Exploring the Impact of the Common Core State Standards Implementation Through the Eyes of Teachers', Parents', and Administrators' Beliefs and Attitudes Related to Reading Instruction

Sheryl Coglaiti
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH THE EYES OF TEACHERS’, PARENTS’, AND ADMINISTRATORS’ BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES RELATED TO READING INSTRUCTION

A Dissertation
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by
Sheryl Coglaiti
B.A., Nicholls State University, 1992
M.Ed., Nicholls State University, 1997
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DEFINITIONS

Accelerated Reader-a reading program where students read a book, take an on-line quiz, and get immediate feedback. Teachers can monitor and manage students' independent reading practice through generated reports based on student’s quizzes, including a diagnostic tool known as STAR (renaissance learning, n.d.).

Basal Reading Series-use of a series of books that introduces reading skills. It contains several materials for teaching reading including: teacher manuals, student workbooks, worksheets, vocabulary cards, games, cassette tapes (CD’s & software), assessments, and paperback books for recreational use (Cheek, Flippo, & Lindsey, 1989).

Common Core State Standards-a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade (NGA/CCSO, 2010).

Guaranteed Curriculum-an on-line document to help ensure uniform, high-quality instructional resources across the School System. The Guaranteed Curriculum is locally developed and is a living document, which is constantly reviewed and revised. It focuses on rigor and relevance by building on enduring understandings and essential questions. The on-line document is a guide to what teachers should teach and what students should know and be able to do (district website).

Skills-Based Instruction-also referred to as a “bottom-up approach” to teaching reading. This approach is based on the assumption that reading begins with print and proceeds systematically from letters to words to phrases to sentences to meaning (May, 1990).
Thinking Maps- a set of graphic organizer techniques used in primary and secondary education. There are eight diagram types that are intended to correspond with eight different fundamental thinking processes. They are supposed to provide a common visual language to information structure, often employed when students take notes (thinkingmaps, n.d.).

Whole Language-a reading philosophy and/or approach that utilizes the integration of language, reading, and writing as an integral component of the reading process (Cheek, Flippo, & Lindsey, 1989).
ABSTRACT

Belief(s) and attitude(s) about education, moreover reading, can shape the way in which we respond to pressures to initiate instructional changes in schools and society. Recently, an enormous reform effort, known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is underway in the nation. The implementation plays a critical role in how the CCSS will be received. In light of being received, how will they impact teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to reading? According to research, there is a need to consider teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) about reading, which may play a role in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in reading. It is by looking at the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) held about reading that a picture of the implementation process concerning the CCSS in reading can emerge.

This study was conducted at two elementary public schools. The purpose of the study was to explore teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to the implementation of CCSS in the elementary setting and how those belief(s) and/or attitude(s) were similar and different. All names and settings are pseudonyms.

A qualitative approach using Spradley’s (1980) Developmental Research Sequence was used to explore the implementation of the CCSS. The studied included: five elementary teachers (one from each grade level 1-5 chosen voluntarily), five parents (one from each grade level from the selected teacher’s classroom), and two administrators (one from each school, K-3 and 4-6). The ethnographic case study provided a glimpse into teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) held about reading and the impact these belief(s) and/or attitude(s) had related to the implementation process of the CCSS in reading.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Changes in reading curriculum come and go. This can be evidenced by the rise and fall of the “Whole Language” era to the debate of when and how phonics should be taught, to a skills driven approach, or balanced literacy. All of these can be viewed in different moments in the history of curriculum and reform changes. These changes can be driven by various regimes, such as political and local school boards, as well as, state initiatives and mandates. Some of the changes “stick,” while others fall to the waste side. However, with current curriculum changes underway since 2009, there seems to be a sweeping reform that will change the way in which curriculum, as well as, education itself is implemented, while affecting the lives of teachers, students, parents, administrators, and states themselves. The most comprehensive reform of education is currently being driven by a set of standards known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Common Core State Standards: A History

In 2009, in an effort to overhaul public school education, governors and state commissioners of education from across the United States formed the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) (Kendall, 2011). The goal of this initiative was to develop a shared set of national standards to ensure that students in every state would be held to the same level of expectations that students in other countries were, and they would gain knowledge and skills to prepare them for college and competition in a global economy (Kendall, 2011). In continuing to understand the development of the common core standards themselves, it is noted that the CCSS were not birthed from state legislators throughout the country; instead they were born out of two Washington D.C. based organizations, the National Governors Association for Best Practices (NGA), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). These
two organizations coordinated the CCSSI to establish voluntary national elementary and secondary school education standards in mathematics and language arts. Furthermore, several organizations provided advice and guidance concerning the direction and shape of the CCSSI (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). These included: Achieve, Inc., ACT, Inc., the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (Eitel & Talbert, 2012; NGA/CCSSO, 2010). Financial support for the CCSSI was provided, but not limited to the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). Prior to the creation of the CCSS in April of 2009, representatives from 41 states met with the CCSSO and NGA representatives in Chicago and agreed to draft a set of common standards for education. Achieve, a corporation founded by the NGA, following the 1996 demise of the national standards effort, was commissioned by NGA and CCSSO (Mathis, 2010). The CCSI project was fast tracked, as Achieve was to have a draft by summer 2009 and grade by grade standards by the end of the year. Historically, the development of subject matter had been in the hands of specialists of specific subjects working in universities and schools (Mathis, 2010).

For purposes of the development and receipt of public comments, the writers of the CCSS divided the standards into two categories: (1) college and career readiness (CCR), also known as anchor standards; address what students are expected to have learned when they graduate from high school and (2) K-12 standards, also known as the achieve standards; which address expectations for elementary through high school (Eitel & Talbert, 2012; NGA/CCSSO, 2010). The anchor standards (CCR) were derived from the College Board, and ACT, Inc. (Rothman, 2012). These organizations were thought to have considerable expertise in the area of college and career readiness, and could enlist businesses and higher education partners to verify
their judgments about what may be necessary for employment and post-secondary education (Rothman, 2012). To develop the anchor standards (CCR), the writers of the standards started with evidence from post-secondary education, and the workplace (Rothman, 2012). They also conducted their own research through the buying of introductory college texts, and studying the reading and mathematics that first year students would likely be doing their beginning year of college (Rothman, 2012). Included were instructors of first year college courses to confirm their judgments about what students should know and be able to do (Rothman, 2012).

The achieve standards are content standards (K-12 standards), specifying what is to be learned by students at the various school levels (Mathis, 2010). According to Rothman (2012), the work groups were staffed almost exclusively by employees of Achieve, testing companies (ACT and the College Board), and pro-accountability groups, such as America’s Choice, and Student Achievement Partners. Many practitioner and subject matter experts complained they were left out of the development process (Mathis, 2010). This complaint was addressed by the project director, Dane Linn. According to Mathis (2010), Linn stated that they wanted to draft standards based on the best research available about effective math and reading curricula, rather than the opinions of any single organization. Of more than 65 people involved in the common core design and review, only one was a classroom teacher (K-12), and no school administrator was listed as being a member of the groups that developed the K-12 standards (Mathis, 2010).

CCSS were released as a public draft on March 10, 2010. At this time they were able to be reviewed. It should be noted that two organizations in education development, the National Council of Teachers for Mathematics (NCTM) and National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE) gave input. Initially, the NCTM indicated a preference for their own work. They recognized the NGA and CCSO for their efforts, but felt the mathematical standards did not
articulate properly from one grade to the next. They also objected to the lack of focus on mathematical understanding and to the short changing of technology, statistics, and data analysis (Mathis, 2010). Fractions, according to the NCTM, received too much attention, and the organization was worried that the standards were inadequate and would fall short of the mark intended for mathematical instruction (Mathis, 2010). Eventually, the NCTM would approve the standards after a revision process was completed. However, the NCTE would not approve the English/Language Arts (ELA) standards based on the standards being too narrow and inappropriately prescriptive, and that grade to grade articulation was inadequate (Mathis, 2010). Members of the NCTE criticized the standards concentration on lower order rote memory at the expense of higher order thinking skills, despite claims to the contrary by the NGA and CCSO (Mathis, 2010). They expressed a concern that the standards would reduce curriculum to what can be measured on standardized tests and therefore, the NCTE did not endorse the standards set forth by the NGA and the CCSO (Mathis, 2010).

On June, 2, 2010 the final recommendations of the CCSS were completed and approved. This marked the final step in the development of the CCSS (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). Currently 45 states, 4 territories, and the District of Columbia, have adopted the CCSS in ELA and mathematics (NGA/CCSSO, 2010). With the push from the Obama administration, a state wishing to compete for federal grants funded by the government, such as, Race to the Top grants, would need to adopt the CCSS if they wished to participate in receiving some of the nearly four billion dollars available (Eitel & Talbert, 2012).

The movement toward a “standards based” education is nothing new. It is the culmination of twenty-five years of emphasis on education reform with high stakes testing infused to improve the education of American school children (Applebee, 2013). The CCSS are
not necessarily “new” standards. The attempt of nationalizing a common set of standards can be dated back to 1989 when NCTM published its subject-matter standards of what mathematics students should be taught in every school in the United States (Applebee, 2013; Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013). By the 1990’s, NCTM standards were being used as a model in several states and were viewed as influential in helping to shape state standards (Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013; Rothman, 2012).

The current push for standards might be best understood as an extension of the education proposals of President G.W. Bush. The first President Bush met with National Business Roundtable leaders in 1989, and together they set forth what is considered the essential components of a high-quality education system, including standards, assessments, and accountability (Mathis, 2010). Furthermore, all students were to be taught to the same levels of performance (Mathis, 2010). In 1989, the President called the first “education summit” at which governors agreed to set national goals and pledge support for state based reform initiatives (Mathis, 2010). Educators, for the most part were not represented in these two efforts, and continued efforts to include more individuals from outside the circles of education than from inside (K-12 educators, practitioners) resulted. This is where standard-making shifted from a professional sphere to a business-influenced political domain (Mathis, 2010).

With mounting pressure from the public and political regimes, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, enacted by the second President Bush, required states to set proficiency standards in mathematics and reading, collect and publically report data on achievements in these subjects, and implement strong “corrective” actions for districts and schools failing to meet the ultimate goal of all students being proficient by 2014 (Ravitch, 2010). Building on the prior Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorizations (NCLB was the 8th
reauthorization of the ESEA of 1965) and state-level standards based reforms of the 1980’s and 90’s (McDonell, 2005), the NCLB Act of 2001 called on state education agencies (SEAs) to shift from compliance monitors to agencies overseeing schools and districts failing to demonstrate results (Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013). Some states such as, Louisiana, Michigan, and Connecticut-created turnaround districts, which removed low performing schools from their districts and transferred school accountability to the state board of education or governor (Marsh & Wolshetter, 2013).

The concern with state standards rose as each state set their own standards, and the content of each states standards seemed to vary. The most noted variation of state standards is in the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The NCLB Act of 2001 requires every state to administer the NAEP in reading and mathematics every two years. The data produced discrepancies between state data and NAEP data. For example, fourth grade students in a given state may score 80% proficiency in mathematics on the state test, but score only 20% proficiency on the NAEP. These discrepancies contributed to the rise of creating a “set” of national standards that would not be strictly tested by the NAEP, but instead by two consortia which have recently come into existence. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Consortia (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), both receiving federal grant funding by the U.S. Department of Education under the Race to the Top Assessment grants (Eitel & Talbert, 2012).

The Race to the Top Assessment Program received its funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). With these federal funds, the consortia have begun to design and implement comprehensive assessment systems in mathematics and ELA ready for the 2014-15 school year (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). Both PARCC and SBAC have also received
supplemental awards in the amount of $15.9 million dollars each to assist participating states in their transition to common standards and assessments (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). By instituting these new standards and assessments, it is the hope of the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, to “put an end to the insidious practice of establishing fifty different goal posts for educational success” (Eitel & Talbert, 2012) (p. 18).

Many states in an effort to escape the pressures from the NCLB Act of 2001, applied for federal waivers offered by President Obama’s administration. In September of 2011, the Department of Education issued the Conditional NCLB Wavier Plan, which allowed states to waive several major accountability requirements of the ESEA in exchange for “rigorous and comprehensive” state developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of education (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). According to Eitel & Talbert (2012), the ESEA listed specific items that a state needed to include in the waiver request from the Secretary of Education. They were: (a) identification of federal programs affected by the proposed waiver; (b) a description of the statutory or regulatory requirements to be waived and how the waiver of those requirements will increase the quality of instruction and improve academic achievements of students; (c) for each school year, identification of specific measurable educational goals for the state education agency (SEA) and each local education agency (LEA), Indian tribe, or school affected by the waiver; (d) a description of the methods used to measure annually the progress for meeting those goals and outcomes; (e) an explanation of how the waiver will assist the SEA and LEA, Indian tribe, or school reaching those goals; and (f) a description of how the school will continue to provide assistance to the same population served by ESEA program for which a waiver is requested. In exchange for receiving the waiver, the Department of Education required the states
to agree to four conditions: (a) adopt college and career ready standards at least in ELA and mathematics; develop and administer annual state-wide aligned assessments that measure growth in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school; (b) develop and implement different accountability systems that recognize student growth; provide interventions for the lowest performing schools, and those with the largest achievement gaps; (c) develop new systems for evaluating principal and teacher performance, based in part on student academic growth; and (d) remove burdensome reporting requirements that have little impact on student outcomes (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). Each state must meet these conditions in order to receive a waiver, which is at the discretion of the Secretary of Education under ESEA.

The Department of Education requires SEA’s seeking waivers to make several decisions, two of which are currently how many states adopted the CCSS. Eitel & Talbert (2012) note that first, the state must declare whether it has adopted college and career ready standards in ELA and mathematics “that are common to a significant number of states” consistent with the Department of Education’s definition of such standards, which is the nature of the CCSS. There is an alternative option for a state to adopt such standards certified by its state network of institutions of higher education, as long as they are consistent with the Department of Education, which uses the CCSS (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). Second, in its application noted by Eitel & Talbert (2012), the state must declare whether it is participating in one of two state consortia, PARCC or SBAC that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition. Otherwise, the state must indicate that it is planning to adopt, or has already adopted and administered, statewide aligned-high quality assessments that measure student growth in ELA and in mathematics in at least grades 3 through 8 and at least once in high school in all LEA’s.
States were given opportunities to apply for waivers in 2011 and 2012. According to Eitel & Talbert (2012), in November 2011 the first round of waiver requests emerged and eleven states filed for waivers. With few exceptions, each state declared that it adopted college and career ready standards at least in ELA and mathematics that were common to a significant number of states, which turned out to be the CCSS (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). Furthermore, Eitel & Talbert (2012) stated ten of the initial eleven states filing requests for waivers would be participating or have participated in at least one of the two state consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition, PARCC or SBAC. Moreover, another twenty-eight states and Puerto Rico applied by a second deadline in 2012 (Eitel & Talbert, 2012). These filings indicated that these states have become committed to the CCSS and PARCC or SBAC assessments for waivers of NCLB’s accountability requirements. Faced with rising targets and consequences, states receiving NCLB waivers have come to accept the CCSS and the consortia as a means to an end (Marsh & Wolhestter, 2013).

**Statement of Problem**

With the creation and acceptance of the CCSS by a large number of states, it is imperative to begin looking at the implementation of the CCSS related to reading. In looking at the parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) it may be important to identify these belief(s) and/or attitude(s) with respect to CCSS implementation in reading.

Since contributions to the CCSS from teachers, parents, and administrators appeared limited, it is through these three lenses that an interpretation of the implementation of the CCSS related to reading instruction emerged. After all, it is these groups of people who encounter the day in and day out task of the full implementation at the school or home. Therefore, the statement of the problem was to explore the impact of the CCSS implementation in elementary
reading through the eyes of the teachers’, parents,’ and administrators’ through their belief(s) and/or attitude(s) about reading in the elementary grades. It was important to examine the perspective(s) of each of these groups by interpreting their belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to reading and the implementation of the CCSS.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) as it related to the implementation of CCSS regarding reading in the elementary setting and how those belief(s) and/or attitude(s) were similar and different.

**Setting**

The study occurred in a suburb of a large metropolitan area. The major industries of the metropolitan area included: oil/gas, higher education, aerospace, finance, service industries, tourism, and health care which were among the metropolitan area’s fastest-growing industries. The suburb had an approximate population of 200,000.

The study was conducted at two public schools within a suburb of the metropolitan area. One school housed grades K-3 with an approximate population of 700 students. The other housed grades 4-6, and had an approximate population of 800 students. According to Louisiana Bulletin 746; Title 28: Section 207, elementary grades are specified as 1-5. For the purposes of this study, the sites selected included only elementary grades. Interviews were conducted with teachers, parents, and administrators, as well as, observations of the teachers during the reading portion of their daily instruction to students. The goal was to note the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) of all three groups in reading, as well as, observe the teachers’ implementation of the CCSS in reading in light of their reading practices.
The Public School System

The public school system in the suburb contained approximately forty-five schools that housed some combination of grades K-8. The remaining schools were high schools or schools designated for specificity. The majority of the school age population in the area attend the local public school. The racial composition of the suburb is comprised of approximately 80% white and 12% African American with other minorities factoring in at approximately 8%. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 92% of the schools in the suburb are considered regular schools with the remaining 8% alternative or special schools. 4% of the student population receives special services ranging from gifted/talented to other exceptionalities and impairments, with approximately 2% English Language Learners (ELL). According to local statistics, 47% of the student population received free/reduced lunch. The school system was ranked among the top in the state and student performance ranked better than the national average on the ACT, with a State Department District Grade of an A.

The two schools selected to be part of the study were referred to as school A (K-3) and B (4-6). Since the schools were separate, each school housed its own faculty, as well as, administrators. The schools had a combined enrollment of approximately 1600 students, and shared a common campus. School A served as a “feeder” school for School B. School B also received students from other “feeder” schools; however, that number was relatively small. The free/reduced lunch percentages were 20% for each school. The attendance rate for both schools fell in the 95% and above range. Teachers at school A and B were certified in the area in which they were currently teaching. Administrators at the schools were certified for their position, as well, as having advanced degrees in education. The length of the school day at both locations was approximately seven hours long. Both schools have maintained a school rating of A since
the inception of the state grading system which was implemented as a result of the NCLB Act of 2001.

**Significance of Study**

The implementation of the CCSS is having an impact in many public schools across the nation, as evidenced by the adoption of the CCSS by the majority of states. By looking specifically at teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to reading, this study has provided a glimpse into the impact of the implementation of CCSS in reading based on how reading belief(s) and/or attitude(s) were interrelated. This exploration also provided a closer look at how teachers, parents, and administrators have perceived the changes currently underway in their school districts regarding the CCSS implementation, specifically in reading.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the teachers’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards regarding reading instruction in the elementary grades?
2. What are the parents’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards regarding reading instruction in the elementary grades?
3. What are the administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards regarding reading instruction in the elementary grades?
4. How are the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) of teachers, parents, and administrators similar/and or different?
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

At some point in the lives of teachers, administrators, and parents, education, particularly in the area of reading, has shaped our beliefs and attitudes toward a successful society. In recent times, educational reform practices have become the front and center of policy changes on local, state, and national levels. The implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in reading is impacting not only teachers’ belief(s) and attitude(s) in reading education, but parents’ and administrators’, as well. Changes in standards and curriculums are being forged at a record pace, and how implementation should be administered is being highly considered as schools begin to adopt the new standards for English/Language Arts (ELA). Much can be gleaned from teachers’, parents’ and administrators’ belief(s) and attitude(s) of reading instruction that may be beneficial to understanding policy implementations, such as the CCSS. It is pivotal that insight be given to the implementation of these standards, since enormous educational changes are underway with a standards driven curriculum and high stakes testing that will inevitably shape the future.

Common Core State Standards

In developing an understanding of the CCSS, it is the intention that the ELA standards are not a curriculum, but a set of standards around which the reading curriculum should be centered (NGA/CCSSO, 2010). The set of standards is not intended to tell teachers and students how to learn, instead it is insistent on what students should know and be able to do, in other words, what they should learn. It is up to the teachers to decide how to implement the standards into their withstanding repertoire along with support from the parents and administrators. However, with differing views about reading instruction, the interpretation of the CCSS, specifically ELA, may vary from group to group.
In first understanding the CCSS, teachers, parents, and administrators should be aware of how the document is situated. It is organized according to College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards; these are broad and general anchors, defined as what students should understand and be able to do (NGA/CCSSO, 2010). The CCSS-ELA document has three sections: K-5 and two content specific sections for grades 6-12, one for ELA and the other for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical subjects. Within each section, ten College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards exist, also known as anchor standards for reading; nine of these standards address comprehension, and anchor standard ten addresses text complexity (NGA/CCSSO, 2010). The K-5 section includes specific grade level standards for foundational skills; Print Concepts (K-1), Phonological Awareness (K-1), Phonics and Word recognition (K-5), and Fluency (K-5) (NGA/CCSSO, 2010). These ten anchor or CCR standards are identical across all grades and content areas (literature, informational, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects). For each anchor standard, there are grade level standards for every grade K-8, and for grades 9-10 and 11-12.

With the implementation of the CCSS, teachers, parents, and administrators should note that the ELA has four strands: reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. In assisting teachers, parents, and administrators, in their comprehension of the standards, it is helpful to consider reading the standards both horizontally and vertically, within each grade level, to foster a general understanding of how the standards are structured and what the specific expectations for each grade-level include. In developing an understanding of the expectations for grade-level implementation, topics, such as vocabulary, one that teachers would traditionally expect to encounter in the reading standards, are included in the language standards. According to McLaughlin & Overturk (2012) when thinking about the CCSS/ELA, it has been noted that
there is a shift with more emphasis on skills, such as interpretation, argumentation, and literary analysis. Therefore, elementary teachers who have been implementing previous ELA standards may find that their thought processes about curriculum, instruction, and assessment may be somewhat challenged (McLaughlin & Overturk, 2012). It appears that even though grade level standards are provided by the CCSS, these are broad and offer little direction in assisting teachers in implementation.

Attention to the vocabulary used in the CCSS document is a critical component in comprehending the reading standards. The CCSS document uses specific terms that many may not be familiar with in prior standards or reform efforts, especially in the area of reading. Terms including, text complexity, evidence, and knowledge describe the key shifts in instruction and curriculum implied by the CCSS. Text Complexity can be defined as regular practice with complex text and its academic language (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). Evidence consists of reading and writing grounded in information from literary and informational text (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). Knowledge refers to building knowledge through engagement with content rich text (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). In part, the success of the CCSS depends on the teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ ability to understand and implement the core vision and intent of the standards. Teachers and administrators will need to carefully construct instruction to meet the needs of the students.

**Professional Development of CCSS**

The role of professional development in implementing the CCSS is to help teachers become aware of using the standards effectively in classroom practices. In order to achieve an implementation process that is conducive to teacher environments, teachers need support in learning to manipulate the complex document of the CCSS. In doing so, teachers must be
allowed to collaborate, and develop knowledge that is able to fit into their existing framework of understanding standards and how they relate to instruction.

To implement these standards Roskos & Neumann (2013) make the following suggestions for teachers: (a) know the reading standards specific to the grade level of instruction, (b) make the reading standards routine in planning, (c) focus on standard ten; range, quality, and complexity of student reading, (d) collaborate with colleagues to align and implement the reading standards, (e) set a pace that is challenging for readers to become proficient from day one, and (f) attend CCSS professional development workshops. However, it is imperative that teachers receive the message that reading comprehension skills must still be explicitly taught, as previous research in reading points out (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). Once again by aligning teachers with their prior experiences and belief system of reading instruction, teachers will need to determine what practices will help their students achieve the standards, hence, collaboration with teachers of grade levels must be occurring. Conversations with colleagues may facilitate changes, as it may bring about greater access to resources and expertise, which may help make decisions about the plethora of messages to pursue (Coburn, 2001). Spillane (1999) suggest “practical knowledge” is necessary to turn ideas into a workable form in the classroom. Coburn (2001) notes that it is through interaction in which teachers gain access to a range of interpretations and ways of negotiating the technical and practical details that go beyond their own experiences and worldviews.

It will require time, resources, and professional development far beyond what prior implementations have experienced. Research indicates that for school reforms to have a positive impact, they must be adjusted repeatedly and work their way into school environments (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). Too often, program implementation has been treated as an
inscrutable period during which many forces cause programs to mutate in unpredictable ways (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). Many years ago, it was discovered that complex programs go through a process of “mutual adaptation” in which both developers and implementers make adjustments to work more effectively (Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013). Decades of research show that even the most clearly defined programs are unlikely to be implemented in ways that are in perfect consonance with the creators’ vision (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). In fact one of the most consistent findings available in educational research is variability in program implementation (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). Studies of various programs ranging from teacher professional development, to comprehensive school reform, to specific instructional approaches find that improvement programs are often used inconsistently, or in ways designers had not expected (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010; Hill, 2001). According to Weinbaum & Supovitz (2010), the implementation should allow designers to engage with the program implementers, and ongoing support included, but not limited to personal connections.

Like prior attempts to reform and improve educational outcomes by implementing new standards and assessments, Valencia & Wixson (2013) state that this effort will only be achieved in improving students’ reading if we understand the thinking that underlies the standards, and keeping that thinking in the forefront while attending to the full array of contextual factors that influence student achievement (poverty, language, school leadership). Valencia & Wixson, (2013) suggest that the standards are a vision, and do not require or endorse particular instructional strategies, approaches etc. It is the teachers with deep knowledge of their subject matter and of their students that are key to improved teaching and change that is beneficial to the students (Darling-Hammond & Bradsford, 2005).
Implementation of policies is not a matter of teacher compliance; rather the teacher may need encouragement to develop a sense of ownership and to use their professional judgment within the mandate of the school (Ravindran & Hashim, 2012). To consider successful implementation of the CCSS, McLaughlin & Overturf (2012) state that educators not only need access to a variety of professional development opportunities, but there must be a plan for common core implementation, which should include a timeline, strategic tasks, and a clear delineation of participants and their responsibility. Once again, a call for support at the district level and more importantly school level should be adhered to by providing materials, financial resources, and ensuring curriculum alignment along with continued professional development.

**Policy**

Research has shown teachers’ beliefs of reading instruction factor in to how standards and learning actually get transposed to students. Therefore, rather than policy shaping teachers and full implementation of standards occurring from the policy mandates, what actually gets implemented is in large part left to how teachers receive the change both individually and as a school/grade level. (Coburn, 2001; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Siskin, 1994). It is noted that teachers not only have an individual interpretation of policy changes, they also try to make sense of their interpretations through conversations with others, including colleagues and outside relationships, which can be deeply situated in other contexts, such as social, professional, and organizational. (Spillane 1999; Hill, 1999; Coburn, 2001; Yanow, 1996).

Uncovering the process through which the teachers reconstruct policy in their professional community is crucial to understanding how teachers interpret the changes and how the implementation of such changes becomes part of classroom practice (Coburn, 2001). Teachers bring their worldviews and pre-existing ideas of teaching reading to interactions with
their colleagues, and as they work over time, they develop shared understandings (Coburn, 2001). By influencing these sub-processes, teachers’ worldviews, classroom practices, and shared understandings, shape what teachers select, emphasize, interpret, and ultimately bring into the classroom (Coburn, 2001).

The important role of teachers’ beliefs in mediating the extent to which they will adopt changes in curriculum or pedagogy, or accept suggestions and support from outside sources, has been noted by researchers (DeFord, 1985; Fullan, 1991; Richardson, V., Anders, P., Tidwell, D., & Lloyd, C., 1991; Westwood, P., Allen-Knight, B., & Redden, E. 1997). These researchers have pointed out those disregarding teachers’ beliefs in implementing changes can yield unsatisfying results in the end. Moreover, DeFord, 1985; Fullan, 1991; Richardson, et al. 1991; and Westwood, et al. 1997 state, it is over simplistic to surmise that specifying certain types of knowledge and pedagogy for all teachers will result in achievement for students. Furthermore, they conclude that looking more closely at teachers’ cognition suggests that it is not only behavior in the classroom that influences student learning, but also teachers’ knowledge (formal and practical), values, beliefs, theories, and thought processes which constitutes an overall importance when considering reform policies, such as the CCSS.

Previous research has explored how teachers make sense of policy messages which focused on solely the individual interpretation by the individual (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Jennings, 1996; Spillane & Jennings, 1997; Coburn, 2001). Many schools and individual teachers are involved in reform measures outside the formal policy system, such as, various school reform models, professional development, university coursework, and teacher networks (Coburn, 2001). Thus, noting these variations in which teachers receive policy messages, teachers may find themselves confronted with many and mixed messages about reading; normative pressures
about how they “should” teach, belief systems about teaching and learning, and specific
teaching practices—from varied sources (Coburn, 2001). Recent research on the connection
between instructional policy and classroom practice suggests that teachers interpret, adapt, and
even transform policies as they put them into place (Coburn, 2001). This, coupled with further
research suggests that it may be more likely that teachers actually shape policy, rather than

According to Coburn (2001), policy enters the school in various ways, first, on a state
level, then on a local level. It is then transitioned into the schools which are left to interpretation
and implementation. At this point teachers receive their information, particularly in reading,
from experienced teachers, leaders in the school, including but not limited to the administrator,
and from attending workshops and conferences, as well as, partnerships with other schools in
which messages about reading and the reform effort trickle in (Coburn, 2001). As
reconstruction may be a central part of moving ideas into practice, research offers the following
suggestions about implementation of policy into classrooms: (a) encourage a collaborative
culture in schools, including providing a system that supports informal and formal settings with
funding for shared experiences and high quality professional development, thus fostering a
common language (Coburn, 2001), (b) foster conditions with ways for collaboration in formal
settings, without too many confines on what teachers are supposed to do during this time
(Coburn, 2001), (c) structure collaboration around authentic activities that have a clear
connection to the classroom (Coburn, 2001), (d) put support and structures in place that assist
teachers in engaging conversations to create diversity in order to make diverse settings
opportunities to learn from one another and expand thinking (Youngs, 2007), (e) provide
multiple and accessible resources to assist teachers in gaining insight to new approaches or
materials deeply, so principled and professional judgments are relative and can be brought into classrooms (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Spillane & Jennings, 1997). Too often Coburn (2001) states that model lessons, textbooks, documents, one time workshops, and so forth are all too common in policy that attempts to change classroom practices among teachers. Access to external knowledge resources may be especially important when policy is promoting instructional approaches that are unlikely to be familiar to teachers (Coburn, 2001). Spillane (1999) recommends that connections with deep knowledge of reform practices would likely be a key attribute of collective settings that encourage teachers to move beyond incremental changes in practice. This calls for policy to support the continuous knowledge resources at the school, so that teachers can find answers to questions they may have about practices, and expand their worldviews and repertoire of approaches to reading instruction over time (Coburn, 2001).

Researchers indicate it is critical to consider teachers’ themselves (beliefs, values, attitudes) in any attempt to improve the quality and consistency of teaching. Therefore, an area of increasing interest is that of teachers’ belief(s), value(s), and attitude(s) (Poulson, Avramidis, Fox, Medwell, & Wray, 2001). In this present time of educational reform and a standards driven curriculum, it is important to consider the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) of the teacher in light of the policies that demand reform. This includes not just what the teachers’ do, but also what they know and believe; and how their knowledge and beliefs equate to classroom practice (Poulson, et al., 2001). Of particular interest is raising the standards of literacy, which is currently considered to be imperative to achievement in a high skills economy, and regarded as necessary in order to compete in a changing and competitive global market (Poulson, et al., 2001). Therefore, literacy continues to remain at the top of educational policies in many parts of the world, as well as, in the United States (Poulson, et al., 2001). This has certainly been true in public debates about the
teaching and learning of literacy with a strong focus on the teaching of reading, particularly, with fears that reading standards may be failing (Poulson, et al., 2001).

**Epistemology**

While teachers’ beliefs and values, and their relationship to classroom practice is accelerating as an important dimension in understanding teaching, it is an area that has seen a considerable amount of diversity in approaches used by researchers (Poulson, et al., 2001). Part of the problem that exist has been that beliefs and their relationship to knowledge have been identified in different ways by educational researchers (Poulson, et al., 2001). Researchers with a psychological perspective, such as Kagan (1990), infer that beliefs and knowledge are equal; whereas others, with a philosophy and epistemology background, draw a distinction between them (Poulson, et al., 2001).

Beliefs encourage schools of thought, whereas knowledge is unique to the individual and emotionally neutral. Beliefs are encircled by an emotional aura that determines correctness and erroneousness (Roehler, L.R., Duffy, G.G., Herrmann, B.A., Conley, M., & Johnson, J., 1988). It is also important to keep in mind that teachers’ beliefs and values are not only individual and personal; they have a socio-historical dimension that is shaped in part, by time, context, and circumstance (Poulson, et al., 2001). Muis (2007) contended that there is a relationship between epistemic beliefs, or beliefs about learning and knowing, and self-regulation.

Teachers teach reading in a variety of ways, at times depending on certain epistemological beliefs that they maintain about the instruction in the classroom, and regarding certain procedures to the acquisition of reading. Kitchener (1983) debated that these epistemological beliefs develop in an order of qualitatively different stages, each “characterized by a logically related network of assumptions about knowledge and reality” (p.80). There is a
resemblance to Rokeach (1968) in Kitchener’s (1983) definition of the epistemic belief structure as a “loosely related network of assumptions, some of which are more closely associated than are others” (p. 83). This insight highlights the importance that little systematic research into the processes by which such interpretations and adaptations occur (Coburn, 2001). However, an up and coming strand of research points to teachers’ professional communities. Researchers cite this as an important discovery for meaning making, highlighting the ways in which local teacher communities can form powerful micro cultures (Little & McLaughlin, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993; Siskin, 1994) that mediate environmental pressures (Spillane, 1999; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). DeFord (1985) drew attention to this as it relates to early reading when research found a strong correlation between educator’s responses on a belief profile and the observations of their instruction. Since that time, further research has contributed to how teachers’ belief(s) contribute to their instructional decisions about reading (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2005).

One way to examine the beliefs that a teacher holds is to consider the influences of professional, practical, and personal knowledge (Vacca, 2011). Professional knowledge is defined as a formal academic training often in conjunction worth a degree or certification. Practical knowledge includes information that is learned on the job that grows with experience (Grisham, 2000; Vacca, 2011; Friesen & Butera, 2012). Personal knowledge refers to beliefs developed through a person’s cultural and individual experiences. The influence of those experiences likely plays an important role in the instructional decisions a teacher makes (Grisham, 2000). When teachers do accept information from outside sources, they filter it through their own personal belief systems, translating and absorbing it into their own unique pedagogies (Berliner, 1987; Kagan, 1992). Teacher’s reliance on their own experiences and
prior beliefs suggests that teachers’ belief(s) function like any other form of personal knowledge (Kagan, 1992).

**Worldviews and Understandings**

Worldviews, both individual and collective, play a distinguishing role in shaping the process by which teachers construct shared understandings (Coburn, 2001). This phenomenon was illustrated clearly when teacher groups with strikingly different world views and practices constructed varied understandings of the same message (Coburn, 2001). Teacher’s professional communities also played a crucial role in gatekeeping (Coburn, 2001). Once teachers constructed an understanding of a given message, they either engaged with it, or dismissed it (Coburn, 2001). When teachers linked those messages with their worldviews or understandings, as noted by Coburn (2001) these categories emerged in ways teachers preserved or had gatekeeping “ideas” of teaching reading; (a) does not apply to grade-level; notions of grade-level appropriateness exert powerful normative pressure, (b) too difficult for their students; teachers drew on their past experience to assess whether students could handle activities or strategies, by doing so, they often overruled professional developers or new district standards (c) philosophically opposed, (d) completely outside the realm of comprehension; teachers dismissed messages about reading in conversations because they seemed inconceivable, (e) doesn’t fit, (f) unmanageable, not able to successfully implement because of allotted time along with other constraints; record keeping burdens, or behavior management issues, (g) not understood; when no one in the group understood the specificity of the language in the standards; or particular approaches offered in professional development; including assessment instruments, they discarded them. Thus, teacher’s implemented the standards more symbolically by creating
something (poster, document, etc.) that could be used on classroom walls, while changing little about their approach to teaching reading (Coburn, 2001).

**Teachers’ Beliefs**

All teachers have belief structures and/or systems, however, defined, and labeled about their work, their students, their subject matter, and their roles and responsibilities (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs within attitudes have unions with one another and are tied to other beliefs in other attitudes, so that a teacher’s attitude about a particular educational issue may include beliefs connected to attitudes about the nature of society, the community, race, and even family (Pajares, 1992). Clark (1988) called teachers’ beliefs preconceptions and implicit theories. He noted that their use is not at all consistent with what one may find in textbooks or notes, for they tend to be “eclectic aggregations of cause and effect propositions from many sources, rules of thumb, generalizations drawn from personal experiences, beliefs, values, biases, and prejudices” (p.5).

