruments to students in the city school district. The program was initiated in 2005 and, since that time, REF has donated over 700 instruments to RCSD students. Another program, the now defunct *Book and a Blanket* program, was also established in 2005. Through this program, elementary school students received a new book wrapped in a new blanket. The books and blankets were presented to elementary school children by high school students from neighboring suburbs. Once the young children were presented with the books, the high school students and the children read the books together.

Since 2006, these three programs have been the center-piece of the REF mission. The significance of these three programs is relevant to this research, because it addresses the limitations noted in RQ2. Of the seven teachers interviewed for this research, only one teacher was familiar with REF. Four were decidedly unfamiliar with REF, and the other two were vaguely familiar with REF, but were unsure about whether they had heard about the organization. When asked if the words “Education Foundation” had any significance for the teachers, one said, “Yes,” one had a vague understanding of the words, and the words held no meaning for the other five teachers.

When asked if the teachers were aware of the *Spring for Music* program, five of the participants had never heard of the program, and two were vaguely familiar with the
program. When asked if the teachers had ever heard of the *Book and a Blanket* program, four responded negatively. Of the three teachers who were familiar with the program, two were prior *Book and a Blanket* recipients, but neither made any connection between receiving books from Give Back, Give Books, a *Book and a Blanket*, and the larger REF organization. Oddly enough the third teacher, who was familiar with the *Book and a Blanket* program, was not a recipient.

The lack of a connection between the larger REF organization and its three core programs was a common theme and a significant program limitation. The fact that teachers received books from two REF programs, but never connected the programs to the larger REF organization, presents a genuine marketing and branding opportunity for the organization. Once more, this lack of communication and connection between REF and its district partner is a significant issue when the success of an education foundation is dependent upon the relationships that it builds with the district it serves (DeLuna 1998; Pressley, 1989; Smith, 2001). Table 4.3 illustrates the extent to which REF has the opportunity to expand its brand and its marketing message. Communication sent to teachers from REF appeared to be largely ineffective, and teachers were largely unaware of REF program offerings.
Table 4.3

*Teachers' Perceptions of REF Branding*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>How did you hear about the Give Back, Give Books program?</th>
<th>Do the words &quot;Education Foundation&quot; mean anything to you?</th>
<th>Did you receive books from <em>A Book and a Blanket</em> program?</th>
<th>Are you aware of the <em>Spring for Music</em> program?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consistent with the branding and marketing opportunity that exists for REF, is the absence of communication between REF organizers and RCSD teachers. All seven teachers interviewed had heard about the Give Back, Give Books program from their principals. Whereas this may appear to be an appropriate channel of communication, all teachers in the district were on the REF electronic mailing list and received electronic communication regarding the program and its application process. To this end, email does not appear to be the best way to communicate with teachers. One teacher thought it would be a good idea to receive emails. Since emails were distributed to all teachers in the district, the lack of teacher awareness, suggests that email is ineffective as a primary form of communication. One teacher, known to be mindful of her email, advised her
principal to anticipate an email from REF. One teacher recalled receiving an email from the district, and the other four never specifically mentioned receiving any type of email from REF or the district. Most teachers appeared to be dependent upon communication from their principals for messages from REF.

Finally, the researcher promoted this program to two of the principals included in this study, accounting for a total of 200 completed Teacher’s Choice Applications for the fall 2009 distribution. The researcher did not promote the program for the spring 2010 distribution, and applications decreased by 44%. One-hundred and twelve applications were completed in the spring of 2010, compared to the 200 completed in the fall of 2009.

Whereas the absence of a consistent brand and marketing message did not impact the teacher’s enthusiasm for the actual Give Back, Give Books program, it provided the researcher with valuable insight into potential program improvements. Because REF intends to expand its impact students, and the number of applicants completed to request books from the Give Back, Give Books program, the organization needs to coalesce its marketing message and its program offerings. Based on conversations with REF book recipients, it appears that its program initiatives were worthwhile. However, the value of the programs was limited to a small percentage of district personnel.

In spite of the fact that the teachers only had a vague understanding of the larger REF organization, they were clear about the goals of the Give Back, Give Books program. The primary goal of the program was to provide new books to RCSD students, such that students would be able to improve their skills in literacy and to develop their own home libraries. With this goal in mind, six of the seven teachers gave all of the books that they received from REF to their students. One teacher retained “the really
popular titles for the next year” (Teacher 3, personal interview, June 9, 2010). The teacher did not indicate why she retained the books. Some research indicates that students are more likely to read books when they are located in the classroom, rather than the school library. It appears that convenient access and lack of possible library fines explains the preference for students reading books found in classroom libraries, as opposed to school libraries (Ingham, 1981).

The most significant reported benefit of the Give Back, Give Books program was the resource/assistance that it provided to RCSD teachers. This benefit was thoroughly discussed in RQ1. However, for the purposes of program improvement, it is important to note the dominant operational themes.

First, of the seven teachers interviewed, six were satisfied with the timing of the program. Five of the six teachers indicated that they liked being able to pick up their books in December. One teacher remarked that it was like “Christmas,” and that it was nice to have new books for the students when they returned to school after the holiday break. Conversely, the seventh teacher indicated that she would have preferred to select her books in October or November; she also noted that, “For me [picking out the books] was like a treasure, I mean, I didn’t want to leave” (Teacher 5, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

As mentioned in RQ1, teachers were grateful to have the opportunity to receive free books for their classrooms. Their gratitude precluded them from complaining about the minor inconvenience of the application process or the title selection. When discussing the application, all teachers found the process to be fair. One teacher remarked, “I thought it was pretty simple. You just had to write up what you were going
to do with it… I mean to get a hundred books, you should have to do something, so
(laugh)… I didn’t think it was too bad at all” (Teacher 4, personal interview June 9,
2010). Another teacher remarked, “It was fine with me, I think… yeah, I think a lot of
teachers don’t, you know, they’re not gonna be choosy if somebody’s willing to give
books… they’ll go hike up a mountain for ‘em, you know… just tell me where to show up
and I’ll be there!” (Teacher 6, personal interview, June 25, 2010).

There was no consensus about a desired title selection: fiction, non-fiction (maps),
class sets, individual titles, and selections from the Lakeshore Reading Catalogue were all
mentioned. Overall, teachers were very satisfied with the timing, application, and
distribution processes, as well as the title selection. The lack of criticism or suggestions
expressed by the teachers is an indicator that the organization’s model for the fall
distribution is satisfactory, requiring no immediate or significant alteration.

Principals. When discussing the outcomes and the operations of the program, the
principals identified three prominent themes. Their language was similar to that of the
teachers:

1. There was a noted lack of cohesion and marketing of the REF brand.
2. There was an opportunity for improved communication.
3. There was lack of clarity about the goals of the Give Back, Give Books
program.

Prior to discussions with the principals, and introducing them to the Give Back,
Give Books program, none of the principals were aware that REF existed. The words,
“Education Foundation,” had no meaning whatsoever for them. Additionally, none of the
principals had heard of the Spring for Music program. Two of the principals were
previously unaware of the *Book and a Blanket* program. One principal, whose school had received books from the *Book and a Blanket* program, failed to connect that program to the larger REF organization, or Give Back, Give Books, saying “I’m looking at everything on its own island. I’m thinking that there are all these different funding sources for 3 different items” (Principal 2, Personal Interview, August 4, 2010). The principals had heard of the Give Back, Give Books solely through my promotion. The lack of communication between REF and the school principals is a considerable limitation of the program, and an area worthy of improvement. Table 4.4 provides evidence of the need for a clear branding message and increased communication in the district. Like that of the teachers, communication from REF to the principals, appeared to be ineffective. Additionally, principals were largely unaware of REF program offerings.
### Table 4.4

**Principals’ Perceptions of REF Branding and Marketing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>How did you hear about the <em>Give Back, Give Books</em> program?</th>
<th>Do the words &quot;Education Foundation&quot; mean anything to you?</th>
<th>Did you receive books from <em>A Book and a Blanket</em> program?</th>
<th>Are you aware of the <em>Spring for Music</em> program?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>The assistant principal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The researcher and from the Central Office Communication Specialist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Central Office Communication Specialist</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>A teacher in the building and from the researcher</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 Whereas two of the three principals were enthusiastic and positive about the Give Back, Give books program, one was critical about the lack of follow through with the applicants who applied for, but did not receive books from REF. Teachers who are not selected to receive books from REF never received a letter or notification indicating why they did not receive books. As the primary promoter of the program in the building, the principals were left in an uncomfortable position with frustrated teachers and no plausible explanation as to why some teachers were granted books and others were not. One principal observed,

 There’s the other side of the coin…those who were not screened in, they were asking, “why not,” and of course I did not have answers to those questions, but there was a second [spring application and distribution] opportunity…I encouraged the others to apply again, and so, it’s a lot of mixed reactions
here…everybody was looking forward to hopefully benefitting. I think I do remember one person saying that she did not hear anything and she was waiting, so, again…not knowing the process, and I had not seen the application, I think that would be helpful…at least there’s a sense of closure for those people (Principal 2, personal interview, August 4, 2010).

This overlooked practice opens a window of opportunity for program improvement. If REF desires to increase its positive exposure in the RCSD, and improve relationships with the district it serves, notifying teachers who did not receive books with appropriate correspondence would be a valuable alteration to the program’s method of operation.

Because all three principals were so unclear about REF and its mission, they were unable to identify any specific goals associated with the program. One principal was unclear about the intent of the program. He had never seen a Teacher’s Choice Application, and he did not know if the donated books were to remain in the school classrooms, or if they were intended to go home with the children. To this end, all three principals suggested that an increase in communication would be welcome. They indicated that they wanted to be informed about all REF initiatives, so they could promote the programs within their respective schools. Additionally, they wanted to understand the specific objectives of the program, such that they would be able to ensure proper execution within their buildings in the future. One principal noted:

As I said, I don’t know what the guidelines, what the rules are as it relates to the books…those who were screened in, books were received… if the understanding the books should go home with children, then I’m gonna say the principals within
the school buildings to be in the loop on that, as well as some of our instructional
teams like School Based or…our leadership teams, and it starts with the principal
…and if we know that there’s opportunity out there…it’s for principals and other
leadership members being insiders to promote and to remind teachers that…If the
opportunity loans itself for the books goin’ home with children, then that should
be the case…but if the opportunity says you can keep the books to expand your
classroom libraries, then that should be the case as well, so it’s just…the thought
of just being very clear and, and if you’re screened in, what the expectation
should be (Principal 2, personal interview, August 4, 2010).