Beliefs can be defined as the knowledge or ideas an individual accepts as true (Friesen & Butera, 2012). Basturkmen (2012) noted that although definitions of teachers’ beliefs vary, the term is generally used to refer to evaluative propositions which teachers hold consciously or unconsciously and which they accept as true while recognizing that other teachers may hold alternative beliefs on the same issue. According to Nespor (1987), belief systems unlike knowledge systems do not require general or group consensus regarding the validity and appropriateness of their beliefs. Individual beliefs do not even require internal consistency within the belief system; this non-consensus implies that belief systems are by their very nature disputable, more inflexible, and less dynamic than knowledge systems (Pajares, 1992). Pajares (1992) states that beliefs are basically unchanging, and when they change, it is not a disagreement or reason that alters them, but rather a transformation. Nespor (1987) realized that
beliefs are far more predominant than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems. Moreover, much of what teachers know or believe about their craft is tacit (Kagan, 1992). For example, Kagan (1992) and Cooney (1985) noted, teachers may be unaware of their own beliefs, they do not always hold the language with which to describe and label their beliefs, and they may be resistant to espouse them publicly. Alexander (1992) further points out that people may be reluctant to express unpopular beliefs, specifically ones that seem to employ contention to current thinking and official policy, particularly if career promotion is thought to be associated with alignment to certain beliefs.

A further challenge noted is teachers’ beliefs are not easily accessible. The relationship between beliefs and practices, such as implementation, is complex; it appears to be dialectical rather than unilateral, in that practice does not always follow directly from beliefs; and sometimes, changes in belief(s) come after, or as a result of, change in practice (Poulson, et al., 2001). Therefore, it is thought that the earlier the belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to change (Pajares, 1992). For these beliefs posthumously affect perception and strongly influence the processing of new information (Pajares, 1992). It is for this reason that newly formed beliefs are most vulnerable. With time and use, they become robust, and individuals hold onto beliefs based on inaccurate or incomplete knowledge even after scientifically correct demonstrations and illustrations are given to them (Pajares, 1992). Munby (1982) suggests that the power of beliefs easily can outweigh the clearest most convincing contrary evidence.

Once beliefs are formed individuals have a tendency to build causal explanations surrounding those beliefs, whether these explanations are accurate or mere invention (Pajares, 1992). However, this is not to say that beliefs do not change under any conditions, but often
there is no change even when it has been proven or is necessary for them to do so (Pajares, 1992; Nisbett & Ross, 1980).

According to Fives & Buehl (2008) understanding how teachers’ beliefs are related to their teaching practices and motivation may allow teacher educators to plan instruction that will best support the development of teachers. It has been established that teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning about themselves, and their students influence the ways they view and approach their work (Erkmen, 2012). This view is based on the assumption that understanding teachers’ beliefs and the principles they operate from will provide insight in how teachers’ view their work, how teachers’ beliefs affect their behavior in the classroom, what goes on in the classroom, how teachers’ use new information about teaching and learning in their teaching, and how teaching practices and professional teacher preparation programs can be improved (Borg, 2003; Erkman, 2012).

Furthermore, Fives and Buehl (2008) indicate that teachers may value different aspects of teaching knowledge depending on how connected they view that knowledge to teaching practice. Therefore, when teachers begin to make a major change within their belief system or practices, beliefs and practices may not be congruent (Lenski, Wham, & Griffey, 1998; Ridley, 1990). Findings from Caudle and Moran (2012) reveal that the process of changing beliefs and practice is synergistic, with neither preceding the other. Rather, there is a reciprocally informing, transactional relationship that evolves over time that is characterized by growing levels of awareness and knowledge of self (Caudle & Moran, 2012). Caudle and Moran (2012) found that participants revealed nuances of self-regulated practices by acting on their personal visions of what they believed was right and appropriate for children, while still respecting policies and practices of their school and administration. It is not unusual for teachers at this juncture, to
experience some degree of frustration as they attempt to move their classroom practices in line with the expanded or altered belief system (Lenski, Wham, & Griffey, 1998; Pace, 1992). Therefore, beliefs and practices may not correspond because the teacher is experiencing a change process with changes in beliefs preceding changes in practices (Richardson et al., 1991). Guskey (1986) concluded that change in beliefs comes after, rather than prior to a change in behavior. Schutz (1970) suggests that a person may consider propositions equally valid even though they may in fact be incompatible. Differences between beliefs and practices are then to be expected as a teacher’s practice may reflect at one time one belief and at another time another belief that is at odds with the former belief (Basturkmen, 2012). One study suggest a lack of relationship between beliefs and practices may indicate that the teacher is undergoing a change process, which counters the argument on professional development that is based on the notion that changes in teacher belief follow changes in teacher behavior (Guskey, 1986). Guskey’s (1986) model suggest that only when teachers see positive results of different behaviors in terms of student learning do they begin to change their beliefs. From Richardson, et al. (1991), the conclusion can be drawn that genuine change will come about in classrooms when teachers think differently about their practices, and are provided with practices to match different ways of thinking.

There is research that exists that highlights a distinguishable inconsistency between teachers’ stated beliefs, intentions, and their observed classroom practice (Desforges & Cockburn, 1987; Duffy & Anderson, 1984). Drawing on the work of Munby (1982), it has been suggested that when teachers’ beliefs about a particular subject are disjointed with their practice in that area, it may be that different and heavier beliefs are the cause. Beliefs are not likely to be
replaced unless they prove insufficient, and they are unlikely to prove so, unless they are contented, and one is unable to incorporate them into existing conceptions (Pajares, 1992).

One focus of investigation in research concerning teachers’ beliefs has been the correspondence or lack thereof between teachers’ beliefs and their practices (Basturkmen, 2012). It is generally accepted that teachers’ beliefs provide a basis for action (Borg, 2011) and that beliefs affect and guide teachers’ decision making (Basturkmen, 2012). The relationship is understood to be an interactive one in which beliefs drive actions, but experiences and reflection on actions can lead to changes in or additions to beliefs themselves (Basturkmen, 2012; Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 2001). Teachers’ stated beliefs are not, however, always a “very reliable guide to reality” (Pajares, 1992) (p. 326). Pajares (1992) contemplates that it is important to think of the links among the beliefs, instead of the beliefs as separate sub-systems. In the context of teaching, beliefs may lead educators to emphasize or leave out aspects of the curriculum (Fives & Buehl, 2008). Roehler, Duffy, Herrmann, Conley and Johnson (1988) argued beliefs are static and represent eternal truths that remain unaltered in a teacher’s mind regardless of the situation.

Fang’s (1996) review pointed out that a range of research has shown that differences in the degree of consistency between beliefs and practices also stemmed from the diverse contexts in which those teachers worked, the constraints which these imposed, such as school climate, the need to follow national, state, or local district policies and mandates. Fang (1996) identifies the “consistency thesis” as dominating much of this work (p. 52). He points out that in research on reading, a substantial number of studies support the notion that teachers possess theoretical beliefs towards reading; and that such beliefs tend to shape the nature of their teaching (Harste & Burke, 1977; De Ford, 1985; Richardson, et al., 1991). Fullan and Hargreaves (1994) outline a
number of contextual factors which help shape teachers’ beliefs and values. These include times when they train and enter the profession, the dominant values of those times, such as a whole language or skills driven approach, the particular stage of their career, and the degree of confidence in their own teaching.

Erkmen’s (2012) study emphasized the value of eliciting beliefs to raise teacher awareness. Based on this assertion, teacher educators could consider training teachers to acknowledge how their beliefs influence their practices (Erkmen, 2012). One way of doing this is by involving teachers in “teaching awareness” tasks that encourage teachers to notice and reflect on their teaching, in terms of their actions and its effectiveness, and consider the reasons behind their actions (Erkmen, 2012). Engaging teachers in feedback dialogues, self-observation, and peer observation activities may result in reshaping existing beliefs.

Results from Pajares’ (1992) work list several beliefs to consider when initiating a study of teachers’ beliefs: (a) beliefs are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate, persevering even against contradictions caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience, (b) individuals develop a belief system that houses all the beliefs acquired through the process of cultural transmission, (c) the belief system has an adaptive function in helping individuals define and understand the world and themselves, (d) knowledge and beliefs are inextricably intertwined, but the potent affective, evaluative, and episodic nature of beliefs makes them a filter through which new phenomena are interpreted, (e) thought processes may well be precursors to and creators of belief, but the filtering effect of belief structures ultimately screens, refines, distorts, or reshapes subsequent thinking and information processing, (f) epistemological beliefs play a key role in knowledge interpretation and cognitive monitoring, (g) beliefs are prioritized according to their connections or relationship to other beliefs or other cognitive and affective structures; Apparent
inconsistencies may be explained by exploring the functional connections and centrality of beliefs, (h) belief substructures, such as educational beliefs, must be understood in terms of their connections not only to each other but also to other, perhaps, more central beliefs in the system. (Psychologists usually refer to these substructures as attitudes and values), (i) by their very nature and origin, some beliefs are more incontrovertible than others, (j) the earlier the belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter; Newly acquired beliefs are most vulnerable to change, (k) belief change during adulthood is a relatively rare phenomena, the most common cause being a conversion from one authority to another; Individuals tend to hold onto beliefs based on incorrect or incomplete knowledge, even after scientifically correct explanations are given to them, (l) beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding such tasks; Hence, they play a critical role in defining behavior and organizing knowledge and information, (m) beliefs strongly influence perception, but they can be an unreliable guide to the nature of reality, (n) individuals’ beliefs strongly affect their behavior, (o) beliefs must be inferred and this inference must take into account the congruence among individuals belief statements, the intentionality, to behave in a predisposed manner and the behavior related to the belief in question, (p) beliefs about teaching are well established by the time a student gets to college.

**Theoretical Orientation**

Some researchers have suggested that teachers differ in their instructional approaches based partly on the function of their beliefs in the process of teaching reading (Harste & Burke, 1977). These beliefs then constitute a “theoretical orientation” (De Ford, 1979). Prior work on the relationship between classroom practices and beliefs in the area of reading have produced
contradictory results. DeFord (1985) found that using the measure from the Theoretical Orientation of Reading Profile (TORP), teacher beliefs could be measured. However, Hoffman & Kugle (1981) were unable to predict specific classroom behaviors on the basis of TORP scores. The two major differences are that DeFord’s predictions were more global than Hoffman & Kugle’s (1982), and the design moved from observation to prediction of beliefs. Hook and Rosenshine’s (1979) summaries of studies also indicated that predictions from paper pencil test measure could be made for global teaching approaches, but not for specific behaviors. It is perhaps the case, according to Richards et al. (1991), as well as, by Hoffman & Kugle (1982) that a multiple choice measure of beliefs is inadequate for predicting classroom practices because teachers feel restrained by specific choices on items. In using interviews on beliefs, Richards, et al. (1991) revealed ways that teachers think about reading and learning and how they practice it in their classrooms denotes a strong relationship between teachers stated beliefs about the reading process and their classroom practices which gives credence to the beliefs as stated and to the way they were elicited.

A variety of factors affect theoretical orientations towards reading instruction. For example, some determinants are situation specific, such as, classroom management, and administrator demands (Richards, Gipe, & Thompson, 1987). The grade level taught and abilities of students can also affect teachers’ orientations, since some teachers believe that both younger and less able students learn to read better with a structured approach to reading (Bawden, Buike, & Duffy, 1979; Gove, 1981). According to Richards, Gipe, and Thompson (1987) training can also affect teachers’ orientations since training can help teachers to become more proficient in diagnosis, prescription, and remediation. The provision of practices without theory may lead to a mis-implementation or no implementation at all, unless teachers’ beliefs are
congruent with the theoretical assumptions of practice (Richards, et al., 1991). Furthermore, programs in which theory is discussed and which focus on changing beliefs without proposing practices that embody those theories may lead to frustration (Richards, et al., 1991). Therefore, Richards, et al., (1991) stated that staff development programs should weave three forms of knowledge together: (a) teachers’ background theories (b) beliefs and understandings of the teaching and reading process (c) theoretical frameworks and empirical premises as derived from current research and alternative practices that instantiate both teachers’ beliefs and research knowledge.

De Ford (1979, 1985) hypothesized that teachers beliefs about reading presage their actions and judgments about instruction. These actions ultimately affect the actions and judgments of the reader (Leinski, Wham & Griffey, 1998). Harste & Burke (1977) supported the supposition that the orientation of many students towards the reading process mirrors the orientation held by their teachers. Stansell, Moss, and Robeck (1982) agreed, “It may be argued that the theoretical orientations held by teachers constitute a major variable in the determination of reading behavior among learners” (p. 243). Because of this influence, teachers’ theories toward literacy acquisition could have a direct impact on their students’ approaches to literacy (Reutzel & Sabey, 1996).

It has been suggested (De Ford, 1979) that theoretical orientations as they pertain to reading involve beliefs about three major classes of instructional approaches, (a) graphophonics methods, (b) skills methods, and (c) whole language methods. In other words teachers can view the teaching of reading as top down, bottom up or balanced. Research by Richards, Gipe, and Thompson (1987) suggests that depending on teachers’ experiences, different theoretical orientations exist. Therefore, leading to the conclusion that if teacher beliefs are to be changed
to accommodate policy shifts, diverse experiences must be afforded to teachers. Hence, no single experience may be effective in stimulating more favorable methods of teaching reading.

According to Evans, Fox, Cremaso, & McKinnon (2004) teachers and educators are often and commonly challenged to reassess the materials, methods, and approaches they use to instruct in light of new theory and research in learning. This is evident in reading instruction, in which several curricular shifts have shaped the views of teaching reading. The emergence of “Whole language” challenged what many thought of as reading instruction. “Whole Language” can be defined as a “child-centered” literature based approach to language and teaching that immerses students in real communication situations (Froese, 1990) (p. 2). However, some researchers have made it known that “whole language” is not a practice. It is a set of beliefs, in other words, a perspective (Altwrger, Eldelsky, & Flores, 1987). Many theories of reading instruction include top-down approaches (Cambourne, 1988; Goodman, 1976, 1989) which highlight the importance of higher order contextual information drawn from knowledge about textual and linguistic structures and general knowledge deriving meaning and directing attention to aspects of print. Bottom up perspectives (Gough, 1972; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Rayner & Pollastek, 1989) highlight the importance of automatic and efficient recoding of print into short term memory for higher level processing of meaning. Both of these approaches play an important role in interactive reading models, balanced reading instructional approaches (Perfatti, 1992; Pressley, 1998; Stanovich, 1984) and in connectionist (constructive) models of reading (Plaut, McLelland, Seidenberg & Patterson, 1996). In these latter theories, reading is modeled as involving the computation of orthographical, phonological, and semantic codes in the lexical network, which activate each other according to its weighted connections during word recognition and reading comprehension (Evans, et al., 2004).
According to Poulson, et al. (2001) there is evidence to suggest that teacher’s theoretical beliefs about reading and writing may be dependent according to the number of years they taught, the type of training they experienced, and highest level of qualification held. The effective teachers of literacy showed a greater degree of consistency between their theoretical beliefs and choice of teaching activities then the comparison sample (Poulson, et al., 2001). Overall, Poulson, et al. (2001) points out the theoretical orientation of effective teachers of literacy appears in many respects to be constructivist. These teachers prioritize pupils’ ability to make sense of and produce written texts in a range of contexts, and for authentic purposes.

One of the most important findings from Poulson, et al. (2001) is that the differences in theoretical orientation may lead to not only differences in practice, but also differences in interpretations of policy requirements relating to literacy. This is an extremely important consideration where ambitious nation or state wide reforms and programs are being implemented, such as the CCSS. Program changes of this nature usually make some provision for professional development training for teachers (Poulson, et al., 2001). However, such provisions are often localized, and fragmented leaving the district or school to take “ownership” of the reform (Poulson, et al., 2001). This conversely has led to a highly centralized prescribed content with distinct forms of delivery (Poulson, et al., 2001). It appears that new reforms take into account little historical and socio-cultural contexts in which teachers’ theoretical beliefs are formed (Poulson, et al., 2001). Rarely is the provision of professional development manifested to take on differentiated accounts of teachers’ levels of expertise, experience, professional qualifications, or theoretical perspectives (Poulson, et al., 2001). The discourses which frame educational reforms tend to construct the new as “good” and the old as “bad,” yet fail to provide ways of helping teachers organize and adjust to changes by relating them to their existing
theoretical belief structures (Poulson, et al., 2001). The presumption that teachers can be given an externally devised curricula along with teaching approaches, in order to free them to be more creative, as well as, inspiring and independent in the classroom may also be reconsidered in the light of this (Poulson, et al., 2001).

According to Byrd (2008), teachers’ theoretical orientations influence their choices about instruction, despite the theoretical and methodological diversity in studies on teacher beliefs. Researchers (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Fullan, 2001; Eilers & D’Amico 2012; Ravindran, & Hashim, 2012) have suggested teacher beliefs and values have a profound influence on classroom practice and teaching decisions. Further research shows that curriculum processes and tasks are carried out differently by different people owing to the different interpretations they ascribe to curriculum implementation (Ravindran & Hashim, 2012).

**Institutional Theory**

Institutional theory provides a powerful tool for understanding the complicated relationship between schools and their multifaceted environment (Coburn, 2001). At root, institutional theory is a cultural approach (Coburn, 2001). It emphasizes how norms and cultural conceptions about appropriate reading instruction are considered, reconstructed over time, carried by individual and collective actors, and embedded within policy and governance structures (Scott, 1995; Coburn, 2001). Institutional theorists suggest that messages in the environment shape patterns of action and belief within schools through regulative means. They are incorporated into formal policy; through normative means, as teachers feel pressured to adopt certain approaches to maintain legitimacy; and through cognitive means, reading beliefs and practices attain a “taken for granted” status as the natural or common sense way to do things (Scott, 1995). Messages about reading are thus “carried” by policy at all levels of the system and
through reform programs, teacher professional organizations, assessment systems, texts and other materials, professional development, and community expectations (Coburn, 2001). As a “carrier”, formal policy (local, state, and national) is one of many mechanisms by which messages of reading come into schools (Coburn, 2001).

Traditionally, institutional theory has been applied rather specifically to schools (Coburn, 2001). Many studies have focused on the influence of the institutional environment on school structures and organization. These studies have failed to investigate empirically the connections between the environment and teachers’ work in classrooms, relying on earlier theorizing that suggested that schools decouple structural changes from internal workings of the classroom (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Furthermore, many institutional studies of public schools have presented a simplistic “outside in” model in which belief systems, norms, and practices originate in the environment and flow into the schools (Cuban, 1988; Rowan, 1982). This approach neglects the dynamic relationship between the environment and the schools’ internal social processes, failing to account for the evidence that teachers actively mediate norms, belief systems, and practices that have diffused from the institutional environment, socially constructing and reconstructing them as they put them into place in their own contexts (Coburn, 2001).

According to Coburn (2001), in schools where teachers interact with one another in either formal or informal settings, conversations played a lead role in mediating between messages from the environment and what teachers bring into their classrooms. Coburn (2001) argues that patterns of interaction and the conditions of conversations, informal and formal settings influence the process by which teachers adopt, adapt, combine, and ignore messages from the environment, mediating the way messages from the environment shape classroom
practices. Coburn’s study (2001) highlights the important role of teacher interaction outside of formal organizational structures; interaction that can be highly influential in ways that teachers make sense of messages from the environment. Thus, Coburn (2001) concluded, the teacher community is multi-faceted and dynamic, which in light, is quite important because teachers in different informal and formal communities can make different sense of the same idea. Lastly, Coburn (2001) indicated that formal policy is only one of many sources of messages and pressures about reading that teachers come in contact with. To simply focus on formal policy is to not represent all that teachers are responding to and grappling with as they work to improve their practice (Coburn, 2001).

**Parents’ Beliefs**

Neglected in discussions often are the view of the parents and their role in supporting their children’s reading development at home, and under the guidance of their child’s teacher to whom curriculum reforms in reading are directed (Evans, et al., 2004). Understanding parents’ ideas about beginning reading and their behaviors directed toward it seems especially valuable given the current emphasis on reform, fostering of parent-school relations, charter school initiatives in which parents have gained curriculum input, growth of home schooling, and the diverse ways to approach reading (Evans, et al., 2004; Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2002).

Very little research has examined parents’ reading related beliefs (DeBaryshe, Binder, & Buell 1994; Fitzgerald, Spiegel, &Cunningham, 1991). According to Lynch, Anderson, Anderson, & Shapiro (2006) knowing parents’ beliefs about literacy may play an important role in understanding the variety of activities in which parents engage with their young children. Research has shown connections exist between parent-child literacy activities and children’s
success in school (Leseman & de Jong, 1998; Purcell-Gates & Dahl, 1991). If a relationship exists between parents’ beliefs and behaviors, then educators who want to influence the types of activities parents engage in with their children may need to note parents’ beliefs about how children learn to read and write (Lynch, et al., 2006). According to Barnyak (2011) parents’ attitudes and beliefs can impact children’s views and desires to read. Positive literacy experiences between parents and children can enhance children’s desire to become avid readers themselves (Barnyak, 2011).

According to Lynch, et al. (2006), there are two demographic factors that seem to play a role in parents’ literacy beliefs: (a) parents’ education level and (b) their socio economic status (SES). Lynch et al. (2006) suggested highly literate parents held beliefs consistent with an emergent literacy perspective, but less literate parents held more traditional perceptions of literacy learning. Furthermore, Lynch et al. (2006) suggested, parents who were less literate wanted a more structured approach, whereas highly literate parents preferred less structure. Fitzgerald’s et al. (1991) study indicated this, as well, and it seems that parents’ beliefs about how young children learn to read and write are still related to the parents’ educational level. Once parents’ beliefs are exposed, teachers and administrators can help these parents understand new developments in the research in relation to what parents currently believe about literacy (Lynch, et al., 2006).

According to Lynch et al. (2006) parents act or intend to act in a manner consistent with their beliefs (Lynch, et al., 2006). Lynch et al. (2006) found a relationship between parents’ literacy beliefs and the behaviors they engage in to help their children learn to read and write. Parents who had more holistic beliefs were more likely to encourage children’s literacy development, as opposed to directly teaching skills (Lynch, et al., 2006). Since encouraging
literacy development is an important aspect of the holistic perspective of how children learn to read and write (Goodman, 1986) the finding that parents’ encouragement of literacy activities related to their beliefs about literacy was supported (Lynch, et al., 2006).

However, an explanation of differences that may occur, rests in the sociocultural spaces occupied by parents and teachers (Evans, et al., 2004). Brofenbrenner (1979) proposed that the source of beliefs resides in an individual’s microsystem. Accordingly, both parents’ and teachers’ belief(s) and attitude(s) of reading may be shaped by their own adult experiences, such as conversations with others, interactions with children, information gained from institutions, and print resources (Evans, et al., 2004). Teachers in their professional roles, are embedded in a different microsystem from parents, with their views and practices challenged by educational policies and theories, the curriculum of training colleges, curricular materials approved for the use in classrooms, in-services, and teacher peers (Evans, et al., 2004). In the absence of these factors, parents’ views may more likely be shaped by their own recollections of what their parents and/or teachers did to assist them and informal interactions with friends who share similar experiences with children (Evans, et al., 2004). Nisbett and Ross (1980) have outlined, that beliefs also serve to filter the evidence gained from experience to support those beliefs and Fang (1996) concluded, beliefs can be so strongly held that they contribute to resistance to curricular changes, therefore, parents and teachers may end up divergent in their views.

Although the different views by parents and teachers themselves are noteworthy, they become of potential pragmatic importance when coupled with the finding that parents regard literacy development with high importance and feel they influence its course in their child’s education (Evans, et al., 2004). This finding is in concordance with that of McGillicuddy-De Lisi and Subramamian (1994) who observed that parents believe they have an influence on their
child’s school success. Additionally, just 43% of parents felt that the school had the prime responsibility for literacy development, which may suggest that a majority of parents will likely take some active role in helping their child read. Thus, it seems likely that many parents see themselves as representing the home and having a substantial role in supporting and assisting their child in reading (Evans, et al., 2004).

As Sigel (1986) noted psychological investigations of parents’ beliefs have largely stemmed from the assumption that implicit and explicit beliefs serve as guides for what parents do when interacting with their children. Studies have shown that beliefs predict literacy behavior in parents (McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1982, 1985) and among teachers in the curriculum they implement (Deford, 1985; Hook & Rosenshine, 1979). Therefore, implementation of new literacy programs should be introduced with respect to parents’ literacy beliefs; if not teachers may not be effective in implementing change (Lynch, et al., 2006).

Parents’ attitudes and beliefs about their children and the learning processes affect the quality of the feedback they give their children, and consequently influence children’s values for learning tasks (Newland, Gapp, Gera, Reisetter, & Syed, 2011). Parents provide a context that engages a child and encourages interest and participation in a learning task by facilitating experiences, translating, and interpreting these experiences, and communicating value and efficacy for the task at hand (Newland, et al., 2011). Thus, parental beliefs about their own and their child’s role in the development of child literacy skills are related to parental literacy involvement practices. (Newland, et al., 2011). Furthermore, caregivers who believe it is their responsibility to help their children become independent and competent are more likely to help children become successful readers (Brody, Stoneman, & McCoy, 1994). Additionally parental
beliefs about the nature of parent-child literacy interactions are also related to the quality of
home literacy interactions (Bingham, 2007).

Administrators’ Beliefs

Little research seems to exist in terms of administrators’ belief(s) and attitude(s) related
to reading. Most research denotes the administrator as playing the lead role in delivering the
implementation of standards in subject matter and facilitating the change within the school
culture. An apparent gap in research is the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) that administrators have
about reading and the nature of its instruction concerning the implementation of standards or
reforms. Perhaps, it is thought that many administrators have had prior teaching experience, and
their belief(s) and/or attitude(s) are situated in the professional development they offer at their
site. Therefore, implementation in regards to reading curricula could look very different across
schools and among faculties. With this stated, the administrator stumbles upon a unique
challenge in trying to assist teachers and parents in the understanding of new policies as related
to curriculum changes, while they themselves are interpreting recent changes of reading
curricula with their own set of belief(s) and/or attitude(s).

Administrators’ Role in Implementation

A challenge of the CCSS is that it has not provided a direct blueprint for achieving the
standards, furthermore compounding the challenge of delivering the appropriate messages to
faculty about the CCSS. Therefore, administrators must continually be transformative
throughout their faculties’ initiative in trying to make their way in understanding the CCSS to
keep all school personnel moving toward implementation. Administrators can influence teacher
growth by the types of professional cultures they promote in their schools (Kardos, Johnson,
Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). In schools characterized by integrated cultures, school leaders
are visibly engaged in their schools and focused on instruction, student learning, and teacher collaboration (Youngs, 2007).

Eilers & D’Amico (2012) identify school leaders and/or administrators are those who guide the teaching and learning in institutions charged with educating today’s youth. School leaders have the responsibility of guiding the implementation of curricular changes, such as the CCSS (Eilers & D’Amico, 2012). However, unlike some prior initiatives that dictated curriculum, assessment instruments, and pacing of instruction, the CCSS do not dictate how teachers must teach (Eilers & D’Amico, 2012). Administrators have the responsibility of deciding how to best meet these standards by moving faculty and staff to uncharted territory. Because of the immediacy and requirements from state departments of education, many may find themselves dictating instructional changes that have not been carefully thought out in an effort to implement these standards in accordance to timelines that have been set on federal and state levels (Eilers & D’Amico, 2012).

Without guidance from a skilled leader, teachers, and students are likely to experience frustration and failure. Eilers & D’Amico (2012) formulated elements for assisting administrators in their schools to promote a successful implementation of the CCSS. They include: (a) establish a shared purpose and vision, a goal oriented mission, and a focused course of action which are critical factors to learning; School leaders must develop an informed shared vision for how their schools will operate to implement the standards fully. They should immerse themselves in the tenets and spirit of the initiative to promote deeper coverage of less content, thoughtful balance of text, type, and genre, connection of mathematical practices to content, integration of history, social studies, and science into language arts, college and career readiness anchor standards for each of the language arts, and a heavy emphasis on all types of technology.
embedded into all curricular areas. The purpose must be clearly established with input from faculty and staff from the initial stages to ensure success, (b) set priorities in which school leaders should identify value and use the professional strengths of each individual as they seek input and bring the individual into line with the overall vision; School leaders are encouraged to begin by determining the knowledge and skills of all personnel to orchestrate shifts in content and pedagogy. They also have the responsibility of defining areas of strength and opportunity within individuals to bridge existing practice to assure the college and career readiness of all students. After making these determinations, the school leader(s) must provide the appropriate support and feedback to each person or group by scaffolding learning shifts one step at a time. This can be accompanied by recognizing teachers’ maximize strengths, providing intensive professional development to build on opportunities, and identifying key faculty members to provide collegial support to team members who are hesitant. (c) align personnel with curricular needs; Good leaders proactively guide change through setting agendas to chart the course; School leaders have the responsibility of building climate and structure for change by determining the importance and sequence of the stages involved in any change. Each stage must be translated into manageable tasks that are achievable and measurable to accomplish the intended purpose (d) practice professional discourse; School personnel may not automatically know how to work together to live up to their potential. Administrators are the critical link in stimulating the conversations that lead to classroom practices that are associated with improved student learning. Schools should promote professional discourse among faculty and staff to reach the CCSS. Guiding personnel through productive professional conversations requires leaders to study the aspects of the initiative with faculty, ask questions to promote critical thinking, and lead everyone to seek answers together. This facilitates the creation of a plan of
action for each grade level and subject area and it also means that school leaders must attend learning sessions with faculty and facilitate study sessions on the school campus as each aspect of CCSS implementation is examined. Administrators may arrange schedules to allow for common planning times, opportunities for peer observation, and focused vertical alignment through cross grade meetings. (e) encourage risk taking; create an environment in which school personnel are empowered to take risks involved in making necessary strides to tackle and implement change. Therefore, building trust is the catalyst to risk-taking that allows change to happen. When everyone has established a common knowledge base and a system of beliefs that view risk as a positive venture, implementation can be positive and fruitful. Administrators should encourage collaboration by observing and engaging in dialogue about the positive side of risk-taking with the idea of making gains rather than the potential for tension or loss. Effective leaders pay close attention to learning along with the faculty to support and encourage experimentation appropriately. Guarantees of professional support and safety to try new things should enable school personnel to modify content and instructional practices required to make each student college and career ready. Because the standards do not dictate how goals should be reached, risk taking with support must be embedded in other essential elements to bring about change. According to Goldring & Rallis (1993) and Spillane, Halverson & Diamond (2001), trust develops when administrators support teachers’ work on a consistent basis and share responsibility for decisions related to curriculum, hiring, and professional development. (f) provide feedback; Moving toward change requires a differentiated supportive work environment with clear expectations. Frequent and focused feedback with faculty is critical to the positive flow of ideas and exchanges within the school environment. Administrators should continually
lead teachers to look closely at curricular changes, question each practice, and make adjustments as needed.

School leadership and teachers are both important influences on the ways that reforms are understood and enacted (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). Formal school leaders play a monumental role in setting the context and establishing the agenda for reform, and without their support, the weight and legitimacy of the reform being enacted can often crumble (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). In light of the leadership position, other faculty members can carry a tremendous influence in schools and use that influence to facilitate or impede reform (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). Many instructional leaders who don’t hold formal leadership positions, are influential on their peers and provide a unique type of support to colleagues who are struggling with the fine grained details of reform implementation (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). Formal school leaders should recognize the influence of informal school leadership and communication (Weinbaum, & Suptovitz, 2010) when implementing school reforms, such as the CCSS, as this may be a benefit to improved implementation.
CHAPTER 3
METHODODOLOGY

Qualitative research can be a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data usually collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning (Creswell, 2009). Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of the situation (Creswell, 2009).

In using qualitative research method for the study, the researcher considered paradigms and worldviews, although they can be named differently by different authors, most are similar in their descriptions. Individuals may develop subjective meanings of their experiences, meanings that can be directed toward certain objects or things (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). These meanings are varied and multiple, which lead the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The goal of the research was to rely mostly on the participants’ views of the situation being studied. The questions were broad and general, so participants could add their own meaning of the situation. Questioning of the participants was open-ended, as the researcher participated as a listener to what people say and do in their life settings. Often, these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. They are not just imprinted on individuals, but formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).
In qualitative research the researcher has an “emic,” an inside view of the participants world, as well as, an “etic,” view, an outside view (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The researcher must develop a relationship that will provide empathy, compassion, and growth. In other words, the researcher has to be able to position themselves in a position of trust. In doing so, the researcher must see the fruition of the project through a lens incorporating their own personal biography, then in turn, using that perspective to help the participant understand the world, while shaping their experience in order to initiate an experience of growth and understanding.

Qualitative researchers are more concerned with the process, as is the case in this research project, of exploring the implementation of the CCSS, in particular, the elementary reading standards through the eyes of teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ belief(s) and attitude(s) related to reading. Patton (2002) implies that “looking at how something happens …… the development process is an end in itself, not just a means to some more concrete end…the journey, not the destination, is what matters” (p.159). The interactions of the participants are often the aim of investigative queries in an attempt to understand the internal dynamics of the study as it relates to the classroom, school, and community. Further, Patton (2002) describes these developments:

Process data permit judgments about the extent to which the program or organization is operating the way it is supposed to be operating, revealing areas in which relationships can be improved as well as highlighting strengths that should be preserved (p.160).

It is perhaps beneficial when evaluating a program to study, to look at its processes, such as those involved with implementation of the CCSS in reading and the individual components (beliefs and/or attitudes) which may contribute to its success, or downfall.
Qualitative research is not simply done as a means to an end, to merely test a theory or idea, rather it is done with the inclination that human change will occur within the participants and their community to improve or provide awareness of their world.

In exploring the implementation of the CCSS in elementary reading through the eyes of teachers’ parents’ and administrators’ based on their belief(s) and/or attitude(s) about reading instruction, the ethnographic case study determined how the implementation was “seen” by the individuals selected and how their belief(s) and/or attitude(s) played a role. The case study provided an insight into teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) of reading in the implementation process of the CCSS and how this interaction affected the school culture. By uncovering the belief(s) and/or attitude(s), the emerging patterns and themes provided an important “look” at how the implementation of a national school reform is actually shaping local schools and communities, and offered insight for further understanding.

Case Studies are in-depth and detailed explorations of single examples (an event, process, organization, group, or individual) that are “an instance drawn from a class” of similar phenomena (Adelman, Jenkins, & Kemmis, 1983) (p. 3). They seek to understand the larger phenomena through the close examination of a specific case therefore, focusing on that case. Case studies are in most part, descriptive, holistic, heuristic, and inductive (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Some case studies can be organizational studies; others with psychological roots focus on individuals (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Ethnographies can be considered special instances of a case study in that they may or may not link to cultural anthropology or sociology (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Case studies are complex and multi-layered. Most case studies are descriptive or explanatory; that is they depict events, processes, and perspectives as they unfold-the “real-life context” (Yin, 1994) (p.25), and often build an explanation for those events or outcomes.
According to Rossman and Rallis (2012), because case studies are “particularistic” in focus, they offer an especially good design for practical problems-for questions, situations, or puzzling occurrences that arise from everyday practice. The strength of case studies lies in their detail, complexity and use of many sources to obtain multiple perspectives (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The result is the thickness of description that allows a reader to interpret and decide the applicability of case learnings to another setting (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

One of the most compelling features of qualitative research is that it must occur in the natural setting. In other words, the researcher goes to the participants. The researcher is the key instrument as they themselves will be collecting the data, examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing the participants. In gathering the data, qualitative researchers seek to make sense of all the data collected and organize it into categories or themes that cut across all data sources (Creswell, 2009). Lastly, the design is emergent. The initial plan for the research is not tightly prescribed, which allows for changes at any time in the process (Creswell, 2009). The key behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from the participants themselves and to address the research to obtain that information (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

**Biases**

It is difficult for research to be completely free from bias. Often qualitative research is thought to contain some form of bias. As the researcher participated in the setting and became a part of the school culture, as in this case, with teachers, parents, and administrators, the possibility for bias can become heightened. The researcher is a former teacher, and it was not the intent of the researcher to gather data through interviews and observations that supported the views of any one group throughout the study. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) state three considerations when viewing qualitative studies:
1. Qualitative studies are not impressionistic essays made after a quick visit to a setting or after some conversations with a few subjects.

2. The researcher’s primary goal is to add knowledge, not pass judgment on the setting.

3. Qualitative researchers guard against their own biases by recording detailed footnotes that include reflections on their subjectivity. (p. 33-34)

**The Developmental Research Sequence (D.R.S.)**

The research design for this study was based on the work of James Spradley (1980), author of *Participant Observation*, and his *Developmental Research Sequence Method*. Spradley, an established researcher in the field of anthropology developed his approach to guide ethnographers in developing an effective qualitative product. The process Spradley produced evolved for two primary reasons: (1) to be more efficient in ethnographic inquires, and (2) to solve problems he had encountered in field work from his work with students and colleagues.

There are twelve steps that Spradley employs in *Participant Observation*, which will be used throughout the course of the research to be conducted.

**Social Situation**

The first step in the study was to select and locate a social situation. According to Spradley (1980) all participant observation takes place in social situations and these situations are defined by place, actors, and activities. The study was conducted in two public schools—one K-3 and the other 4-6. The K-3 school is a feeder school into the 4-6 school. The schools are located on the same campus, however, they are considered separate from one another. The focus of the study involved five classroom teachers, five parents, and two administrators. The teachers selected included one from each grade level 1-5, as well as, a parent from the chosen teacher’s classroom. The administrators selected included one from the K-3 school and one from the 4-6
school. The principal asked for voluntary participation, and the selection of participants was considered by both the researcher and administration of the schools. Diversity was considered in the selection process. The study used interview protocol with the teachers, parents, and administrators, as well as, observations of the teachers during their instructional period for reading. The study intended to explore the implementation of the CCSS in elementary reading through the eyes of teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to elementary reading. Prior to any information collected, the researcher obtained permission from the supervisors at the district level, then proceeded to each school to determine the best selection of candidates for the project. Activities noted by the researcher included teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ interpretations of the CCSS as it related to their belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to reading curricula. Of important note, was the close examination of the interviews and classroom observations of the teachers in the implementation of CCSS related to belief(s) and/or attitude(s) of reading instruction to discover if belief(s) and/or attitude(s), in fact matched the classroom practice. Also, specific attention was given to how teachers’, parents’ and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) of the implementation of the CCSS, related to reading had similar or contrasting ideas.

**Participant Observation**

The researcher conducted the study as a participant observer. As an observer, the researcher observed classroom practices and participated in interviews. Alternating from an insider/outsider perspective, interviews were conducted with teachers, parents, and administrators, including observations of classroom teachers as a component of the study. The focal point of the insider view consisted of gaining knowledge about the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ have related to the CCSS in the
implementation as it relates to elementary reading, while the focal point of the outside view consisted primarily of the classroom observation to determine if the belief(s) and attitude(s) were consistent among practice.

**Explicit Awareness**

The researcher exhibited *explicit awareness* (Spradley, 1980) of things that the teachers stated in their interviews and how the relationship of those ideas corresponded in their actual classroom practice.

**Record Keeping**

The researcher kept detailed records that were both objective and subjective. Interviews were recorded and notes taken. The interviews and observations were recorded in an effort to assist the researcher in making sure all information was intact and clearly communicated between the parties involved. These methods assisted the researcher as emerging themes surfaced, and the researcher was able to locate precisely where other members of the group exhibited the same belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to the implementation of the CCSS, specifically reading. In doing this, the researcher was able to “paint” a picture of what was occurring in the setting and recorded any phenomena.

**Ethnographic Record**

The field notes reflected an ethnographic record for later observation. Spradley (1980) states:

> A description of culture, an ethnography, is produced from an ethnographic record of events of a society within a given period of time, the ‘events of society’ including, of course informants’ response to the ethnographer, his queries, tests, and apparatus. (p. 63)
Using concrete language focused on the specificity of the situation and led to a realistic portrayal of events, ensuring that the analysis was accurate. Moreover, these observations were recorded to minimize any generalizations.

The researcher kept a notebook which contained field notes. In doing so, Spradley (1980) states, “Like a diary, this journal…contain(s) a record of experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, and problems that (arise) during fieldwork (p.71). The notes were assistive to the researcher, as the researcher was reminded of events that may have been “glossed” over, remained in the background, or even forgotten. Spradley (1980) states that this will be the area where the researcher is encouraged to “think on paper” (p. 72).

**Descriptive Observations**

The question-observation method, both relying on one another, was employed in this study. The descriptive observation method was used to ascertain the questions that were derived for further investigation. Therefore, the researcher kept in mind each thing seen and recorded, which was assistive in formulating the questions the researcher sought to understand. After this process, more specific questions emerged. Spradley (1980) notes descriptive observations in response to descriptive questions, include a wealth of information for the researcher.

According to Spradley (1980), there are nine components of every social situation:

In a most general sense, these dimensions can serve as guides for the participant observer: *space*: the physical place or places; *actor*: the person(s) involved; *activity*: a set of related acts people do; *object*: the physical things that people carry out; *time*: the sequencing that takes place over time; *goal*: the things people are trying to accomplish; *feeling*: the emotions felt and expressed. (p.78)

These nine areas were used as a foundation for this study to specifically narrow the observations into belief(s) and/or attitude(s) of teachers’, parents’ and administrators’ as related to the CCSS, particularly in the area of reading. This encouraged the researcher to keep
similarities and differences among the three groups in a precise manner, and to note the interrelatedness among ideas and/or themes, while careful not to exclude any aspect of the interview/observation process.

**Domain Analysis**

Spradley (1980) states that the research cycle requires an investigator to ask questions, collect data, and analyze it before repeating the process (p.85). In doing this, the researcher discovered patterns that emerged throughout the course of the study. These patterns surfaced from the observation and interviews, and more thoroughly by referring to the field notes and transcribed records from these events. As these patterns emerged and evolved, the researcher gained an understanding of the culture being studied. According to Spradley (1980) culture refers to the patterns of behavior (p.86). By developing an understanding of the culture, the researcher in this study interpreted the teachers’, parents’ and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) concerning reading curricula into a larger lens of their interpretation of the implementation of the CCSS. Finding the patterns and relationships during the analysis stage, propelled the researcher to continue to develop ideas for areas that surfaced, such as belief(s), as well as those that are in need of further research.

**Cultural Domain**

A cultural domain is a category of cultural meaning that includes smaller categories (Spradley, 1980) (p. 88). More or less cultural domains are categories of meaning, and as domains, these cultural categories are made up of three basic elements which include: cover term, included terms, and semantic relationship (Spradley, 1980) (p. 89). The cover term was the name of the cultural domain. In this study teachers, parents, and administrators formed the domains from the data collected about belief(s) and/or attitude(s), as related to the
implementation of the CCSS in regard to reading instruction. The terms included names of smaller categories that emerged from the findings. Lastly, was the single semantic relationship, linking together two categories. For example, in this research project, it was the teachers’ and principals’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) that emerged in a similar or different pattern which was uniquely similar or different from the parents’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) in regard to the implementation of the CCSS, as it relates to reading. In conclusion, the researcher located the cultural domains that emerged, and included those in the research project.

**Focused Observation**

Finding and establishing patterns within the field notes, created a focused observation. Spradley (1980) defines a focus observation as “A single cultural domain or a few related domains and the relationships of such domains to the rest of the cultural scene” (p.101). The focus of this observation was an in-depth investigation of the implementation of the CCSS, specifically, the reading standards in the elementary setting, involving the teachers’, parents’ and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to reading instruction. Spradley (1980) advises that “studying a single domain intensively (rather) than many domains superficially” is the premise behind choosing an in depth investigation versus a surface investigation of several cultural domains (p.101).

Focused observations at times can be based on structural questions, those that have a relationship within domains. Spradley (1980) notes that a structural question makes use of the semantic relationship of a domain with a cover term. For example, teachers’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to reading as the domain, and the structural question as, “What are the teachers’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) toward reading?” The forming of the questions was vital to the research project, as it highlighted the important aspects of the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) the
participants garnered related to reading instruction in the elementary setting, and how the implementation of the CCSS was perceived by those involved in this study. By discovering aspects of the cultural scene, both large and small cultural domains were plausible with focused observations. Throughout the study, the researcher organized the characteristics of the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) of the participants while focusing on the implementation of the CCSS in reading.

**Taxonomic Analysis**

According to Spradley (1980) taxonomies can “visually represent a set of categories organized on the basis of a single semantic relationship” (p.112). The primary function is to show the interrelationships between topics within cultural domains. Once taxonomies can be constructed, focused observations can be followed in order to determine whether the taxonomies are solid, need to be adjusted, or completely thrown out. Spradley (1980) notes, “A taxonomy reveals the subsets and the way they are related to the whole” (p.113). Keeping the revelation of the subsets to the whole, reveals to the researcher what must be studied in-depth. For example, the same semantic relationship emerged from similarities among teachers’ and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) in regard to reading which yielded interesting information noted for further analysis. Inevitably, there may be exceptions by researchers depending on their defined taxonomies; these must be noted in the final description of the study pursued.

**Selected Observations**

Observations involve specific detailed accounts with explicit focal points in the study. This study consisted of formal and informal interviews and observations. The formal interview was conducted as a sit-down interview with a pre-determined set of questions for each group; teachers, parents, and administrators. These interviews required a consent form, as well as, a
predetermined date, time, and location that was completed. These types of formal interviews can yield a substantial amount of information for the researcher. The consent included permission for tape recording, so that all information was recorded precisely to ensure information was clearly transposed and understood by the researcher and the participants.

Purposeful sampling was used in the selection of participants. Permission from the school district was obtained and school sites were selected that included accessibility and convenience as priorities. The administrators in the selection included the participation of two schools, since School A housed only grades K-3, and School B housed grades 4-6. The teachers were chosen based on voluntarily wanting to participate with the parameters of having ten plus years of classroom experience, a degree in education, certification in the area currently teaching, and availability to participate with special consideration given to diversity as a priority. Parents for the project were selected from the participating classrooms after a project description was distributed along with a consent form. From there, the researcher set parameters for participating parents to have some college education and some level of involvement with the school. From the received responses, the researcher was able to locate a parent from each class that matched the parameters specified. The researcher took diversity into account. There were a total of twelve participants in the study: two administrators, five elementary teachers, and five parents. Of the two administrators, one was from School A (K-3) and the other from School B (4-6). Three of the teachers were from School A (K-3) and two of the teachers were from School B (4-6). Likewise, three parents from the participating teacher’s classroom were from School A (K-3) and two parents from the participating teacher’s classroom in School B (4-6) were involved.

The researcher included observations of teachers in their classroom setting during reading instruction. This situation introduced the opportunity for the researcher to engage in the social
situation from a different aspect, but with the idea that this observation in the classroom built upon the formal interview that was scheduled prior to the observation. This observation was particularly insightful in how the teachers engaged with what they previously stated in the formal interview about the implementation of the CCSS, as it related to their belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to reading.

Another form of selected observations includes *dyadic questions*. According to Spradley (1980) *dyadic questions* “take two members of a domain and ask, ‘In what ways are these two things different?’” (p.125). Answers that emerged were from interviews, field notes, and/or new observational experiences, which in turn contributed to the discovery of new data. Spradley (1980) specifies that *triadic questions* can be utilized “for uncovering tacit contrasts that are easily overlooked” (p. 126). These *triadic questions* ask, “Which two domains are most alike from the three in question?” (p.126). These different triadic questions had a variety of outcomes to the same domains in question; therefore indicating the interrelationships and the dimensions of contrast among the domains which became evident. The differences that were discovered are noted by Spradley (1980) as dimensions of contrast. (p. 127).

**Componential Analysis**

Every domain in the Developmental Research Sequence Method (D.R.S.) has specific attributes that set them apart from one another. Spradley (1980) states that componential analysis is the “systematic search for attributes (components of meaning) associated with cultural categories” (p.131). According to Spradley (1980) an attribute is “any element of information regularly associated with a cultural category. (p. 131). Thus, componential analysis is the looking for the units of meaning that people have assigned to their cultural categories (Spradley, 1980) (p. 131). In this study, the researcher attempted to discover meaning attributed to the
cultural categories as they emerged. Each attribute was represented through a paradigm, which explicitly denoted the categories in a systematic manner. The first column was associated by the name of each domain. Then, the second, third, and fourth columns represented the distinguishing characteristics or “dimensions of contrast” (Spradley, 1980) between the categories that in turn, set each column apart. In using this chart for discovering the contrasts that existed in each category of the domain, the researcher was led to the important aspects that needed to be included in the study.

**Cultural Themes**

Cultural theme as defined by Spradley (1980) is any principle recurrent in a number of domains, tacit or explicit, and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning (p. 141). Existing are embedded concepts which are part of the underlying culture that are considered as themes. The discovery of these themes became of value to the researcher, in that it exposed underlying reasoning and/or specific behaviors within an identified cultural group. It is by the immersion of the researcher, that this was accomplished. Once themes were established, then the researcher analyzed the information and discover the themes prevalent in the culture, and consider the emerging themes that needed further investigation in order to shed light on the study by the researcher.

**Cognitive Principle**

According to Spradley (1980) cultural themes are the patterns that make up culture (p. 141). A cognitive principle, as defined by Spradley (1980) is something that people believe and accept as true and valid; it is an assumption about the nature of their commonly held experience. This principle assisted the researcher in uncovering the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) teachers, parents, and administrators held by locating cultural themes that existed, and those that were
emerging in order to establish relationships among domains in the culture regarding the implementation of the CCSS based on the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) that existed about reading.

**Cultural Inventory**

In the D.R.S., the researcher assessed all the collected information acquired and discovered sufficient data to continue the study based on the D.R.S. In doing this, the researcher reviewed field notes, transcriptions of interviews, and other information collected during the study. These items were reviewed extensively in order to view the culture in its entirety. By doing this, the researcher recognized where gaps existed and searched for domains that needed further investigation while remaining on the focus of the study. A complete list of the cultural domains assisted the researcher when developing the outline for the study. This outline was helpful for the researcher, helping to maintain the central focus of the study. Sketched maps were included within the cultural inventory, including, but not limited to; the physical environment, relationship networks, and objects/things noted that participants used. As these evolved, they were assistive in nature to the researcher as the project concluded.

**Ethnography**

As an ethnographer, the goal is to make sense of the cultural patterns and communicate clearly to others the information uncovered about the particular culture in the study. In composing the ethnography, the researcher described the culture and its patterns as one that was foreign to the reader. By doing this, the researcher was prevented from generalizing, and a descriptive, holistic interpretation of cultural patterns emerged. Spradley (1980) states that considering the knowledge of the culture described and the one tacitly held by the audience (readers), an effective translation can be achieved.
Within the ethnographic and cultural translation, there were various levels used to assist the researcher in writing from generalized terms that began when the process was initiated to those that are particularistic in nature. In an effort to describe the cultural patterns that existed with teachers, parents, and administrators of the implementation of the CCSS as related to the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) to reading, this dissertation ascribed to use the third and fourth levels of Spradley’s (1980) six levels of ethnographic writing. In doing so, the researcher made general statements about a society or cultural group (level three), and made a general statement about the specific cultural scene (fourth level). Other levels were included, but in a controlled manner to maintain appropriate proportions compared to levels three and four to maintain a balance between both audiences, the ethnographer and the reader.

**Summary**

The qualitative method for this study can be identified according to three categories suggested by Wolcott (1992): watching, asking, and reviewing. Within the D.R.S. Method, these actions were repeated, forcing questions to surface, and to be posed again and again to gain a better understanding of the culture.

According to Patton (2002), qualitative inquiries can produce a wealth of information about a small number of people and cases. In looking at this small number and cases, an attempt to describe the situation(s) in-depth produced an understanding without generalizing. Though many in research may be quick to choose and judge qualitative research as not having validity, it should be considered that qualitative studies are dependent on the situation and instrument used to obtain the data. Patton (2002) suggests that the researcher is the actual instrument thus, the reliability and validity of the study “hinges on the skill, competence, and rigor of the researcher doing the fieldwork.” (p.14). In doing qualitative research, in particular for this study, it is best
understood that belief(s) and/or attitude(s) about reading and the implementation of the CCSS may not be quantifiable. It was not the intent of the researcher to determine how individuals feel about the CCSS, but to determine the underlying attributes at play in the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) teachers’, parents’ and administrators’ have related to reading and how those belief(s) and/or attitude(s) are at work in the implementation of the CCSS.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interview with Mrs. Lake (Administrator of School A: K-3)

Educational Background and Experience

The first investigational interview was conducted with Mrs. Lake, the principal of School A. School A consists of grades K-3 with a population of approximately 700 students. Mrs. Lake holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice. She returned to school for an alternative certification in education, specifically special education. She became certified in Special Education grades 1-12 mild/moderate. After obtaining her alternative certification, Mrs. Lake returned to school to complete her Master’s Degree in Administration. She later returned to complete an add-on certificate for supervision. Her professional career spans twenty years. Of those years, Mrs. Lake spent thirteen in the classroom, mainly as an inclusion teacher. The last seven years have been in an administrative capacity, two as an assistant principal, and five as principal of School A.

Common Core

Mrs. Lake has mixed opinions about the CCSS in reading. She feels that it’s always good to hold high standards, and the CCSS have done that thus far. However, Mrs. Lake indicated that in holding such high standards, children have been “left behind.” Her reasoning for this is based on the fact that she believes the implementation of the CCSS in reading was “too fast” and at such a “rigorous level” that “students lacked the foundational skills they needed to progress to the more rigorous standards,” that were being imposed at such an early age. Mrs. Lake felt that in order for CCSS in reading to be more effective, the implementation should have started at the kindergarten level and gone up with that grade until it eventually reached the third grade, which is the last grade at School A.
However, Mrs. Lake pointed out that Louisiana chose to implement the CCSS in reading differently than what she envisioned would have been “more successful for all involved.” “The CCSS in reading were to be implemented K-1 one year, and 2-3 the next year,” she said. “Unfortunately, that plan was scrapped and implementation of the CCSS occurred at all grades levels and in every subject,” she stated. “Suddenly,” Mrs. Lake noted, “Soon gaps were being noticed in the curriculum.” She felt that the standards were “holding children to a higher level of rigor and the students had no prior instruction in achieving these higher levels.” She said, “It was detrimental to the students.” Some of the gaps she noted have been in the requirements for high levels of skill achievement. “But,” Mrs. Lake stated, “For the young students for whom I am the principal, these students needed instruction on foundations and practices of skills before they could ever expect the students to master standards in which they had never received instruction in.” Mrs. Lake feels that while the CCSS are “rigorous standards for children,” the “instructional gaps” in order to achieve the high standards is “highly lacking for the students of her school who are in grades K-3.”

Mrs. Lake pointed out that the CCSS in reading are “pushing higher standards” onto students that are “not developmentally ready.” While Mrs. Lake specifies that School A “provides many programs, such as tutoring, the Voyager program, and differentiation in instructional tasks to assist the students who are failing to reach the CCSS,” not all can be assisted in the manner that she would like due to the swiftness of the implementation of the CCSS in reading. Mrs. Lake states, “There is a tremendous effort put forth in these programs because many more students are needing extra assistance with the new standards in place.” “Therefore, many students are not progressing into previous levels due to a longer period of time being spent on trying to catch students up to meet the CCSS in reading,” she said. Mrs. Lake
mentioned, “Even teachers, many whom are veterans, have noted that the students seem to have slowed in their progress.” “They are not knowing as much as they did two years ago,” said Mrs. Lake. “The teachers are feeling compelled to give instruction in what they see the students need, rather than complying with the CCSS in reading,” she indicated. Mrs. Lake said, “The teachers don’t see a sequence, therefore, they feel like they are lacking a check-list, a set of sequential skills students should be able to do to show readiness for the next reading endeavor.” According to Mrs. Lake, “What is happening is that the CCSS, specifically in reading, are skipping around, and not providing a sequential order in which to progress.” “This has left the students and teachers feeling frustrated,” says Mrs. Lake. “They can never really figure out where all this is going,” she stated. Mrs. Lake feels that this is mainly due to the lack of a basal reading series in which the progression of skills was built into the text through a series of selected literature from the publisher. She feels that the basal was “cross-curricular” and allowed “deeper understandings” of reading skills because the basal was based on a “sequential order of skills, one story…unit…theme building into the next more difficult skill.” In using basals Mrs. Lake said, “It went from less rigorous to more rigorous throughout the year.” “It was also developmentally appropriate for the students on that grade level,” she indicated.

“Developmentally appropriate seems to no longer exist with the implementation of the CCSS in reading because these standards are so broad, it starts to be whatever the teacher’s interpretation of the standard is,” noted Mrs. Lake. She says, “With no basal, or particular literature in place, teachers are choosing what they think is best in teaching the reading skills at the moment and going with that based off of the CCSS in reading.” “So, many classrooms, although the same grade level could look very different based on the teacher’s perspective,” implied Mrs. Lake.
In the eyes of Mrs. Lake, the implementation of the CCSS in reading has both increased and decreased student reading achievement. She feels, “It has increased their independent thinking skills, as they participate more in shoulder partner and group activities.” “So, instead of hearing one or two answers, there are now twenty answers and viewpoints to consider,” she says. However, “There has been a decline in specific literacy skills,” she said. An example pointed out by Mrs. Lake was, “That while students can have their opinions and share them in a group and locate text to support their opinion, a problem lies in what the author has intended for the student to gain from a specific piece of literature, and they may never grasp that because as long as they are able to support their opinion, that is sufficient enough to meet the CCSS in reading.” This, Mrs. Lake feels “leaves students cheated out of gaining a deep appreciation of literature because it becomes based on the opinion of the students.” Mrs. Lake spoke of the creativity being taken away from reading. She specified more focus in the elementary grades, specifically for School A, is on non-fiction reading rather than fiction. Mrs. Lake has noticed that students are now required “to read for a cause in order to be able to make a stand, or state an opinion that can be supported by the text, rather than reading for imagination’s sake.” She noted, “Students read more now for purpose, than enjoyment.”

Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction

Mrs. Lake believes that since her school, School A (K-3), is the entry level of students to school for the first time, she supports the instruction of phonics. She feels it is her job to “ensure that the students are taught to read, first and foremost with phonics, and then the concepts and skills of reading follow.” It is at this junction that Mrs. Lake and the CCSS in reading also differ. Mrs. Lake mentioned, “The CCSS in reading puts more emphasis on the skills of reading and not the basics.” Mrs. Lake states, “Much instruction is needed in phonics and in writing,
specifically even handwriting, before we can even write detailed paragraphs with text-based evidence on the things we have read.” Therefore, Mrs. Lake believes that the lower elementary (K-3) should be its own “entity,” and “focused on the foundations of reading.”

Mrs. Lake recalled upon entering the profession that the “Whole Language” approach to reading was being emphasized. However, she feels “phonics” and the use of “basals” are important components of creating successful readers. She noted, “With the CCSS in reading, it has changed to non-fiction with a focus on details and evidence.” Whereas, Mrs. Lake recalled, “Teaching with fiction based on the comprehension of literacy elements proved successful in the teaching of reading to students in the past.” Her strong belief of phonics instruction and support of teaching foundational reading skills with basals showed she supports a phonics-based approach to teaching reading. Mrs. Lake noted, “Even though basals are not the win all, know all, they were very assistive because they provided check points, as well as, providing the teacher a look at what was going to be covered unit by unit and for the year as a whole.” Mrs. Lake may be a proponent of a skills driven approach to reading due to the fact that she has many students who are beginning to encounter sounds, letters, and meaning for the first time. It is interesting to note that even though she entered the profession when a different approach to teaching reading was being advised, she remains embedded in a phonics approach to the instruction of reading in the lower elementary grades. Mrs. Lake stated, “With the implementation of the CCSS in reading, many of the standards are left up to the teacher’s interpretation, so what may be taught and asked one way one year, may be entirely different the next year, which poses a problem for both the students and teachers.” Mrs. Lake said, “The teacher’s do not want scripted lesson plans, they want to assist the students with their knowledge and expertise, but with the CCSS in reading, many have found themselves trying to interpret what they believe the standard to be,
trying to locate the resources, and then trying to do the actual implementation in the classroom.”
“It has become a time-consuming task with no sure way of identifying skills to match text and so forth… a check list for each grade level would be helpful,” reiterated Mrs. Lake.

**Parental/Teacher Involvement in the School Reading Program**

Mrs. Lake believes firmly that teachers should have input into the reading program that will be implemented. She recalled when textbook adoptions were still around. She said, “The textbook companies would come around to the districts and provide a whole sampling of the program and teachers were free to peruse the items, borrow them to try out, and attend workshops provided by the companies.” “The companies provided a wealth of information and some wonderful ideas, which even if that company’s text was not adopted, learning new ideas was exciting and could still be implemented if the teacher could find a way for the idea to exist in her repertoire of strategies she used for reading,” stated Mrs. Lake. “It was part of growing in the profession,” believed Mrs. Lake. Mrs. Lake voiced, “If teachers are the ones implementing the standards, they should be the ones who have a say into which resource should be used in order to meet the goals best.” Mrs. Lake says, “If you start asking the central office, or the state board, then you are talking to people who are out of the trenches.” “Currently, the district is really dictating to us what is to be taught in reading and that curriculum is based off of the CCSS in reading,” she said. “The district has created some teams that are writing curriculum, but teachers are finding mistakes that leads to more frustration with the implementation of the CCSS in reading,” she said. However, “As the district is noting the mistakes, they are trying to go back and put it into a more developmentally appropriate sequential order,” said Ms. Lake. “It’s just that the state came down so fast that our district didn’t have the appropriate time to implement it (CCSS in reading) at its best,” implied Mrs. Lake. Mrs. Lake said, “It ended up being that our
district was writing curriculum and putting it out for the teachers with the understanding that they had a choice of what to use, but for the most part since we were all learning something new, everyone was leery about not following what the district put out because it was all so new.”

“The CCSS in reading and the district curriculum were intertwined and that was in place to follow,” she said. “However, it has been noted and voiced by many in the district that what the district wanted implemented as CCSS in reading was far too rigorous for the beginning of the school year,” noted Mrs. Lake. Mrs. Lake said, “In the beginning of third grade, all third graders were expected to read a novel that was a mid-fourth grade level.” “There was frustration all across the board among students, teachers, parents, and administrators,” she said. Mrs. Lake did note that there is a school level book committee that can approve other texts for reading, but only with school level committee approval. “Most teachers, were not willing to pursue an alternative route, as this being the first year of implementation of the CCSS in reading and the district curriculum, they wanted to be in compliance with what the district was asking of them even though a book committee was in place,” responded Mrs. Lake. “It may also be the case that the process of having to get books approved, plan lessons, and assessments on your own could have resulted in an even more time consuming task, that may have been too overwhelming for one to take on at the time of implementing new standards,” indicated Mrs. Lake. “There was a huge learning curve for all involved and once again teachers were forced into compliance with ideas that didn’t line up to what they believed was the best instructional practices and approaches for teaching reading,” she said. Mrs. Lake indicated, “They were not willing to risk the idea of standing against the grain of the CCSS in reading and the district implementation of those standards to implement their own choice of text for students to achieve the standards put into place.” Mrs. Lake did note, “Changes in the reading curriculum from the district will be
incorporated next year, and should provide somewhat of an improvement for students and
teachers.” “Some of the text has been too difficult for the students to interpret, and that is where
the frustration level has been for everyone,” she said. Mrs. Lake reiterated her belief of phonics
instruction and need for foundational skills at the lower elementary level with developmentally
age appropriate text and skills to ensure success in reading. “You have to be able to know words
at some level to be able to comprehend and gain meaning,” she said. Again, Mrs. Lake stated,
“A strong phonics program, sequential skills, and literacy elements are the things needed to
become a successful reader.” To implement Mrs. Lake’s reading program, she strongly
suggested small class sizes. She feels that in order to truly be able to assist young readers,
individual time is needed with each student because reading involves many cognitive processes.

Mrs. Lake strongly believes parents should not have a voice in the implementation of the
reading curriculum. She feels that it should be left to the “educated professionals.” “These
professionals know what they are doing,” she stated. Mrs. Lake believes parents should be left
with the task of “supporting instruction from the home.” The parents may be overwhelmed with
the CCSS in reading, but she feels this is because of the terminology being used in instructing the
students, much of it never heard of by the parents. According to Mrs. Lake, “The new
terminology has put parents in a state of fear.” Mrs. Lake says, “It’s not scary, it is just that the
parents have been thrown off by the language the students and teachers are using, and what they
fear is a lack of being able to help their child be successful in school.” Mrs. Lake feels that
instructions should be written two ways, such as, “Find the text dependent answers that support
each statement, or locate the supporting details.”
Policy Shifts

Mrs. Lake feels that her school has done an “excellent job” in handling the recent policy shifts associated with the implementation of the CCSS in reading. As the principal of School A, she has provided teachers with “questioning time, reproduced bubbles to hang in their classrooms to spur student thinking, given different Bloom’s Taxonomy examples, arranged for direct professional development with Achieve 3000, implemented small groups with presenters, initiated faculty teacher study groups to write rubrics, and assisted teachers in noting how the grade level before and after look.” “We have special meetings for teachers to attend who may need further assistance in implementing the CCSS in reading with a student and provide interventions for use,” she said. “The biggest frustration with the CCSS in reading policy shift has been in locating all the correct resources needed for implementation,” said Mrs. Lake. “It has not been a financial burden, but it has been the locating of resources, and the lack of time due to the quick implementation of CCSS in reading by the State of Louisiana,” she noted. “The teachers are stressed out because it has been time consuming with not much time given to preparation,” mentioned Mrs. Lake. Mrs. Lake said, “Teachers were unable to adjust their instructional methods in a timely fashion, nor deal with the new terminology that was being thrown out at them….their whole repertoire been pulled out from under them.” “I am fortunate enough to have enough veteran teachers to be able to get it done, but it is the unknown aspect that has caused such discomfort and loss of confidence,” she said. Mrs. Lake felt that at least a “two year implementation” would have served the population best. Mrs. Lake indicated, “Implementation should occur preferably, starting at kindergarten and then moving up each year…so, by year three, the entire school would be in full implementation and adjustments could have been made along the way with enough time, so that students wouldn’t be facing gaps and
teachers wouldn’t be searching for resources.” Mrs. Lake also suggested a “piloting” for teachers for a one year period for each grade level. She said, “The pilot could be beneficial for the teachers, as it is helpful to know how far you can dangle the carrot, you don’t want the student to jump for the carrot and fall flat on their face.” Therefore, Mrs. Lake suggested a “pilot” could be assistive in providing “just the right amount of rigor” students need for that grade level.

Mrs. Lake believes it would be helpful for parents in understanding policy shifts if parents were given a “handbook” that was grade specific and contained specific terminology that allowed the parents to assist the child at home. Mrs. Lake recommended the “handbooks” be created for the grade level the child was currently enrolled because “looking at the entire CCSS document is quite overwhelming.” “Perhaps, if parents became acquainted grade by grade it would lead to a better overall understanding of exactly what the changes are, and how they are being articulated in each grade level,” stated Mrs. Lake.

Another part of assisting parents in policy shifts is by making parents aware of the policy shifts by involving parents in meetings. For example, Mrs. Lake said, “When I taught 4th grade, every parent was expected to attend the two yearly meetings on high stakes testing, as well as, individual meetings with the teachers.” “Also, handouts were given specifically for grade 4 and many resources were made available to parents from the district level,” she mentioned.

**Teacher Evaluation**

Mrs. Lake believes the teacher evaluation tool has “a lot to offer teachers.” Mrs. Lake explained, “I like how the tool has made teachers make adjustments in their teaching style.” “I have seen more student participation, where we get twenty different opinions, rather one or two from students,” said Mrs. Lake. “I think it has been a benefit to the teachers and students, as far
as, getting everyone out of their comfort zone,” she noted. However, “There are some areas of the tool that can be improved upon,” she said. “Many of my teachers have complained about the rating system, because it is difficult to achieve the highest score,” mentioned Mrs. Lake. “It relies on some very minute details that teachers have to be very aware of in their teaching practice,” she said. “Therefore, my teachers have found the tool difficult and unfair, but with more training and exposure I think the tool will be helpful for teachers and students,” said Mrs. Lake.

**Interview with Ms. Punch from School A**

**Educational Background and Experience**

The second interview involved Ms. Punch. Ms. Punch has been teaching elementary reading for twenty-five years. Ms. Punch holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Louisiana State University in elementary education and is certified in grades one through eight. She taught for four years in a private school. The following twenty-one years have been in public elementary schools. She attended and received six credit hours from Southeastern Louisiana University for recertification after spending time home to raise her children. An additional six hours at Southeastern Louisiana University was earned toward a Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Instruction, however, Ms. Punch did not complete her Master’s program due to the inability to receive tuition deferment.

Ms. Punch stated that her training in reading education was attained by “methods classes” taken at the university, studying on her own, talking with other people (including colleagues, other parents), and experience with having her own children. She also implied that she has used trial and error in reading programs. If the method and implementation that she used was enhancing the learning of reading, she incorporated it into her existing strategies of teaching
reading. If she realized the reading instruction offered by the program or implementation was not enhancing the child’s ability to read, she discarded it. Ms. Punch indicated that if a “reading program” was not working, she did not go back to explore if more components existed, or more training was available. While Ms. Punch acknowledged that sharing ideas of reading with colleagues has been helpful, she has not seen an opportunity for how to teach reading actually addressed by workshops or professional development that she has attended. “They used to have first grade professional development where we all went and were offered reading ideas and strategies, but with financial problems those things that have been cut,” said Ms. Punch. “The only thing I have been to in several years was the Literacy Institute this summer, and they did some things with common core and reading, but it was things I had already seen with reading, such as guided reading,” stated Ms. Punch. However, Ms. Punch said, “The little training we have had with the CCSS has had some focus on close reading and on a few other non-fiction type things, but mostly it has been things related to writing, not reading.” Ms. Punch noted that over the last several years, she has felt that professional development for reading “has been really a waste of time because nothing new has been offered.”

**Common Core**

In discussing CCSS in reading, Ms. Punch indicated, “We went over the CCSS in reading and that was training.” She stated, “We haven’t been offered very much besides that.” Ms. Punch said, “We have done Common Core training in other areas, but not in reading.” Again, Ms. Punch reiterated that she attended a Literacy Institute this past summer, but the focus was mainly on writing and math. She has felt that the big changes in the CCSS have come in writing and math. She noted that she did not see a lot of change in reading at the first grade level.
Ms. Punch indicated, “I have not seen an increase in reading achievement among the first graders I am teaching.” She mentioned that she has noted a few “positive things,” such as, “the questioning techniques; which puts more emphasis on text dependent questions.” However, no strong changes in reading achievement were noted. Ms. Punch indicated that she was still using the same basal reading series that has been in the district for the last five to seven years. Ms. Punch gathers her student data on achievement and growth from a computerized Accelerated Reader test, known as STAR which gives a student reading ranges for fiction and non-fiction books, DIBELS, and observations in class. Ms. Punch feels, “Students today do not know more, read better, or understand deeper than the children of ten years ago.” She said, “Today’s children are more stressed about school today than in the past.” Ms. Punch mentioned that through her observation of her first grade students over the past ten years, “Many do not love reading as much, and most are not enjoying school as they once did.” She stated, “Often, I have to pull myself back and remind myself that these are just babies… and these kids need to love reading for reading or they will never read anything.” She indicated, “Even though there is more focus on nonfiction text, students are not very interested in reading it unless it is of high interest to them.” “If I just give them something that is nonfiction and they have no interest in it, then they don’t want to read it,” said Ms. Punch. According to Ms. Punch, “It is tougher to teach students at such a young age to read using non-fiction material compared to fiction.” Noted by Ms. Punch, “Some of the non-fiction text that CCSS in reading is implying for teacher’s to implement in first grade is just not developmentally appropriate.” She stated, “Most of the students have to read a whole grade level lower in non-fiction, or they are just not ready for it.”
Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction

Ms. Punch believes in a balanced approach to reading instruction where phonics is mixed with strong literature. Ms. Punch said, “It was a long time ago when I first started teaching reading and it was real phonics-based.” She indicated, “There wasn’t a lot of literature and then the swing went to whole language, and then there was a lot of literature, and then it went back a little bit more to phonics and now I’m hoping it stays as a true mixture of both of these things.” “I really think phonics is a lot more important than most people think it is for first graders,” said Ms. Punch. “First graders need phonics to be able to interact with the literature, or have the comprehension of the literature,” she stated. Ms. Punch also indicated, “They need to be able to decode, to be able to read words.” “I even believe the kids who come to me reading need to know and understand the skills of phonics, so that later on they can break apart multi-syllable words and understand the terminology that’s involved with phonics, such as, vowel teams and diphthongs,” she said. Ms. Punch mentioned, “I think in kindergarten they introduce a lot of vowels and consonants, but in my opinion first graders need it (phonics) the most because it is the developmentally appropriate age, around six or seven.” She indicated, “I think that because if you wait too long, it’s hard for them to absorb that because they have already become such a good reader that’s how I see it.”