Another principal noted, “I would like to not be in the dark about resources. I know that
there’s a lot out there” (Principal 3, personal interview, August 4, 2010). At the
conclusion of an interview a third principal said, “Now that I know, I would promote it
more, so now if something comes across my desk that has the [REF] name on it, then I
would know what it is and I would be able to promote it” (Principal 1, personal interview,
July 12, 2010).

Both teachers and principals identified marketing and communication as areas
needing improvement. Similar solutions were identified by both groups, and both
populations mentioned the possibility of having an REF Program presentation during
Open Houses and as part of the in-service professional development of teachers. All of
the principals mentioned partnering with specific District Chiefs, the ELA Coordinator,
and the Head Librarian to promote REF programs. One such instance follows:

I think a good idea at some point if uh the foundation can find itself as one of the
agenda items on the principal’s calendar during the course of the…school year…I
think we have instructional/operational meetings, so...uh...and so the forms are there...and I would say principals also should be...connect with...two other forums...one is the assistant principal forum (Principal 2, personal interview, August 4, 2010).

Finally, there was no consensus about the most effective way to communicate with teachers or principals. Once principal suggested in an email, “I say this...the thought of an email to principals...certainly as basic as it can be, . . .it just gets right to what the points may be and a cover letter with an attachment of an application”(Principal 2, personal interview, August 4, 2010). The same principal suggested attaching an engaging message in the subject line of the email. Conversely, another principal preferred not to receive email. “I have to say no...I will tell you that I do get emails that say “free book offered”...but usually they’re from a company and so I don’t pay any attention to those, because they’re trying to hook me into something” (Principal 3, personal interview, August 4, 2010). Distribution of flyers was mentioned twice and one teacher proposed quarterly communication via email and flyers in the following:

I think just like what you guys were doing, you know, the emails and you know, as un-environmentally friendly as this is, maybe a couple times a year, put a flyer out, to have secretaries put it in your mailbox, you know, because if you hit the...if you hit a teacher maybe in the right moment, where they actually are at a lull between report cards and paperwork and they have this...you know, I’m speaking to the teacher that didn’t have like a lot of time, maybe at some point...just different points in the year, it might be a good time for them, you know (Teacher 6, personal interview, June 25, 2010).
Librarian. When discussing the outcomes and the operations of the program with the librarian, three themes emerged:

1. There was a need for organizational improvement.
2. Title selection complimented curriculum and lesson plan needs.
3. Students were enthusiastic about the addition of new titles in the school library.

Program goals for librarians are different than they are for teachers. There is no expectation that librarians will give the books they receive from REF to their students at the end of the term. There is, however, an expectation that the books will be used in accordance with the terms of the Teachers’ Choice Application. Because of this distinction, the intended goal of the book flood from the librarian’s perspective will be addressed in RQ3. However, when discussing the outcomes and operations of the program, the librarian identified one suggestion for operational improvement and two benefits.

Because the librarian interviewed was familiar with the program, she quickly identified the program limitations and areas in need of improvement. Interestingly, she was concerned that the application process might be too time consuming, or taxing, for teachers. This concern was never identified by the teachers. In terms of the organization of the REF book storage room, she suggested that the books should be moved to a larger space, so that book recipients would have more room to move. Keeping the books at waist level was also suggested. Finally, the suggestion was made to arrange the books like “record albums,” so that recipients would be able to “flip” through the titles. She found the current set-up “frustrating,” but was pleased that the Executive Director had portioned off space for books of particular interest to librarians. This space typically
contained large reference books. This participant, who spent “two to three hours” selecting books for her school, had this to say:

Well, it was nice because Pat said that when I went in to pick books, she said, “these we recommend for librarians” and you know, I love to share that, because sometimes there are these huge things that no kid wants to take home, so she said, you know, to definitely look through those first and so I took a bunch of those so I could put them into our collection (Librarian 1, personal interview, July 12, 2010).

The librarian identified two benefits of the Give Back, Give Books program. First, not only was she able to expand her collection for the library, but she was able to partner with teachers in her building and select books that would complement their teaching needs and curriculum, saying the following:

I do partner with teachers and we do certain things every year, depending on the grade level. I know how frustrating it is if I don’t have materials or if I have to always do interlibrary loans to get these things and sometimes timing on that doesn’t always work out, so I can’t do the interlibrary loan but I’ve been here at least 5 years, so I knew what teachers wanted what, you know, I looked for specific things that I wanted…things that the kids love to read or went with some curriculum piece that you know, I needed materials…so…all those things went into our collection (Librarian 1, personal interview, July 12, 2010).

Next, in terms of the children’s response, the librarian noted, “They’re book hounds…they know the collection, they know what’s available and when they see the new books, they get very excited” (Librarian 1, personal interview, July 12, 2010).
Knowing what students want to read encourages reading (Allington & Mc-GillFranzen, 2008). The benefits noted by the librarian are consistent with the positive theme noted in RQ2.

Unanticipated Results

The noted lack of cohesion and marketing of the REF brand was the single largest unanticipated result of this research. This outcome, along with the lack of clarity about the goals of the Give Back, Give Books program, makes this formative assessment worthwhile. These two unanticipated outcomes provide REF and its Executive Director with valuable information about areas that require improvement. Additionally, the suggestion made, regarding whether REF should inform every applicant of the status of his or her application after the selection process has been completed, provided REF with a tangible justification for expanding its presence and improve its relationship with district partners.

Research Question 3

What is the intersection, if any, of the intended goals identified on the book flood application, and any goals articulated in the participant interviews?

Research question 3 addresses the issue of project fidelity and Table 4.5 provides a summary of the extent to which teachers were able to adhere to their intended projects and the goals of the program. Four of seven teachers who received books were able to complete their projects as planned, and provided the researcher with evidence of their completed project. Five of the seven teachers distributed all of their gifted books to their students and two teachers retained books for future classroom use.
Teachers. Table 4.5 illustrates the variables associated with the program that informs this researcher’s study.  

Table 4.5  

*Project Fidelity*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Type of Project</th>
<th>Number of books granted</th>
<th>Were the books used as intended per the application?</th>
<th>Is this a new project or integration with current curriculum?</th>
<th>Provided me with project evidence</th>
<th>Did you give all the books away?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Creative Project</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>New project</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, retained class set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>New project</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Integration with current curriculum</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No, retained popular titles for next year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Creative Project</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Integration with current curriculum</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Creative Project</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Yes/No Partial Completion</td>
<td>New project</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>New project</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7</td>
<td>Book Club</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>New project</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Teacher’s Choice application is a form, whereby teachers are asked to answer seven questions. One of the questions asked requires the applicant to place his or her project into one of five categories. The participants in this study placed their projects into the following categories: (a) creative project, (b) book club, (c) parental/family project, (d) a project that involved executing lesson plans, or (e) a project that involved keeping track of individual student reading. Of the seven teachers interviewed, four were able to execute their projects as they were outlined on their teacher’s choice application. Two participants were unable to complete their intended projects, and one participant completed only a portion of the proposed project.

Of the four teachers who were able to complete their intended proposals, two took departures from their regular curriculum and two integrated the books into existing lesson plans. Three themes were identified amongst the two teachers [T1 and T2] whose projects represented a departure from their curriculum:

1. The projects were collaborative in nature. Students either read with one another or with family members.

2. There was high teacher involvement. The teacher appeared to be engaged with the students’ work.

3. There was high teacher enthusiasm.

The first teacher, who was able to complete her project as proposed, created multiple book clubs, whereby the students would read and share their thoughts about the books they were using in an on-line forum. The students were asked to write reviews of the books they read, which they then posted on a public web-site created by the teacher.
The project gave the students a purpose and an audience with which to share their writing. She explained the project as follows:

We used the books where they did literature circles, and the literature circle groups they responded on-line because, we get the computers twice a week, and they don’t like doing things hand written any more, and so if they got to respond to their partners on line, on a blog, so that they could instantly see their partner’s thoughts, then they loved it. They had to read independently, and then they had to respond to whatever questions I posted on to the blog, then they had to…they could see their partner’s thoughts instantly on the blog…and then that way, they thought it was like working together, but it was working together on-line (Teacher 1, personal interview, June 8, 2010).

In addition to the on-line blogging activity, the students completed a creative art project that accompanied their books. The students wanted to create their own t-shirts that were reflective of the books they read. Because the teacher could not afford to buy shirts, she had them create their own “t-shirts” out of poster board. The art work on the t-shirts reflected the story line of the books that the children read.

One teacher participant found the integration of traditional book reading and blogging to be an invaluable use of her instructional time:

They’re learning their keyboarding skills, they’re learning their internet skills, they’re learning tons of skills…like some of them had never been introduced to a blog, you know, so the technology skills was outstanding, that they learned, you know, and so, just teaching them all the techie stuff that they needed to know…and the safe skills…that they needed to know cuz of the internet…what
was safe, what was not safe, and the language they had to use that was appropriate for me, that they couldn’t use their slang, text language, you know, cuz they tried that and then some of ‘em tried the inappropriate stuff and then they learned that that was not appropriate for me, and so they learned that that…I would not allow that, and I would go on there and delete it…and so then I had to, you know, learn how to screen out certain things and…so there was a learning curve for them, there was a learning curve for me (Teacher 1, personal interview, June 8, 2010).

Additionally, this same participant found that classroom management and behavior had improved with this project, because the students were fully engaged in their work, and they were working autonomously. Not unlike the findings of Fader (1976) and Elley (2000), this teacher found that executing the project, and integrating the books into her daily lesson, required much more preparation than the she had originally anticipated.