Parental/Teacher Involvement in the School Reading Program

If I were chosen and able to structure a reading program in this elementary school, Ms. Punch stated, “I would structure it with balancing phonics instruction with sight word recognition, I would give a lot of practice.” Ms. Punch said, “By practicing, I mean all of it including fluency and comprehension, as well as, making it enjoyable.” “Therefore, I would have a strong phonics program embedded in “good” literature,” she said. Ms. Punch is a
proponent of a program called *Project Read*, which focuses on phonics instruction. She would include the use of *Accelerated Reader*, which she believes is a “fabulous” program. She says she feels that having the students read books in their reading range based off of the STAR assessment, which is linked to the *Accelerated Reader* program, gives students sufficient time to practice reading daily which improves students fluency and comprehension. She noted that the *Accelerated Reader* program used for reading, allows her to “adjust instruction individually” by allowing her to be able to monitor the student’s weekly progress via individual student reports provided by the program. As Ms. Punch analyzes the types of questions the student has missed, she stated that she can “provide individualized instruction to help the student improve in their weak area(s) of reading.” Overall, Ms. Punch believes teachers should have a “voice in selecting a curriculum that they see will fit into the needs of their classroom.” By allowing teachers choice in a reading curriculum, “a balanced approach to reading that fits both the needs of the students, as well as, the philosophy of the teacher can be attainable,” she said.

Ms. Punch believes that parents could be asked about their child’s interest and attitudes toward reading. Ms. Punch indicated that this information would be helpful, especially in the beginning of the school year when first graders are still learning to read. However, Ms. Punch does not feel that parent’s should be designing curriculum. She stated, “The parents are not the trained professionals.”

**Policy Shifts**

In regard to policy shifts, Ms. Punch feels, “You just have to stay in the middle and do what you feel is right and works for the age of the kids.” She says she knows she is “doing the right thing” from the results she receives on students’ tests. Ms. Punch said, “I don’t think you ever know if you’re doing it right, it’s how the kids are progressing, how they are doing on your
assessments, and how they feel about reading.” “It’s a gut feeling that teachers have and I know they don’t want us to go by gut feelings anymore, they want us to be able to document everything with data, but you know when somebody is doing well,” she said. Ms. Punch stated, “They do well on your assessments, and I am looking at things from a developmentally appropriate standpoint.” Ms. Punch noted that there is “definitely disconnection” with people on the “outside,” and people on the “inside.” “The outsiders want things done one way because they don’t see it from the inside, which can often be contrary to what the outsiders believe is the best way to educate children,” she said. Ms. Punch particularly feels that, “I know I’m not going to give up, I’m going to do what works for these kids, and just because some bureaucrat tells me I have to do it differently, I am not…that may sound hard, I just know I feel that what is happening now, is not what’s best for these kids.” “I am going to make sure that they are exposed to the skills they need, but I’m not going to do it in a way that they don’t enjoy it,” she indicated. Ms. Punch has felt that at times, “It’s like I have to fight that battle, I have to find a way to still let them have fun and develop a love of reading and not make it so higher level like high school.” She said, “A lot of these things (CCSS in reading) that are written, are for like high school… even the teacher evaluation system is written for a much higher level than elementary school.”

**Teacher Evaluation**

Ms. Punch began with a deep breath, as she stated, “The fact that part of my evaluation will be based on student test scores does affect me.” Ms. Punch indicated, “I try not to let it affect me, but being human and being a person who takes pride in doing a good job, it does affect me in some ways.” Ms. Punch mentioned that in some ways the teacher evaluation has been a positive experience because it has forced her to look at things in a different way. For
example, Ms. Punch noted that when she first thought about kids having to question themselves in groups, she thought it was “ridiculous.” She felt that it was difficult to get students to understand what a question was in first grade, then she was going to be evaluated on rather the students could ask questions, even higher level thinking questions of each other. But, Ms. Punch said, “At least it made me start thinking about how I could start baby steps for that, so that was positive.” However, Ms. Punch still does not think being evaluated on a scale that is not “developmentally appropriate” for her students is correct in evaluating her as a teacher. Ms. Punch indicated that is one of the main reasons she has negative feelings towards the evaluation. “Of course, I think any time that you sit down and think about what you’re doing, make adjustments, and consider ideas you haven’t thought about, then I think progress has been made,” indicated Ms. Punch. But, in the case of teacher evaluation, Ms. Punch responded, “Now, I think they take it to the far degree.” “I think it is sometimes a waste of time with some of the skills they are asking them (first graders) to do and to think that I will be evaluated based on these things, such as drawing a smiley face or straight face on the back of the test paper to evaluate how well they did…many first graders lack the ability to judge their own work at this level,” she stated. Ms. Punch mentioned, that even though this is part of the tool used in evaluating her as a teacher, she knows her teaching has not changed because of it. The reason she stated that her teaching has not been changed is because she has “trained” her students at the conclusion of the observed lesson, to complete the necessary team evaluation required by the teacher evaluation tool. “If students circle a smiley face, they know their group gets four points for the completed the task,” she said. “I had to teach them all that… I do that three or four times before, and then the second time the observer comes I don’t ever do it again,” said Ms. Punch. “I just do it when the observer comes in, and if they remember it, they remember it,” she said.
“This is what I feel is part of the time waster that I’m being evaluated on,” stated Ms. Punch. Ms. Punch does not think it is necessary for first graders to do those things to the extent that the evaluation tool is expecting them to be done. Ms. Punch feels that the evaluation tool currently being used for first grade teachers is not appropriate. “I could fully see this tool being used in a 10th grade English class or in a high school group setting, with the class completing the evaluation at the end and writing notes to the teacher about what parts of the project they liked and didn’t like because they have the ability to make those decisions,” Ms. Punch pointed out. “In first grade, students can tell me, I like that, but often times they will say something that has nothing to do what they did,” stated Ms. Punch. Ms. Punch said, “They just don’t have the ability yet.” Ms. Punch indicated that the current curriculum in reading (CCSS) is moving to give students “more power” in the classroom, but “without properly guiding students on the path that is necessary to be able to achieve the higher level reading standards being imposed.” Ms. Punch mentioned that with the new implementation there is “a lot of pre and post testing” on everything she teaches. She indicated that in first grade it is “difficult to continue giving pre-tests on things students have seen for the first time.” Ms. Punch said, “They need to know all these skills and they haven’t had them taught to them before, so a pre-test is pretty much a waste of time… that’s how I feel about it… all I am doing is testing when I want to teach them.”

**Grand Tour**

Ms. Punch’s classroom is located in the red brick main school building down a long corridor that branches off on the left into several hallways, which are named by color. The location of Ms. Punch’s classroom is the second hallway of the corridor named, “Silver Hall”. She is located approximately three doors off of the main hallway on the left. Her classroom faces the circular bus loop.
Upon entering Mrs. Punch’s classroom the calming pale peach colored walls bring a sense of relaxation and warmth to the area. To the left of the entrance, the back wall houses pale wood cabinets with silver handles, and open shelf space to the right of the cabinets. The cabinets were filled with teacher and student supplies, including workbooks, teacher manuals, and other assistive teacher books. Along the back wall, under the cabinets were hooks where students have placed their school bags, sweaters, and lunch bags. A short distance further along the back wall was a sink with an attached water fountain. Underneath the sink and attached water fountain, more storage space exist. Above the sink and attached water fountain, a yellow bulletin board containing many notices about upcoming school events and teacher reminders were hung. It appeared that this bulletin board served primarily assist the teacher in remembering school events and important teacher dates, such as, meeting times and locations. Next to the sink and attached water fountain, was a four drawer tan file cabinet. To the right of the file cabinet, the far wall of the classroom was located. Along this wall there were student cubby holes with student names and textbooks inside. Above the cubby holes on each side of the far wall were several charts. These charts include information about the state of Louisiana, such as, the state flag and tree. In between both set of cubby holes was a large window containing blinds. The set of cubby holes closest to the front of the classroom contained classroom books for reading. These appeared to be non-fiction and sorted by particular subject matter. The students did not access these particular books during the observation. The blinds remained closed throughout the observation period. There were red, white, and blue triangular gingham curtains above the window. Ms. Punch’s desk was situated in front of the window along with a black rolling desk chair. Ms. Punch did not sit at her desk or retrieve any items from her desk during the observation. Her desk had many papers stacked in several locations and a bag sat in her chair.
There was a large wood cut out of a tree behind her desk and in front of the window. It contained two poles sticking out of each side and contained several small bags hanging. The green part of the tree cut out contained a banner with “LSU.” In front of the tree and to the left of Ms. Punch’s desk were two large rolling wooden carts. The carts contained the classroom reading library. There was an abundance of books sorted by apparent reading levels. The levels of the books were noted on the outside of the rolling bin, and ranged from 0.5-5.6. In front of the classroom, a smart board, a small white board and two bulletin boards existed. To the left of the smart board was an orange bulletin board with “Calendar Math.” This bulletin board had a monthly calendar and appeared to display a daily math activity in which students were asked to do several “mathematical” things pertaining to the calendar. In front of the calendar were short shelves approximately two feet in height and the contents included several math manipulatives, such as, counting rods, blocks, and measuring tapes. There was a teacher chair to the right of the short shelves, and in front of the smart board. To the left of the teacher chair, a small easel with a blank laminated flow chart, and a flip chart with beginning, middle, and end was located. During instruction, Ms. Punch used the easel to write on the laminated flow chart as an example of a more explicit version of recalling the sequence of events from a story with the use of order words. She accessed the small flip chart to show students how sequence could be remembered in “3 simple parts of the story.” Behind the easel, on the same wall as the smart board, which is considered the front of the classroom, another bulletin board was utilized. It was used to encourage and motivate students to read Accelerated Reader books, and take computer quizzes to earn points. Ms. Punch appeared to use this red bulletin board to move car cut outs across a map of the United States as each student achieves a set number of points from their reading quizzes. However, the researcher was unable to conclude how many points students needed in
order to reach the other side of the map, which appears to be the goal. To the right of the red bulletin board, a TV with a DVD and VCR player were located in the corner along with an American flag. Below the TV, and in front of the red bulletin board were two computers. One computer faced the bulletin board, while the other faced the easel and teacher chair. Next to the computer facing the easel and teacher chair was a wooden bin approximately two feet high that contained folder and books. Across from the bin, on the wall to the right of the door, and the inside hall wall, were four more computers and a blackboard. The computers were on and being used by students to take *Accelerated Reader* quizzes during the observation time. The blackboard was not used by Ms. Punch, but did have each letter of the alphabet posted with words beneath each letter. It was determined that some of the words were frequently used words, such as, *the, come,* and *because.* To the right of the computer table and door, a bookshelf in the shape of a house stood. There were books on each of the four shelves, but students could not access the lower two shelves due to three drawer bins in front of them.

The student desks in Ms. Punch’s classroom were located in the center of the classroom in the shape of a “U,” leaving a large, open space in the middle area of the room. The desks were clustered in groups of four and contained a supply basket in the center. The supply basket housed scissors, glue, and crayons. The students did access these supplies during the observation easily and readily to complete the sequence activity after receiving instruction from Ms. Punch. The large center of the room contained a colorful rug in which the students sat, while Ms. Punch read the story *Grandma’s Gumbo Pot.* Students appeared to use most areas of the classroom and for the most part, it was very organized and fairly accessible in all areas. Lastly, there was a long table located in front of the cabinets and behind the student desks. The table contained student
reading texts and another small easel beside the table with a printed alphabet chart attached. The students did not access the table during the observation time.

**Mini Tour**

**Teacher Instruction.** Ms. Punch began the mid-week reading lesson by assembling all students to the large center area of the classroom. She began the lesson by reviewing the basal story that was read earlier in the week. Ms. Punch called on several students for a summary of the story. As she sat in the teacher chair in the front of the classroom with an easel next to her chair, she introduced sequencing the order of events by directly informing students of the skill used to summarize the story. She pointed out that there were two visual aids that could be assistive to them in recalling the order of the story. She specified one as more specific than the other and referred to it as a “flow chart” that required more details from the story. The other visual aid was simpler, and easier for students to use, especially if they had difficulty in reproducing many details to determine the sequence of the story. The simpler visual aid had three flaps that could be lifted with the beginning, middle, and end of the story recorded briefly with the sequence of events. Students were reminded of order words, *first, next, and after.*

After reviewing the sequence skill, Ms. Punch reminded students that these are things they learned from using the story in the reading text. Then, she instructed students that they would be practicing the skill using a different story. She read the story *Grandma’s Gumbo Pot.* The story was repetitive in nature, as ingredients were repeated when a new one was added. Students participated in the repeating of the ingredients each time one was added, and Ms. Punch stressed the use of order words by encouraging students to use the words orally as they recalled what ingredients were being added to the “Gumbo Pot.” Students were not encouraged to use either visual aid incorporated earlier in the lesson. Ms. Punch mainly focused on the students
remembering the sequence through the repeating of the ingredients, and use of pictures from the book. After Ms. Punch completed the story, students were instructed that they would complete an activity involving sequence. The students were dismissed to their cluster of desks and worked in groups to complete the activity. Upon completion of the lesson, Ms. Punch visited each group individually and discussed their completed picture flow chart.

**Teacher-Student Engagement.** Ms. Punch was very engaged with students during the lesson. This was evidenced when students were encouraged to orally participate with the repeating patterns and rhyming of words from the story. When students appeared off task in whole group instruction in the middle area of the classroom, Ms. Punch was quick to notice by calling on the particular student and asking for specific information from *Grandma’s Gumbo Pot*, such as, “What were the rhyming words on the page we just finished reading?” After the completion of the story, Ms. Punch called the “Material Managers,” to gather the needed materials for the sequencing activity from the front of the classroom, which she handed to each “Material Manager,” and spoke directly with each reiterating the instructions for the completion of the activity.

Students returned to their desks which were arranged in the groups of four to six. Ms. Punch visited each group and had a short discussion about the pictures that would be used to organize the sequencing of the ingredients and how to assemble the pictures into a flow chart. Ms. Punch had few students who were off task and she quickly engaged them by eye contact and instructions with what each student should be doing in order to successfully complete the sequencing task. Ms. Punch addressed student questions about the activity individually and promptly. No student waited longer than thirty seconds for assistance from the teacher. As groups finished, Ms. Punch encouraged students to choose an *Accelerated Reader* book to read.
silently and to take an *Accelerated Reader* quiz at the computer station. Interaction between the teacher and students remained positive throughout the lesson.

**Student-to-Student Engagement.** Initially the lesson on sequencing began as whole group instruction, therefore there was notably more interaction between the teacher and students. After finishing the instructional portion of the lesson, students returned to their desk areas and attempted to work with one another in groups. Students engaged in conversations both related and unrelated to the sequencing activity. Some students in different groups talked about things that were not related to the activity or lesson, however, when members of the group did not continue to participate in the off task activity by another group member, the students in the group setting returned to completing the activity. Students observed and manipulated the pictures, as a group, and then individually. As students worked, group discussions focused on what came first, second, and so forth. Students did not work together to cut or trace the gumbo pot needed for the flow chart. In conversing students did not engage in the language offered by the teacher in the earlier instructional phase, such as, *next, before,* and *after.* Noted was a student who did not participate in conversations with the group, nor fully complete the task assigned. Although, the group and teacher tried to assist the student, the student remained off-task for a large portion of the lesson and was eventually assigned to complete the learning activity at a later time in the day, for which no observation was recorded. The students seemed agreeable to group decisions, even if these decisions did not benefit the group in completing the activity properly, or with regard to the actual sequencing skill the teacher had taught during the instructional phase of the lesson. Some students ignored the group decision making process and completed the sequencing on their own, although they had participated in the group discussion and decision making. Students easily shared supplies available in their supply baskets located in the center cluster of the desks,
and cleaned up when signaled to do so by the teacher. It appeared that the “Materials Manager” was in charge of ensuring compliance with the clean-up procedures. Some students encouraged one another to finish the activity early, so that they could enjoy reading from other books in the classroom library and taking quizzes on the computer. However, the students involved in encouraging one another were not from the same groups, and some of the encouragement to finish the activity resulted in disruption of the group’s performance on the activity as a whole.

Several students who finished early were walking about the room and engaging in conversation unrelated to the sequencing activity, nor pertaining to the instruction to read a book and take a quiz after finishing early.

Assessment. In this observation, the assessment was clearly the completed flow chart. However, it was unclear if students would have to complete a more formal type of assessment in order to acknowledge what they had learned about sequencing. However, Ms. Punch did indicate that students would use the sequencing skill in other stories that they would be reading. It appeared that this was not the first encounter students had with sequencing, but it was noted during the observation that on-going practice and assessments would be given at some point over the course of the next several weeks.

Classroom Observation: Ms. Punch (School A)

Ms. Punch began the reading lesson by calling all students to the large area in the center of the room. She took her place in a teacher chair with the smart board behind her and a small easel to her left. A discussion began about a story students read earlier in the week, with particular attention given to the events in the story pertaining to the beginning, middle, and end.

As the discussion among the students and teacher transpired, Ms. Punch thoroughly had students recall the middle of the story, by giving specific instructions to use the words, “first,
next, after, and before.” When students volunteered answers for questions, such as, “What happened next?” Ms. Punch stated, “Now, use the order word to give your answer.” Ms. Punch reminded students that the middle of the story is also called the plot. She said, “A plot contains the problem and solution to the story.” Then, Ms. Punch introduced two visuals that would be helpful for students to remember the order of the story. The first visual was referred to as a “thinking map.” The “thinking map,” was also called a “flow chart,” by Ms. Punch. Ms. Punch explained to the students that the flow chart was more detailed and contained “more boxes to fill-in with every single event written down in order to give a more complete picture of the story.”

The second visual was a small flip chart divided into three sections, beginning, middle, and end. Ms. Punch told students, “This chart is more of a summary of the events.” Ms. Punch told the students that either visual aid would help the students “remember what the events or sequence of the story were.” She also mentioned that these devices are “good tools for retelling a story.” Then, Ms. Punch said, “What do good readers do to remember what happens in a story?” A student responded, “We read it more than once.” It was evident that students had been taught that in order to remember a story, it should be read more than one time, although students did not read the story used on the observation date more than once before participating in the sequence activity. It was unclear whether the students would re-read the story Grandma’s Gumbo Pot at a later date to assess their ability in recalling the events in the story.

After explaining the sequence skill by using the story from earlier in the week, Ms. Punch said, “Today, we will read a special story called Grandma’s Gumbo Pot, and complete an activity using sequence.” “I want you to sit up nice and tall, and prepare to listen to the story carefully, so you can remember what happens in the story,” stated Ms. Punch. The students immediately sat up straight and tall. Ms. Punch indicated that she liked the way the students
were ready to learn by stating, “I like the way you are sitting, Joe and Ashley.” Then, Ms. Punch showed the cover of the book to the students. She elicited responses from the students that required students to activate prior knowledge. Responses from students included, “My grandma cooks gumbo too,” and “When my mom makes a gumbo, it is spicy” (emphasized). Ms. Punch showed students pictures from inside the book and asked, “From looking at the pictures, what else you think this book will be about?” Students actively scanned the pages with their eyes as Ms. Punch turned the pages slowly. A student responded, “It will be about making a gumbo and putting stuff in it.” Ms. Punch asked, “What kind of stuff?” From looking at the pictures in the book, students were able to infer shrimp, okra, and crabs.

Ms. Punch began to read Grandma’s Gumbo Pot to the students as they remained on the floor in the large area in front of the teacher chair. After reading a few pages, Ms. Punch asked the students, “What do you notice the author doing in this story?” The students answered in unison, “Rhyming.” “And what words rhyme on this page?” she asked. The students replied, “Gumbo and jumbo.” Furthermore, Ms. Punch asked students, “What does jumbo mean?” A student responded, “Big.” Ms. Punch said, “Yes, big is another word for jumbo too.” It was apparent that Ms. Punch was incorporating the use of unfamiliar words with words that students would have in their current vocabulary base to establish connections between the new larger words and the smaller, simpler words in the story. She did this for several words in the book, including: “roux for a gravy like mixture, okra and its resemblance to a small pickle, and hot sauce to spicy.” This strategy showed that Ms. Punch was aware that students were encountering new vocabulary throughout the story and may have little knowledge of the term, or know the term as a different word. She was actively modeling how students could activate prior knowledge to interact with the vocabulary in the text to understand the words in the text. By
doing this, Ms. Punch was helping students recognize that words can mean the same things, but
be named differently. These associations helped students use prior knowledge to gain new
knowledge and incorporate the new knowledge of the word into their existing repertoires. As the
story progressed, every time something was added, the next page would start over with what was
added first. Since the instructional portion and group activity targeted sequence, this book fit the
skill being taught (sequence). Other features of reading instruction, although not the
instructional focal point of the day’s lesson included: the use of rhyming, activating prior
knowledge for further understanding of words and questions, and gaining meaning from picture
clues. A lengthy discussion of particular ingredients used in the gumbo ensued involving the
words, *parsley, garlic, and okra*. One student said, “I know what okra is because when I was a
baby my mom showed it to me, and I called it Oprah, and every time we have okra, I call it
Oprah.” Ms. Punch also pointed out to the students that the author doesn’t always write
everything down in a story. She said, “Some things the author wants you to think about.” “Now,
the author doesn’t mention this, but what do we need to go with our gumbo?” The majority of
the students shouted, “Rice.”

After completing the reading, Ms. Punch shifted students’ attention to the small easel by
her chair and said, “What chart will we use to sequence this story…Think about what one would
be best since there were many steps needed to make the gumbo.” Most students agreed the flow
chart would be best. A student stated, “The flow chart is best because you should list one
ingredient in each box and she had a lot of ingredients and she needs a lot of boxes to remember
everything.” Ms. Punch agreed and said, “The flow chart is the right choice here because there
are many steps to preparing the gumbo, and if we want a good gumbo, we have to have the
ingredients added into the pot in the right order.” “What are some order words that help us sequence events?” she asked. Several students shouted out, “Next, Last, and Then.”

Ms. Punch explained that the students would be getting a sentence strip, a gumbo pot to trace, and a sheet with the pre-printed ingredients. The students were instructed to work with their group to discuss the correct order of the ingredients, then cut them out and paste them onto the sentence strip, so it resembled the flow chart on the visual aid. After, they were to trace the gumbo pot on a piece of black construction paper and cut it out. The gumbo pot was glued to the beginning of the flow chart, with the pictures glued horizontally on the sentence strip. The “Materials Manager” for each group of desks picked up the materials for the group and everyone returned to their desk. Students conversed throughout the remainder of the lesson, although it was at times about things unrelated to the learning activity. Initially students were quick to cut out and trace, before discussing the order. Several groups, which were in four or six, seemed to split into smaller groups within the group, so several conversations were occurring in the groups at the same time. When groups discussed the order, most were involved in contributing if it was right or wrong, but in the end chose to complete the task in an individual manner, even though the group remained together. Noted during the observation, were that some members of different groups completed the project in different phases, which left several students walking around to other groups and conversing about choosing other books to read, and if they were going to ride bikes after school. This was not a huge distraction, but for a small number of students who were having difficulty, this inhibited their ability to complete the task in a more timely fashion. Ms. Punch encouraged students experiencing difficulty to ask their group members for help, although she frequently visited each group and offered assistance with very little waiting periods for students who needed teacher assistance. Those who did complete the learning activity early,
were instructed to read a book from the bin and take an *Accelerated Reader* quiz. Only two students completed that task. One student did not complete the learning task, and was instructed that since he had wasted time and not used his group wisely, he would have to complete his work at a later time. From the observation it was not able to be determined if this would be a recess period, or if the activity would be sent home to complete.

The conclusion of the sequencing lesson included Ms. Punch reviewing the “Gumbo Pot” sequence chart and having students stand behind their desk and recite the order of ingredients. Ms. Punch asked, “What have we worked on to help us become better readers today?” One student responded, “Sequence.” Another responded, “Order.”

Overall, the lesson was focused and included both direct instruction and group work as guided instruction. During this observation, although some independent work was completed by students that chose not to stay engaged in their group’s choices for completion, and choosing books to read and take *Accelerated Reader* quizzes, it was unclear if students would work independently on the sequence skill later in the week to reinforce the day’s instructional approaches to sequencing using specifically a flow chart.

**Parent Interview: Ms. Punch’s Class (School A)**

**Educational Background**

Ms. Snow is a college graduate and has recently returned to work.

**Common Core**

Ms. Snow believes that the implementation of the CCSS in reading at the elementary setting has both pros and cons. However, she does not feel like she has enough information about the CCSS in reading to make a legitimate stand on rather it is beneficial or not. She noted
that she hears about the CCSS in reading from other parents and coworkers and continues to feel that it is, “one big mystery.”

Ms. Snow has indicated she “knows nothing” about the implementation of the CCSS in reading at her child’s grade level. Ms. Snow said, “No one has ever told me anything… there’s never been any information… none from the school.” However, Ms. Snow mentioned she was told that there was a website available and she could learn more about the CCSS in reading from there. The only recollection of discussion about the CCSS in reading that Ms. Snow had occurred on the first day of school. Ms. Snow noted that it was never mentioned again. She stated, “I feel like the school is to blame for that, I think that they have done a poor job in helping the parents understand this new curriculum, which is such a change from what we had before.” Ms. Snow was adamant when saying, “I’m not blaming the teacher… I’m more blaming the administration for this because I think the teachers look to the administration for the materials to give to the families.” “I know many parents like me don’t feel that the administration has done their part in educating the parents about the changes that have come along with common core implementation,” she said.

Ms. Snow said, “I’m not sure that the implementation of the CCSS in reading has really changed my view of reading instruction at my child’s grade level, and I base that on the fact that I don’t know anything about the common core.” Ms. Snow mentioned that her son was already reading when he entered first grade, and even read in kindergarten which was prior to the implementation of the CCSS in reading. Ms. Snow’s son is currently in fifth grade. “What I do know is that whatever my child’s teacher is doing now is working too, or seems to be working for my second child who is currently in Ms. Punch’s first grade class,” she said. Ms. Snow stated, “I am not sure if the success in reading for my first grader is due to the common core
reading standards, or if it’s that it (reading) finally clicked for her, which may have more to do with the role her teacher has played in her reading success and the method of instruction utilized; rather than the implementation of the CCSS in reading.”

Ms. Snow feels her child’s reading achievement has increased, but could not indicate if the increase was in direct relation to the CCSS in reading. She has noticed increased homework with words her child must know for reading on a weekly basis. Ms. Snow indicated that she did not recall such “emphasis on word recognition” when her older child, who is currently a fifth grader, was in first grade. She stated, “I feel like there are a lot of words that my child has to know in order to read the things that she is being asked to read in first grade.” Ms. Snow was unclear if it is the teacher’s expectations or the implementation of the CCSS in reading. However, what Ms. Snow was very clear about is the amount of words that her child needs to learn and know in order to be able to keep up her reading progress. She noted that she is “not seeing much work with understanding questions or in gaining comprehension.” She mentioned, “I’m not really sure what that is about.” Ms. Snow indicated, “I read every night with my child from a book that has been sent home from the teacher and I record the book-level, as well as, signing a sheet stating that I have read with my child on that night.”

Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction

Ms. Snow indicated that she was unsure of her reading belief(s)/attitude(s) for her child’s grade level. She has noticed that her first grade child is getting instruction in words and is reading frequently. Ms. Snow said, “She is even reading chapter books!” Ms. Snow indicated that she noted a “definite difference in preschool reading instruction” for both of her children. She said, “My first grader did not have any instruction in reading at the preschool she attended, so she went into school and was not reading in kindergarten.” Ms. Snow stated, “Whereas my
oldest child, attended a different preschool that had a reading program in place and he was reading when he entered kindergarten.” Ms. Snow pointed out that she was not exact about what her son’s preschool reading program had in place or what it entailed, however she felt that whatever it was, it made a difference for him.

As a parent, she noted that she has made “comparisons of her children” in their reading ability. She specifically noted that her first grader had to work more on “getting the click of reading,” whereas her son, who is in fifth grade now, did not at that age. Ms. Snow said, “I think the direct instruction in letters and sounds would be beneficial for most children because I think that is definitely what made my son able to read earlier and easier than my daughter who did not experience that type of instruction at an early age.” Ms. Snow pointed out that her experience with her two children is how she has come to that belief about reading instruction. She also mentioned, that she learned to read through phonics and assumes that phonics must work because that seemed to be the way her son had learned to read at such an early age. “My first grader in Ms. Punch’s class had more of an exploratory approach to reading and experienced more difficulty grasping the concept of reading at an early age, although she seems to be progressing and doing quite well in reading according to her teacher,” said Ms. Snow.

**Parental/Teacher Involvement in the School Reading Curriculum**

In discussing the design of a reading curricula for elementary at the first grade level Ms. Snow indicated that the reading curriculum needs to be at the student’s level in order to “keep their interest and to make them want to continue to read.” She definitely feels the topic has to be “age appropriate, too.” Ms. Snow said, “I think right now that the themes my child is doing are somewhat age-appropriate, but I have noticed that as she is moving up in her level of reading, she’s moving into some things that are not age-appropriate.” “I’m not sure if this is due to the
impact of the CCSS in reading, or not,” she stated. However, Ms. Snow mentioned that her child continues to read and she thinks that that is what is so important.

However, Ms. Snow said, “I do not think parents should have input in designing the reading curriculum unless of course they definitely have a background in education.” She strongly urged, “I believe it’s best to leave it to the professionals, which include the teachers and administrators who continued their education in education.” Ms. Snow also mentioned that she thought “professors and students who do research on all of this should be part of designing a solid reading curriculum.”

**Policy Shifts**

In helping teachers be prepared in dealing with policy shifts in the teaching of reading, Ms. Snow said, “I think they just need to learn about it.” She indicated that teachers needed to learn the policies and “know them back and forth.” She stated, “I know I don’t know enough about the CCSS in reading to say that in such a harsh manner, but in order to take responsibility for the learning that needs to occur.” Ms. Snow said, “I do know that there needs to be leadership for these teachers.” Ms. Snow did indicate that she believed the CCSS in reading were implemented too quickly and the teachers were “slapped in the face with it.” Ms. Snow believes that, “If there wasn’t such a hurry to implement new policies all the time in education and teachers were given at least a year to do the process and changeover for the next year, that implementation of policy would be a lot smoother for everyone involved.” Ms. Snow mentioned that as a parent, she would have felt “much more on board with it.” “I feel like it’s been mayhem,” she said. “All I know is I work in a business and any policy change in any business is going to have some mayhem, but in the business I work in, they take it step by step.” Ms. Snow has noticed that the CCSS implementation as a whole was “way too fast.” She said, “I’m not
sure it’s going to produce the results that everyone is looking for so quickly when teachers and students have not been able to fully understand the nature of all the changes at hand.”

**Teacher Evaluation**

Ms. Snow felt she could not comment on teacher evaluations at this time. She mentioned she has little knowledge of the CCSS themselves, much less the teacher evaluation tool. However, she has heard from being in conversation with other parents, that teachers are being evaluated on student performance. She feels that this is undue stress for students and teachers. Ms. Snow wants her child to enjoy school and does not want her child to feel under pressure to perform because the teacher needs her child to perform a high level task to get a rating on a scale. Ms. Snow indicated she is “very happy” with her child’s teacher this year and is hopeful that whatever evaluation tool is used, it is being used in the “best interest of the teacher and the students.”

**Interview with Ms. Candy from School A**

**Educational Background and Experience**

The next interview was with Ms. Candy, a second grade teacher at School A. Ms. Candy has been teaching for twenty-six years. She has only taught at the elementary level in kindergarten, grade one, and grade two. She has always taught elementary reading, as her grade levels were self-contained. Most of Ms. Candy’s teaching experience has been at School A in kindergarten, and she is currently in her second year of teaching second grade at School A. Ms. Candy graduated from Southeastern Louisiana University with a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education and is certified to teach grades kindergarten through eighth. She indicated that she has taken a “few graduate courses” at Southeastern and “attended afterschool workshops.” Ms. Candy noted that she has been “basically trained to teach reading through teacher reading
manuals,” otherwise known as basals, and through “reading about the teaching of reading” in books she has discovered on her own. All twenty-six years of her teaching experience have been in the public school system.

**Common Core**

Ms. Candy embraced the CCSS in reading when they initially rolled out before becoming state policy. She mentioned that she started out implementing the CCSS in reading prior to the district and state mandate. Ms. Candy stated that in her initial use of the CCSS in reading, she used all the materials she already had in her classroom. She said, “I thought, “Okay, this (CCSS) is great! I really like this!” Ms. Candy thought that everyone would be on the “same page” in covering the material for a specified grade level and it would alleviate gaps when students entered from another state or district. But, by the end of the year that she began her initial implementation of CCSS in reading, she started hearing more about the “guaranteed curriculum” that the district would be imposing with the CCSS in reading embedded.

Ms. Candy thought the CCSS in reading were a good idea. She felt initially that the CCSS in reading were sequential in teaching certain things in certain grades, but as Ms. Candy became more acquainted with the CCSS in reading this year, the full implementation at all grade levels, she found that it was “way more demanding for the students and a lot more was expected.” Ms. Candy said, “The sequence was no longer good and there was no accountability for attaining particular skills in reading or anything… I guess what I’m trying to say is this sequence in reading (CCSS) is not developmentally appropriate.” “At first, I was gung ho about it, but then I started to see some holes in it,” she said. Now, Ms. Candy indicated, “What I find is that the students are struggling more in reading and they did not struggle when I implemented it the way that I interpreted it my first year using it (CCSS) on my own.” “The first year I used
the CCSS in reading, I just kind of went through and I followed with the materials I already had in a sequential order... and plugged the common core into it,” she stated. Ms. Candy noted, “Then the district came along with the guaranteed curriculum and it’s much deeper and goes way more into things than I think we need to go into at this age level (2nd grade).” She did mention that she is not required to use everything from the guaranteed curriculum, however, she mentioned that teachers are “strongly encouraged” by the district to incorporate the guaranteed curriculum into daily lesson plans. Ms. Candy uses it as a guide and at her discretion. Ms. Candy said, “I’m no longer in line with the CCSS in reading the way I once was at the level I am currently implementing it, but I cannot go back to what I did the first year because I have skipped all over the reading series I am using provided by the district and I have done stories from unit four and then back to unit two.” “Initially, I began to follow the guaranteed curriculum with the CCSS in reading embedded in it because I thought I had too,” she indicated. “But, several months into the current school year, I found out I could use it at my discretion and more of as a guide, but it was too late to change back to the way I did it the year before,” said Ms. Candy.

In the beginning of the year, her grade level did the novel, Helen Keller. Ms. Candy emphasized it was “very challenging” for the students and even for herself to teach because the reading concepts were “very difficult,” and students “lacked the skills needed to understand a non-fiction book at a higher reading level.” She mentioned that she is trying to “go back and forth” between what she did the year before the CCSS implementation in reading and “slow down a bit more.” She has decided to use what the district has provided (guaranteed curriculum) as a guide and to follow the basal reading series because “it is sequential and follows a set of skills where they build upon each other. “When I am using the basal reader, I refer back to the
CCSS in reading, and say… Okay… Yeah, that’s what I’m covering here and here… which is what I did the first year before I changed it to do the implementation that they (the district) suggested,” said Ms. Candy.

“I have to say I have shifted my belief in the CCSS in reading from when I initially implemented it to where I am now,” she indicated. Ms. Candy said, “I do believe the CCSS in reading are good, but I would like to see more of a developmental approach to them.” “I like that everybody is doing the same thing, at the same time… it’s like what every second grader should be doing and learning… it was never like that before because we always had kids moving in and out and they were all learning different kinds of things in different places,” she said. Ms. Candy noted, “I know I have to be flexible, but it was more of an adjustment on my part than the student’s part because I had to adapt my class instruction for the new student, whereas, with common core you have something that they should be doing across the board.” Ms. Candy indicated that is what she liked about the CCSS, especially in reading and math. She mentioned what she does not like about it now is that it is not “developmentally appropriate, or in a logical sequence for the students to attain the higher levels that the CCSS in reading are encouraging.” Ms. Candy stated, “There has been very little training in implementing the CCSS.” “I went to a summer institute workshop and since that time, there has been only one workshop within the school time,” she said.

However, “I feel like my students have increased in their reading ability, at least for the ones who are ready for the challenge of the CCSS in reading, but for the ones who are struggling… it has been more of the struggle than I have previously noted and that’s where I am running into what is appropriate for students at this age to be doing,” said Ms. Candy. She knows that their reading ability has increased just by what they are reading at this level. She
said, “I compare it to what my personal children were reading ten years ago, and the reading was not at this higher level.” Also, Ms. Candy reasoned that the students have increased in their reading ability because “I cannot remember kids reading as many chapter books at this age.” She ponders if the students are reading for “reading’s sake,” but she noted that they seem to be doing “okay.” Ms. Candy mentioned that she thinks the kids that are struggling with reading are “definitely at a greater disadvantage” currently because the demands of the CCSS in reading are “too difficult.” She indicated that she is “making accommodations for the students, such as, shortening the assignments for those who struggle by assigning a lesser number of items to complete,” she said. “Who knows if the next teacher will make the same accommodations for them as these same students will continue to need a lot of assistance to learn to read at the level that the CCSS in reading is asking them to read at… and hopefully the next teacher will do the same as me.”

**Belief(s)/Attitude(s) about Reading Instruction**

Ms. Candy believes an exploratory and theme-based approach to reading is best for teaching students to read. She specified that a “wholistic approach” for students is best because “they learn to read with the knowledge they come in with and explore using that knowledge to learn how to interact with the literature.” Ms. Candy said, “I believe in a challenging program, but it has to be developmentally appropriate where all students progress through stages and skills at their own level.” She indicated that she believes in having a wide variety of reading materials available to the students at all times. Ms. Candy believes that she has been supported in her approach to the teaching of reading because she has been provided with all the necessary materials through the school. Ms. Candy mentioned that she had moved from teaching kindergarten in the past because “it was getting more and more difficult to teach her approach to
reading in kindergarten because the skill expectations had become much higher.” Ms. Candy stated that she feels in an appropriate kindergarten setting, students should be “exploring letters and sounds, and how letters and sounds work with the language of the text to produce meaning for the students.” Ms. Candy said, “When I had to start teaching specific words and reading skills in kindergarten, I figured I might as well be teaching first grade, so I changed grade-levels.” Ms. Candy feels that more and more reading skills are “being pushed down to the younger grades at a greater rate and with the notion that students need to be reading and comprehending difficult text at a much younger age.” She said, “I see that the skills are getting harder and harder and a reading program should be exploratory and not so demanding on young students to attain skills that are not developmentally appropriate for their age.”

**Parental/Teacher Involvement in the School Reading Program**

“I think it is helpful for the parents to read and engage with their child through the use of books that have been exposed to the student in the classroom and to share the books that they have experienced at home with their fellow classmates,” Ms. Candy stated. Ms. Candy noted, “It is important for the students to see their parent engaged in helping to prepare them for success in reading by participating in the reading process.” “However, I do not think parents should be involved in the development of the reading curriculum,” she said. Ms. Candy feels only people in “education, child development, or psychology” should write reading curriculum. More importantly, she stressed, “Just because a parent reads with their child and went to school, does not mean that they hold the qualifications necessary to design a reading curriculum.” While Ms. Candy believes parents play a pivotal role in their child’s reading success, they should not be the designers of reading curriculum for the young, elementary child.
Policy Shifts

Ms. Candy feels that teachers could be better prepared to deal with policy shifts in the teaching of reading if they were given “more training, and not training on their own time.” Much of the training that occurs from policy shifts in reading has been done on her own time by reading, studying, and “looking at stuff.” Ms. Candy specified, “There needs to be more professional development given to the teachers in order to implement new policies and not much thought has been given to that.” Ms. Candy said that she does not feel pressure to attend professional development when policy shifts arise, but said, “I would like to learn more about what it is that I am expected to do, especially when policy shifts as big as the CCSS come into the picture.” Ms. Candy mentioned, “More training is needed to implement the CCSS in reading at the level it should be.” She said, “I feel like the implementation hasn’t been as good as it could be because there are a lot of interpretations about the CCSS in reading, and I feel like we were bombarded with what I thought it was and with what the district thought it was.” Again, Ms. Candy mentioned “little training” has been provided into how to best implement the CCSS in reading into classroom use that is effective for the students.

Teacher Evaluation

Ms. Candy stated that she is incorporating things that she might not have normally used in her prior years of teaching because she knows that she is going to be “observed more often.” Ms. Candy noted, “It’s not so much that they are evaluating me, but it is the part of the evaluation tool that is tied to the student test scores.” She says that she teaches more of what “students will need to know in order to be successful for testing,” rather than the things she once felt were important tools for reading. Ms. Candy noted, “Some of these things may not really be relative to what I feel is important in reading instruction, but I am trying not to make a big deal
out of it.” Ms. Candy was enthusiastic as she stated she has a “We can do this type attitude, but the evaluation tool and testing is affecting everyone in the grade level.” “Many of us at this grade level (2nd) are struggling with the evaluation tool and how to best implement the things that the students are supposed to do even if we think some of these things are not developmentally appropriate for the students, and we have had very little training on the evaluation tool,” she said. Ms. Candy also noted that there has been “a lot of confusion” about the tool itself and what she feels is best for the students in order to attain a high level of reading success.

Grand Tour

Ms. Candy’s classroom was located in the red main brick school building. In navigating a long corridor with halls that branch off the left, Ms. Candy was located in the second hallway named, “Silver Hall.” Six doors down, on the right was Ms. Candy’s classroom which faced a common green space area between the main school building and a portable white school building.

Upon entering Mrs. Candy’s room, the walls were painted a bright sky blue with granny apple smith colored cabinets and cubby holes. To the right of the entrance was a built in wooden storage cabinet and lightly colored wooden cabinets along the back wall. Above the cabinets, many boxes of what appeared to be materials for teacher and student use were located. These boxes were labeled as, Science, Math, etc. Under the cabinets are dark blue curtains with more storage space. Ms. Candy has a designated space on the cabinets, titled “Teacher’s Corner.” This area contained notes and school reminders of meetings and activities for the teacher. Along the back wall and next to the cabinet was a sink and attached water fountain. Next to the water fountain were several black bins which contained worksheets of different subject matter. In front of the sink and attached fountain, a long table that contained file folders of more worksheets was
located. Ms. Candy’s desk was situated next to the long table and in front of the cabinets. The
desk appeared organized with a blue rolling chair behind it. Ms. Candy did not access her desk
during the observation period. She frequently walked around the room and used the long table
adjacent to her desk to sit and assist students. To the left of the entrance was a wall with a
blackboard. Above the middle of the blackboard, an American flag hung. The blackboard was
used as a space to hang learning material. The blackboard contained a large question mark and
an exclamation point. Noted were two pocket charts hung from the blackboard. One of the
pocket charts was used as “Classroom Jobs,” in which students appeared to be assigned roles.
The other pocket chart contained words that appeared would be assistive to students when
answering such questions as, who did what, where, and when. In front of the blackboard three
computers were situated. All of the computers faced the blackboard and were on at the time of
the observation. Students did access the computers to take Accelerated Reader tests and locate
more information on “Superstorms,” which was the current theme in reading for the week. It
appeared most students who accessed the computers did take Accelerated Reader tests, and only
two were noted as “surfing the net” for other information pertaining to the text theme. To the
right of the three computers is the front of the classroom. There was a large white board in the
center of the wall. In the middle of the white board, a smart board was attached. The smart
board was used briefly in teaching the word prevent. Students did not use the smart board on
their own during the observation. Below the smart board, were a number of student folders. The
students did not access the folders. To the left and right of the smart board were open spaces of
white board. In these areas, Ms. Candy had the daily schedule posted and pictures of coins. To
the left of the white board was a teacher desk facing the opposite wall with a computer on top.
To the left of the teacher’s computer area was a bulletin board that stated, “Reading Across the
USA.” It had a map of the United States stapled to it. To the right of the white board, another orange bulletin board existed. This bulletin board had a daily calendar that appeared to be tied to some mathematical learning. Below the bulletin board, short shelves contained reference books in sets, such as dictionaries and almanacs. To the right of the bulletin board was the far classroom wall. This wall housed cubby holes on each side with a large window in the center. The window blinds were open during the observation, allowing added light from the sun into the classroom. The cubbies to the far left of the wall housed classroom library books. There was no apparent order in which these books were organized. However, the books above the cubby holes appeared to be non-fiction in nature and ordered according to subject matter. The pencil sharpener was attached to the set of cubbies. There was a large open space in front of the cubbies and the students did use this space for answering text-dependent questions during the observation, as well as, accessing the books in the cubbies when their work was completed. Noted was a reading level chart attached to the cubbies. The chart was color coded, green-level 0.5-1.0, red-level-1.1-1.5, and so forth. However, students did not seem to choose books based off of the level on the chart. Not all books in the classroom were color coded. In front of the window and in between the two sets of cubby holes, a large wooden rolling bin containing many books was situated. The students also accessed books from this location during the observation. The books, however, appeared worn with torn covers and fading pages. The other set of cubby holes contained learning material for science and mathematics with a four drawer tan filing cabinet next to the cubby holes. Also, in front of this set of cubby holes, an open area was where students worked on the floor during the observation. Student desks were shaped in a large outer square with desks touching one another, with three rows in the inner area of the square creating three rows with three desks across touching. This did not allow students to use much floor space
in the classroom, although they were working in groups during the observation. Most students had to turn chairs around to work together. It seems that more floor space was required to do the small group interaction that was observed in the reading lesson. For the most part, the room seemed rather crowded and congested during periods of movement with the exception of the two areas in front of the cubby holes. These were the only areas where students could work comfortably together on the observed task. But, with a large number of students (24) only a few could access those areas.

**Mini Tour**

**Teacher Instruction.** Ms. Candy began the whole group lesson with all students in their own desks by projecting the word *prevent* onto the smart board. She asked students how they could use the word in a sentence. Several students provided sentences that correctly used the word. Ms. Candy also supplied limited instruction on breaking the word into “*pre*” and “*vent*.” She explained the prefix *pre* means before.

Students were then instructed that they would be working on text-dependent questions about the weekly story, “Superstorms.” She explained that the students could and should use their reading textbook to answer the questions with exact information. She instructed that the boys would do the odd number questions, while girls would do the even number questions. Ms. Candy also explained that the questions should be answered in a complete sentence in their notebooks with the page number that they found the answer on.

As students shifted into groups, which were already pre-determined prior to the observation, the noise level and some degree of confusion buzzed about the room. Most of the “buzzing” had to do with where students would choose to sit as a group to complete the assignment. The room is rather crowded and the only large working spaces that exist for group
work are in front of the cubby holes, but those spaces were quickly taken, leaving others walking around the room aimlessly looking for an area where a group could fit to work. Eventually, Ms. Candy suggested that students could turn several desks and chairs around to work in a group.

**Teacher/Student Interaction.** Immediately after getting the groups situated, Ms. Candy moved about the room, inspecting student work and listening to conversations. One group had difficulty determining the main idea of a particular sub-heading and needed assistance. Ms. Candy went over and had students read the subheading orally and then use the “skim and scan” technique to see what words match with the subheading. After probing with a few more questions, the students determined the main idea and wrote it down in their notebook. While this was taking place, other students in the classroom appeared off task by constantly sharpening pencils, venturing to other groups for conversation, and even looking at what other groups had written down and copying it. Two groups remained focused during the observation on answering the text-dependent questions. One of the two groups was a pair of boys who enthusiastically seemed to be enjoying learning about the different types of storms. Their facial expressions showed excitement and eagerness, as they answered each question with evidence from the text. This group was among the first to finish the assignment. Once again, when students needed assistance, Ms. Candy would direct students to orally read to one another to locate the text dependent answer for the question. Ms. Candy monitored the room at times, but for the most part let students work while she tended to some work at the back table. As the observation continued, it was noted that Ms. Candy was assistive to students who approached her for help, as well as, often looking around the room to see if students were on task.
At the conclusion of the allotted time for reading instruction, Ms. Candy instructed students to put away their notebooks and questions, and that they would be reviewing them tomorrow.

**Student-Student Engagement.** At the beginning of the task, students looked somewhat confused. However, it appeared that because the students were instructed that boys did odd questions, while girls did even ones, the directions may not have been clearly understood, as some groups did all. After students settled into their groups, many students had their textbooks open with their notebooks and questions, but the conversations among students did not stay on the topic. One group of students was shooting rubber bands at each other and another group was constantly sliding on the floor, roaming around the room, and sharpening pencils. Ms. Candy did correct the group and caught them several more times sharpening pencils, although she did not intervene in a way to prevent them from continuing to do this. Eventually, the boys did manage to complete some of the questions, but it was not a group effort, with one of the boys finishing the assignment and not the others. There was no apparent consequence for not completing the questions. A group of girls on the floor discussed the questions, and went back and forth to find the answer in the text. While they answered most of the questions, a few stumped them and teacher assistance was provided. Several groups held conversations about other subject matter, for instance, one group discussed something related to recess and snacks, while another group had gadgets from inside their desks that they were manipulating most of the time. Although there seems to be a great deal of off task behaviors occurring, students eventually returned to the topic of study and the questions to be answered. It was clear that the students had been engaging in conversations, however, many were not related to the lesson. Two students who did manage to finish their work, chose books to read and take *Accelerated Reader*
tests. However, of the two that were doing this, one ended up at the computer “surfing the web,” for more information on storms, which Ms. Candy does permit, but she redirected him to taking an *Accelerated Reader* test during this observation. The classroom library for choosing books did not seem enticing, as students approached the cubby holes where the books were located, none paid attention to the book level chart. A few flipped through pages of the book, but were uninterested. It was noted that students would converse about a book and see how another student liked it. However, the books appeared worn with some having torn pages. At the end of the group time and assignment, students were told to put their things away. Ms. Candy stated, “Put your things away, we will review the questions and answers tomorrow.” It was noted in the observation, that many students did not complete the assignment.

**Assessment.** For assessment during the observation, the only form of assessment that could be attained for the text dependent question activity on this day was through teacher observation. Because Ms. Candy would not be reviewing the answers until the next day, there was no indication if students had mastered answering the text dependent questions using the text. Some groups did not finish the task in a timely manner, and during the observation Ms. Candy said they would review tomorrow. Therefore, there was no real accountability for students to produce any finished piece of work. Based on the observation, many students did not engage in the types of conversations that would have been helpful in assisting one another with the task of completing the questions based on the text. More assistance provided by the teacher to the students, and fewer questions that could have been completed in the time frame would possibly be more beneficial in assessing students understanding of the day’s lesson. Also, teacher examples of answering the questions from the text could have been beneficial, as students had difficulty understanding the main idea of a sub-heading. No observed instruction was given on
skills. In the end, it was difficult to determine the level of the understanding, if any, in students being able to use the text to answer questions directly.

**Classroom Observation: Ms. Candy (School A)**

Ms. Candy’s classroom has a hum about it. It is full of energetic students, and much student freedom. The instruction began by Ms. Candy calling attention to the word *prevent* on the smart board. Ms. Candy said, “Boys and girls can you use this word in a sentence?” It was obvious that Ms. Candy was focusing on vocabulary development and this word was from their reading story for the week. One child answered, “I can prevent a forest fire.” Then Ms. Candy went further and discussed that *pre* means “before.” She said, “*Prevent* means before something happens.” She stressed for students to look for word clues, such as prefixes and suffixes, and for students to understand word meaning using the word *prevent* in different types of sentences.

As the lesson progressed, Ms. Candy informed the students that today they would be working in groups to answer text dependent questions. Ms. Candy turned off the smart board and told students that she would be handing out the questions that needed to be answered. Ms. Candy instructed students to get a pencil, their notebook, textbook, and find a spot to work. Then, she said, “Boys will do the odd numbered questions, while girls will do the even numbered ones.” Ms. Candy went around the room handed out the papers. After handing out the papers, the students shifted around the room. Some sat in the large space areas in front of the cubby holes, while others roamed around the classroom until Ms. Candy specifically said, “Guys, find a place to work.” Then, Ms. Candy went over and clustered three desks together for students to work.

Although Ms. Candy navigated throughout the room at times, many students had personal conversations related to topics about recess and lunch. Those who experienced difficulty in
answering the questions, simply quit participating. They would lie on the floor and have conversations about lunch, and family matters. Ms. Candy did approach these groups and shift their attention to the work at hand. Another group simply copied a few answers from the group beside them, as they seemed to not be able to locate the answer in the book, possibly sensing it was near the end of the lesson. Another group constantly played with gadgets in their desks, however, towards the end of the observation time, the group did return to the task at hand, although they would not finish it completely. There was a group of students who were very interested in the subject matter. These students did complete all the questions, and had time to select another book to read from the cubby holes. From the observation, it appeared they selected a book, and went right over to the computers. It was unclear if they had already read the book and just needed to take a quiz, or if they were going to go to the computer and take the quiz while looking for answers during the quiz time. Another student who had not completed his text dependent questions approached and tried to use the computer to “surf the web.” However, once Ms. Candy realized this, she told him to return to his group to complete the given assignment, then he could access the computer for more information.

Although, the lesson seemed lengthy and unorganized, the students did appear at various points in the assignment to partially complete the task. It appeared during the observation that too many questions were given, and attention was lost in the small group setting by most. Also, more clarification, or practice of specific reading skills may have been helpful, as this was a non-fiction text, which included many sub-headings. Many students did not know how to approach answering some questions based on what appeared to be their lack of interaction with this type of text, which may indicate why so few students completed the questions.
The conclusion of the lesson was brief. Ms. Candy said, “It is time for lunch.” Then students were told that they would share their answers tomorrow in class and help one another check the answers by locating the page numbers the answers were on. Ms. Candy specifically said, “All students will have all the answers completed when we finish reviewing them, so that these can be studied for the test.”

Parent Interview: Ms. Candy’s Class (School A)

Educational Background

Ms. Tabbs is a college graduate and has previously worked, but is new to the area.

Common Core

Ms. Tabbs indicated that she had not done much research in the reading department upon their recent move to the area. She noted that there has been a big change in the curriculum upon her children entering their current school of enrollment. However, she noted that the change has been more so, in mathematics than in reading.

One of the reasons she stated for not looking more closely at the CCSS in reading, is that she is “easily overwhelmed” and is “not willing to homeschool” her children. Ms. Tabbs stated that she had a learning disability in reading, so she is not eager to look at what the CCSS in reading indicate need to be done in order to achieve the higher level standards set about in the CCSS.

Ms. Tabbs said she does not know anything about the CCSS related to reading. However, she indicated that she knows her child’s current reading level and she knows he is doing well in reading at school because “I get these numbers, I email the teacher and ask her where we stand in reading as far as progress is concerned and she tells me he is doing great!” Ms. Tabbs stated. “As long as I have confirmation from the teacher, I believe that he is doing
well in reading,” she said. Ms. Tabbs indicated that she could not tell if his reading progress is directly related to the CCSS in reading or to some other factor. She noted, “My son brings home his homework, which allows me to see what he is doing and he obviously is learning.” She receives his daily work and weekly test which are also indicators that he is progressing in reading. “However, I cannot really compare if he would be doing this same level of work if we were still living where we were, but it has been a big change,” Ms. Tabbs noted. Some of the things she has noticed include: bringing home a textbook to read, answering comprehension questions from the text, and studying vocabulary words for a test at the end of the week. Ms. Tabbs feels that this is standard reading instruction anywhere.

Ms. Tabbs believes that the reading ability of her son has increased since moving to the school her son currently attends. She mentioned that at her son’s previous school, books on her son’s specific reading level were sent home on a nightly basis. She was instructed by the teacher to “record if the book was too difficult or too easy,” and the teacher would send books home that would fit the level he was reading at. Ms. Tabbs indicated, “I don’t see that as much here, but he does seem to be succeeding in reading.” “One of the major motivations my son has is pleasing his teacher by doing well in reading,” she stated. “I know my child doesn’t want to let his teacher down, so he gives it his all and he will do his work for a good grade,” she said. A surprising statement by Ms. Tabbs about her son was, “He doesn’t really like reading because he likes other things, but he doesn’t want to see a bad grade on his reading paper, so he will complete the work.” Ms. Tabbs feels that this motivation probably has a lot to do with how he is progressing in his reading ability. She mentioned that at times, “It has been like pulling teeth because we had to read fifteen minutes every evening and he has told me he hates reading.” Ms. Tabbs said, “He doesn’t really have good examples either, I am not a reader and I did not enjoy
reading.” However, she feels he must enjoy it some at school to be able to be performing at the age appropriate reading level. She indicated, “He just doesn’t want to do reading at home because it interferes with his play time and wanting to be free.”

**Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction**

“I believe reading instruction has come a long way over the past fifteen years,” said Ms. Tabbs. She recalled when she was her son’s age. She said she did not remember starting to read until first or second grade. She noted that her son began reading in kindergarten. She mentioned that when she was in kindergarten it was “play based and not academically challenging.” Ms. Tabbs said, “I know when my son started reading in kindergarten, I just thought wow!” Ms. Tabbs could not recall how her son was instructed in reading at the kindergarten level, but she stated earlier “he came home with three books a night that had to be read and I had to list if it was too difficult or too easy.” She noted that based on the previous night’s reading record, the teacher would send another book home that would be “just right.” Ms. Tabbs said, “So, I guess I could say that I believe reading instruction should involve reading nightly with the books on the child’s level.” She feels that this method has been tremendously helpful in her son’s ability to read. She strongly indicated that she thought her son would have “struggled” if he had not been introduced to reading many books at an early age. Ms. Tabbs has noticed that her daughter who is currently in kindergarten is not reading and the teacher does not send books home for nightly reading. She has concerns about her daughter’s reading ability because she says, “There is only a short period of time left in this school year, and I look at what my son is doing in second grade… and fear if she does not start reading soon, she will be behind in reading.” This is frightening for Ms. Tabbs, as she mentioned she had a learning disability in reading. Ms. Tabbs reiterated that she strongly believes that “reading with a parent nightly is what produces
successful readers.” Ms. Tabbs indicated, “I have spoken to other parents, and this too is what
they believe encourages successful reading at a young age.” However, she said, “The teacher
must provide the right reading materials for the child nightly and this should begin at an early
age rather than waiting to first or second grade.”

**Parental/Teacher Involvement in the School Reading Program**

Ms. Tabbs feels like a reading program should entail many books at the elementary level.
Again, she believes these books should be sent home nightly. Ms. Tabbs indicated that “being
able to read and comprehend is important in a reading program.” She mentioned her own
difficulty with reading and suggested some type of “direct instruction with students that would
give them direction in choosing the appropriate reading materials for their reading level is best.”
Ms. Tabbs said, “The teacher should instruct the students about where they need to be in reading
achievement by pushing them to read more.” She specifically stated that by “giving students a
sense that they could read it because the teacher believed that they could,” was significant.
Therefore, Ms. Tabbs suggested, “Motivation must play an integral role in the reading program
that is set forth in the elementary school.” “The teacher must be motivating and encouraging to
the students by helping the students to read the appropriate level of book that the school
provides,” she said. Ms. Tabbs indicated that she has “great trust” in the teacher and the role that
the teacher plays as an educator in her son’s classroom. She commented that she bases it on the
fact that her children have experienced many “good teachers” thus far and feels that creating a
reading program for the elementary level is not something that she feels she needs to be involved in.
Policy Shifts

Ms. Tabbs feels that the teachers are dealing with an enormous amount of pressure from the recent policy shifts enacted by the CCSS. She has noted that she has realized that a huge change has come to the teachers themselves. Ms. Tabbs mentioned, “Most teachers already have it hard enough in managing all the aspects of the classroom, the curriculum, and the policy mandates.” Ms. Tabbs feels that the administration and the school board “need to do more to prepare the teachers for the policy shifts.” Ms. Tabbs indicated, “It is the responsibility of the school boards, and administration to inform and educate the teachers about what is going to be going on in their schools and classrooms as far as policy is concerned.” Ms. Tabbs strongly voiced, “The teachers already have a load on them and when new policies enter the arena I can see that being very stressful, especially since these new changes are tied to testing.” Therefore, Ms. Tabbs reiterated that the school board and the administrator “need to do more to help the teachers prepare to implement policy shifts that are enacted at the state and national levels.” She feels “teachers have to have the time to plan accordingly to meet the demands of the policy shifts, as well as, the needs of their students.”

Teacher Evaluation

Ms. Tabbs said, “I am not well aware of the teacher evaluation that is currently in place.” She indicated that she is new to the area. However, she did know that her child’s performance would be tied to the teacher’s evaluation from discussions with other parents. She said, “I can see and understand how teachers could be stressed about this because every child might not be able to perform at the level that’s expected of them for a number of reasons.” She said that she could only speak about her child and his progress in reading because she is in communication with teacher. Ms. Tabbs stated, “I know my son will be able to perform at the levels needed for
the teacher to receive a good evaluation.” In her opinion she feels like the teacher is doing “an outstanding job” in assisting her child to become a proficient reader, but she could not pinpoint exactly what her child would need to do in order for the teacher to receive a successful evaluation. Ms. Tabbs did respond that an evaluation tool for teachers “should not be very dependent on student performance.” She said, “Student performance may be a factor, but success for some students may look differently in some than others.” She specifically indicated, “It depends on where the students start in the progression of reading instruction, and where the student is currently. Ms. Tabbs said, “That might not be able to be measured in the way that the tool is being used.”

Interview with Ms. Sands from School A

Educational Background and Experience

Ms. Sands is currently teaching third grade at school A. She has been teaching for approximately eighteen and a half years and she has a Bachelor of Science in elementary education from Delta State University. She is certified to teach kindergarten through eighth grade. Ms. Sands taught for seven and half years then stayed home to raise her children for approximately twelve years. She slowly made it back into the classroom by daily subbing then long-term subbing. Ms. Sands decided to get recertified and enter the classroom full-time once again approximately ten years ago. Most of her teaching experience has been in third grade, she previously taught fourth grade for a short period of time. Ms. Sands received her training in the teaching of reading through “methods classes in college,” where she mentioned that “skills instruction was stressed” as an important tool for teaching reading. She has also received training in Project Read, which is a phonics based reading program used throughout the district
in grades K-3. She has taught both in private and public schools. However the majority of her teaching experience has been in the public school system.

**Common Core**

Ms. Sands believes that the implementation of the CCSS in reading has been a “train wreck.” She stated, “There has been no pre-thought, no one spoke to the educators, and the educators were suddenly seen as the bad guys.” Ms. Sands also indicated that there has been no training in the CCSS in reading, but she was expected to implement the CCSS in reading in her classroom. She mentioned that if she “did not comply” with it, she could “lose her teacher tenure.” She said, “Then, on top of that, how the kids scored depended on my job and pay.” She noticed that she was putting more and more stress on the children, and every day it has become more difficult for her to continue to watch herself place more stress on the students with higher level standards and testing. Ms. Sands said, “These young children are not trained to handle the type of stress the CCSS in reading has put on them, they don’t have the coping mechanisms in place to deal with this sort of pressure.”

Ms. Sands has even noticed a shift in her attitude about the reading curriculum and feels like she is supposed to be a “robot.” She mentioned that the curriculum has the students “basically teaching themselves.” She said, “I do not use the things I used before that I knew were very effective in teaching reading.” Ms. Sands stated that she feels she is “setting the students up for failure” by not using skills to teach students to read. “It scares me that I am not providing a reading foundation for these children… the skills are in no way correlated with the stories that we are reading…nothing makes sense, and I am losing my passion for teaching,” she said. Ms. Sands mentioned that she feels she is “losing the battle of loving what she does,” and is “not motivated due to the higher level expectations,” which are “barely attainable for both
students and teachers,” she said. “I am just facilitating and watching all of this implode before me,” said Ms. Sands. She mentioned, “It’s been watching a train wreck, I have to close the door and try to teach what I know is right.” Ms. Sands said, “I often wonder what happened to the day when doctorates in universities put books together and they were once the experts in the field of education.” She stated, “It feels like we have thrown out the baby with the bathwater.” Ms. Sands said, “I have always been excited about changes coming into the school because it was a chance to revive excitement in my profession that would ultimately lead to better assisting the students in the classroom, especially in reading.” Recently, Ms. Sands indicated she has “not seen anything in the CCSS in reading that provides assistance in helping the students achieve the higher levels the CCSS in reading wants students to attain.” She stated, “There is no research behind the CCSS in reading, and I feel like why should I buy into this…it doesn’t make any sense and it truly doesn’t sound like the American dream to me.”

Ms. Sands mentioned that reading has changed dramatically. She feels that the CCSS in reading are definitely a more “whole language approach” to reading instruction and one that she is not in full agreement with. She believes that the skills instruction approach is important to teaching reading, and she still believes in teaching students skills. Ms. Sands said, “Students need skills in order to be able to read, and with the implementation of the CCSS in reading, I do not see much of that incorporated.” Ms. Sands stated that she was “told nothing about the CCSS in reading” and felt “very unprepared and unaware” of what to expect for herself and the students while implementing the CCSS in reading. Currently she indicated, “I feel more like I am teaching for the test, which cannot provide all the knowledge needed for students to be successful in reading.” Ms. Sands noted, “I am frustrated and crying for the future of these children because I feel that they are learning so little, my job is on the line, and I have never
worked so many hours in all my life.” Ms. Sands spoke about the implementation of the CCSS in reading this year having an effect on her marriage, home life, and her personal health. She has recently seen her doctor, who stipulated that there has been a “spike in prescribing prescription medication” to teachers more now, then ever before. Ms. Sands said, “I think what everyone needs to remember is that we are people, from all environments, and most of all we are human beings.” Ms. Sands says “more time is needed” to help teachers and students “cope” with a reform of this magnitude.

Ms. Sands noted that there has been “no training for the CCSS implementation for reading.” Ms. Sands stipulated that she and her colleagues used “their own money to buy things that had to do with common core.” She said, “We (myself and colleagues) even paid for a website called, “Teachers Pay Teachers.” Ms. Sands said, “We were so scared, we would buy anything that said common core, and now we realize we have wasted a lot of money with most of the items being crap.” Ms. Sands mentioned that the salaries of teachers in the district have been frozen for two years now, and many teachers including herself, are digging deeper into their pockets to purchase materials needed just to survive in the classroom to be in compliance with the CCSS in reading. Ms. Sands feels that she and her colleagues needed more materials and resources to help them adapt to the CCSS in reading.

Ms. Sands noted that there has been a decrease in reading achievement in her classroom in the recent year. She feels that reading achievement has declined because the “students are facilitating more of the learning on their own” without really knowing what it is that they should be learning. Ms. Sands said, “They don’t realize what skills are important for them to be able to be good readers, they can’t teach themselves the skills needed for reading without me instructing them in using those skills, and not just once, but multiple times through different types of text.”
“Again, I believe the students still need skill instruction at this young age and they cannot be left to read through content and expected to understand what skills they are to have learned if I am not teaching it,” stated Ms. Sands.

**Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction**

Ms. Sands believes in teaching skills in order to be able to read at a proficient level. She believes that the teacher should be the “leader in the classroom” and lead the students in understanding the “necessary skills” to become efficient and productive readers that can comprehend a variety of materials. Mrs. Sands currently feels that the shift to a more “whole language approach” is definitely not beneficial for her young students. She states, “Often students at this young age cannot facilitate because they do not have the foundation in place to know what is correct and what is not correct in understanding reading.” Ms. Sands also believes that a “sequential order” must be followed and “scaffolding of the skills” should occur in order to achieve the levels of reading that are desired. Currently, Ms. Sands indicated, “I see none of that happening with the new curriculum (CCSS in reading) in place.”

Her attitude about reading is one that includes “skills to be taught in a sequence and acquired through practice” in the classroom. “Once students have been taught the necessary skills for their level, then students can master that skill and understand the content and concepts that they are reading for at a deeper level,” she said. Ms. Sands responded, “If that is not happening, students cannot achieve the levels that are being required by the CCSS in reading because they have not mastered the skills necessary to do so.” Therefore, Ms. Sands believes it is “vital that skills instruction be in place” in the lower elementary grades. Ms. Sands stated, “I am not against incorporating good literature, but students need shorter stories with skill
instruction to be able to accomplish the task of understanding good literature and we must remember that these are young students.”

**Parental/Teacher Involvement in the School Reading Program**

Ms. Sands believes that teachers should be involved in developing the curriculum for the reading program. She mentioned, “After all we are (educators) the experts, we are the ones in the classrooms with these children day in and day out, and we can see what they need more of.”

Ms. Sands also thinks teachers should be on the “committee for selecting what books the students should be reading,” and to make sure the “skills can be acquired” by the selection of books for the appropriate grade level. In the end, Ms. Sands indicated that she believes it should be left up to “the doctorates at the universities to assist us (teachers) in providing the materials that are necessary for students to develop their reading ability.”

Ms. Sands believes that parents could be involved by “reviewing materials that may be adopted.” However, “Parents have not been trained in the teaching of students,” said Ms. Sands. She said, “I think we need to be careful if we start allowing parents to decide what materials should be used to teach children, they do not have the in-depth knowledge that doctorates, university professors, and teachers may have.” Ms. Sands also feels that many parents “don’t realize what skills are necessary for students to master reading.” She said, “They have an idea of what they want their child to be able to read at a certain level or above a certain level, but I’m not sure they really understand how to get their child to that level and what materials would be best at providing that experience for their children.” While Ms. Sands believes parents should be “involved in their child’s reading education” and “assisting their child in learning to read,” she reiterated, “Ultimately information on reading instruction is best left to the universities and experts, which can communicate to the parents the stages of reading and the appropriateness of
skills needed to achieve reading competency.” As Ms. Sands states, “Gone are the days when we once had basal and textbook series adoptions where we could look at what was available and best for our students, our district, and our school; now we have nothing and we are left searching for resources with some parents making suggestions that may not even be appropriate or focus on the desired skills needed for reading success for their school age children.”

**Policy Shifts**

In discussing policy shifts with Ms. Sands, in the area of reading, she feels that she could be “better prepared if more information and training were given.” She has indicated that the resources that were to be implemented with CCSS in reading “needed to be available prior to the start of school year.” “Right now, because of the policy shifts, we are just piece-mealing things together and then trying to wing it, and we are winging it,” said Ms. Sands. “This is not how we should be teaching children and policy should be more focused on giving more time to districts and teachers for training… it is not good when a policy is enacted with little time given for preparation,” she stated. Ms. Sands feels that when policies are “enacted,” districts need to have “sufficient time to provide an overview and training for their teachers.” Ms. Sands indicated, “Since the CCSS in reading were abruptly implemented, I can only access the curriculum just a few weeks ahead of when I am supposed to use it in the instructional setting.” “This is a major frustration for me as a teacher, because it is difficult to figure out what lies ahead, so I can be better prepared to assist those that are struggling with the CCSS in reading,” she indicated. Ms. Sands feels like she is “pretending to teach the CCSS in reading because they had been mandated to us by a policy.” She firmly believes that these reading standards are not the “best in my eyes.” Ms. Sands said, “I believe policy shifts should have more discussion at the state level, district level, and then at the schools. “I know this may take time, but in the case with the CCSS in
reading, especially because it is a huge undertaking, time is what we needed in order to prepare for the new implementation that was going to be required of the teachers and the students.”

Lastly, Ms. Sands noted that the CCSS in reading policy, “has been too much too fast.”

**Teacher Evaluation**

Ms. Sands indicated that the teacher evaluation tool is “impacting the implementation of the CCSS in reading” because “no training was received on the evaluation tool” that is currently being used to evaluate her. One area of concern she voiced was, “I am being graded on what my students are doing, even if I realize my students don’t have the knowledge for what it is that they are to be doing.” Ms. Sands mentioned that she has been “training her students and wasting time to do things that they are not capable of at this age in order for her to get through the evaluation tool with a decent rating.” “The evaluation requires a strong group effort on the part of the students based on in student interactions with one another,” she said. “Some of these students don’t have the foundation to be able to have a discussion about a text and in the manner in which the evaluation tool is asking them to do that,” she stated. Also, Ms. Sands noted that her pay is now “tied to how these students perform from the evaluation tool” which she feels is not “developmentally appropriate” for the grade she teaches. Also, the fact that a “score on a standardized test weights in” on her evaluation is something she is in disagreement with. Ms. Sands, reiterated, “I have had very little training on how this tool was going to be used and I am also being evaluated all the time.” “I used to be evaluated in cycles, such as once every three years, now it is three and four times a year, or whenever they (administrators) want to come in for a visit,” she said. Ms. Sands stated, “I am not against being evaluated, but when the tool being used is based on inappropriate activities for her students, and on their testing scores which doesn’t give a full measurement of what the students have learned over an entire year, I feel
overwhelmed and frustrated that one tool has the ability to affect my salary and my tenure as a teacher.”

**Grand Tour**

Mrs. Sand’s classroom was located in the rear of the red school building, unattached. It was a white portable building that runs along the left side of the school property line. To gain entrance, hallways branch off to left, each color coded. At the end of the main corridor, was the last hallway that branches off labeled “Red Hall.” Upon taking a left and walking to the end of the “Red Hall,” was a set of double rust colored doors. Exiting the rust colored doors and taking a right leads to the white portable building where Ms. Sands’ classroom was located. Gray double doors lead the way into “Purple Hall” where Ms. Sand’s classroom could be found. The room was the second door on the left upon entry.