Prior to executing the project, the teacher spent time researching author information based on the titles that she had chosen for her students. Following her initial research, the teacher established and monitored all of the blogs. On the subject, one participant recalls the following:

Well, you know, it was the management of keeping it all together, I mean, because it was…I was running 5 blogs, you know, so instead of just having the one class, it was the 5 blogs and keeping up with not just the traditional of the paper, you know, you’re doin’…cuz if you just do a literature circle in your room, you would see maybe 2 groups a day, ok…well, I had 5 groups goin’ in a day, ok…they’re all working at the same time and so I’m …I was…some groups were just fine, but some groups they…when they posted, I had to check their post
before I could let it post automatically, because some of ‘em were postin’ risky stuff, ok (Teacher 1, personal interview, June 8, 2010).

The most noted outcome for this teacher was that the students were very enthusiastic about reading and were very engaged in the project. She was also surprised that all of her students wanted to keep their books, offering the following:

I found it help[ed] with the behavior issues, this is the first time I’ve ever had the partner set separately, but respond, live…and they loved it. They could not wait until the next session to get together, and so I found my reluctant readers sitting there and going, “what do I have to read? What do I have to read?” I did expect that they would enjoy the blog, ok, because I do have several students that are very high with their technology skills, ok, and so I expected them to be able to help the others…so I expected those that were more reluctant…they’re always saying, “help me, help me, help me”…I figured those would get better, ok…and they did. It’s my expectations and my hopes were that my more reluctant readers would say, “what am I supposed to do…how do I do…, you know”…I need to keep up”, and they did better. They didn’t always get the job done, but they did better. I guess it, it reaffirmed the technology aspect more, and the part about the reluctant readers, ok…that’s what it did for me…the reaffirmation about that.

Just the fact that they…the end…I guess it inspired me the fact that the joy of the reading and the discussions that they had after it and they were just sayin’ like, “Ok, what do we get to do next with it?” They were looking forward to it…something next…next…next. And with 6th graders, you don’t get that a lot. It’s not very often that my students are given the opportunity to take a book home,
and get to keep it, because by the end…they kept saying, “I get to keep this book?” “…I can take this book home?”, and I was…I was so amazed because they thought…I thought they wouldn’t want to keep it after they finished, you know, why would they want to keep it, because they’d read it…but they…some of them even traded the books and then…that was the book they wanted to keep (Teacher 1, personal interview, June 8, 2010).

The second teacher, who completed her project as proposed, initiated a parental reading project. To prepare the families for the project, the teacher sent home a simple homework assignment during the February break, along with a letter asking the parents to read with their children. The letter also requested that the students turn in their homework when they returned from break. Assigning homework over the February break was the teacher’s attempt to determine the success of her intended Give Back, Give Books project experience. The teacher considered her success rate to be positive.

The project involved children reading the books together as a class. Through this practice, the teacher and her aides were able to “pre-teach” some of the vocabulary to the students by using “picture walks.” As a result, when the children brought the books home to read to their parents, they were familiar with the vocabulary and the story line. Books were sent home Monday through Thursday for two consecutive weeks. In addition to the books, the children brought home six cards that contained six sight words from the story, and a book response form. On the last day, the teacher assigned homework for the parents. She described the project as follows:

When I initially…did this, on that first Monday, I wrote a letter to the parents, explaining what we were doing and I sent them something I found on-line that
tells them…what research shows the results can be from reading with your student…or for reading with your children, so that just kind of gave them, hopefully, some value to what we were doing. That went home the first day, book responses went home every day, for the 8 days. On the last day, you know…and it must have been the day after that…the parents had homework, and I told the kids, I go, “now tonight’s homework is for your parents, so you need to tell them before you watch TV tonight, you need to do your homework…or before you can play on the video games, you have to do your homework”…I go, “say the same things to your parents that they would say to you”. I go, “but that means that you need to offer to maybe do dishes to free them up to do their homework…or sweep the kitchen floor, to free them up to do their homework” (laugh) (Teacher 2, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

This particular teacher received 100% of the book response forms back every night. All of the forms were completed and provided to the researcher. Unlike the previous teacher who retained 48 of the books donated to REF, this teacher indicated that all of the books donated by REF were sent home with her students. When discussing the project, this particular teacher did not feel overwhelmed by the amount of work she had to do, unlike the first teacher. She felt that having sets of books helped with the work. “Lord no, it really wasn’t. I think that one part of it that really helped was having sets of books, like we had 12 Hansel and Gretel, we had 12 Danny and the Dinosaur…that was awesome, because we could totally sit down with a whole group and introduce the book together” (Teacher 2, personal interview, June 9, 2010). If she were to do the project
again, to lighten her work load, she indicated that she would put the sight words on sheets of paper rather than individual cards.

It is important to note that this teacher was an avid reader, who, even prior to her work with REF, gave away approximately five books per year. To this end, when asked if there was something other than books that REF could provide, she responded, “Well, you’re kinda asking somebody who thinks books are probably the most fun (laugh) I think books are probably the most important things we can give these kids, you know” (Teacher 2, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

Two additional teachers [T3 and T4], who successfully completed their intended plans, used their REF books to complement already existing projects. Three prominent themes emerged during the interviews with these two teachers:

1. The projects were collaborative in nature. Students either read with other students or with family members.

2. Students had the freedom to self-select the titles that they wanted to read.

3. Both teachers reported high parent enthusiasm.

For T3 and T4, the REF books augmented on-going classroom practices. Both projects encouraged shared reading. One teacher initiated a parental involvement project whereby the students earned one free book, for every five books that they read with their parents. The teacher displayed the books on a table, allowing each student to pick a book in order to get them excited about reading and to build their home libraries. After the students brought home their initial selection, the teacher told the students that each time they read at home with their parents and signed off on their “monthly homework sheet,”
they would receive a new book for every five books they read. The students and parents responded positively to this program. Accordingly, the teacher shared the following:

Oh, they were SO excited…I mean they…they didn’t really realize that I’d been doing that all year, like I would stop and say, “oh, this person read…they get a book. This person read, they get a book”, you know. There was one kid whose Dad called me and said, you know, “we don’t have time to get to the library, we don’t have any books at home”, so then I created like a bag, and every week, he would pick 5 books that he would take home, and we would do that, and then he was earning them, so…but a lot of the kids didn’t even realize that I was giving prizes, like what I was giving those for…you know, when I was collecting the homework, and then I was like, “okay, so and so can come up and pick a book”…it didn’t really connect until, I think, I had all those books, so then I could afford to give all 22 students a book to start out with, you know, in January, and it kind of motivated those who were already reading at home, to read more, so it was just a good way to launch it” (Teacher 3, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

This particular teacher had been working on a similar project for years. She usually relied on books from Scholastic publishing to start the year off, but, due to being out on maternity leave, she was unable to receive books from the early fall program.

What I usually do every year is have the kids earn…usually after every 5 books, I give them a book, which I purchase myself, and last year I came back mid-year, because I was on maternity leave, so I never started off with Scholastic, where usually your first book order you get a class set free, so then I save those, and you know, reward the kids, and then I just buy books myself over the year. Well, last
year, since I was out for half the year, I never got any of the Scholastic stuff, so I used up the rest of my books that I had, you know, my stockpile…so when I saw this, I thought it was great that I could continue it without having to spend hundreds of dollars myself (laugh) to do it (Teacher 3, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

The second teacher who was able to successfully execute her plan, initiated a creative reading project, whereby her kindergarten students partnered with 5th grade students to engage in shared reading time. This teacher, along with her 5th grade counterpart, has been working on this project for several years. Once a week for one half hour, the 5th grade students and the kindergartners read together. Initially, the 5th graders read to the kindergartners, but as the year progressed, the kindergartners read to the 5th graders. This program allowed the 5th graders to be role models for the younger students. The books served as a reward to the children for their mastery of the content.

This same teacher read the books at the end of the day for final story time. The teacher kept the books in a “special box” in the classroom. The teacher liked having some class sets, but was also glad to have individual titles such that students could choose books that reflected their individual reading interests. The teacher noted that the parents also enjoyed the program:

I have some really good parents…they get to enjoy reading with them, so like having extra books to read and things like that. And it seemed like they liked that…it was one that they read here, so if I just gave it to them, we didn’t do anything at school it probably didn’t have as much to it, so when we did it here, and they’d read it with their reading buddies, they read it at story time, and it
meant more to share at home that way, so parents liked that. I think if I just brought it home and they just, like, “oh here’s a book, you can take it home,” it wasn’t as exciting (Teacher 4, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

The previous statement accurately reflects the research literature that finds that a child’s interest in reading increases when the child engages with an adult in a creative and fun manner (Elley 2000; Neuman, 2006). The teacher also noted that the books were “integrated nicely into the curriculum,” and that it was “just nice to have more resources; it’s always nice to have more books” (Teacher 4, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

The teachers who integrated their REF books into existing curriculum, made no mention of an increased work load. The teachers simply noted that the REF books added to their classroom libraries and that it was helpful to have extra resources. In her 1981 *Bradford Book Flood*, Ingham noted, that because of proximity, students were more likely to read books from classroom libraries, than from the larger school library.

Finally, one teacher was only able to partially complete her intended project. As with T1, T2, T3, and T4 the three following similar themes were apparent:

1. The projects were collaborative in nature. Students read with other students.
2. Students had the freedom to self-select the titles that they wanted to read.
3. There was high teacher involvement. The teacher appeared to be engaged with the students’ work.

The teacher proposed a creative project whereby her bilingual (Spanish-English) students would make “partner booklets” to accompany the book being read. The “partner booklets” would contain illustrations and the “new” vocabulary words. The students
would then share the booklets with another class to see if the new words could be better understood. The books would then be displayed at the school Author’s Fair in the spring.

Even though the students were able to complete their “partner booklets”, the teacher had hoped that the students would complete a translation project, as well. She explained with the following:

The last piece was they were going to choose like 3 books, well, maybe 4, um, simple ones and translate them into Spanish and make Big Books out of them and read to the kids in the first grade, and that’s a lot of work, so it just…there wasn’t time…because I planned it, I had put May 30th as the target date for that, and May was the month of “horrible tests”…(laugh)… yeah, 1, 2, 3 in a row, and it takes a lot of energy and stuff, and it’s really hard. And then we had to do the DRAs…they had to be all done, and then we had to do something else. . .

(Teacher 5, personal interview, June 9, 2010).

The two teachers [T6, T7] who were unable to complete their intended projects, were unable to for very different reasons. One teacher’s experience was indicative of a program improvement opportunity for REF, and the other teacher’s experience is indicative of a larger sociological phenomenon. In spite of the teachers’ inability to complete their projects as intended, three common themes emerged:

1. The projects were intended to be collaborative in nature. Students were either going to read with other students or with family members.

2. There was high teacher involvement. Both projects were a departure from the traditional curriculum. The teachers appeared to be highly engaged and enthusiastic about their projects and the books.
3. Both teachers were able to distribute all of the books they received from REF. The first teacher, who was unable to complete her intended project, originally noted that she wanted to run an after-school book club. The teacher’s school building did not have a library and she was assigned as one of the school mathematics teachers. Her intention was to create a book club whereby students would meet after school one or two times a week from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Other school staff as well as parents and families were invited to participate in the club. Students brought their books home after they were read during the book club.

When the teacher announced to all 7th grade English classes that a book club was established in the school, approximately 20 students (20%) of the 7th grade population indicated interest in participating in the book club. The teacher was unable to complete the intended project, because when she went to the REF office to select books, she was unable to obtain a sufficient number of like titles to support a book club.

One of the issues that we ran into when we picked out the books was that there were only a couple of different titles in multiple copies, and then we took some that had maybe like four copies or five copies and our thought we could do small group circles instead of everybody reading the same book they could read, you know, a couple different books and then like swap them, something like that. When we got…like we took our, you know, big box of books, and we took ‘em back to school, and we talked to the administrator about it and you know, we let her know, you know…what the problem is now, we’ve got all these books, but there’s not really enough books for everybody to read the same book at the same time. And she said, “so, we’ll buy some,” and I said, “ok,” so she actually ended
up buying us books for the kids that wanted to be in the book club, so that they
could all read the same title at the same time, and the books that we got from
REF, we used as prizes and give-aways for the kids, so they could have more
books they could take home and read on their own time (Teacher 7, personal
interview, June 29, 2010).

Whereas this teacher was unable to complete her project as intended, she was able to
distribute all of the REF titles to her students. Because participating in a book club is one
of the project choices on the REF Teacher’s Choice application, consistently carrying sets
of books speaks to a program improvement opportunity for REF.

The second teacher, who was unable to successfully complete her intended
project, indicated that she wanted to complete a project whereby parents, students and the
teacher could read and discuss books relating to social and emotional wellness. This idea
was a continuation of a school improvement project that the teacher had begun at the
University of Rochester. The teacher thought it would be helpful to have morning book
club meetings with parents. The teacher sent out invitations to parents asking them to
attend morning book club discussions. She bought bagels and donuts, and hoped that
parents would attend. The project did not turn out the way the teacher intended. She
explained the project as follows:

The whole theory came from a project that I was involved in at the University of
Rochester and we enrolled…uh, it was the Urban Teacher Leadership Academy,
and part of that…part of the project was…they gave us money to help our school
improvement plan and what we did is put together a whole library of children’s
literature that was socially/emotionally wellness related, in different categories, so
I said, ok, this is a great idea. I can use some of these titles and use some of the philosophies behind that in this Give Books program and kind of implement that and have it be not just books to read in the classroom, but books the kids can take home, and then talk about, you know, what the themes were and….yeah. . . . . (laugh)…so, that was ambitious to say the least. The bottom line was that the mom…the one mother came in and she was really happy and each time I said, “ok, take some more books” (laugh), you know, she has um…Faith is in my class, she’s a 5th grader and so she has a little sister who’s in first grade, and a brother that doesn’t go to our school, but who’s in 6th grade, who has some learning challenges also, so it was one of those things where it’s like if you weren’t going to use the books at home, please take them…I sent out invitations and I sent out, the letter saying, you know, have you had a hard time discussing some of these ideas with your children, and you know, is this an issue at home or, you know, like in a pamphlet, like you know how you can do those 4-fold like little invitations on Word Perfect or whatever…and I went out and bought bagels and you know, cream cheese and donuts and coffee and juice and fun plates…and…[after] three times, [only one mother attended] and I was like, Ok, I give up (laugh) (Teacher 6, personal interview, June 29, 2010).

This is the same teacher who noted that by 5th or 6th grade parents can receive a great deal of negative feedback from the district, and they can tend to disengage from the school process. Student academic achievement has been studied, and achievement is strongly correlated with parental engagement (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Lightfoot, 2003).
In spite of the fact that this teacher was unsuccessful in executing her intended project, she created enthusiasm and excitement in using the books with her students. She put the books in a special box and told the students if their parents or guardians came to school, they could have some of the books.

If you want this book, tell your Mom, you know, and I tried to use it as a hook to try to get parents to come in..."if your Mom comes in, I’ll let...you know, you can pick a book...if she wants to come in for a parent conference, you know.” Basically, I didn’t want to just give them a book for no reason. I wanted them to have a parent buy into it, cuz that’s what I said I wanted to get parent buy-in, that’s why I wanted these books and...(laugh) (Teacher 6, personal interview, June 29, 2010).

Additionally, before she went on early maternity leave, she told the students that “if they wrote thank you notes, they could take home some of the books, and then the deal was when you can write a thank you card, you can have a book, and then it was like, “yeah...I can finally get my hands on these books” (Teacher 6, personal interview, June 29, 2010). The teacher who initiated this project provided me with copies of the thank you notes and letters that the children wrote.

The teachers’ inabilities to complete their intended projects were similar to the findings of the ESL book floods, whereby external factors such as school closing and civil strife frequently made it impossible for teachers to complete their intended plans (Ng, 1987; Elley & Foster, 1996).

**Principals.** Research question three was not as easily answered for principals as it was for teachers. Principals did not have to complete any type of application for their
teachers to receive books. Thus, project fidelity did not explicitly apply to teachers. However, one principal articulated one substantial theme that undergirded the utility and feasibility of the Give Back, Give Books program.

1. The Give Back, Give Books program appears to be aligned with individual school and district goals.

I just appreciate the opportunity that the Foundation has given to our teachers that plays itself out with our students, and this promoting literacy and there’s not enough of that…we need to continue with that…I say, continue to be the champion you are for literacy (Principal 2, personal interview, August 4, 2010)

The intent of the Give Back Give Books program was well aligned with the RCSD Strategic Plan. As the RCSD strategic plan looked to increase the percentage of students who scored at levels three and four (proficient/advanced) on the New York State ELA assessment, as well as improve access to rigorous instruction for all English language learners, the Give Back Give Books program supported these goals. As the presence of books in classrooms was known to increase reading, it had also been known to increase standardized test scores by as much as 5% (Neuman, 1999; Ingham, 1981). Additionally, the presence of English language books for English language learners was known to improve reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and mastery of English (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). The Give Back, Give Books program not only supported individual schools the program supported the larger district mission of student success.

Librarian. Unlike the teachers, there was no expectation that the librarians would donate the books they receive from REF to their students. However, the librarian noted
that during REF’s first year, she received books and she distributed them to her students. The distribution actually caused a bit of confusion.

You know, the first year that I did it, they had given me all those books, which I gave away to the kids in the school…I think they got 2 or 3 books, you know, and it was really nice to be able to do that…maybe it was 2 books…um…you know, and the kids…”what?” you know, cuz they’re so used to me…they have to bring ‘em back to me…and they couldn’t quite understand that they were gonna be allowed to keep these…teachers and I…had to keep repeating, “these can go home. These can stay at home. These are yours. You can put your name in it,” you know…it just…it was a new concept for them to get something to keep from the library…I was also worried that they would think “oh, maybe she’s changed her policy” (laugh)...no…they got it (laugh) (Librarian 1, personal interview, July 12, 2010).

It is important to note that the librarian completed a grant application. Her application indicated that she wanted “lively stories and picture books to inspire her students to enjoy books” (Librarian 1, personal interview, July 12, 2010). The theme that emerged from the interview data was similar to the utility and fidelity themes noted by P2 in RQ3:

1. The librarian was able to align title selection with teacher and student requests, and curriculum needs.

Whereas the librarian did not specifically say that she picked out “lively stories,” she mentioned that she spent” two to three hours” picking out books, a process that took a great deal of time, because as mentioned earlier, she was interested in matching teacher
curriculum needs, and frequent student requests. Additionally, because her school had been designated as a School In Need of Improvement (SINI), one of the needed improvements involved increasing parental engagement. In order to accomplish this goal, she was interested in obtaining books in both English and Spanish in order to engage parents.

We do have a parent section upstairs in our library...in English and in Spanish...it’s not used...I’ve never had a parent come up...I’ll have students say, “can I take this out for my mother?”...um...what I’ve seen mostly is the kids will borrow for their mothers or their grandmothers...like “Twilight,” you know...this one girl toward the end of the school year...her mother wanted it and I said, “well, she’s got to get it back”...you know, when I was closing the library...and so she told her mother, and she got it finished and brought it back...but that occurs quite a bit, where kids take things out for their family members at home (Librarian 1, personal interview, July 12, 2010).

Unanticipated Results

One unanticipated theme emerged from RQ3. First was the issue of teacher and student autonomy in title selection. Teachers involved in national and international book floods, as well as the teachers who were interviewed for this research, noted that they enjoyed the freedom to choose the books that they would use with their students. This finding was consistent with the research literature that noted a positive correlation between book title choice and external motivation for student engagement in reading (McQuillan & Au, 2001). Deci and Ryan (2000) suggest that intrinsically motivated behaviors, which are performed out of interest and satisfy the innate psychological needs
for competence and autonomy, are the prototype of self-determined behavior. Because five of the seven teachers interviewed completed their projects as intended, one might argue that the freedom granted to teachers to develop their own lesson plans and choose their own books, led to heightened degree of self-efficacy, which in turn led to an increase in motivation to execute and to complete the projects as intended.