When entering Ms. Sand’s classroom, the olive green walls and colorful pink and yellow curtains adorning the windows were quite comforting. To the right and behind the doorway was a wooden storage cabinet attached to a set of cabinets that ran along the back wall of the classroom. Below the cabinets were hooks where students have stored school bags and jackets. Next, to the lightly wooden colored cabinets along the back wall a sink and water fountain conjoined with storage space underneath was located. Next, to the sink and water fountain were a small white refrigerator with a small white microwave on top. Above the sink and water fountain, a large pink bulletin board with what appeared to be “thinking bubbles” was located. The “thinking bubbles,” contained questions that may at some point have been assistive to students during reading, as they contained questions that students may have asked themselves pertaining to the text being read. These questions included, *who, where, when,* and *what happened.* These were not used by students during the observation period. Also, stapled to the
bulletin board was a yellow poster titled “Proofreader marks.” Still along the back wall and left of the sink and water fountain was a gray steel open set of shelves containing four shelves which hosted a variety of instructional materials. In front of the sink and water fountain was a long table with four chairs positioned under the table. The wall adjacent to the back wall runs along the side of the school property. There are two sets of cubbies between two sets of windows. Two tan file cabinets sit on each side of one set of cubby holes. A large picture of colorful handprints hung from the center wall. Below the handprint picture were several stacks of non-fiction books in paper-like shelves. The cubby holes located closest to the front of the classroom had several clear storage containers labeled with material for teacher and student use. The cubby holes had student books and supplies, and there was one specified for each student. Above this set of cubby holes were several blue bins with worksheets inside each one. To the left of the cubby holes closest to the front of the room was the front wall. The front wall contained a white board with a smart board in the center. Above the white board was a cursive alphabet. The outer portions of the white board contained information about the daily activities and homework assignments. Along the front wall was a tall white bookshelf with math manipulatives and instructional materials. There were also two small bulletin boards located to the left and right of the front classroom walls. The yellow bulletin board closest to the book shelf contained words for reading and specific subject words used in mathematics and science. A blue pocket chart next to the bulletin board contained more words that could be used by students to answer comprehension questions based on text. An American flag hung above. Below the bulletin board and pocket chart were short blue bookshelves. These bookshelves had two shelves with several white baskets on each shelf. Each white basket contained classroom library books that were labeled with leveled reading tags on the outer area of each basket. They ranged in levels
from 1.0-7.0. The opposite bulletin board, still along the front classroom was decorated in orange bulletin board paper and included a calendar and library card pockets attached to the bulletin board containing fake money. The bulletin board had a white laminated sentence that read, “Today’s amount is ____.” In front of the orange bulletin board was Ms. Sand’s computer on a small teacher desk. In front of the small teacher desk were two short tan filing cabinets with two drawers each. Behind the small teacher’s desk was a larger teacher desk along the inner wall of the classroom with a small white round table and a lighted red lamp. Above the large teacher desk was a TV and DVD/VCR combo. The TV, nor its components were used during the observation. Along the inner wall was a blackboard that was covered with a poster of Louisiana, the United States, and a counting chart to 100. There was also another blue pocket chart attached to the blackboard containing more math vocabulary. To the left of the blue pocket chart was the final zebra bulletin board containing “thinking bubbles” around the outer edge for students to use while engaging in conversation about text with one another. These included, “Can you tell me more?” and “Can you cite that?” The zebra bulletin board contained words that were “frequently misspelled.” In front of the zebra print bulletin board were three computers to the left and two to the right. The computers were on during the observation, but not accessed by students. There were headphones on top of the hard drives next to each computer screen and a set of Accelerated Math folders along the wall. Students’ desks were situated in clusters of six. In each group four were facing each other while the remaining two faces forward. There were four sets of desks grouped this way. Near the middle of the classroom was an open area that was spacious enough for large group instruction on the floor, and a specially painted wooden desk in the center. That desk was not used by any student during the observation. Students were able to
move about the room freely and conveniently with several open spaces for group work besides
the desk configurations.

**Mini Tour**

**Teacher Instruction.** Ms. Sands instructed students by reviewing vocabulary from the
current basal story and questioning students about trade books that students had encountered
previously on the “Wild West.” She reminded students about the genre of the story, “historical
fiction,” and asked students, “What other stories have we read that could be classified as
historical fiction?” This encouraged students to share and relate their prior knowledge of the
“Wild West,” to the current story. Ms. Sands informed the students that the lesson would focus
on questions about the story. She reminded students that they read the text twice at school and
once at home to assist with remembering the story. Ms. Sands told students that they would first
do, “Think, Pair, and Share.” This was done by having students walk around the classroom
while music played. When Ms. Sands turned the music off, whoever was standing near the
student would high-five the student next to them and begin reviewing reading vocabulary words.
The students had a piece of paper with a number of vocabulary words and definitions listed prior
to the start of classroom movement. They were to think about ways the words could be used in
sentences and definitions, and share with their paired up partner. Ms. Sands’ primary role was to
monitor the students while walking and listening to their conversations.

Then, Ms. Sands called students back to their seats. At this time, Ms. Sands practiced
how students could find the answers to text-dependent questions. First, Ms. Sands read a
question and modeled how she would look for the answer. She said, “First, I read the question,
then I look back in the story to see if I can remember where that part is, if I can, I turn to that
page and find my answer.” “If I can’t remember where the answer might be located in the story,
then I skim and scan the story for a few words that go with the question I am looking for,” she said. Ms. Sands modeled this several times, once by knowing exactly what page to find the answer on, and another where she demonstrated how to skim and scan for an answer. Ms. Sands encouraged students to read the question and the matching text aloud to make sure the answer to the question was correct. Noted were probing questions Ms. Sands used after demonstrating to the students how to answer text dependent questions. When she moved to guided instruction during the observation, she probed students with questions. These included, “Tell me more,” “Where is that located,” and Can you give me the page and paragraph?” After several rounds of this type of practice, Ms. Sands instructed that students would now get into groups and answer the rest of the text-dependent questions related to the current *Wild West* themed story.

**Teacher/Student Interaction.** During the observation it was noted that students were very comfortable with Ms. Sands. This was evidenced when one student believed the book contained a grammatical error. After a brief class discussion he was able to see his conclusion was incorrect, and Ms. Sands said, “See how we notice things?” The student chuckled and said, “I realized I was incorrect because I had once seen something written like this, but it was incorrect.” Ms. Sands visited each group at least twice during this observation. She conversed with students about how neatly their work was being completed and clarified a question and answer for another group. It should be noted Ms. Sands has a calming voice and a gentle demeanor that students seemed to enjoy. During the group work, most students worked unassisted with the exception of a group of students at the back table who needed the most assistance. Ms. Sands delivered help by reading questions orally, discussing where and how to find the answer in the text, and assisting the group in how to write the answer in a complete statement.
**Student to Student Engagement.** Students eagerly participated with their group. This was evidenced by the cooperation noted by groups, and students agreeing on the answers to questions. Students also allowed each other to read orally when they found an answer to the text-dependent question to make sure it was exactly the answer that would be needed to respond to the question. When students did not agree, another student from the group would locate what another possible answer could be, and students would engage in conversation about what the question was really asking and which answer would best fit. This was noted by two groups during the observation. A few students were gazing in other directions at times, but when it was time to write an answer, students did write the group consensus. Students were able to complete the assignment in the allotted time frame and participation of on-task behavior was high. The only group that did not complete all of the questions was the group located in the rear of the classroom, however it was only one student from the group that did not complete the work. It appeared that his group tried to assist, but there was difficulty in reading and locating the answer from the text, as well as, writing. Upon completing the assignment students returned to their desks to use their “Shoulder-Partner,” to read the “Wild West” story orally to one another.

**Assessment.** Ms. Sands was able to assess the student’s ability to locate answers from the text by collecting the questions answered. She told students, “I will review these tonight, and we will go over them tomorrow to check for accuracy.” She was also able to assess readily by visiting each group at least twice during the observed time. It appears Ms. Sands knows what students need more assistance and she frequented that group more often than the others, and even re-taught the lesson briefly. During the oral reading portion, she roamed the room listening with a careful ear as students read through their story with their “Shoulder-Partner.” She appeared to be assessing fluency and accuracy of oral reading. She did stop on several occasions to hear
students read. It was not understood in this observation if those students were specifically targeted because they had been identified as being “at-risk” in reading or not.

**Classroom Observation: Ms. Sands (School A)**

Students entered Ms. Sand’s classroom from recess. Ms. Sands quickly settled the students as they returned to their desks. Ms. Sands told the students that they would be reviewing vocabulary words, and answering text dependent questions in today’s lesson.

Ms. Sands sat on a stool in front of the classroom and opened up with a discussion on reading vocabulary words. She asked the students, “Tell me another way I could use that word?” “Can you locate that word in the text and read the sentence it is in?” This type of discussion occurred for all seven vocabulary words. Then students were instructed to get their “list” of vocabulary words and get ready for, “Think, Pair, and Share.” Ms. Sands arose and put music on and students shuffled about the classroom, which was set up to have student’s maneuver easily around the room. When the music stopped, students were to high five the closest person to them and begin a review of their vocabulary words by reading the word and definition aloud, and then forming sentences. Then, Ms. Sands would play the music again, and students would shuffle about the classroom and find a new partner. These episodes occurred three times. At the conclusion of the third one, students were ordered back to their desks. Ms. Sands then began another segment of the lesson. She referred to the genre of the story, “historical fiction”, and asked students to recall other trade books that they have read that would fall into that category. Ms. Sands then discussed how the word “historical” comes from the word “history, and “history means the past.”

The next portion of the lesson focused on answering text-dependent questions. Ms. Sands instructed students to look at the pictures on pages 157-158. Then she read the text orally
to the students. She said, “From this, where is the setting located?” A student answered, “Out in
the West before we had stuff like today.” Ms. Sands replied, “Yes, very good.” She stated,
“How would I know this is correct?” The students replied, “Because it says so on the page.”
Then, Ms. Sands told the students, “Yes, that is how we find the answers for today’s questions,
because they are text-dependent, which means we find them right there in the text.” Another
question Ms. Sands asked, “How does the author describe the West?” Ms. Sands stated, “I want
exactly what the author says.” A student raised their hand and located the correct text page and
read the description orally. Ms. Sands said, “Great! You get a special treat for answering the
text-dependent question exactly from the text.” She proceeded on to another question, “What
can we learn from the life of a miner?” She instructed students to turn to page 158. Then, she
called on another student by picking a popsicle stick that had student names written on them.
The student read the answer verbatim from the text. Now, Ms. Sands said, “We will get into our
small groups and work on the remainder of the questions.” “Who can tell me exactly what we
have to do?” A student replied, “We have to answer the questions directly from the text book.”
“Yes,” answered Ms. Sands.

Students quickly and quietly moved to their designated areas. Students did not exhibit
any difficulty getting into groups or into spaces where they could work together. However, Ms.
Sands did direct one group to the long back table to work, and she appeared to focus more
attention on this group by assisting them in finding answers, reading, and writing complete
answers. She did not spend all of her time assisting these students only. Ms. Sands moved about
the room and stopped and worked with each group a minimum of two times. After a specified
amount of time, students were asked to turn in their completed work and return to their desks.
After returning to their desks, Ms. Sands instructed students that they would be practicing reading aloud to their “Shoulder Partner” for the remainder of the lesson. “Shoulder-Partners,” are the students that sit next to one another in the group cluster of desks. The desks are arranged so that all students have a shoulder partner. It was apparent in this observation, after students began to orally read, that Ms. Sands had set stronger reading students with weaker reading students. This was evidenced in the observation by noting the fluency and accuracy of the student readers. Some students who needed assistance with words, such as pronunciation, were given that assistance by their shoulder partner.

In conclusion, Ms. Sands reminded students that today’s focus lesson was on text dependent questions. She explained to the students that they would review the answers that were written from the assignment tomorrow and would have a test later in the week.

**Parent Interview: Ms. Sands Class (School A)**

**Educational Background**

Ms. Fields attended college for two years and currently owns her own business.

**Common Core**

Ms. Fields is fairly familiar with the CCSS in reading at her child’s grade level (3rd). However, she feels that the school did not address the implementation of the CCSS. Ms. Fields said, “I am only familiar with the CCSS in reading because I have been digging into the homework and the books regarding my child’s education.” Ms. Fields indicated she is “not very happy” about the CCSS in reading and math. Ms. Fields said, “It (CCSS) seems to be all over the place, and it’s jumping around.” She also said, “There is no sequential order of how things are being taught, there is no good foundation for my child to build her reading skills upon.”
Ms. Fields has been involved at the school level through volunteering and she implied that the school did not have any meetings to explain the CCSS in reading. She stated, “They did not let us know that this is what the school was going to do, or even that it was a state-mandate, or anything of that nature.” Ms. Fields reiterated that her lack of knowledge about the implementation of the CCSS is not because she is not involved with the education of her child. She stated, “I have always been involved in my children’s education as a room mother and PTA member, and there was just nothing held concerning these new standards.” Ms. Fields noted, “Teachers cannot be expected to hold meetings on such matters.” She believes that the teachers are trying to communicate as much as they know about the CCSS in reading by “sending home letters,” but as far as holding large meetings and directing the school, she indicated, “That it is the responsibility of the administration of the school.” Ms. Fields noted, “Nothing has been communicated on any level to the parents.” “I’m confused as to how all these new standards even transpired and I’m unhappy with it,” said Ms. Fields. Ms. Fields said, “The teachers have been very nice ladies and are working on behalf of my child, but I look at this curriculum every day and think this is not what I want for my child.”

As far as Ms. Fields is concerned, the CCSS, especially in reading have been “very vague.” She noted that the only thing she has learned about the CCSS in reading is from asking other friends, and friends who were educators. “It’s obvious that the teachers that hold positions in the schools don’t want to say anything negative about the CCSS because it would not look good on their school,” she said. “I’ve only been able to speak frankly with a few educators who are friends at other schools and they are able to articulate what they feel is going on with it, but I’m not sure I’ve had any very frank conversation with my child’s teacher regarding these standards and their implementation into the classroom,” stated Ms. Fields. Ms. Fields feels that
the teachers are not at liberty to speak. “I have had some meetings with my child’s teacher because last year she was doing very well, and this year she seems to be lagging behind,” noted Ms. Fields. “I indicated that I have concerns about the curriculum and the teacher just wouldn’t address them, the only thing she could say was that she was disappointed about the curriculum,” stated Ms. Fields. But, Ms. Fields mentioned, “I do not think that the teacher has been honest about really educating my child this school year.” Ms. Fields speculated that the teacher must have an opinion on the CCSS in reading, but is afraid of losing her job. “I feel horrible for them,” indicated Ms. Fields.

“I’m not sure the CCSS in reading has changed my view of reading instruction because I don’t know specifically what it is that I dislike; except that I know that the reading instruction is not sequential, and it just hasn’t been good enough this year,” stated Ms. Fields. Ms. Fields suggested that before the implementation of the CCSS in reading, “my child was doing much better.” But, Ms. Fields also indicated that her child may get “caught in the middle of this transition” into a new reading curriculum leaving a “gap in reading instruction” which will ultimately lead to “poor reading performance.”

Ms. Fields said, “I think my child’s level of reading has decreased because there has been more of a need for memorization to pass the standardized test.” “I just don’t think it’s appropriate for them because they are so young and haven’t developed enough reading foundation that the CCSS in reading is asking them to provide,” stated Ms. Fields. She also strongly feels her child is “not getting a better education because of the new standards implemented by the CCSS in reading.” “I’ve always had a positive attitude of helping the teacher out by assisting my child at home, but this year the teacher can’t even tell me what I should be helping my child on because she is not even sure of what is coming next or how to
even instruct my child and the class,” said Ms. Fields. “It seems chaotic and unorganized,” she stated. Ms. Fields indicated that she is not sure if the teachers feel it is unorganized or not. “But, as a parent I feel that way about it, and not being able to help my child has put a lot of stress on me,” noted Ms. Fields.

**Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction**

Ms. Fields believes that reading instruction should have a foundation. She remembers when she was learning to read, a skills-based approach with phonics being taught with books related to the skills was used. Ms. Fields said, “It was very direct, like 1, 2, and 3.” “Right now with the CCSS implementation in reading, they are skipping all over the books and there is no sequential direct instruction for my child in reading, so it’s confusing for the kids,” she said. Ms. Fields firmly indicated that a “sequential order to teach reading skills” is what is absolute for her child and others to be successful in reading and comprehension. Ms. Fields said, “I feel like this has been a wasted year.” “The students have not received the instruction needed for them to be successful in later phases of reading,” noted Ms. Fields. Ms. Fields suggested, “It is not the teacher’s fault, but it seems to be the implementation and the organization of the CCSS in reading, which has my child left in the middle trying to figure out how to order these skills herself to best be able to use them to assist her in becoming a better reader… I think that’s just crazy.” Ms. Fields said, “I know that when I learned to read, I learned through phonics and by being taught very sequential skills that build upon one another to help me learn to read, and I just don’t see that being done right now.” Ms. Fields mentioned that the questions and quizzes that are being implemented from the CCSS in reading are “tricky” and some of the information that is being asked of her child is questionable. “I think that confusing children at a young age about reading is not a smart thing to do, children need to have the reading foundations first, so that they
Parental/Teacher Involvement in the School Reading Program

Ms. Fields believes that a good reading program at the elementary school would produce a “love of reading” and a “love for education.” She indicated it is important for students to have “many books to read.” She reiterated that reading skills and foundations should be “taught specifically in grades one through five” then, “more challenging reading material could be introduced with students already having a firm foundation in their reading ability.” Furthermore, Ms. Fields feels this would be the most supportive and assistive way of attaining higher functioning reading levels. Currently, Ms. Fields feels students are “not ready to reason at the level that is being asked of them.” Ms. Fields noted, “Phonics needs to be implemented more and taught in the schools, not just touched upon.” “I think using a reading series where the teacher has a manual and the students have textbooks, where it is organized into skills and themes would be the best route to go,” she stated.

“I think as a parent I should have an impact on whether they move forward with different curriculums,” implied Ms. Fields. “I guess it’s because I’m so dissatisfied with the CCSS in reading right now, and it would have been beneficial for my children if I had been able to hear and learn more about the curriculum that was going to be adopted,” she stated. “I’m not saying that parents should design it completely, but what I am saying is that parents should have the opportunity to look at different resources and voice their opinion about whether something should be implemented or not,” noted Ms. Fields. She suggested that teachers should be involved in the reading curriculum and not someone who is a “lawmaker” or “owns a particular company.” “It has to be a person that is an educator, that has been educating kids for ten years or
so… and can say I did this at first… and this didn’t work and now I do this… and it does work,” she said. Ms. Fields indicated that it should “include individuals that have figured out what reading curriculum works best and is appropriate for a specific grade and age level.” “I think it’s very important that the teachers have a say in reading curriculum and assist or develop the curriculum that will be implemented in their classroom,” stated Ms. Fields. “It is the teachers that have to instruct the students in the subject matter, and it should be done in a way that is best met for the teachers and the students in that particular classroom,” she said.

Policy Shifts

In regards to policy shifts, Ms. Fields is always thinking about the teachers. She feels that teachers want to be there (teaching) for a reason and that reason is to make an “impact on children.” She stated, “Obviously it’s not the high pay that these people are seeking in this job, it is because they have a passion for education.” Ms. Fields wishes that teachers had “more freedom” in their classroom to incorporate their “own personality” in education. “With all of these new mandates, policy shifts, and the high accountability levels teachers have lost the freedom and the ability to be who they really are,” said Ms. Fields. “I think kids are missing out on that in the classroom because the teachers are uptight and they don’t know what’s coming next,” she stated. Ms. Fields feels that being “uptight” gets passed down to the children. She said, “I know for a fact that it makes my child very stressed, and I think that is unfair.” “These are only children,” she stated. “I think that much of what gets mandated, really isn’t about education; it’s about getting prepared for some standardized test, which means we are missing vast learning opportunities to get into what could be a really good curriculum, good reading, or better understanding due to the fact that everyone is so focused on the standardized test,” stated Ms. Fields. “Then everyone feels like these tests are the only reflection of the school, the
teachers, and society,” she said. Ms. Fields suggested, “There is a huge loss when teachers are spending more time preparing for standardized testing, dealing with curriculum changes and trying to understand policy shifts; rather than actually teaching the children what the foundations are that need to be learned in order to prepare them to succeed in life.” “Teachers should make the educational policies, not the lawmakers that have no idea about education and what it actually entails,” she stated. Ms. Fields said, “The government needs to get out of the classroom.” “I know I would hate if someone who never ran a business came into my business, and tried to run my business… that is what the government seems to be trying to do with education in implementing the CCSS in reading,” said Ms. Fields.

Teacher Evaluation

“I think the teacher evaluation that is based on standardized test scores has got these teachers teaching to the test and it is so unfortunate,” suggested Ms. Fields. Therefore, Ms. Fields noted that she has a “harsh view” of the teacher evaluation currently in place. “I think the teachers are overly stressed by the fact that their students have to attain some type of high performance in order for them to be stated as doing a good job,” she said. “I know many people who do a good job and don’t always see results off of everything that they do,” stated Ms. Fields. “I’m not saying that the teacher would not see results from the students, but I think at the level that they want the students to perform and the lack of good curriculum is just unimaginable,” noted Ms. Fields. Ms. Fields mentioned she is concerned about the stress that it puts on her own child. “I know that my child knows that her teacher will be evaluated on how she is doing, and I think that is something young students cannot handle,” she said. Ms. Fields indicated that she is not against teachers being evaluated, and believes an evaluation tool should exist. However, she pointed out, “I’m not sure how much emphasis should be placed on the student’s test scores.” “I
know as a mother what I expect my child to have learned by the end of the grade level, and I am sure that the teachers are well aware of what children should know and be able to do without having some evaluation tool tell them if they are doing it or not,” said Ms. Fields. “Although I have not seen the evaluation tool being used for the teacher evaluation, I do know it includes specific parts about student performance,” she said. Ms. Fields indicated that she felt this part of the tool should be revamped. “I’m not sure I have the answer on how to do that, but I think that looking at each student’s progress yearly is beneficial to teachers and students, but being evaluated on it, that I am not comfortable with,” she stated. “Perhaps, if the teacher has to be evaluated on student performance it is more of a whole class approach to student performance,” said Ms. Fields. “It’s difficult to tell how teachers should be rated on student performance because students are at different levels and grow differently depending on a number of circumstances, so I am not sure I could offer any other suggestion about the evaluation tool at this time,” noted Ms. Fields.

Interview with Dr. Woods (Administrator of School B: 4-6)

Educational Background/Experience

Dr. Woods currently holds a Ph.D in educational leadership from the University of Southern Mississippi. He has also holds a Master’s degree in administration and supervision, and a Bachelor’s degree in elementary education. Dr. Woods has a total of twenty years of educational experience. It includes teaching eight years at the sixth grade level. Dr. Woods has administrative experience in both middle and junior high schools. He was a principal at the junior high level for approximately eleven years, and this is his first year as the middle school principal at School B.
Common Core

Dr. Woods believes the CCSS in reading, “offers a great opportunity to implement rigorous standards in reading and in several other subjects.” “The district has really put together an effective rollout for the teachers,” he stated. One of the concerns Dr. Woods voiced was the CCSS in reading being “linked to many state initiatives.” He believes that the CCSS in reading “rolled out” by the state has been a “disaster.” Dr. Woods indicated that he feels the “district has done a good job in getting those standards in place.” He also stated, “The district has provided teachers with a fantastic curriculum to use with the implementation of the CCSS in reading at the elementary level.” Dr. Woods said, “I am unable to tell if achievement in reading will increase or decrease with the implementation of the CCSS in reading.” He felt it was too early in the implementation process to determine if students’ scores will go up or down. “I think it’s really on the teachers who know how well their students are doing,” he said. “I know my teachers are going to compensate for any shortfall in the CCSS in reading,” indicated Dr. Woods. “I think this year will be a telling tale of how students do, as far as, achievement in the CCSS in reading,” he stated. Dr. Woods mentioned he has children in several grades, and is getting a “snapshot” of the CCSS in reading at every level. “I’ve been very encouraged by its potential, but the implementation has been less than ideal.” “The state rushed through with the implementation,” he said. Dr. Woods indicated that the state wanted the implementation to take place within a “short span of time” and “dismissed the original implementation time-line of a multi-year progression.” “Originally, the CCSS implementation was supposed to occur over a longer period of time, but suddenly the state chose to implement it within a one year time frame and everyone was at a disadvantage due to a lack of time to prepare for the changes,” he stated. Dr. Woods said, “I think that just created confusion for teachers and parents which has led to some of the
negative press regarding the CCSS.” “The state effort as far as the implementation of the CCSS in reading has fallen short,” he mentioned.

“One of the things I like about the CCSS in reading is it spirals upwards in complexity, and there is purpose and meaning from one grade to the next,” stated Dr. Woods. “It’s not just separate and independent skills,” he said. Dr. Woods included, “It has practice that builds upon what the students are expected to learn.” “The CCSS in reading are cohesive and offer a challenge for students that are on or above grade level,” he said. However, Dr. Woods noted, “For students who are reading below grade level, there is a gap where the burden falls on the teacher to fill in those gaps for the students who are struggling, and lack the skills that are needed for reading increasingly complex text.” “One of the difficulties of the CCSS in reading is the lack of prior experience with the types of texts the CCSS in reading are asking the students to interact with daily,” said Dr. Woods. “But, my teachers are doing a tremendous job of helping their students along in gaining the ability to read more complex text,” noted Dr. Woods. Dr. Woods stated, “As students move through the years and grades, they will get better at what the CCSS in reading is expecting them to do.” “Hopefully, the CCSS in reading gives meaning to the skills they have learned and is dependent upon what is done one year into the next tying all of the grade levels together,” he said.

**Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction**

Dr. Woods believes reading in the middle school should occur “by constantly reading and having reading skills in place for what makes a good reader.” “Lots of modeling done by the teacher is needed for the students to understand how to use the reading skills and decode at this level,” he said. “For lack of a better term, a hands-on approach in getting the students to read as much as possible, and not just doing the mechanics of reading,” stated Dr. Woods. He also
mentioned comprehension in reading. Dr. Woods indicated, “Comprehension is very important in understanding what has been read.” “In middle school we are transitioning from learning how to read to getting information from the text,” he said. Dr. Woods stated, “The focus of reading in this middle school is more about reading to learn, rather than learning to read.” He feels that this is the case in most schools that contain grades four and up.

**Parental/Teacher Involvement in the School Reading Program**

Dr. Woods stated, “If the state had utilized teachers and parents from the beginning for discussing the plans of implementation of the CCSS in reading, and been more transparent, as far as, what the goals were for the CCSS in reading including what the state had to offer students, I believe we could have had a different experience.” “Anytime there is an implementation of something huge, like the CCSS in reading, there is always going to be a little bit of frustration,” mentioned Dr. Woods. He implied that most people understand that some level of confusion and frustration will exist until all the “kinks” get worked out. However, “I think having as many people as possible at the table; both at the state level and the district level would have proved to have been helpful in the implementation of the CCSS in reading,” he said. Dr. Woods mentioned that the district has done a “very good job” in helping the schools and teachers implement the required CCSS in reading. “They have been provided with novels to assist in teaching the reading standards,” he said. “The problem lies in the state rolling out the CCSS because the state came out very quickly… out of the gate and wanting to get something done,” he stated. Dr. Woods suggested, “The state should have spent more time being in conversation, while including stakeholders in the process.” In doing so, Dr. Woods thinks “more transparency would have existed.” “Initially, the parents should have been invited to a meeting or something,” he said. “For as much time as we have spent on deciphering the CCSS in reading, all of that time
could have been in communication about what the CCSS in reading were and how these standards were better than what the state had,” said Dr. Woods. “The state should have done its job in convincing parents, teachers, and stakeholders on why the CCSS in reading were superior to what was already in place,” he said. Dr. Woods indicated, “Because the transparency did not exist, there has recently been more reaction to the implementation of the CCSS in reading.”

“I believe that parents should be involved in the school reading program, but only to the level and extent of participation that they are receiving information about the education their child is receiving,” said Dr. Woods. “I believe parents should be knowledgeable about what their child is learning,” indicated Dr. Woods. “Parents should definitely be involved at that level, but I don’t think they should be designing a reading curriculum and selecting reading materials,” he said. “Parents don’t have enough experience with being able to do that and that is not their area of expertise,” implied Dr. Woods. “Again, I am all for informing the parents of changes and for instituting a plan where it’s done slowly over a period of time, so parents can adjust, but I do not think it is in the best interest of the students for parents to be selecting the material for the reading curriculum,” reiterated Dr. Woods.

**Policy Shifts**

In assisting teachers with being prepared to deal with policy shifts in the teaching of reading, Dr. Woods mentioned “communication is a key factor.” “I think the way the CCSS in reading and teacher evaluation were implemented created a situation where districts struggled because there was a huge gap in communication,” he said. Dr. Woods insisted that the confusion created by CCSS in reading is strongly due to the state’s “lack of communication.” “It should have been their (the state) job to convince people why what they were getting ready to do was better than what we were already doing,” stated Dr. Woods. “From the very beginning it should
start with communication and bringing stakeholders to the table, and we have only just seen that in the last few months with the state superintendent visiting districts,” he said. Dr. Woods suggested it was “certainly great, but it should’ve started that way in the beginning.” “Districts needed more information about the CCSS in reading, as well as, training,” suggested Dr. Woods. “There was not enough training for the full implementation of the CCSS in reading, he said.” Dr. Woods indicated that if more time would have been given, along with training, “questions that many teachers and parents had could have been addressed in a timely manner.” Dr. Woods said, “If the implementation would have taken that approach, it would have been a much different experience for the teachers, parents, and state.” “I think even the state legislators holding meetings would have proved to have been helpful in all of this,” he said. Dr. Woods included, “I think that if the legislators are voting for something like the CCSS, they should be able to explain why they voted for it, and that it’s going to be better than what was already in place, especially for a district like this, which is among the highest scoring in the state.” Therefore, Dr. Woods feels teachers and parents have not been able to understand the “shift” to the CCSS in reading, because “the district was already doing very well.” Again, Dr. Woods suggested, “Communication is the most important key in helping teachers deal with policy shifts, and the communication regarding the shift in policy should be clearly stated from the state level to the district level.” Dr. Woods stated, “Time is needed for the teachers to understand and decipher the policy shifts, so that a smooth transition occurs from the teacher to the learner.”

**Teacher Evaluation**

Dr. Woods said, “The teacher evaluation tool has been difficult because the teachers were dealing with implementing the CCSS in reading in such a short period of time, while also being evaluated with a new tool that graded them on student performance.” “Little training was
offered by the state for the use of these things and the teachers were overwhelmed,” he stated. Dr. Woods indicated, “There was a high dissatisfaction rate with the tool at my school.” “Many teachers think it is unfair to have a link between student scores and teacher effectiveness,” he said. Dr. Woods believes that the tool can be improved to “take in the considerations of the teachers and administrators.” Another point made by Dr. Woods is the fact that the tool is tied to teacher tenure and pay. He said, “There are many differences that need to be taken into account by each individual student, so growth of a student may show up in different ways, not just on a test.” Dr. Woods indicated, “I understand the teacher’s viewpoint because many of my teachers are trying very hard to do their best job and help students to improve.” Once again Dr. Woods referred to “more training and communication as important tools to implement the evaluation in a favorable way for all.” Dr. Woods said, “I don’t necessarily have the answer on how to improve the teacher evaluation tool, but there a few items that could be rewritten to match the items that would be grade level appropriate in the evaluation.”

Interview with Ms. Pine from School B

Educational Background/Experience

Ms. Pine graduated from the University of New Orleans with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She is certified to teach grades one through eight. Ms. Pine has thirteen years of classroom teaching experience. For five years she taught third grade in a parochial school, and the last eight years in grade four at School B.

Common Core

“In discussing the CCSS in reading implementation my attitude is one where if I am given the right tools and guidance I’m fine with it,” stated Ms. Pine. “But, I really feel like I have not gotten that,” she said.
Ms. Pine indicated that she did not feel she has had a “shift in attitude,” about reading. She stated, “It’s just that there has been so much thrown out at us, and we need to take it one bite at a time.” Ms. Pine indicated that her attitude is not about “disliking the teaching of reading,” it lies more in the way she is being asked to implement the teaching of reading in her classroom. “We are being asked to do so much and at a rate that is too fast, so I am more frustrated and confused about what it is I need to do to teach reading at this level (4th), and how they want me to teach it,” said Ms. Pine.

“I feel the CCSS in reading are trying to challenge children in different ways to become critical and independent thinkers,” indicated Ms. Pine. However, Ms. Pine pointed out, “There are things that the CCSS in reading are asking me to have students do and it is just not developmentally appropriate.” Ms. Pine said, “There are areas where links, I mean chunks of reading skills are missing, and students need more instruction in reading in order to attain the independent level of thinking that CCSS in reading are asking them to do.” Ms. Pine mentioned that she has had to spend a “considerable amount of time training students” to be able to work in groups and “think differently.” Ms. Pine indicated, “I have had to learn some new strategies to implement with my students, so that can they can participate in the reading lesson, which has not been easy to do.” “Little training has been made available to us (teachers) to show the best way to implement the new ideas in order to assist the students in becoming better readers,” said Ms. Pine.

“Student improvement has mostly been seen with the strong or high achieving readers because they obviously come with more to the table,” Ms. Pine pointed out. “The CCSS in reading wants students to answer in a certain way with precise language, and higher achieving readers are certainly more capable of doing that because they have had more experiences outside
of the text that they can relate to the text, whereas the low-level readers….well, the readers that are below are really struggling with the CCSS in reading and the standards don’t address this area.” “It is definitely an area of concern,” she said.

Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction

Ms. Pine believes reading has “skills.” “After students learn the skills,” Ms. Pine stated, “then, you can teach the higher level thinking to dig into text understanding.” Ms. Pine said, “Much of what is occurring right now in the classroom with the CCSS in reading, is getting the students to be more independent thinkers.” “This is difficult when students are missing skills in reading that are needed in order to be able to think independently about the text,” she stated. Ms. Pine noted, “The missing reading skills and strategies include: summarizing and making text connections. “Many students at this age still need instruction in reading, and how to interact with the text,” she said. Ms. Pine mentioned, “Time and practice is needed for the students to be able to excel at the levels the CCSS in reading is expecting.” “What’s happening now with the CCSS in reading and our district curriculum, is a bouncing around of reading instruction, and the text selection is not appropriate for this age level which makes it difficult to teach the basics that the students need to understand in order to be independent thinkers,” noted Ms. Pine. She believes, “Reading starts off with the basic text and in that text we teach the skills that are needed in order to be able to interpret the text and think independently about it,” stated Ms. Pine. Ms. Pine strongly suggested, “Again time and practice are needed, and because more time is needed, it’s not something that will register improvement right away…it’s a growing process…it continues onto the next grade and the next grade… hopefully, by the time students get to high school and college they have developed these independent thinking skills and are able to interact with the text and interpret it in the way that requires the higher level thinking at those levels.”
“Right now, requiring the higher level independent thinking skills before we’ve even taught the basics of reading or how to interact with text is a problem,” stated Ms. Pine.

Parental/Teacher Involvement in School Reading Program

Ms. Pine strongly believes that teachers should be involved in structuring a reading program and reading curriculum for school use. Ms. Pine said, “I would structure a reading program starting from the very basics, building the skills in a sequential order for the students to be able to respond to the text.” She would also include, “collaboration with colleagues, that way we are all on the same page, even if we have different kids that we teach.” Ms. Pine stated, “By collaborating we are able to share our ideas then, interpret the ideas so that they are very much alike and students are receiving the same instruction.” “I would also include a scope and sequence for everyone to follow because it’s important to know where students have been and where they are going, a guide that shows that information is essential,” she said.

Ms. Pine does not think parents should be involved in developing a reading program. “A lot of parents are out of touch, or they just don’t have the background in reading education,” said Ms. Pine. “Many parents I know are struggling to help their kids with school work,” she stated. “I know that may not be all parents, but if they have any part in helping with the reading program or curriculum I think it should be in ways that they can engage their child at home,” noted Ms. Pine. Ms. Pine indicated, “Parents can be given information about reading and what is being done in class, basically it is the parent reinforcing and engaging with the child about things that we do in reading here at school, that’s it.”

Policy Shifts

In dealing with policy shifts, Ms. Pine noted that she needs more information. “I need more information about the CCSS in reading and more training should be available,” she said.
“There has been little training available to teachers besides what we have done in professional development, which was the Seven Keys to Comprehension,” said Ms. Pine. “We haven’t really had any dialogue or time with manipulating the CCSS in reading,” stated Ms. Pine. Ms. Pine indicated that for any policy shift, “there needs to be time offered and information given about the new curriculum.” Ms. Pine said, “Furthermore, how that document (CCSS) can be interwoven into what already exist in the classrooms and district level would be very helpful.” “Unfortunately, that is not what happened and the CCSS in reading were basically thrown to us and we were expected to shift our ideas into this new document,” she said. “It was difficult to do because it happened so fast,” stated Ms. Pine. Ms. Pine noted, “I think that before we have to implement something, we need time as teachers to collaborate within our grade levels to be able to make some sense out of the document and make sure that some sequential order exist.”

Another recommendation Ms. Pine spoke about included “more resources.” “There just was not enough resources offered for teaching reading the way the CCSS in reading was wanting us to, and student materials were sparse since we were not really following the basal series anymore,” stated Ms. Pine. However, Ms. Pine did indicate that the district was still “employing the use of an older basal reading program,” but that “matching the skills and teaching to the basal was difficult because the strategies were very different and student knowledge requirements by the CCSS in reading cannot be met with the basal reader.” Ms. Pine said, “Now that we are using the CCSS in reading and the guaranteed curriculum, it is all jumbled, everything is overwhelming and no real format exist.” Ms. Pine feels that if new policies are going to be implemented, “those things should be studied” before being presented to teachers, as well as, the expectations of teachers and students regarding the CCSS in reading. “Some of the CCSS in reading, cannot be achieved at the grade levels expected because the material is inappropriate,”
stated Ms. Pine. “To expect teachers to know new policy in a short amount of time, and turn around and teach it, teachers have to be able to know the best way for them to approach teaching it to the students,” said Ms. Pine. “There just wasn’t enough time or resources to implement the CCSS in reading at the level of expectation,” she said.