It is important to note however that the two teachers [T6 and T7] who were unable to complete their projects as intended were engaged teachers and creative leaders who wanted to work beyond the boundaries of their prescribed curriculum. In both instances, self determination and self-efficacy did not play a part in the success or failure of the execution of the intended book flood project. In one instance, [T7] title availability precluded a teacher from executing her project. In another and more complicated instance, [T6] lack of parental participation precluded the teacher from completing her intended project. The issue of self determination has implications for the absence of parental participation in student education.

Summary of Findings

Each of the participants in this study was unequivocally supportive and positive about REF and the Give Back, Give Books program at their respective school sites. They seemed genuinely appreciative of the resources and the impact the books had on their students’ learning and their enjoyment of reading. This outcome is an important element of the program because there are countervailing forces in urban education that many teachers find very discouraging. Because of this, the Give Back, Give Books program impacted RCSD personnel on multiple levels.
The program provided teachers with personal support, as it alleviated a portion of the persistent burden of out-of-pocket teacher spending for essential supplies and materials. Additionally, the program provided a resource for classroom support, as well as positive means for communicating with parents. Principals were grateful that the program filled a need and provided resources for the teachers and the students that the district could not provide. The librarian enjoyed seeing the children’s excitement and enthusiasm when they noticed the increased title selection in the library.

In spite of the mostly positive outcomes reported by the teachers, librarians, and principals, there were opportunities for improvement. Whereas the support that REF provided for teachers and students in the district was noteworthy and a validation of the program, there was a need to broaden the visibility of the REF brand. It appears that the marketing message needs to include support not only for students, but for district personnel, families, and the larger Rochester community as well. Next, in an effort to grow the REF brand, and build constructive relationships in the RCSD, there is a need to increase communication with all RCSD who complete Teachers’ Choice Applications.

In addition to the recurring themes and patterns that were identified in research questions one, two, and three, the interview questions revealed four other distinct findings that the interview questions did not necessarily address. First, when asked what other resources REF might supply to teachers, three teachers mentioned paper and pencils. Four teachers mentioned that they used Ziploc bags to organize and protect the books when the students brought them home. Second, three of the four teachers noted that either they or their students wrote their names in their books to create a sense of ownership. One teacher created bookplates for the children. Third, four of the seven
teachers showed the researcher the work that their students completed based on the books they received. Finally, four of the seven teachers noted that when picking out books, they deliberately tried to match title selection to student interest.

Finally, and most importantly, the framework of the Give Back, Give Books program matched the research literature that indicated that to encourage reading; it is most effective if children have access to books, and are engaged with books that are fun to read and offer the students a chance to respond in a creative manner (Neuman, 1996). To this end, the researcher concluded that based upon the positive response from the RCSD personnel who were interviewed for this study, along with the existing framework that supported creative teacher and student engagement prior to ownership, the Give Back, Give Books should not be altered at this time. Conversely, the researcher discovered that the lack of a consistent brand and marketing message left RCSD constituents confused and unclear about REF’s mission, its relationship to the district, and its overall goals.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

A persistent problem in the RCSD continues to be substandard student performance as measured by standardized state tests in both mathematics and ELA. During the last decade (2000-2010), the number of students scoring at or above the specified standard on New York state administered ELA tests has hovered at approximately 50%. This reality, accompanied by a RCSD graduation rate of less than 50% for the same period, has created a sense of urgency among professionals and politicians in the city of Rochester. In an attempt to help mitigate the persistence of substandard test scores and low graduation rates in the RCSD, the REF established the Give Back, Give Books program. Since 2007, REF has donated more than 22,000 new books to students (K-12) in the RCSD. Whereas this provision of books may be a worthwhile endeavor, REF has not established a methodical process to measure the impact this practice has had on the teachers who use the books in their classrooms.

This circumstance has created a void of substantive data regarding the impact of how a small, modestly administered book flood can inform teacher practice. This study has not only sought to address this gap in the research literature, it has also sought to provide an initial formative assessment of the effectiveness of the Give Back, Give Books program. Through interviews with RCSD personnel, the researcher was able to uncover ways in which teachers manage and execute book floods in their own classrooms. Finally, through this investigation, the researcher provided useful information to the
Executive Director of REF about the utility and feasibility of REF’s most prominent program.

The topics discussed in this chapter will include the following: (a) the implications of the study’s findings; (b) the relationship of the literature review to the identified themes uncovered in the interviews; (c) the value of a qualitative study; (d) the limitations of the study; (e) recommendations for improved program execution; and (f) recommendations for future research. A reflection of how this study illuminated the researcher’s executive leadership skills as a doctoral candidate in St. John Fisher College’s Executive Leadership Program is also included.

Implications of Findings

RQ1

The three findings identified in RQ1 have important implications for the stakeholders associated with the REF. First, because the librarian, teachers, and principals, who were interviewed for this study, were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the program, their comments provided credible evidence concerning the need to continue to fund, and even expand this program. This finding was consistent with many of the outcomes found in the book flood literature.

Most notably were the existence and the continued perpetuation of book floods, not only in the United States, but abroad as well. The positive outcomes of the Fiji Book Flood initiated by Elley and Mangubhai (1983) ignited something of a “book flood movement” in the Pacific Isles. In point of fact, no fewer than 11 large scale book floods were launched and studied from 1980 to 1997 (Elley, 2000). The effectiveness of this practice was further advanced by Elley, LeRoux, and Schollar (1998). Following the
success of their book flood in South Africa, whereby student achievement in the areas of reading, listening, and writing increased, when compared to a control group, the South African government institutionalized the program, and the initiative was expanded to other schools. A similar practice was expanded upon after Elley and Foster (1996), initiated their book flood in Sri Lanka. The outcomes were so successful that students who participated in the book flood showed increases in the areas of reading comprehension and vocabulary that were, three times greater than those of control groups. This outcome was so substantial that the Ministry of Education agreed to expand the program to 200 additional schools.

Next, when comparing the Give Back, Give Books book flood program to the most prominent book flood in the United States (Neuman, 1999), the findings were similar. Neuman noted that teacher enthusiasm impacted student engagement with books, reading, and learning. In her research, Neuman found that when she saturated classrooms with books, teachers tried to use the books creatively, such that, not only was reading a fun activity, but it was an accessible activity. This practice is consistent with the work of the teachers who executed creative activities in their classrooms [T1, T2, T4, T5], displayed the books in an attractive manner [T3], or spoke enthusiastically about new book ownership [T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7].

Whereas the amount of time that students spent reading was not studied, the researcher found substantive evidence that when the REF recipient teachers received their books, they tried to create engaging lessons that would entice their students to read. As reading engagement has been broadly defined to include consistent and sustained reading (Allen, Michalove, Shockley, & West, 1991), involvement with texts (Wells, 1990), and
personal interchange with characters in literature (Beach & Hynds, 1991), it is critical to note that the research literature indicates that engagement with reading is likely to lead to greater academic success (Morrow & Weinstein, 1986; National Academy of Education, 1991; Want, Haertel, & Walberg, 1990). From this perspective, Baker, Afflerbach, and Reinking (1996) note that when a classroom is “appropriately supportive and inviting, engaged readers are motivated to read, to use prior knowledge, and to employ cognitive strategies (p. xvi). This finding is consistent with Neuman (1996) who found that when classrooms were flooded with books, teachers created comfortable reading corners with pillows and small chairs that would invite and encourage children to read. These outcomes were the products of engaged and enthusiastic teachers, as well as librarians and principals who support them.

Next, the theme of gratitude was consistently expressed by the teachers and librarians who received books from REF. Their gratitude was a clear indication that REF not only supports students in the RCSD, but REF also supports teachers. This substantial finding gives REF the opportunity to broaden its mission statement and to enlarge its entire brand message. The research literature in the area of an Education Foundation’s work and impact explicitly notes that a key factor in the operation of a successful Education Foundation is the relationship that the foundation builds with the district it serves (DeLuna, 1998; Pressley, 1989; Smith 2001). As RCSD teachers are clearly a part of the district, their success stories can be combined with those of the children who have already expressed their appreciation for the Give Back, Give Books program. As the enthusiasm and numbers of stakeholders grow, so may support from public and private donors. This hypothesis is supported by research from the non-profit arena that
associates, “brand loyalty/positive word of mouth,” with a “stimulation of donor support” (Sargeant, Ford, & Hudson, 2008, p. 471).

Finally, with respect to RQ1, the extent to which REF provides a positive conduit for parental engagement is an important unanticipated outcome of the Give Back, Give Books program. This finding is especially relevant because the book flood program unintentionally aligned itself with the RCSD goal of “accountability for student success” (RCSD Strategic Plan, 2010, p. 22). This goal includes “engaging parents as partners in the journey of student success” (RCSD Strategic Plan, 2010, p. 22). Neuman (1996/2008) argued that family support was a mechanism that can enhance reading achievement. She noted that parent and child interventions (shared reading) “designed to enhance children’s access to books and increase their storybook reading,” had produced positive academic outcomes, namely in the areas of concepts of print and language skills (2008, p. 10). More importantly, Neuman’s research indicated that parents who were engaged with their children in the school environment, gradually, (a) built social capital, such that they began to feel more comfortable in school; (b) communicated more freely with teachers; (c) were more connected to school activities; and (d) “acted like welcomed members of the school community (Neuman, 2008, pp. 10-11). Neuman’s findings along with Astone and McLanahan’s (1999) assertion that parental involvement positively impacts children’s school achievement, lends significant merit and importance to the unanticipated outcome of teacher and parent engagement in the Give Back, Give Books program.

This outcome is not insignificant, as it is supported by the NRRC (1996) and the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979).
an ecological context of development. In this model, linkages and relationships are
developed that encompass and touch upon every aspect of an individual’s life, in this
case, the student. In this model, there is mutual communication and trust between
parents, teachers, and school administrators. The NRRC contends that children are more
likely to “develop into engaged readers and writers, when parents and teachers have a
shared understanding of children’s needs and work toward common goals” (NRRC, p.
21).

The Bronfenbrenner ecological model of development, is also supported by the
work of Henderson (1987) who noted that when “parents are involved, children do better
in school” (p. 1). Sattes (1985) supported this assertion, and notes, “parent involvement
impacts student achievement when that involvement is meaningful to parents” (p. 11). In
this view, the parent must find the outcome to be valuable and relevant. Mutual parent-
teacher understanding and expectations can only come with communication. Whether the
issue is books, reading, academic achievement, social emotional wellness, or physical
health, it appears that as REF provides a context for opening channels of communication
between parents and teachers, REF has the potential to impact children’s lives on
multiple levels.

RQ2

RQ2 addressed the procedural aspects of the Give Back, Give Books program.
The qualitative data, collected and analyzed from the interview transcripts, provided the
researcher with valuable suggestions about ways in which REF can improve its overall
operations. First, as previously mentioned, RCSD personnel who received books from
the Give Back, Give Books program were all enthusiastic about the program. Their
comments about the timing, the application, and the distribution process were also positive. However, their comments regarding the noted lack of cohesion and marketing of the REF brand, as well as the overall lack of communication with the district and the teachers who were not granted books, were congruent with similar reports in the professional literature (DeLuna, 1998; Pressley, 1989; Smith, 2001).

This assessment is also supported by the research literature that addresses the issue of branding in the non-profit sector. Grounds (2005) defined a brand as “who you are, what you say and what you do” (p. 65). Given this definition, and the negative response from teachers and principals when asked, “Are you familiar with the Rochester Education Foundation?” or “Do the words education foundation have meaning for you?” REF has an opportunity to clarify its name, programs, goals, and mission. This is particularly relevant in light of the work by Sargeant, Ford, and Hudson, (2008) who reported that “charity brands have been found to assist income generation by enhancing donor understanding of an organization and what it stands for” (p. 468).

RQ3

RQ3 addressed the issue of project fidelity, a persistent concern for the Executive Director and several REF board members. Whereas four of the seven teachers interviewed for this study were able to complete their projects as intended, valuable information for program improvement was gleaned from those teachers who were not able to complete their projects as intended. As noted in Chapter 4, teachers were satisfied with the title selection that was available to them. However, not allowing for the provision of a class set of books (one title with multiple copies) in the selection process precluded teachers from conducting the book clubs anticipated in their respective
proposals. This finding is valuable information not only for the Executive Director, but for the team responsible for updating the Teachers’ Choice Application every year. The application asked teachers to identify the type of project they would be initiating. Leading a book club was one of the options available on the application. Because the title selection may have precluded teachers from conducting traditional book clubs, this choice may need to be reconsidered, additionally resourced, or removed from the application entirely.

Another teacher who was unable to complete her project as intended originally planned to sponsor a morning a book club with parents, whereby issues of social and emotional wellness would be discussed and related to the books the students were reading. A persistent lack of parental participation prevented the teacher from launching this program. The teacher was only able to engage one parent from a class of 20 students. The reasons for the failure of parents to participate in the school book club were never conclusively articulated. The teacher only speculated about the reasons for non-participation. She guessed that many parents had to work in the morning, so their work schedules precluded them from attending the book club. She also speculated that some might have had difficulties with transportation, and perhaps others were simply uninterested in attending.

Based on the findings of this study, it is appropriate to note that “parental engagement” is a broad topic. Three of the seven teachers in this study indicated that their projects involved parental engagement. Two of the three teachers were able to launch their projects successfully as intended. The two teachers who were able to engage parents did so without the parents leaving their homes. Parental engagement occurred in
the form of shared family reading and book logs that parents had to sign after their children completed their reading assignments at home.

Parental engagement may be as simple as a phone call from a parent to a teacher inquiring about the presence of a new book in a child’s book bag. In another instance, parental engagement may include parents and children reading together in their own homes. Parental engagement may also be a parent signing a reading log indicating that a child completed his or her reading assignment for the evening. Finally, parental engagement may be as involved as a parent attending a monthly book club at his or her child’s school. In any case, the words, “parental engagement” have multiple meanings and implications. Irrespective of the meaning, it is apparent that REF has created a constructive and meaningful way for children, parents, and teachers to communicate with one another. As previously mentioned, this two-channel line of communication follows the ecological model set forth by Bronfenbrenner, “that conceptualizes optimal relations between home and school” (Baker, Afflerbach, & Reinking, 1996, p. 21).

Finally, because the goals of the Give Back, Give Books program were clearly understood, six of the seven teachers interviewed distributed their gifted books to their students at the end of the term. As this has been a prominent question for REF stakeholders, this data confirmed the actual intent of the program. However, in spite of teacher clarity about the goals of the program, the principals of the research site schools were unclear about the intent of the program. There was noted confusion about REF and the Give Back, Give Books program, both in terms of the general mission as well as specific goals. The principals did not know if the books were to remain in school classrooms or if they were intended for students to take home. This confusion about the
actual operation and intent of the program is an important data point in the process of a formative program evaluation. A clearly defined execution strategy, complete with anticipated goals will help REF to improve its overall operations and its relationship with the school district.

**Literature Review and the Identified Themes**

Two themes emerged during the interviews that were consistent with the themes found in the literature review. First, REF did not simply give books to children without any instruction. Books were given to students only after they have been read and discussed with a teacher. Books were not donated to children in the hope that their presence would suddenly inspire children to read. Rather, students and teachers engaged together with the books before they were sent home to become part of the child’s personal library. Because the Give Back, Give Books program required instruction before ownership, it exemplified some of the best practices in reading instruction (Elley, 2000; Neuman, 1999).

This issue of instruction before ownership is so critical to academic success, that in many of the national and international studies, teacher instruction on how to use books in the classroom precedes the actual flood. This is especially apparent in the work of Faders (1967). He noted that flooding classrooms with books required a reassessment of lesson plans and daily activities. Additionally, the Give Back, Give Books model mirrored research from the NRRC (1996) that indicated:

Diverse instructional contexts can better prepare students for reading in a wide range of situations, as expected in literate societies. If reading instruction is limited to certain materials and procedures, reading development will be more
limited than if reading instructions encompasses diverse texts and diverse opportunities to interact with texts (p. XVI).

The Give Back, Give Book model provided teachers with access to books, without any restrictions on title choice, and also encourages instructional autonomy. This model is congruent with the research literature that prescribes access to a variety of materials (titles) and diversity in instructional methods. To this end, REF’s Give Back, Give Books program sets the stage for optimal student engagement, and thus academic success.

Next, the Give Back, Give Books model mirrors Fader’s (1976) model of saturation and diffusion. Fader contended that whenever possible, textbooks should be replaced with high interest, easily accessible reading material. He also maintained that reading and English language skills should be taught in every classroom irrespective of discipline. This model mirrors the Give Back, Give Books model, whereby teachers who receive books are not limited by the subject they teach. Teachers of mathematics, for instance, can apply for and receive books, as can any other content-area teacher.

Additionally, consistent with the Fader model, it is important to note that RCSD teachers who participated in this study used high quality, high interest books in addition to traditional texts, to facilitate the learning process.

Implications of Unanticipated Findings

Two unanticipated findings emerged during this research project. First, the interviews provided a robust and nuanced understanding of the extent to which the REF supports teachers. Because REF markets itself as a student centered organization, the reality of REF supporting teachers and its impact on practice was revealing. This
researcher had been completely unaware of this outcome—a characteristic of Goal Free Evaluation. This insight may have only been garnered by actually talking and listening to the experiences of the participating teachers. Second and consistent with this finding was the notion that gifted books provided an important means of communication for teachers and parents. The books allowed for a positive and engaging interaction between professionals and parents within a much desired and needed partnership. When considering both of these findings, REF not only has the opportunity to broaden its mission statement to include teachers and parents, but it also appears that REF serves under resourced students and also builds relationships in under-resourced communities. This finding is particularly relevant as it corroborates the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner. This theory supports a child’s development within the context of the system of relationships that form the child’s environment. Building relationships in under-resourced communities also supports the findings of Neuman (2001) who in her assessment of access to print in low income and middle income communities concedes that “learning and development cannot be considered apart from the individual’s social environment” (p. 1).

*Value of a Qualitative Study*

Much of the book flood literature is focused on student outcomes, primarily using the benchmark of standardized test scores. Whereas quantitative outcomes are an invaluable resource for program evaluation and continuous improvement, the qualitative perspective of the teacher’s lived experience provides the important and necessary data for a more complete, and multi-perspective formative evaluation. Because REF maintains only a modest budget, a longitudinal study that might include an experimental
design that measures individual test scores is not only improbable because of cost, but it is challenging because of the multitude of variables that can impact test scores. For the purposes of program improvement, this formative assessment has provided REF with data that it needs to ensure its donors that the Give Back, Give Books program adds value to the school district it serves. Additionally, this qualitative research investigation also provided REF with information about the need to improve its branding and marketing message. An improved branding message may increase REF’s donor base, and in turn, increase the number of teachers and students who are served.

A Qualitative Study and Participant Goals

Finally, a qualitative study employing Scriven’s GFE methodology, provided the researcher with the opportunity to gather information about the participant’s expected goals for the Give Back, Give Books program. Scriven (year) asserts that in GFE, “Merit is determined by relating program effects to the relevant needs of the impacted population, rather than to the goals of the program” (p. 180.) Because of its inherent focus on the needs of the population being served, GFE could also be called, “consumer-oriented evaluation. (p. 180). To this end, participant goals for the program are as relevant as the unanticipated outcomes themselves. Whereas GFE does not approach a program with pre-conceived outcomes, participant goals for the program, simultaneously emerged as an unanticipated side effects.

The researcher never explicitly asked the participants the question, “What should the goals of the Give Back, Give Books program be?” However, Scriven would argue that because merit is determined by the participants who are impacted by the program,
their goals for the program should be considered (1991). The researcher identified five participant goals after the interviews were completed.

First, because the gifted books gave teachers the opportunity and the resources to depart from their traditional curriculum, the researcher hypothesized, that innovative pedagogy might be one of the consumer goals for the program. Because teachers were so enthusiastic about the program, it can be intimated, that teachers may suggest that REF encourage applicants to create lesson plans that foster creative learning, rather than simply create a platform for preparing students for standardized tests.