**Teacher Evaluation**

Ms. Pine believes the evaluation tool currently in place is “unfair.” However, she stated, “I am not going to buck the system, so I will try and do what I am being asked to do.” Ms. Pine indicated that this is what makes the evaluation tool “difficult.” “It is difficult because each child learns differently and my job is to help meet student needs, which may not be apparent on a test score or in the two observations done by my principal,” said Ms. Pine. “There is a lot of stress involved, but I’ve also had to realize this past year that I have to do what is best for these students and the state has not been clear on many things, they have been flipping back and forth which has been very confusing,” she said. “At the end of the day, I have to know that I did the best job that I could do, and that is what matters to me, and not some number on an evaluation,” noted Ms. Pine. “I don’t know the best way to improve the evaluation tool itself, but I can tell you that the teachers needed more training and more information on this tool, especially for the way it effects tenure and pay,” she said. Lastly, Ms. Pine mentioned, “I am hoping changes in the tool come soon because some of what we are being evaluated is not for the grade level that we teach, that is something I think should be adjusted.”

**Grand Tour**

Ms. Pine’s classroom was located in a redbrick school building. Upon entrance of the rust colored double doors of the school building, there was a long corridor with halls that branched off to the right. Ms. Pine was in the first hall on the right, three doors down on the left.
Ms. Pine’s room exuded warmth, calmness, and comfort from the pale peach painted walls to the low level of lighting provided by paper lanterns suspended from the ceiling and various types of lamps placed throughout the classroom. No overhead lights were turned on during the observation.

After opening the classroom door, there was a large storage cabinet attached to cabinets along the back of the wall. Below the cabinets were hooks holding student sweaters, book bags, and other miscellaneous student items. Above the cabinet area, there were several large paper umbrellas open and placed on an angle for decoration. Next to the set of cabinets a teal counter space housed a sink and water fountain with more storage beneath the sink. Above the sink, and along the back wall was yellow bulletin board titled, “Great Work.” The bulletin board displayed student work. To the left of the bulletin board was the outside wall. The outside wall overlooked a green space between two buildings. A large window with yellow curtains above sat in the middle. To the right of the window, was a large mural painted to appear as a library. Beneath the mural were cubby holes. The cubby holes contained student textbooks and folders. Above the cubby holes was available surface space. The surface space was used to house two sets of paper shelves. On the paper shelves were books students could access for further reading. Ms. Pines indicated that these books were leveled and organized according to the basal stories. Two students did access this area during the observation. Students had other text selections that were being read during the observation, but it is unclear where students received those selections. There was no noted leveling of books that was able to be seen during the observation. There was a definite lack of student reading materials noted during this observation. In front of the sink there was a small brown sofa with a four legged wooden table in front of it. Several magazines were on the table including *Sports Illustrated*, however, these were dated. Behind the sofa was a
small round table with four chairs. This table sat in front of the large window. The table and chairs were notably small for the students. The size of the table and chair appeared to fit more in line with the size of first grade students. The observation was completed from this vantage point. To the left of the window, another large mural was hung. It contained three large stars and was titled, “Reach for the Stars.” Below the mural was another set of cubby holes with the teacher’s desk situated in front of them. The white teacher’s desk had a black rolling chair behind it while the cubby holes contained teacher instructional materials. The teacher did not access the desk during the observation. To the right of the teacher’s desk was the front wall. The front wall had two bulletin boards in between the white board. The white board contained a smart board in the middle. No technology was used during the lesson observed. Part of the white board contained “bell ringer” work to be completed, which students did follow during the observation. The school heading was hung from the white board as well. On the right side of the white board was a yellow bulletin board containing language information on nouns. To the left side of the white board was a teal bulletin board with a pocket chart. The pocket chart contained the label “Common Core State Standards,” but no standards were in the pockets. Ms. Pine did inform the researcher during the observation that due to testing, some materials had to be removed, which may explain the empty pockets. In front of the teal bulletin board was a small teacher desk containing a computer and document camera. In front of the small teacher desk was a set of shelves. Two globes sat on the top portion, but the other shelves were not accessible during the observation. Behind the small teacher desk was the inside wall of the classroom. This wall included a large teal bulletin board where students had written “Acts of Kindness.” Above the bulletin board white string lights were draped and turned on. An American flag hung above the bulletin board. To the left of the bulletin board were two white shelves hanging on the wall with
small knick-knacks on each shelf. The middle of the room housed the student’s desks. They were situated facing the white board. There were four sets of rows. Each row had two desks touching one another. During the observation, it appeared that the touching desks were student’s “shoulder partners.” Although there were two students who were asked to be “shoulder partners” in another set of empty desks. The room was very crowded. There was no space for students to work in other areas besides their desk space.

**Mini Tour**

**Teacher Instruction.** Ms. Pine began the reading lesson with praise for students who appeared ready. She said, “I like the way you are ready, Michelle.” Ms. Pine instructed the students that they would be practicing for the LEAP test by doing a “spiral review.” She asked, “Why do we need to practice?” A student replied, “So, nothing will go wrong.” Another student stated, “Because if you don’t practice, you can lose.” Ms. Pine told the students that they would be reading an excerpt from the story *Because of Winn-Dixie* out of their basal readers. Students were asked to retrieve their basal reader from their classroom cubby hole. Ms. Pine continued questioning students about what reading strategies should be employed in order to comprehend the text. Many students answered incorrectly. The students were naming reading skills such as, *main idea*, and *compare/contrast*. Ms. Pine continued questioning until students responded with reading strategies which included: *connections of the text to self, inferences, visualizing, and summarizing*. Then, Ms. Pine told students to read silently and independently using the “fake telephones,” and sticky notes to label pages where they used reading strategies. She did inform students that after the reading portion with the sticky notes, students would meet with their “shoulder partner” to discuss their sticky notes and answer questions at the end of the story from the text.
**Teacher/Student Interaction.** Ms. Pine interacted with students through questioning techniques used to introduce the review activity. Ms. Pine walked around the room during the independent reading portion. After completing the silent reading and sticky notes portion, Ms. Pine engaged with students who needed added assistance. Two students were noted. Although one student did complete reading the story on her own, she had difficulty answering the response questions from the story. After a period of time, Ms. Pine directed another student to assist the student. Then, Ms. Pine went to assist the student whom she took the shoulder partner from. This particular student had not completed the sticky notes portion of adding the sticky notes containing reading strategies to assist in comprehension of the text. Ms. Pine assisted her through the story. Attention was focused on these two students for a large portion of the lesson observed.

**Student to Student Interaction.** Students engaged with one another after the independent silent reading portion was completed. Students shared their sticky notes placed on pages from the story that included their comprehension strategies. Most students started off with their “shoulder partner,” but it was evident that after several minutes, students became disengaged, even building shapes with their sticky notes. Students were required to write the answer to questions from their text about the story on a sheet of loose leaf given by Ms. Pine. While some students attempted to complete this, none completed the assignment during the observation. Noted during the observation was the length of time given to discussion among students. One student attempted to use a black marker and wrote on her hand. Ms. Pine disciplined the student and the student was instructed to begin again and wash their hand. The shoulder partner of the student was uninterested in completing the task. This was evidenced by
the student looking around the classroom the entire time and conversing with another group in close proximity.

Assessment. Two forms of assessment observed included: student sticky notes and teacher observation. In this observation, no group completed the assigned questions. The teacher did observe and discuss sticky notes with most of the students, although the level of understanding by students to use comprehension strategies to assist them in the understanding of the story was not apparent. Some students did write on the sticky notes and place them onto pages in the story as they were reading, however, some of the sticky notes did not contain helpful information for students to strategize their reading approaches.

Classroom Observation: Ms. Pine (School B)

Ms. Pine started the reading lesson by giving praise, “I love the way Michelle is ready to work on reading today.” Then, Ms. Pine said, “We are preparing for the LEAP test and it’s your big game day to showcase all you know.” “In order to win the game, we all need practice, if we didn’t practice what would happen?” A student responded, “Something may go wrong.” Ms. Pine told the students “there is no doubt in my mind that you are going to win.”

“Today’s lesson is going to be a review, a spiral review, using your reading strategies that you have learned because they are important in everything you do,” said Ms. Pine. Ms. Pine instructed students to retrieve their basal textbook from the cubby holes located in the classroom and to look at page 544. “This is an excerpt of the story Because of Winn-Dixie,” stated Ms. Pine. There was a class interruption for class pictures during the observation and students were instructed to line up shortest to tallest.

Upon returning from pictures, Ms. Pine praised students who were ready to continue the lesson. “Let’s review the reading strategies… what are they?” said Ms. Pine. A student
answered, “Compare and Contrast.” Ms. Pine said, “That’s a skill, but what is a strategy?” During the observation Ms. Pine repeatedly ask for the reading strategies and was often answered with a reading skill. Ms. Pine did not define or separate what she meant by reading strategy and reading skill during the lesson, which appeared to confuse students as evidenced by their answers throughout the lesson. Ms. Pine said, “Think of all the reading strategies… things we use to help us understand the story.” Ms. Pine waited. Then, she stated, “I know that we have been focused on writing lately, but let’s regroup our minds and think about reading… what are questions you ask yourself while you are reading… those would be your reading strategies… I’m waiting.” Students did not seem to have a grasp on what Ms. Pine was asking. There were no answers given. Ms. Pine stated her question another way. She said, “Think of the things that help us comprehend better… you may not even realize that you do these things.” A student answered, “Things you do to relate to other things.” Ms. Pine probed by asking, “Give me a name for that?” The student answered, “Connections.” “Yes!” said Ms. Pine. “That’s it… a reading strategy that we use is making connections,” she said. A student offered an example of a time when a dog was found near their home and how it was a connection to the dog being found in the story. Ms. Pine stated, “So, that is a text to self-connection.” Ms. Pine continued asking students for reading strategies. She continued to have to probe students’ thinking for a sustained amount of time to achieve the answers she was seeking. Eventually, Ms. Pine was able to assist students in reaching the targeted reading strategies she wanted students to apply to the text. The reading strategies included: predict, summarizing, inferring, connections, and visualizing.

Ms. Pine said, “Now, in today’s lesson you’ll get some sticky notes and you will ask yourself questions using the reading strategies we just discussed.” “Wherever, you predict,
summarize, visualize, and make connections, write them on your sticky note and place them next to the part that makes you think those things,” she said. “By doing this, it makes you aware of the reading strategies you are using, it’s like writing to the author of the story,” stated Ms. Pine. While students turned to the story page, Ms. Pine handed out the sticky notes. After several students received the sticky notes, these students placed the sticky notes on their noses and mouth. Ms. Pine gave a hand signal for students to be quiet. She asked if students needed a “hand held fake telephone” made out of white PVC pipe. If the student had a raised hand, another student retrieved a white fake phone from the rear of the classroom and brought it around to each person with a raised hand. These were used to assist students who appeared to need subvocalization of the text in order to comprehend the selection. Fifteen of the twenty five students used the devices, but it was more of a disturbance, as some students were trying to read the text silently, and many who had received the fake phone were not using it when they were approximately half way through the story selection. Ms. Pine instructed the students to begin independently reading on their own and not to forget to place the sticky notes on the story pages to assist in remembering the reading strategies used in understanding the story. “When we are done reading the story, we will get with our shoulder partner and discuss the sticky notes along with the text,” said Ms. Pine. Ms. Pine gave three claps and said, “Attention, ready, go!” Students read into the phone prop, some appeared to be skimming the pages, while others actual read independently and wrote on the provided sticky notes. One student did not read the story. It was unclear during the observation for the lack of participation. Ms. Pine did go over to tap the student’s desk at which time he began to appear to read the story and she returned to his desk with a pencil a few moments later.
After allotting twenty minutes to read the story, most students had completed reading the selection. Students who finished earlier than the twenty minutes allotted began looking in notebooks from within their desks, playing with pencils, looking around the classroom, and building shapes with their sticky notes. Ms. Pine mentioned to the finished students to “read a book.” Most students did get a book from their desk. Only two students were noted retrieving a book from a paper bookshelf on top of the cubbies. Ms. Pine passed out a sheet of loose leaf paper to each pair of students. The students were in rows of four with two desk joined and facing the front white board. Ms. Pine said, “Now that we have finished reading, you will discuss your sticky notes with your shoulder partner, when you are finished discussing your sticky notes of your reading strategies that you used to help you understand the story, you are to answer the questions on page 556 and 557 at the end of the story.” Students began discussing with their “shoulder partner.” One pair argued about what should be completed. Ms. Pine motioned for that pair to cease the arguing and begin working on the questions. Ms. Pine did assist one child for a lengthy period of time in the back of the room. The student had attached her pages with sticky notes that contained the reading strategies used to assist her in understanding the selection, but she had notable difficulty engaging with her “shoulder partner.” The student was not able to engage in discussion and had difficulty writing the answers to the questions. Another pair engaged in conversation said, “I have a connection with this because of my grandma’s,” while other pairs had little discussion. Several pairs went right to answering the questions at the end of the story. Ms. Pine did rotate around the classroom, but in short bursts, as two students needed more assistance than other students. Ms. Pine reminded students that the loose leaf paper was for answering the questions, and the sticky notes were to be used in the discussion.
After approximately twenty minutes of discussion and attempting to answer the questions about the selection, some students were notably more engaged in discussion with their “shoulder partners.” However, most students had become disengaged and did not complete the task of answering the questions. One pair was noted as having a black marker in which one student wrote on her hand and partly on the top of the paper not pertaining to the lesson. Ms. Pine approached the student, asked her to clean her hand, and threw the paper away. Ms. Pine gave a class warning by saying, “Sit up straight, and if I have to stop again because the noise level is too loud, or you are off task, you will lose points for fun Friday.” Ms. Pine said, “Sometimes we have to muster up in order get through things we don’t like.” Ms. Pine allotted another fifteen minutes to pass by to complete the task, but no students were noted as completing the assigned questions.” One pair who worked continuously throughout the lesson asked, “Do we have to do number five?” Ms. Pine said, “No.” There was a lack of clear direction given to students during the observation. In concluding the lesson, Ms. Pine said, “1…2…3… all eyes on me!” “It is time for a bathroom break, and PE,” she said. “Please put your loose leaf paper for your pair into your pair folder, we will review the answers and reading strategies tomorrow,” stated Ms. Pine.

Parent Interview: Ms. Pine’s Class (School B)

Educational Background

Ms. Brook is a college graduate working part time.

Common Core

In discussing the CCSS in reading with Ms. Brook, she indicated she was “frustrated” with the way her child is experiencing the CCSS in general. Overall, she explained that her CCSS experience has been “more focused on the math implementation rather than the reading.”
Ms. Brook indicated, “Much of the information I have received about the CCSS in reading has been through homework my child completes nightly, and what I notice is that the worksheets and test have no correlation.” “Although my child has not decreased in her reading achievement based on the tests I see weekly, she isn’t progressing at a faster rate either,” said Ms. Brook. “Another important note from Ms. Brook included the “lack of resources and materials for the CCSS in reading has increased my frustration level too.” “Many teachers are not following a sequential order in reading and I think that causes more confusion with parents and kids,” said Ms. Brook.

Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction

Ms. Brook believes reading instruction should “consist of silent and oral reading, sight word and vocabulary instruction, as well as instruction in comprehension.” In receiving reading instruction, Ms. Brook feels the “use of a reading textbook and other literature” should encompasses a school reading program.

Parent/Teacher Involvement in School Reading Program

Ms. Brook indicated her preference for participation in selecting the reading curriculum. “Because the reading curriculum chosen affects my child, I should have a voice in what they are reading,” she stated. “I believe that if I have a voice in choosing parts of the curriculum, I am better able to help my child at home,” said Ms. Brooks.

Policy Shifts

Ms. Brook said, “Teachers need more information and education before implementing these new reforms in the classroom.” “Teachers need to be able to know what they are implementing before it happens,” she said. “Part of the problem with the CCSS in reading, is the teachers are barely aware of what they are supposed to be doing in order to reach these
standards,” noted Ms. Brook. Ms. Brook suggested, “Teachers need more resources and tools available to assist in the implementation of the new policies.” “Seminars and trainings should be available to teachers,” she stated. “It appears to me the teachers have had little training in the CCSS in reading.” She evidenced this by noting the “lack of order” in the reading curriculum.

**Teacher Evaluation**

Ms. Brook stated, “I am not aware of the evaluation tool in its entirety.” However, she mentioned, “I do understand that my child’s test performance is some indication on how the teacher is instructing.” Ms. Brook said, “I don’t think my child’s test performance should be tied specifically to one teacher, as many teachers have helped her to get to the level of reading that she is now at.” Ms. Brook stated, “That portion I would have to say is unfair.”

**Interview with Ms. Ponds from School B**

**Educational Background/Experience**

Ms. Ponds has been teaching for twenty-three years. Her educational experience encompasses grades kindergarten, first, and fifth. She spent a relatively short period teaching kindergarten and first grade. Most of her classroom experience lies in fifth grade, which she currently teaches. Ms. Ponds graduated from Texas A&M University. She is certified to teach in Texas and Louisiana. Her certification in Texas includes grades one through eight with an add-on for kindergarten. In Louisiana, she is certified in grades one through five.

Ms. Ponds has had training in the *Seven Keys of Comprehension, Response to Intervention* (RTI), *Kagan strategies*, and inclusion.

**Common Core**

In discussing the CCSS in reading with Mrs. Ponds, she believes many fifth graders “can grasp a lot of this (CCSS) better than what is being asked from the CCSS in reading for the lower
She stated, “I don’t know how I would’ve taught this to those kids, and my hat goes off to those teachers, I really don’t know how they are doing it.” However, Ms. Ponds said, “Fifth-grade is a different story.” “Even though this is an inclusion class, and I have a few kids who are reading several grade levels below, I like the fact that the CCSS in reading are rigorous,” noted Ms. Ponds. She indicated, “A change was much needed in the reading curriculum because I felt that students were not being challenged and we were going along with the status quo.” She strongly feels that it is her job to ensure that “kids who are functioning above their reading level, continue to be brought up, as they are going to be future leaders.” “As for the kids who are functioning below grade level in reading, I feel these kids can be brought up in the same setting with the higher functioning readers assisting them as models of good readers,” she stated.

Ms. Ponds spoke about the change of literature used in the CCSS in reading. “I like the fact that it’s 50% nonfiction and 50% fiction,” she stated. She mentioned, “I think a lot of the nonfiction is good, especially because the social studies text and the science texts are difficult and challenging to read at this level.” Therefore, she indicated, “The more nonfiction experience students can encounter at this grade level (5th) the more beneficial it is in helping students read text that is rigorous in other areas.” Ms. Ponds suggested, “The shift in the CCSS in reading places more emphasis on non-fiction text and has been an improvement in raising the level of reading required by students.”

“Last year during the first phase of implementation of the CCSS in reading, was the worst year of my teaching career,” said Ms. Ponds. She mentioned she had known several “excellent” teachers who retired because “it was just too much.” “It was a major shift in what we did in the classroom as reading teachers,” noted Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds mentioned a major problem was not being provided with enough resources for the teachers, students, parents, and
administrators. She said, “The CCSS in reading were rolling out so fast, and there was no time to gather all the new materials, as well as, familiarize yourself with the way these standards needed to be implemented in the classroom properly.” Ms. Ponds pointed out, “It was not necessarily the district’s fault in being behind in trying to deliver training and materials, but it was due to the state’s rapid implementation of such a major shift that left many of us unprepared to meet the demands of the new curriculum.” “It was extremely overwhelming, we just did not have a good grasp on what we were supposed to be doing… it was very unclear,” she said. “The district totally changed the guaranteed curriculum on us and left us with the major task of re-creating everything, which we had already spent hours and hours in collaboration doing the previous year to ensure a smooth transition into the CCSS in reading through the use of the guaranteed curriculum, so it would be easier for teachers,” stated Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds mentioned that this year “the guaranteed curriculum was shifted again to meet the CCSS in reading and what was created last year is no longer available for use.” “The problem has been the constant change, the constant change and the amount of prep time that is needed to prepare all the needed materials to teach, which is lacking.” For example, I was teaching the novel *Sign of the Beaver*, but I was having to copy, cut and paste pages together that were missing from the given lesson plans, or that were incorrect,” she said. Ms. Ponds noted, “This year I haven’t seen as much of an emphasis on non-fiction like the year before, it is frustrating, I just don’t know what is going on.”

However, “This year has been better because everyone took a deep breath and went okay let’s see what we can do,” said Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds shared that one of the first professional developments this year was designed by her school principal to meet with other area middle schools to discuss the CCSS in reading. Ms. Ponds noted that teachers were able to sit in grade
level clusters according to subject matter. “We were able to share our feelings about the CCSS in reading and the guaranteed curriculum, and discuss what was working, what others have done, and what was not working.” said Ms. Ponds. She stated, “It was the best and most helpful professional development I have ever had, because I got to hear that other teachers were frustrated and I was not alone.” Ms. Ponds indicated that teachers were able to share and exchange ideas. She was able to bring back some ideas for classroom implementation. Ms. Ponds noted that the experience had been reassuring because she felt “like I was spinning around in a circle with no way of knowing if what I was doing was in line with what others were doing.” Ms. Ponds said, “I have very high standards for myself and I’m a perfectionist, so I expected to be able to do everything immediately, and when I couldn’t I thought something was wrong with me.”

Ms. Ponds reiterated, “Very little training in the CCSS in reading has been offered.” “I was more fortunate I suppose because I was selected by my school principal to go to Baton Rouge to attend the initial CCSS in reading training,” stated Ms. Ponds. “Unfortunately, it was not very helpful, it left me with more to learn and do in order to be able to articulate the CCSS in reading to my colleagues,” stated Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds indicated that much of her training in the CCSS in reading has come from “YouTube videos of people teaching the CCSS in reading, her own research on what the CCSS in reading are, and looking at how the CCSS in New York are being implemented.”

According to Ms. Ponds, another issue that resides in the CCSS in reading, is the “assumption that kids are already on grade level, and in reality they are not.” Ms. Ponds noted, “CCSS in reading indicate that students should be reading on grade level by the end of the year, and that is going to be impossible for several of my students because they are so far below grade
level.” “I just want to see them have growth,” she said. “I do the STAR testing associated with the *Accelerated Reader* program three times a year just to show their growth, and I’ve already had some kids grow half a grade level and my below level readers growing 1½ grade levels,” mentioned Ms. Ponds.

Ms. Ponds has a mixed ability classroom with both high achieving and low performing students. She noted another difficulty has been in “grouping students for discussion.” Ms. Ponds said, “It’s been very difficult to try to group these kids together to have discussion groups while trying to challenge those who need it, and encourage participation by the lower level readers.” “I don’t want any of the children to be made to feel dumber because these discussion groups demand much higher thinking skills and conversation,” pointed out Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds mentioned, “I have seen more growth with the higher achievers because they understand the CCSS in reading better, and they can participate in the discussions because they bring more to the table with background information and schema.” “What has been helpful for the lower level readers is the use of text based evidence,” she said. “I think that is good because it does provide the lower level reader with the opportunity to participate in the discussion group and interact directly with the text by locating the answer and sharing,” stated Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds suggested, “If the CCSS in reading were implemented with the kindergarten level and moved on through the years, the lower level readers would probably stand a better chance at being successful readers and able to participate in the types of reading that the CCSS in reading is asking of them at the required levels.” She indicated, “Many students will not be able to achieve the growth targets in the CCSS in reading, and it is not all their fault.” Ms. Ponds is eager and curious “to see what happens with these kids coming up,” but stated that she is “worried about gaps in reading skills because many skills are not being taught, and students are just expected to
know these things.” Ms. Ponds has “concerns” about the questions being asked from the CCSS in reading. She said, “Some of these reading questions are crazy, and I even had trouble answering them because they are at a really high level.” “While I appreciate the rigor, sometimes it’s a little too much,” noted Ms. Ponds.

**Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction**

Ms. Ponds stated, “The pendulum is always swinging in reading instruction.” “When I first started out teaching, it was whole language and I detest whole language,” she said. “I was raised on phonics, straight phonics… and by golly I could decode a word like there was no tomorrow!” she said. However, Ms. Ponds mentioned that when she came through college and began her teaching career it was all whole language. “I was trying my hardest not to do it, but I had to because I was teaching first grade at the time and that was what was implemented,” stated Ms. Ponds. “I have a sister who was a junior in high school, and she had gone through the whole language program, she had no idea what verbs or nouns were!” she said. “I can remember teaching things to her as a junior in high school by going back to my first and second grade foundational reading and language arts set up for teaching the parts of speech, and she had no grasp on it!” she said. Ms. Ponds indicated that she was “delighted when whole language was thrown out.” “Then, we moved to centers and back to phonics, and literature circles,” stated Ms. Ponds. “I like literature circles because everyone has a job and people can’t just check out, they have to be actively participating,” suggested Ms. Ponds. “I like thinking maps and flexible grouping too,” she stated. Ms. Ponds is a proponent of flexible grouping and mentioned that her students “know that their reading groups are always changing.” Ms. Ponds included that she “incorporates thinking maps” into her reading instruction, as well as, “literacy stations.” She said, “I do lots of cooperative grouping and its working better now.” “It was difficult at first,
because I have had to do a lot of teaching on how to participate in a cooperative/discussion group, such as what is it supposed to look like?” she stated. “I have given students coach questions and roles for working in their groups so everybody knows what to do,” she said. Ms. Ponds included, “I’ve got behavior strips that they have passed out so everybody has to be responsible for their behavior, in addition to being responsible for their group.” Ms. Ponds suggested that these groups now work well, but indicated that the “training of students”, in the groups has been a “long process.” She feels that it has “definitely been beneficial for students and enhanced reading instruction because students are now able to use sentence starters appropriately and have learned how to disagree with someone in the appropriate way.” “I have seen growth in their speaking ability, as I had one child who didn’t talk very much, who was struggling to participate in group activities and discussion, and recently I actually saw him pull out his novel and say to another group member that the answer was incorrect, because he referred back to the text… my jaw just dropped because it was so unlike him,” said Ms. Ponds. “I can finally see his comfort level coming out and he feels that his words are now important and what he is thinking can be heard, and that’s the part that I like about cooperative/ discussion groups,” indicated Ms. Ponds.

As much as Ms. Ponds suggested she likes the cooperative/discussion groups, she knows that students still need reading instruction at this level. “I would structure a reading program in several steps,” she said. “First, I would offer a dyslexia program in the school, I am shocked that we don’t have a dyslexia program here and I have several kids in my room that I know are dyslexic.” “In College Station, TX we had a dyslexia program,” she said. Ms. Ponds recalled a time when she had five kids go through the dyslexia program in College Station, and all five were identified as dyslexic. Ms. Ponds said, “I wanted to be a dyslexia teacher and we don’t
have anything for those kids, they are just expected to roll along.” “I am not trained to teach children who are dyslexic, as they need a complete retraining of their brain,” suggested Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds stated, “I don’t have the tools or the training to do that.”

Ms. Ponds suggested more co-teaching with teachers who could address special needs in the classroom. “I would have more co-teaching in the reading program because I like working with the special education teacher,” she said. Ms. Ponds indicated, “Even though I can modify and accommodate things for the students in reading, I need help with my students that are performing well below their reading level.” “I think having the co-teacher in the same classroom setting is beneficial to the students because they can see what good readers do, yet be able to be pulled for more intense instruction, and offered different reading material as needed,” suggested Ms. Ponds.

Lastly, Ms. Ponds would include “modeling of reading strategies” across all grade levels. She indicated it is important for students to see their teacher incorporating the reading strategies that are being taught in the classroom. “For example, I am reading two different types of texts, Reciprocal Teaching, and Games of Thrones, I discuss with my students every day the different strategies I have to incorporate in order to gain understanding from the text,” stated Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds suggested that modeling was a “powerful tool in showing students how they will continue to use and need these reading strategies to decipher different types of text they encounter.” In explaining her thoughts, Ms. Ponds suggested that a reading program should include both “student selected reading material and teacher selected reading material.” She feels that “more student selection should occur, but with the CCSS in reading tied to testing, many of us (teachers) are unsure of how to implement student choices for text.” “Unfortunately, the
CCSS in reading are dictating the kind of text that needs to be covered in order to do well on the test, leaving little student involvement in the selection of text,” she stated.

**Parental/Teacher Involvement in the School Reading Program**

Ms. Ponds said, “I think teachers should definitely be involved in the school reading program.” “I have been a part of a writing team for the guaranteed curriculum in reading for fifth grade, which has enabled me to be in contact with a lot of teachers about what they think should be included in the reading curriculum,” stated Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds indicated that she enjoys being known as a “pioneer” in reading by her principal. She was the presenter at her school for the initial roll out of the CCSS in reading and was glad to be involved in delivering the information as a well-respected reading educator at her school. However, she suggested, “More teachers need to be included in attending meetings about reading and implementing new standards.” Ms. Ponds suggested, “New policy changes should include time for teachers to incorporate it into their teaching style, as well as, time factored in for preparation of locating materials and organizing them for instruction.”

Ms. Ponds stated, “I think parents should be involved to an extent.” Although she did not think they should create the reading curriculum. “At this school we have programs like Achieve 3000, which is an online program based on lexile levels that can be accessed at school and home,” she said. “These programs are interactive and the parents can see exactly the kinds of things that are expected of their child in reading,” stated Ms. Ponds. However, Ms. Ponds did indicate, “I do not believe that parents or most parents can make a recommendation for a reading curriculum that would be beneficial for the majority of the students because they don’t possess the professional knowledge needed to make curriculum decisions for a wide variety of student levels.”
Policy Shifts

In discussing policy shifts in regard to reading instruction, Ms. Ponds suggested a “slower implementation time frame.” “The CCSS in reading were just thrown out at us and it was extremely overwhelming,” she said. “I think the state is trying to slow it down now, and I appreciate that because I just felt like I was thrown out to the wolves where no one was listening to what I had to say,” noted Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds mentioned, “There were not enough resources available for teachers to properly implement the CCSS in reading, it just did not exist.” Ms. Ponds did indicate the purchase of novels by the district for reading were “helpful, but more resources and materials were needed for the teachers to successfully implement the CCSS in reading the way the standards were designed.” Ms. Ponds noted, “English/Language Arts teachers needed time to collaborate, and create things that could be useful in transitioning to the new standards.” “I feel a major factor in policy change is the lack of preparation time they gave to us,” mentioned Ms. Ponds. “Most people just do not understand the massive amount of time that goes into prepping for these lessons, especially because they are new for all of us,” stated Ms. Ponds. Besides the lack of time for preparation, Ms. Ponds offered, “I constantly have to spend time reading about the policy shifts because the implementation was so fast, I did not have enough time to dig into what was really expected of me and the students I teach.” Once again, Ms. Ponds reiterated, “They (state) needed to go slower, so that we would be able to adapt and re-create ourselves into this new style of teaching that was required with the standard changes in reading.” “Understanding what the reading standards were about and how to implement them in a way that fits each teacher’s teaching style was not thought about,” she said. Ms. Ponds feels, “There was no thought behind how to best implement the new ideas into the existing curriculum, if there was, much stress could have been avoided with more time and collaboration given to the
teachers.” Ms. Ponds indicated, “These standards are very encompassing, and I’m only responsible for ELA and social studies, but I have several people on my hallway that are self-contained… one of them has lost so much weight that it frightens me.” “We have teachers that are just constantly spinning in circles trying to keep up with all of the changes in all of the subjects from the CCSS and that is totally impossible,” stated Ms. Ponds. “All I know is I teach ELA and social studies and just that has me overwhelmed, so I really feel for the teachers who are trying to incorporate all of it,” she said.

**Teacher Evaluation**

Ms. Ponds did indicate that the teacher evaluation tool has changed her belief(s) and attitude(s) about reading instruction. She said, “I would be silly if I said no.” Ms. Ponds is bothered by the fact that “half of my rating will be based on student performance.” She feels it would be “more appropriate to look at the yearly progress of students with a cumulative performance for teachers.” “It’s one thing to look at my kid’s progress throughout the school year based on what they have done in the classroom, but it is another thing to look at it from how they perform on the iLEAP test,” she said. She mentioned, “The class ability varies greatly and students have a number of personal issues from test anxiety to medical needs.” Ms. Ponds was relieved to find out that the test will not be timed this year, which she feels may help students score better, and improve her evaluation score. “I have always thought time constraints were not appropriate for this grade level (5th) because it’s not how fast you can read, but how you decipher what you are reading on your own by using the tools that have been taught, and timing hampers students’ ability to do that effectively, at least that is what I have experienced with students,” she said. Ms. Ponds did indicate that with the “time constraints lifted this year, more focus will be directed to student learning targets (SLT) rather than value added measurement (VAM).” “I
know they are currently trying to revamp the VAM scoring on the evaluation area that focuses on student test scores, and I appreciate that because I don’t think it has been fair,” noted Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds mentioned the other portion of the evaluation is based on two classroom observations from the principal. She said, “That doesn’t always say everything you have done every day all year long either… I know they are working on improving that right now too, I feel like I’m in a hamster wheel and running faster because there is so much more that I have to prepare my students for in reading to feel like a successful teacher.” Ms. Ponds noted, “Even though my score on the evaluation tool is important to me, I realize that it is what I have done to help my kids grow in their ability to read that really counts, not some score.” Ms. Ponds knows that some type of evaluation tool has to be in place for teachers, but she stated, “It needs to be along the lines of a more cumulative of approach rather than the Danielson Rubric currently in place. “I have always prided myself on the classroom management present in my classroom, and I was scored the lowest on the rubric in that area,” she said. “This is so ridiculous to me, and I know it’s not my principal’s fault, it’s the way this rubric is worded,” she stated. “For my observation lesson, I did a discussion group with the text that was nonfiction and students had to retrieve a bucket with the materials needed to complete the activity, so a smooth transition between the lesson instruction and activity could occur, but according to the Danielson Rubric, the kids were supposed to get all their own materials ready, and basically run the classroom,” said Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds indicated that this was “contradictory to all the training” she received in her education classes, and “wasted time in the lesson for both the students and teacher.” “Of course, my kids do their own lunch choices and morning routines, but to assemble all the materials needed to complete an activity is absurd, I would have to keep stopping because one kid may say I don’t have a pencil, I can’t find my scissors, I need this, and I don’t have everything… I want them to
be self-sufficient, but to the extent the rubric is asking the kids to be responsible for lesson material, is just ridiculous,” stated Ms. Ponds. These are the things that Ms. Ponds suggest need revision.

“More professional development for understanding the tool should be addressed too,” she said. “There have been too many unknowns in this whole process and a lot of discomfort could have been avoided with proper training,” indicated Ms. Ponds. “When I taught in Texas, we had a lot more training on everything from teaching, to testing, to evaluation and I haven’t seen that here until recently, and maybe it’s because more teachers are being evaluated on test performance which is driving everyone to become more aware of all the factors in the teacher evaluation tool,” stated Ms. Ponds.

**Grand Tour**

Ms. Pond’s classroom was located in the main red brick school building. Upon entrance into School B a long corridor was visible with hallways branching to the right. Ms. Pond’s classroom was in the second hall on the right and was the third door on the left.

Ms. Pond’s classroom was painted a pale green and was very stimulating. The first notable thing about Ms. Pond’s classroom was the green banners that hung from corner to corner criss crossing the room. Under each section of green banner, was a collection of student desks grouped in four to six. The room was quite congested and students did not move from their specified desk groupings except to retrieve a book from the classroom library, access a small sofa in a section of the classroom for reading, or file test papers in a bin at the back of the classroom. There was no large floor space available in the classroom. Above each group was a “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle” suspended from the ceiling with a specific colored bandana across the eyes of the turtle. Once the classroom door was open, the back wall to the left of the
open door contained a large storage cabinet, cabinets above hanging hooks, and counter space with a sink and water fountain. Above the cabinets, boxes labeled for the seasons were shelved. There was a green bulletin board labeled “Book Genre,” with a street sign above the bulletin board stating, “Aggies A&M Ave.” Next to the sink and water fountain, a small white refrigerator and microwave sat on the counter space. On the far wall, were two sets of cubby holes between a window space. The cubbies closest to the sink and water fountain, contained student texts and folders while the top portion was used to house classroom library bins with an assortment of novels in each. On the wall above the cubby holes was a poster depicting the writing process. To the right of the poster was a set of shelves. The shelf unit contained four shelves each with a variety of reading resources and materials, such as student copies of a thesaurus, color coded non-fiction books, and student dictionaries. Above the shelf sat a globe. Next to the shelf was a large centered window overlooking green space. Sitting below the window were two air conditioning units. A small plastic two shelf storage space was in the middle of the air conditioning units, while a two-seater sofa sits faced the window. The shelves contained reading material including cassette tapes with books inside clear plastic holders.