Second, because principals noted that the Give Back, Give Books program was well aligned with school and district initiatives, a goal suggested by principals might be that REF continually reassesses its own mission and vision, such that it is consistently aligned with the mission and the vision of the school district. To remain relevant, it would behoove REF to ensure that its own mission reflects the mission of the customers that it serves.

Third, a principal noted that REF gave her the opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the work of teachers and librarians in her building. Kouzes and Posner (2007), in their book, The Leadership Challenge, noted the importance of recognizing outstanding accomplishments in an organization. As teachers and librarians are awarded books in individual schools, this gives the principal the opportunity to acknowledge his/her own staff. The worth of the gifted books, and the Give Back, Give Books program, is then extended to the entire school community, and not just the recipient teacher or librarian. Not only is this participant goal consistent with the values of
inspired leadership, but it perpetuates, and extends the REF brand to a larger number of RCSD personnel.

Fourth, as REF seeks to continually improve the Give Back, Give Books program, a participant goal might be that REF seeks to encourage teachers to infuse technology and literacy in school instruction. This goal is not only consistent with REF’s commitment to creative engagement with the gifted books, but it will better prepare students to learn in multi-media classrooms.

Finally, the same teacher who infused technology with the donated books noted that, because the students were so engaged with their projects, that behavior and classroom management improved. The goal of creating interesting classrooms, might unintentionally lead to improved student behavior. This goal may have a positive impact, for both teachers and students.

An effective way to integrate these participant goals into the REF Give Back, Give Books program would be to consider some of the goals as criteria during the application process. The current Teachers’ Choice application states that, “special consideration will be give to projects that promote literacy in the following way: creatively, supporting home, parental or community involvement, and demonstrating impact on student learning” (http://givebackgivebook.org/teachers2010.shtml, p. 1). Expanding the criteria to include projects that support engaging pedagogy, that infuse technology, would not only provide teachers with suggestions for creative lesson plans, but it would fulfill Scriven’s intent of realizing participant goals. Finally, assessment and alignment with district goals and mission, along with promoting and acknowledging the
work of teachers, gives REF the opportunity to continue to remain relevant to the constituents that it serves.

Limitations

There are significant limitations to this study. First and most importantly, is the issue of researcher bias. As reported in Chapter 3, bias can cloud the way a researcher reports outcomes. Because the researcher in this study has an interest and a relationship with the REF, it is easy for interpretations to be colored by the researcher’s proximity and emotional commitment to the organization. Glesne (1999) notes that alertness to the researcher’s own biases assists in producing trustworthy interpretations. The researcher concedes her own subjectivity in the investigation. Whereas every effort was made to remain neutral during the interviews and in the reporting, there was concern that by affirming most every response from the interview participants, the researcher may have couched or encouraged overly enthusiastic responses. Additionally, researcher subjectivity may have occurred in the instances when she informed a participant that his or her sentiments had been voiced during prior interviews. Bias may have also been a factor during interviews with two of the principals. The researcher has a personal relationship with two of three principals interviewed for this study. It is possible that the principals provided the researcher with socially desirable responses.

Next, the findings of this study cannot be extrapolated to any other populations. The findings will only be relevant to REF, its donors, and the RCSD. Additionally, the sample size and the nature of the convenience sample limits the extent to which the findings can be assigned to other populations. The original intent of the proposal was to conduct interviews with nine teachers; however, one teacher failed to return requests for
an interview, and another teacher traveled to Europe during the summer of 2010. Her travels precluded her from meeting for an interview. Had interviews been completed with all nine teachers, prominent themes and outcomes may have been weighted differently.

Finally, to increase dependability and decrease researcher bias, the original intent of the proposal was to have a research assistant code the interview transcripts independently from the researcher. This intent was not realized. Member checking was substituted as a means of increasing dependability.

*Recommendations for Improved Program Execution*

In spite of the many positive outcomes documented by the Give Back, Give Books program, numerous opportunities for improvement exist. Whereas the support that REF provides for teachers and students in the school district is noteworthy and a validation of the program, there was one significant criticism. Because REF made no attempt to contact teachers who are not awarded books, there was a lack of closure, and a feeling of frustration on the part of teachers who did not receive books. This concern was clearly expressed by one principal who was interviewed for this study. This lack of communication had the potential to create negative publicity for REF and mitigate its impact in improving literacy in the RCSD. Negative press frequently leads to a decrease in donations, which in turn can negatively affect a program’s impact. To overcome this, it may be helpful for REF to develop a more comprehensive communication plan, whereby all teachers are individually notified about the status of their applications. This communication plan might include individual letters to teachers who are awarded books.
At this writing, teachers simply wait to see if their names appear or do not appear on the website at the end of the application process.

Next, it might be beneficial if REF developed a perpetual plan for communicating all of its initiatives, not only to RCSD personnel, but to all city and county residents. The communication plan might include a marketing and branding strategy, along with three year, five year, and 10 year goals. For its own sustainability, REF needs to increase its community partnerships. A starting place for this initiative would be working with district partners in a collaborative way at school open houses, and administrative meetings. Finally, it may be helpful if REF reexamines its mission statement and narrows it focus. The current mission statement includes the phrase, “REF is an independent organization whose mission is to provide resources to improve learning and success for all Rochester city public school students. . . .” (rochestereducation.org, 2009, p. 2). Learning and success are not easily defined or measured. A more specific mission with measurable goals might help to narrow the focus of the organization.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This research study provided evidence for the value and fidelity of REF’s most prominent program, Give Back, Give Books. However, because this research was so narrowly focused, there are multiple opportunities for additional research projects. First, because education foundations are a recent and growing phenomenon, a meta-analysis of the initiatives of the 200 education foundations in the United States, would be valuable information for the National School Foundation Association (NSFA).

Next, future research may either be teacher-centric or student-centric. Working with the current model of the Give Back, Give Books program, a future qualitative
research project might include student interviews that assess their dispositions about the books they received from REF. This type of research project would not only help REF to continue to evaluate the fidelity of the Give Back, Give Books program, but it would also provide a barometer by which to begin to measure student dispositions about reading and new book ownership. This type of research would not only have value for REF, but it would be valuable information for publishers and book retailers.

Because the research indicated that REF is a positive conduit for communication between teachers and parents, there may be value in interviewing the parents of the students who received books from REF. Given the outcomes of the current research it is unlikely that parents would participate in interviews at school. However, given the success rate of the parents who completed the book logs forms, there may be some success in administering surveys to parents whose students receive books from REF. Additionally, when considering the outcomes of the current study, along with proper time, funding, and IRB approval, an interesting study could include in-home interviews with the parents who receive books from REF. In-home interviews would alleviate the burden of having parents travel to school. In-home interviews would also dovetail with the work of researchers who have measured the presence of reading material in homes and communities (Neuman, 2001; McQuillian & Au, 2001).

A serious and scholarly study investigating this area would be logistically challenging, but it would also provide valuable information to REF about what actually happens to the donated books after they are taken home by the children. This type of study would provide psychologists, sociologists, and educators with information about
the relationship between parents’ reading practices and children’s dispositions about reading.

Finally, there may be value in interviewing the teachers who, after completing the Teacher’s Choice Application, did not receive books from REF. Typically, teachers who were not chosen to receive books from REF have not clearly communicated their intentions about using the books in the classroom. Typically, there were questions left unanswered, or their application had an abundance of typos and grammatical errors. Interviewing these teachers about their approach to filling out the application, how they found out they were not selected, and their feelings about not being selected, would give REF valuable information about how to better clarify its expectations and standards for receiving gifted books.

Conclusion

The current study was a formative assessment of REF’s Give Back, Give Books Program. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, whereby interviews were conducted with RCSD personnel whose schools received books from REF. The study sought to answer three research questions all designed to assess the utility and fidelity of REF’s most prominent program. Because REF has done little in the way of evaluating any of its programs, a formative assessment is a significant step in establishing donor and stakeholder credibility.

Data from this study was gathered from three subsets of REF constituents. Interviews with teachers, principals, and one librarian in the RCSD provided the researcher with valuable information about the utility and feasibility of the Give Back, Give Books program. The research employed a theoretical framework derived from
Polkinghorne’s (1988) *Narrative Ways of Knowing* and Scriven’s (1972) Goal Free Evaluation in order to understand the lived experience of how teachers used donated books in their classrooms. The combination of these models allowed the researcher to understand the utility and feasibility of the Give Back, Give Books program without measuring it against predetermined outcomes or bias. Themes of classroom practice, program logistics, teacher engagement and creativity, school resources, and student dispositions about new book ownership all emerged from an analysis of the collected data.

A total of seven teachers, three principals, and one librarian were interviewed for this study. The participants represented a convenience sample of the larger population of RCSD personnel who received books from REF. The convenience sample was based on the researcher’s academic relationship with the principals in the district whose teacher’s received books from REF. Several themes emerged during the research. First, teachers, principals, and the librarian all responded positively to the program. Second, teachers overwhelmingly expressed their gratitude for the program. To this end, REF is as supportive of teachers in the district as it is of students. Third, the Give Back, Give Books program is a way for teachers to positively engage with students. Fourth, teachers and librarians were clear about the goals and intent of the program; however, principals were not. Fifth, there was consistent need for clarity about the REF brand and the goals of the larger organization. All RCSD personnel interviewed expressed confusion about the organization’s programs and initiatives. Sixth, principals shared valuable suggestions about ways for REF to improve its communication with the district. Principals expressed
their concerns about the need for REF to initiate communication with teachers who apply for, but do not receive books from the Give Back, Give Books program.

Finally, and most importantly, the model of the Give Back, Give Books program that requires teacher and student engagement prior to book ownership is consistent with the research literature that indicates that the optimal conditions for encouraging children to read include access to books, and enthusiastic engagement (Neuman, 1996). Because the framework and the mission of the Give Back, Give Books program follows these best practices, and specifically, because teacher engagement occurs prior to student ownership, the Give Back, Give Books program does not appear to need any immediate changes or modifications. However, a clear marketing and branding message along with more specific communication directed towards principals and applicants who apply for, but do not receive books from REF, will improve REF’s relationship with the city school district.
References


Appendix A

2009-2010 Teachers’ Choice Application Form
Teachers’ Edition

Please note:

• Books will only be donated to Rochester city school teachers, Rochester city school librarians and not-for-profits serving Rochester city school students.
• Books donated through teachers must be given to students for home libraries by the end of the 2009-2010 school year.

Contact Information
Name of applicant
Telephone number of applicant
E-mail address of applicant

Organization Information
Name of school
Mailing address of school
Phone number of school
Academic level or ages served

Your Project
1 What type of project do you plan while using books from the Give Back, Give Books program?
   o Execute lesson plans using donated books
   o Monitor and keep track of reading by individual students
   o Develop and monitor a book Club
   o Parental involvement
   o Creative project: Enter short name or title here

2 For the project you chose in Question 1, please provide specific details on what will happen and how this plan will make a difference in students’ reading and learning. How will you integrate the books into your project activities? Other than students, will anyone else be involved in your project, and if so, in what way? What specific steps will you take to implement your project?

3 Teachers must understand that the books received through the Give Back, Give Books program are intended to become the personal property of the children participating in their project. How will you ensure that this is the case?

Data Collection and Project Evaluation
4 Because this program is primarily supported by grants, REF must provide evaluation data to receive continuing funding for the program. Thus all applicants for books from the program must be willing to work with REF to evaluate their efforts. We may therefore be contacting you for information and feedback. Please choose from the following list, the
data collection tool that you feel would be most appropriate to your project as described above.

- Evidence of learning from executing a lesson plan using donated books
- Recording system or book log to track reading patterns and changes over time
- Monthly report of book club or group participation, frequency of meeting times, and books read
- Record of parental involvement
- Report on your creative project impact on student learning

☐ You may contact me to discuss data collection and evaluation of my project

**Book Request**

5 Please fill out the table below reflecting the number of books you are requesting according to the reading level(s) of students in your project. Please remember that you may request a maximum of 200 books (in total).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Level</th>
<th>Number of Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten through 1st Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd through 3rd Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th through 6th Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade +</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 Is your school currently receiving or expecting to receive new books from other book distribution organizations?

- No
- Yes How many? Over what time period?

7 Have you received books from the Give Back, Give Books program in the past?

- No
- Yes In what year?

**Thank you for your application.** Please click the **Submit Form** button below when you have completed your application.
Appendix B

2009 ELA Test Scores: Percentage of students who are not meeting State Standards in English Language Arts

New York State Report Card, 2009
Appendix C

Rochester City School District Percents of 4th and 8th Grade Students Who are meeting State Standards in English Language Arts

New York State Report Card, 2009
Appendix D

2009 ELA Test Scores: Percentage of students who are not meeting State Standards in English Language Arts

New York State Report Card, 2009
Appendix E

Proportion of Families with Children <18
Who are Below Poverty Level, 2000

Buffalo: 34%
Rochester: 32%
Syracuse: 31%
Albany: 26%
New York City: 26%
Yonkers: 20%
Average: 28%
Appendix F

RCSD Graduation Rates 2003-2008

New York State Report Card, 2000
Appendix G

Percent of Children Living in Poverty

U.S. Census Bureau, 2009
Appendix H

Dear Mr. or Mrs. __________________________ (Name of RCSD teacher or librarian who has received books from REF)

I write today to ask your participation in a brief interview. In December of 2009, you were awarded a total of ________ (# of books donated) from the Rochester Education Foundation (REF). As part of REF’s on-going evaluation process, I am interested in meeting with you to discuss your experience with the Give Back, Give Books program. The purpose of the interview is to better understand how new books are used in city school classrooms, and how the REF can better improve its Give Back, Give Books program. In an effort to strengthen the evaluation process, I would like to contact you, to set up an interview that would take approximately one hour of your time.

I am interested in your responses to the following questions:

1. How did you hear about the Give Back, Give Books program?

2. How did you use the books?

3. Were the outcomes that you anticipated achieved?

4. What challenges or difficulties did you encounter executing your proposed program?

5. What changes in children’s behavior or knowledge were observed? What did you notice about student responses?
6. What changes did you notice in your own teaching assumptions/beliefs/practices?

7. What surprised you?

8. What inspired you?

9. How did the children respond when they realized they were able to take the books home at the end of the school term? (Librarians will not be asked this question, as they are not expected to give students donated books at the end of the school year.)

10. What can REF do to improve the Give Back, Give Books Program?

11. Is there anything that you would change about The Teachers Choice Application?

12. Is there anything that you can suggest to improve the process of picking up your books from the REF office?

I am a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College and collecting data for REF is part of my doctoral dissertation.

I understand that you have a busy schedule. Your participation in the interview is not required. However, if we are interested in meeting with me, I will accommodate a time and place that is convenient for you. I am happy to meet you in your classroom. As a way to thank you for your time and insights, you will receive a $10.00 Barnes&Noble Gift Card.

I look forward to working with you. I will be contacting you via email within the next four days. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (585) 233-1526 or wlf08451@sjfc.edu.

Warmest regards,

Wendy L. Fritz, REF Volunteer, St. John Fisher College Doctoral Candidate
Appendix I

Dear Principal ___________________,

I write today to tell you that (name of RCSD teacher or librarian)____________
has been chosen to receive new books from the Rochester Education Foundation
(REF). This past fall over 100 Rochester City School Teachers completed a
Teachers Choice Application from REF. From the pool of 100, 25 teachers were
selected to receive new books as part of REF’s Give Back/Give Books program.
As a selected recipient, Mr./Ms.______ has received a total of ___________ (#of
books donated) books.

As part of REF’s on-going evaluation process, all recipient teachers have agreed
to participate in a brief interview. The interview is designed to better understand
how new books are used in city school classrooms, and how the REF can better
improve its Give Back, Give Books program. In an effort to strengthen the
evaluation process, I would also like to contact you, at your convenience, either
by phone, email or in person for a brief ten minute interview. I am interested in
your responses to the following questions:

1. How did you learn about the REF?

2. Did you know that REF existed for the sole reason of supporting students in the
   RCSD?

3. Did you and your teacher (Mr. or Ms Jones) discuss receiving books from REF?
4. Did you know that REF also distributes refurbished musical instruments to city school district students?

5. Is there something other than books and musical instruments that your school could benefit from receiving: athletic equipment, computers, general school supplies?

6. What suggestions would you make to the Executive Director of REF, about ways to improve the Give Back, Give Books program?

I am a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College and collecting data for REF is part of my doctoral dissertation.

I understand that you have a busy schedule. Your participation in a brief interview is not required. However, if we are interested in meeting with me, I will accommodate a time and place that is convenient for you. As a way to thank you for your time and insights, you will receive a $10.00 Barnes&Noble Gift Card.

I look forward to working with you and your teacher(s). I will be contacting you via email within the next four days. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (585) 233-1526 or wlf08451@sjfc.edu.

Warmest regards,

Wendy L. Fritz, REF Volunteer, St. John Fisher College Doctoral Candidate
Appendix J

St. John Fisher College
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of study: Give Back, Give Books: A Formative Program Evaluation

Name(s) of researcher(s): Wendy Lynn Fritz

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. John Travers    Phone for further information: 585-223-7387

Purpose of study: The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Rochester Education Foundation’s Give Back, Give Books program. The intent of the Give Back, Give Books program is to collect and donate new books to city school students, such that they can develop their own home libraries. However, because REF does not currently have any tools in place to measure the effectiveness of its program, there is no way of knowing if there is any value or utility gained by the recipients of the donated books. Additionally, feedback from teachers who receive books has never been formally collected or analyzed. This lack of data makes it impossible for REF to improve upon the current program, or redirect its resources altogether.

Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Place of study: Rochester City School District, Rochester, NY    Length of participation: May 2010 to August 31st, 2010
**Risks and benefits:** The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below:

This is a low risk study. Participation is voluntary, and anonymity will be maintained throughout the data collection and reporting processes. Additionally, participants may withdraw from the study at anytime. This study will benefit members of REF, its donors, as well as students, teachers, and principals in the RCSD.

1. Because REF has never collected any data regarding the effectiveness of the Give Back, Give Books program, it is impossible for REF to even begin to assess the value and utility of this program. Conducting teacher interviews will help REF to evaluate the suitability and effectiveness of the Give Back, Give Books program.

2. Next, REF relies heavily on donations from community partners for its sustainability. Interviews with teachers will give REF some preliminary qualitative data to report to its donors. Irrespective of the outcomes, this data will assure REF donors that REF is using donated funds for their intended purposes. Building community trust and credibility will be a great benefit to REF.

3. Interviews with teachers will help inform REF about ways that students and teachers can be better served. Teachers many have suggestions about title selection, or ways to improve the distribution and the application process. If implemented, such suggestions will benefit future teachers who apply for books from REF, as well as the students who receive them.
4. Finally, interviews with RCSD principals may help REF to improve their communication and marketing strategies. Improved communication with the district will improve efficiencies that will benefit teachers and students.

**Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants may choose to terminate participation at any time during the research. All interviews will be recorded with a small digital voice recorder. All recorded interviews will be transcribed, and the transcripts will be considered research data. All tapes and transcripts from the data collection will be locked in a secured safe in the researcher’s home. Participant anonymity will be maintained. Participants and their responses will be identified by a number only. Because teachers and principals will be identified by number only, comments, either positive or negative, regarding the Give Back, Give Books Program will neither preclude, nor guarantee teachers from receiving books from REF in the future. Teachers and principals, who choose not to participate in the evaluation process, will only be identified by number, and their names will not be identified, or reported to the Executive Director of REF. Following the culmination of the study, and the use of the data, all tapes and transcripts from the data collection will be destroyed.

**Your rights:** As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.
I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

Print name (Participant)  
Signature  
Date

Print name (Investigator)  
Wendy L. Fritz  
Signature  
Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact the Office of Academic Affairs at 385-8034 or the Wellness Center at 385-8280 for appropriate referrals.