During the observation the students were able to self-select text from the classroom library both on the shelf and in the cubby area. Some students had notable difficulty in selecting a text and required teacher assistance during the observation. Book levels were noted on the outside of the classroom library bins to assist students in choosing a book in their reading range, students did not appear to note the book levels when self-selecting books. The books appeared old with a yellowish tinge on most pages. Students were able to navigate to the sofa and use it while reading silently. Along the windowsill were rubber chickens that had been individually decorated. The top portion of the window blinds were open, while the bottom portion was closed.
during the observation. To the right of the sofa and along the outer wall was another set of cubby holes used to store student text and folders. The surface above the cubby holes was clear. On the wall above the clear space, a set of small posters containing “comprehension strategies” were hung. They included: inferring, determining importance, synthesizing, and sensory images. It was not apparent how these strategies were actually implemented by the students during the observation. To the right of the outer wall was the front classroom wall. This wall housed a long board in the center with bulletin boards on each side. In the center of the board was a smart board which was not utilized by the teacher until the end of the lesson. A small portion of blackboard was exposed with a chart of groups posted. When groups were on-task and following teacher commands, the teacher awarded points. Students marked the appropriate chart for their group with tally marks. It is apparent that there was a group leader, since every time the teacher awarded points the same student made the tallies. The green and blue bulletin board to the left of the smart board was labeled “Star Points.” Although the words did not appear to make a connection with the postings. The postings included three columns. The first column on the left included, there=here, their=our, they’re=they are, effect=noun, affect=verb. The middle column of the bulletin board included, too=so, also, two=three, to=so, also, three (there was something written above this particular label, but it was unable to be noted during the observation). The third column included, where=here, were=are, who=he/she. Under the columns near the bottom of the bulletin board were two charts titled, “Homework Heroes and Conduct Crusaders.” It was not clear how students earned their names on either of the charts during the observation period. On the other side of the smart board, the green bulletin board contained a poster displaying “Noise Levels.” Noted on the bulletin board were several miscellaneous pieces of paper stapled, including teacher reminders about school dates and so forth. In front of the bulletin board was a
small teacher desk with a computer facing the opposite wall of the classroom. The teacher did access the computer during the observation to take attendance. Next, to the small desk was a table with a document camera which the teacher utilized at the end of the lesson to review the answers to the text dependent questions. The desk was cluttered with a variety of papers that could not be accessed during the observation. Behind the small teacher desk, was the inside classroom wall. Directly along the inside wall on the far left were two computers which were not on during the observation. However, two students did approach the teacher during the observed lesson and inquire about taking an Accelerated Reader test, which the teacher denied. Along the inside classroom wall was a long white board where specific assignments for homework were written. Above the white board was the cursive alphabet. In front of the white board, the actual teacher’s desk was located with a brown rolling chair behind it. The observation was completed from this vantage point. The desk included a desk calendar and several teacher handbooks. The inside classroom wall contained library pockets with lunch cards according to student name. Students moved their own lunch cards, and were able to access bathroom passes located next to the library pockets. A small wooden shelf sat below the lunch cards and contained an electronic pencil sharpener, bins of markers, scissors, and crayons. The students did access crayons/colored pencils during the observation. Overall, the classroom appeared to be a bit small and cramped for the number of students (28) limiting space in which movement could occur.

**Mini Tour**

**Teacher Instruction.** Ms. Ponds began the lesson by instructing students to get out the passage about rainbows from the previous day. She explained to students that they would need all four pages including the text dependent questions and diagram page. Ms. Ponds also
instructed students to have colored pencils on their desk to be used for circling and noting information from the passage and correcting answers if needed.

Ms. Ponds started the lesson by having students recall how to organize the text passage to better assist students in understanding the text. Mentioned by Ms. Ponds were: numbering paragraphs, doing annotations, underlining things of importance, circling things not understood, and notes on the side, all which students completed in a prior lesson not observed. Ms. Ponds referred to notes on the side as “tracks in the snow.” She said, “All paragraphs should have tracks in the snow because it shows me that you are deciphering the text for understanding.”

Then Ms. Ponds held up a book she was reading and explained to students, “At times we have to read things that we cannot select ourselves.” She explained to the students, “When we are unable to select our own text to read, then we have to be extra careful about paying attention to what we are reading.” She gave examples of how her mind “wanders off” when she is reading the uninteresting parts of the book and showed students how she uses the same “tracks in the snow” strategy to keep her mind focused on what she is reading.

Students were instructed to read the selection again and finish the box questions she had on the back of one of the worksheets. She reminded students to “activate their schema on rainbows to assist in completing the task.” At a later point in the lesson, after completing the boxes, Ms. Ponds handed out text dependent questions for each student. These were previously completed, but she instructed students that they would be in “discussion groups to defend if their answers were correct or needed to change based on the group discussion and evidence from the text.” Upon completing the text dependent activity, Ms. Ponds discussed the answers with the students by using the document camera.
Ms. Ponds ended the lesson by reminding students to use comprehension strategies as in this lesson, to assist them with the upcoming iLEAP test.

**Teacher/Student Interaction.** Ms. Ponds interacted with all groups in the activity. She used humor during interaction which appeared to be comforting to most. Ms. Ponds spent the most time with one group in particular. While assisting that group, Ms. Ponds had to do a large amount of re-teaching in order to assist the students in engaging with the text. In the end, the group did complete the activity, but with a number of errors. The other students in the classroom did discuss in their groups with limited engagement from Ms. Ponds. It was noted that because a large portion of the activity time was with one group, most students became disengaged in the text-dependent activity. The one group receiving the most assistance from Ms. Ponds did appear to display a lower level of reading ability as compared to the other students in the classroom.

**Student to Student Interaction.** Students engaged with one another by sharing their written answers in their boxes, as well as, some discussion about the text-dependent questions. Group two, which was situated in the front of the smart board participated the most, while Group three, located in front of the teacher’s desk needed the most assistance. Students worked quietly on some parts, even though they were supposed to be discussing text dependent answers. Group four in the back of the room, composed of two girls and two boys were on and off task at various times through the lesson. At one point they were touching each other’s arms to see how much hair each had. It appeared that for most students the amount of time given was more than necessary. Group five consisting of three girls and one boy did hair flipping contests. When Ms. Ponds noted student’s behavior she re-directed them to complete the group work or get a book. When several students walked to the book bins to select a book, many just engaged in further chatting and giggling. It was apparent that many students did not engage in selecting text
appropriately because they appeared to pick any book and sit down. However, Group two completed the tasks given, as well as, having the most participation in conversation without teacher assistance. They debated about the questions and even convinced one student to change his answer based on text evidence that another group member displayed. Overall, students did not seem interested in the lesson, or remain on task for any length of time. It was noted by the observer that this was a cold text read on a scientific topic that contained no title, which appeared to have hampered some students in engaging in discussion, with one another.

Assessment. In assessing students understanding of the cold text read on rainbows, Ms. Ponds reviewed the box questions first, and then projected the text dependent questions based question onto the smart board using the document camera. Ms. Ponds led the discussion of each question and answer. She underlined specific words to show students how to break apart the question and read each answer choice. Ms. Ponds reminded the students that some questions had two parts with both parts required to be in the answer. She completed all the questions with students. When a student circled the wrong answer on the sheet, she engaged in discussion about what the student was thinking and how to think differently to obtain the correct answer. This was done for three students. In closing, it was not clear if Ms. Ponds would be collecting the box questions and text dependent questions for a grade because she instructed students to put the papers inside their green folder.

Classroom Observation: Ms. Ponds (School B)

Ms. Pond’s class was entering the room from P.E. The students organized their daily materials from their school bags onto the classroom hooks in the back of the classroom and stored items into their desks. Ms. Ponds took attendance on the computer, as she instructed the students to place their test folders in the test folder bin according to their name in the back of the
classroom. Then, Ms. Ponds proceeded to visit each student’s desk checking a number of papers. Each student received a check next to their name if they had the proper papers on their desk. One student explained that he did not have his because he could not locate them. Ms. Ponds said, “Do I need to call Grandma?” The student said, “Yes.” Ms. Ponds said, “I gave you a second sheet like this already, let’s try to look for it first.” Ms. Ponds moved onto the next desk.

Ms. Ponds was full of enthusiasm and humor as she bounded through the classroom checking student work and engaging in conversation with several students. “Table points” were awarded to tables where everyone had completed their work. Ms. Ponds said, “Table two and three go to the board and put tally marks.” Later she included tables one and five for table points. After Ms. Ponds says “table points,” a student goes to the white board in front of the classroom next to the smart board and marks a tally mark under their group number. It appears there is a designated student from each table that marks the tallies, as the same person always marked the tallies for that group during the observation.

After checking student work, Ms. Ponds had students put the checked work back into a folder. She instructed students to read silently while several students remained in a line in the back of the classroom to file their test paper folders into a specified bin on the counter next to the sink. Although Ms. Ponds had directed students to read silently, some were talking, giggling, and several did nothing. One student was showing a snack to another student during this time. Mrs. Ponds said, “I appreciate the students who are following directions.” As she was speaking, she handed out some type of green ticket to students who were on task. During the observation it was not evident what the tickets were used for, however, it appeared that students prized the tickets because many refocused their attention quickly. One student stated, “I could not read a
book because I missed library yesterday.” Ms. Ponds said, “You know we have many books in the classroom bins, you could have picked one from there.”

Ms. Ponds began instruction for the reading lesson by asking students to retrieve their reading strategies paper and iLEAP practice selection. Students shuffled through many papers trying to locate the exact materials from their folders. After a few minutes, Ms. Ponds held up both of the pages she was looking for and asked students to get colored pencils. “Please choose orange, red, purple, or another light color… but nothing too dark.” Students shuffled around the room to a shelf to gather the colored pencils while some had the pencils in their desk. The first table ready received table points. Ms. Ponds said, “Today, we will review iLEAP practice from yesterday.” “Do you remember our reading strategies?” she said. “Can someone please volunteer them for us?” stated Ms. Ponds. A student volunteered, “Numbered paragraphs, so it’s easier to find information.” Another student answered, “Annotations.” Another stated, “Underlining important things and circling things that I don’t understand.” And another class member said, “Putting notes on the side.” Ms. Ponds said, “Very good…Remember that we star things in our annotations too, and leave notes on the side…What do we call that?” A student answered, “It’s called leaving tracks in the snow.” Ms. Ponds said, “That is correct, we don’t want our paper to look all nice and pretty… we want to leave tracks in the snow, so that we can make sure we understand what we have read, keeping us from rereading the same passage over and over.” Ms. Ponds showed the class a book she is reading called Reciprocal Teaching. She told students that she sometimes has to read things that she “doesn’t select herself,” and “when that is the case, I can get bored and lose my interest.” She told the students, “I have to use my reading strategies to help me understand the book I am reading, like this one (she points to the Reciprocal Teaching book). “Look inside this book and see how I have highlighted things, and
left tracks in the snow?” she said. Ms. Ponds stated, “I had to use my comprehension strategies actively, partly because I didn’t get to choose what I wanted to read, so I have to pay more attention to reading this (Reciprocal Teaching) than I do my Games of Thrones book,” she said. Ms. Ponds instructed students, “On the back of your page there are some boxes that will assist you in using your reading strategies.” “Look at the box titled inference, what is an inference?” she asked. A student answered, “An inference is a prediction about what is going to happen.” “That’s correct,” said Ms. Ponds. “Now, let’s make sure we know how to activate our schema,” she stated. Ms. Ponds gave an example about using a program she watched to assist her in understanding smoke she saw rising from a wooded area on her way home from work the day before. “I was watching Dead Man Walking, and I learned that black smoke rising means the fire is still burning, while white smoke rising indicates the fire is out, so when I saw the smoke in the sky, I suddenly remembered what the show said about smoke… I knew the area where the smoke was coming from was marsh, so I realized it must have been a marsh fire that was still burning because the smoke was black…see how I used my schema to assist me in figuring out what was happening?” she said. “That is exactly what I need you to do when you activate your comprehension strategies,” said Ms. Ponds. “Look at the second and third box questions about what we read yesterday, you will put your answers there,” noted Ms. Ponds. “In the vocabulary box, put any words you may have had an issue with, or that you think a younger child may need help to learn,” she said. Ms. Ponds said, “In the WOW! box, write something interesting you want to share about this passage, and in box six draw an image you could use to assist you in understanding this passage.” Then, Ms. Ponds walked around the room while students worked on the boxes. She said, “Remember, you’re using the passage that we read yesterday about rainbows to assist you in completing the boxes on the back of your page.” “This will help you
understand what you have read so, that in a few minutes when we do text dependent questions you will have something to assist you,” suggested Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds walked around the room and met with each group to look over their box questions. Students were given about ten minutes to complete this activity. One group was noted in needing more help than others. This group may have been the below level readers Ms. Ponds referred to in the interview. An interruption during the lesson was recorded. It was resolved by having students attend drama club at a later time in the day.

“Attention everyone, look at box seven, it says we have to put a title… remember the title for this selection was not given so, after reading and completing the other boxes, think of a good title for this selection,” instructed Ms. Ponds. “All right time is up, let’s share what we put in a few of these boxes,” said Ms. Ponds. The students shared their pictures, some included a picture of a flashlight, a rainbow, and raindrops; while others just had a rainbow. Students also were encouraged to share what they wrote in the box labeled “inference.” A student said, “I knew this was going to be about rainbows because when I read the first paragraph of the selection it said something about rainbows.”

Ms. Ponds said, “Now, we will move on to answering text dependent questions on our own, so be sure to pay attention to what the questions are asking and remember you can find them in the text.” She said, “How will we approach answering these questions?” A student said, “Read each question and circle clue words.” Ms. Ponds said, “How do we prove or justify our answers?” A student responded, “To justify we look back in the passage and circle the words we think would help us.” “Ok, and how do you show the answers?” asked Ms. Ponds. “By bagging and tagging,” several students belted out. “Bagging and tagging means that we box it in, then put Q 22 and Q 23 which is the tagging part, so we know that this goes with question 22 and 23,”
answered a student. “Next to each question, what else can you put?” asked Ms. Ponds. A student replied, “P and S, so that you know which paragraph and sentence to look at to find the answer.” “Good job,” said Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds told students ten minutes would be given to complete the text dependent questions. The time frame was inadequate for most students and more time had to be allocated for sufficient completion of the activity. Students did work in discussion groups. Students were somewhat some engaged in short conversations about the text, but there were spurts of time where students were disengaged. Several students began eating snacks, but it was noted in the observation that this may have been an everyday occurrence because several students ate snacks and were not reprimanded. Ms. Ponds did walk around the entire lesson to assist students individually and as groups. However, she spent most of her time with one group which appeared to have the most difficulty in reading the text. This is one of the reasons the time frame for answering the questions was extended. As Ms. Ponds was assisting this group, she told the remaining students, “When you are finished answering questions, please get out a book and read.” Students did appear to some extent to read other selections located in their desk or the classroom book bins, however, several walked to the reading bins and chose a random book. It did not appear that students paid any attention to book levels or make a selection that was interesting to them. This was evidenced by students who consistently kept getting up and switching books, and flipping through the pages of a novel rather quickly while looking around the room giggling. Noted in this observation was the selection of books in the classroom library bins. These books were labeled by book level, but had torn covers and yellow tinted pages. While Mrs. Ponds continued to assist one group in particular, another group had a hair flipping contest while another was feeling the hair on their arms to find out how much hair each group member had.
Ms. Ponds told students time was up. She said, “What can we do to assist us in understanding the questions?” Once again student responses included annotations, looking back at the text, and tracks in the snow. Ms. Ponds pointed out that “eliminating answers” is also helpful. One student shared, “The hard part was bagging and tagging, I was confused and actually the bag turned out to be the entire paragraph.” Mrs. Ponds said, “Okay, as long as you don’t do that for every question.” Mrs. Ponds called attention back to the lesson by saying, “Teenage Mutant.” Students replied, “Ninja turtles.” She turned on the document camera with a photo of the questions reflected on the smart board. She asked, “How do you think you did as a group?” The groups responded, “Better.” Ms. Ponds asked, “Why?” A group responded, “Because it’s important to listen to others’ opinions and why they think they chose the right answer.” “Good job,” said Ms. Ponds. Ms. Ponds reviewed the questions on the smart board modeling how to read the questions and underline important words in the questions and answers. Students shared their answers and reasoning with the class and Ms. Ponds added in comments and suggestions as needed. In closing, Ms. Ponds instructed students to put away the papers in their green folder, while using “football huddle” volume to get ready for vocabulary workshop.

Parent Interview: Ms. Ponds Class (School B)

Educational Background

Ms. Green is a college graduate and is currently working part time.

Common Core

Ms. Green indicated that her children love to read. However, with the CCSS in reading she noted, “If you are a quick, high level learner and have the basics of the subject matter down, you will do okay, but if you are struggling and have trouble learning new concepts quickly, you will be unsuccessful in the current curriculum.” “The CCSS in reading does not give students
the opportunity to master reading lessons needed for improving and achieving the expectations being set forth,” stated Ms. Green. “The teachers my twins had last year and this year are only able to touch on the reading skills and quickly move onto the next text selection,” she said. Ms. Green mentioned that she has noticed less “creative thinking” involved in answering comprehension questions. “My sons are now being taught to read for correct answers by citing directly from the text,” noted Ms. Green. “The CCSS in reading has failed in allowing my sons to express their thoughts freely because everything has to be answered word for word,” stated Ms. Green.

“The implementation of the CCSS in reading at my children’s grade level has been implemented in a way that the teachers teach only certain lessons from reading textbooks, and then jump to a novel that is unrelated,” said Ms. Green. Ms. Green mentioned that the novels are “so picked apart and by the time they are finished reading it, the enjoyment of reading is lost and comprehension is of little importance compared to doing a text analysis and having the same thought processes as your classmates in order to make sure the questions can be answered exactly the same way.”

The reading progress of my children has not changed. “I work with my sons on a regular basis outside of the classroom and it has taken a lot of time to go over reading concepts that they didn’t learn because of the quick change to the CCSS, or for some skills they just haven’t fully grasped yet,” said Ms. Green. “I do not know what a parent with a struggling reader must be doing… I imagine it must very difficult, and I’m sure the parent could be easily frustrated in trying to assist their child because the reading is all over the place,” she said. Ms. Green noted, “Some children just do not have the same level of parental involvement in their child’s education either, and I don’t know how those children will keep up with reading progress.” “Since the
implementation of the CCSS in reading, I have seen an increase in my assistance level to my sons in reading, either I am reviewing a reading concept, or trying to teach them a skill that somehow was left untaught in the transition to CCSS in reading, which has been frustrating,” noted Ms. Green.

Belief(s)/Attitude(s) About Reading Instruction

Ms. Green believes reading instruction should include: phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, constructive response skills, and an introduction to the various styles of writing. Ms. Green said, “More time is needed on mastering these reading lessons before moving on to exploring literature in depth.” “All of the sudden the children today are expected to learn quickly and to move onto the next lesson,” she stated. Ms. Green feels that many students at the 5th grade level, “have not mastered all the skills of reading needed to do the requirements of the CCSS in reading.” Ms. Green indicated, “The basics of reading have not been fully understood therefore, children are not going to be able to master reading.”

“A reading program has to be structured on the child’s level of learning with a focus of mastering the basics before proceeding to the next level,” noted Ms. Green. “Most children are reading words in these novels, and that they don’t understand them because they have little knowledge of how to figure out a word to determine its meaning,” said Ms. Green. She indicated, “I think that is a big loss in helping children to learn and understand from their reading experience.”

Parental/Teacher Involvement in the School Reading Program

Ms. Green said, “Parents should definitely have a say when it comes to particular books that are being read in the classroom.” Ms. Green bases her comment on her recent experience with the selection of novels used in reading instruction by her sons’ reading teacher. Ms. Green
indicated that the novels chosen have not included considerations about the “maturity of students” with some material “not appropriate for the age of the reader.” “I am not sure of the level of teacher input on choosing the reading selections, but the novel selection was not the best,” she said. She feels teachers should be “very involved in the selection of instructional reading materials.” She said, “These (teachers) are the people working with students on a daily basis and can make the best choices for reading instruction.” “I think a lot of pressure on teachers could have been avoided this year if parents would have been notified about the changes to the reading program and what was going to be read,” stated Ms. Green. “I didn’t have a problem with the reading stories in the textbook, this is actually the first year that I have had to challenge the teacher on a novel that was being read in class,” she said. “I want more involvement in the reading curriculum because I want to protect my children from certain language and undertones a story may convey,” noted Ms. Green.

Policy Shifts

Ms. Green indicated that policy shifts could be better handled if they were implemented at “an earlier grade level, preferably first grade.” She also believes that in order for policy changes to occur properly, “Teachers should have the proper materials and tools to understand the changes.” “I have asked several questions about the CCSS in reading and I have never received the same answer twice!” she said. “Teachers not only need the materials in a timely fashion, but most importantly need time to plan for the instructional reading purposes,” stated Ms. Green. Ms. Green indicated, “Expectations need to be clearly communicated to the teachers, so that they can clearly and effectively communicate those to the parents and students.” Ms. Green noted, “One of the challenges of the CCSS in reading has been the lack of knowledge about these standards from the administration and teachers.” “There is notably more negativity
with teachers now than in the past, and I think it is because so much confusion exist about these new standards with little justification about the best way to help students be successful with them.”

**Teacher Evaluation**

Ms. Green believes “all teachers should be evaluated.” She mentioned, “I have been very fortunate with the teachers that my twin sons have had during their time in school.” She stated, “I do not know a lot about how the teacher evaluation is taking place, but I am aware that my sons know that their teacher is being evaluated on a regular basis.” Ms. Green mentioned this has caused “unneeded stress” on her children. “I assume because the teacher is stressed and talking about it to the students the students are taking on more of a role in the evaluation process,” she said. “I don’t think that is right, I think the teachers should be evaluated on the way that they deliver the instruction to the students,” said Ms. Green. “It is as much the student’s and parent’s responsibility to ensure reading progress takes place,” she said. “With added emphasis on teacher evaluation, I feel like it takes away from the real learning process that should be resulting in helping student’s attain better results,” noted Ms. Green.

**Cross Case Analysis**

After careful analysis of the interviews and classroom observations, a return to the research question focusing on the comparison and contrasts of the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) relating to the CCSS in reading emerged between the teachers, parents and administrators. The cross case analysis summarizes the data between each group. The six groups of analysis included: administrator to administrator, administrators to teachers, administrators to parents, teachers to teachers, teachers to parents, and parents to parents.
Administrator School A (Mrs. Lake) and Administrator School B (Dr. Woods). In comparing and contrasting both administrators, Mrs. Lake (School A: 1-3) and Dr. Woods, (School B: 4-6) several similar themes about the CCSS in reading emerged. First, Mrs. Lake and Dr. Woods believe that the CCSS in reading are rigorous, challenging and needed for today’s students in order to progress at a rate that will produce future contributing members of society.

However, the difference between Mrs. Lake and Dr. Woods lies in how to instruct the current population of students in achieving reading success. Mrs. Lake believes strongly in a phonics based program for reading instruction, “Particularly because the lower elementary (1-3) needs more instruction on letters and sounds to build the vocabulary necessary for reading words.” Mrs. Lake believes the CCSS in reading are “not sequential or developmentally appropriate” for the students at her school.

Dr. Woods believes in a “hands-on” approach to reading that includes “teacher modeling” of reading strategies. As Dr. Woods indicated in his interview, “At this level (4-6) we are shifting from learning to read, to reading to learn.” Dr. Woods stated, “The CCSS in reading have spiraled upwards from grade level to grade level which shows the cohesiveness of the reading standards and ties all the grade levels together.”

Both administrators indicated that time was a factor in being able to implement the CCSS in reading effectively and at the level the state expected. Mrs. Lake and Dr. Woods specifically spoke about the lack of time from the introduction of the CCSS in reading to the actual expectation of implementation. This lack of time resulted in frustration on all levels including, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. “Because the expectation of the reading levels were so high, we needed time to adjust our reading instruction to fit the needs of the students, and that was not allotted for,” stated Mrs. Lake. Dr. Woods concluded, “The implementation of
the CCSS in reading was too fast, leaving many frustrated due to a lack of time to prepare adequately.” Both administrators agreed that time was a major factor in the disorganization and lack of understanding about the CCSS in reading. “More time was needed to read through the document to develop an understanding of the expectations for teachers and students,” stated Dr. Woods. Mrs. Lake included, “More time was needed to allow teachers to prepare the necessary materials needed to adjust their instruction.”

Mrs. Lake and Dr. Woods agreed that the teachers are doing a tremendous job in adjusting to the CCSS in reading curriculum and working hard to meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. Both believe that gaps do exist in the CCSS in reading and those gaps are particularly evident in students who are reading below grade level. Although both schools have some form of assistive programs in place for failing readers, the gaps appear larger because the CCSS in reading have set very high standards for students to attain by the end of a school year, which will be impossible to achieve at the level of expectation for the grade level.

The administrators did acknowledge a large portion of the responsibility to remediate the students who are below level fall on the shoulders of the teachers. Both administrators admit the gaps in reading ability have been furthered because students have not been instructed in some necessary reading skills due to the swift implementation of the CCSS in reading, which did not take into account the prior learning experiences of students. The CCSS in reading has increased the achievement of students who are reading at higher reading levels, indicated both administrators. Mrs. Lake and Dr. Woods noted that the higher achieving readers have been able to do better because their reading and language experiences are stronger. Both administrators agree that students are now reading more for purpose then for pleasure.
Mrs. Lake and Dr. Woods believe that teachers should be involved in the creation of the reading curriculum. “Teachers should be allowed to collaborate and meet with one another to assist and devise a plan that would best serve the children,” stated Dr. Woods. However, both administrators strongly opposed having parents involved in the process of devising a reading curriculum. “Parents should only be involved, as far as, receiving information about the reading program being implemented in order to be assistive to their child’s learning needs in reading,” said Dr. Woods. Mrs. Lake suggested, “Parents should receive a handbook associated with their child’s grade level to be used as a reference guide throughout the implementation of the reading curriculum to assist them in understanding the terminology and strategies in use for their child’s grade level.”

Both administrators believed more informative meetings should be instituted to bring parents up to date on curriculum changes and to encourage the participation of parents in understanding their child’s educational journey. “If communication were used throughout the process of these changes, I think many of the challenges we are facing with the CCSS in reading could have been prevented,” stated Dr. Woods.

Lastly, the teacher evaluation tool has been seen as both having positive and negative views from each administrator. Dr. Woods indicated, “Because the evaluation tool was thrown at the teachers at the same time as the CCSS in reading, the lack of training on the use of the tool has been a downfall.” “Many faculty and staff have had strong feelings about the tool and justifiably so,” stated Dr. Woods. Dr. Woods feels that the evaluation tool needs some “tweaking” in order to serve the teachers and students best. He indicated that an area of improvement in the tool should stem from the linking of test scores to teacher pay and tenure. “Students grow at all rates, and it is unfair to assess a teacher as ineffective in one particular year.
based on low test scores,” stated Dr. Woods. Mrs. Lake feels the teacher evaluation tool has been a “benefit” to School A. “While it has been difficult on teachers, I see tremendous growth in both teachers and students, noted Mrs. Lake. “It has forced teachers to do things differently in their classrooms that allow more engagement and responsibility to occur between students and teachers,” noted Mrs. Lake. “Because the evaluation tool does have areas that do not take into consideration the age level of the students, these need some revamping,” she said. “Linking the test scores as part of the evaluation tool may not be as beneficial, because student achievement can vary greatly from student to student within the same classroom,” said Mrs. Lake. “So, I think that the tool needs to include more ways of validating the teacher, as well as, the student’s growth,” she said.

Administrators to Teachers. In comparing and contrasting the belief(s) and/attitude(s) of the CCSS in reading between the administrators and the teachers, several themes emerge. First, both the administrators and the teachers of School A and B like the rigor and challenge of the CCSS in reading. However, Mrs. Lake (School A), the teachers from School A, and one teacher from School B feel the CCSS in reading lack “sequential order to develop reading ability.” On the other hand, Dr. Woods (School B) and one teacher from School B did not mention the sequential order of the CCSS in reading.

Both administrators and teachers from School A and B did state that learning gaps exist in the CCSS in reading. From the analysis of the interviews of both administrators and teachers, gaps appear to be related to the implementation process of the CCSS in reading that were incorporated by all grade levels, with administrators and teachers believing it should have begun in grades kindergarten and first, and proceeded upward each year. Administrators and teachers from both schools believed, instituting the CCSS in reading across all grade levels has left
struggling readers at a greater disadvantage and high level readers gaining the most in reading ability because the necessary reading skills were already in place for the higher achieving readers. The observations provided more evidence for the differences noted between the struggling and higher leveled readers. It was noted in the observations that those who appeared to be struggling readers had a more difficult time engaging in what skills were needed to discuss the text appropriately. Although the struggling students tried to participate, it was evident in the observation of discussion groups, which occurred in all observations, these students became disengaged, and spoke off topic more often. This further strengthens the assumptions of both administrators and teachers that the achievement level in reading has been increased more so for students who are stronger readers than those who are weaker.

Mrs. Lake and Dr. Woods noted, lack of time existed in the implementation of the CCSS in reading which was concurrent with teachers from both schools. This included not being able to locate necessary resources in a timely manner and providing training in using the CCSS in reading. Teachers from both schools mentioned the lack of time to prepare and train for the changes to be implemented. Teachers described their feelings as, “frustration, confusion, inadequacy as a teacher, prepping constraints, and constant changes to the reading curriculum” as factors in determining their attitude about the implementation of the CCSS in reading. Mrs. Lake and Dr. Woods noted if proper timing were allotted, things could have been very different in the implementation process, both citing a “smoother transition.”

Teachers included the lack of resources available to implement the CCSS in reading as another factor in their belief(s) and/or attitude(s) about the CCSS in reading. All teachers were still using a basal text and trying to match instruction from the basal to the CCSS in reading. This was noted in interviews and observations. Both schools did mention the purchase and use
of novels this year for each grade level (1-5) for reading instruction and considered the novels to be part of the “rigor” being incorporated into reading instruction from the CCSS in reading. However, teachers from School A and School B mentioned the novels were “too difficult” for the specified grade level. Mrs. Lake from School A cited, “Using Charlotte’s Web as a beginning third grade novel, proved difficult for most students and revisions are currently underway to revamp our approach for next year.”

Both School A and School B believed that parents play an important role in assisting their child (ren) in learning to read. However, all felt the reading curriculum should be designed by trained professionals with a background in education.

Lastly, the evaluation tool currently in place at both schools has caused anxiety and frustration for both administrators and teachers at School A and B. The teachers at both schools feel the evaluation tool requires students “to do a certain task” at a level that is not “developmentally appropriate.” One teacher noted, “The discussion groups require students to talk about certain text features and author perspectives when students have no clue what these things are.” In observations, students did appear to not always get the “just” of what the text was implying. This can be evidenced by student disengagement and off task behaviors. Several teachers noted more student led instruction required by the tool was a “waste of time.” Administrators liked the more student centered, “hands-on” approach and feel the students are more engaged in learning. However, tying student test scores to the tool was a disappointment for all. Noted by teachers and administrators were individuals with differences in learning. Teachers strongly felt that there are better ways to assess student growth than to tying it to the teacher evaluation. Administrators considered this a problem too. “Students grow at different levels based on where they’re coming from, so to be heavily rated on student performance is
difficult,” explained Mrs. Lake. All noted the evaluation of teachers as an important indicator of the success of students, but indicated changes to the evaluation tool were needed to effectively measure teachers and students.

Mixed responses between the administrators and teachers existed on how to structure a reading program at the school. Mrs. Lake from School A strongly favored a skills based approach to teaching reading. She justified her stance by indicating, “Students in the early elementary years need a foundational approach that includes the teaching of letters and sounds in order to be able to read words.” This view was also shared by two teachers from School A, Ms. Punch and Ms. Sands. Ms. Candy from School A believed in a “wholistic approach” to reading with a focus on reading as an exploratory process. Dr. Woods from School B indicated his preference for a “hands on” approach to reading where students are engaged with “digging” into the text by utilizing reading strategies. However, Ms. Pine from School B preferred a more direct approach to teaching reading at the fourth grade level, including specific skill instruction in reading. Ms. Ponds from School B indicated her preference for more student engagement, including discussion groups and “flexible grouping” in teaching reading strategies at the fifth grade level.

Administrators to Parents. Similarities and differences emerged from the data between administrators and parents of School A and B. First, the CCSS in reading was noted by parents, as “jumping around,” and “confusing students”, by having them participate in group discussions, but having to have the exact answers.” Mrs. Lake indicated, “Formatting has been less than ideal for the implementation to occur as smoothly as it could have.” Administrators mentioned that students are covering more material, however, Mrs. Lake pointed out it is not “as deep.” Parents mentioned there is a “touching of the subject” and a “quickness to move on,” specifically in
grades three, four, and five. Parents believed that implementation should occur in the lower grades, so “gaps in skills” would not exist. Administrators acknowledged that “gaps in learning” do exist due to the “swiftness” of the implementation, which left struggling readers specifically at a disadvantage.

Administrators and parents wanted more information on the CCSS in reading. Much of the information parents know about the CCSS in reading has been received from three sources: internet access, homework assignments, and other parents. Administrators and parents suggested parent meetings and interaction about curriculum changes need to exist. Mrs. Lake suggested a “handbook” on CCSS in reading, while a parent from School B suggested seminars to assist in understanding the material and teaching methods being used. Most parents indicated that the school had done a “poor job” in educating parents on the curriculum changes which has led them to “frustration,” “mayhem,” and “confusion.” Dr. Woods acknowledged, “There has been a lack of communication due to the state failing to include stakeholders in conversations about the educational policy changes affecting parents and students.”

Parents strongly indicated their preference for a more sequential style of reading instruction similar to a basal. Voiced by parents was a strong emphasis on “phonics, vocabulary, sight words, and comprehension instruction” for their child. Parents in third, fourth, and fifth grade indicated a desire to be a part of selecting reading curricula based on their belief that the “selected novels” currently used for reading instruction were inappropriate for the maturity and age of the reader. Ms. Green from School B stated, “My fifth grade boys who love to read, lost the enjoyment of reading the novel because it was so picked apart in trying to teach skills, and it turned out to be a disappointment.” Mrs. Lake from School A mentioned that students were “reading for purpose and less for enjoyment and creativity.” Mrs. Lake holds a similar view on
providing reading instruction, while Dr. Woods indicated a preference for a “hands-on” approach to reading with “digging into the text.” Administrators from both schools felt that the design and implementation of reading curriculum should come from educated professionals and those in the trenches.

Administrators and parents agreed that no strong improvement in reading has been noted at this time. Parents feel that the reason scores are decent is in large part due to parental help from home. The majority of the parents participate daily in assisting their child in reading, from homework completion to nightly shared readings. Of important note, administrators and parents admitted with the implementation of the CCSS in reading recently those readers who are already strong will do alright because they are capable of filling in the gaps due to their firm foundation in the basics of reading. However, for struggling readers, it is a more daunting task, as specific reading skills are not given the needed emphasis, and these students appear to be falling further behind.

Administrators and parents agreed that more time was needed to execute the CCSS in reading. Administrators indicated a need for adjustment for parents and students in adapting to the new methods being used to teach reading. Parents felt that teachers needed more time in understanding the changes so, changes could be effectively implemented in the classroom. Parents mentioned more planning for teachers to develop their lessons to fit the new curriculum as important in assisting their child in understanding how to use what they already know in reading to help them reach the new goals set by the CCSS in reading.

Lastly, the teacher evaluation tool was viewed by parents as a distraction, to what should be occurring in classrooms. Several parents indicated that their child has become “stressed” because of the teacher focus and preparation that “requires students to perform certain tasks in
order for the teacher to receive a decent evaluation.” Most parents did not know what a replaced evaluation tool should be, but indicated that as long as their child was showing progress, and not by a test score, that should be sufficient. Dr. Woods pointed out, “The tool has been overwhelming, as it rolled out with the CCSS in reading at the same time.” He said, “There are some parts that do need to be reconsidered with input from others.”

*Teachers to Teachers.* In comparing and contrasting the belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to the implementation of the CCSS in reading between teachers at School A and B findings of similarities and differences were noted.

From data analysis of teacher interviews, teachers indicated that they liked the rigor and challenge the CCSS in reading offers. However, four of the five teachers mentioned a “lack of sequential order” in reading instruction, and “developmentally inappropriate” reading skills and concepts to be mastered at the level the CCSS in reading indicate.

Overwhelmingly, the teachers noted lack of time in the implementation of the CCSS in reading played a major role in how their belief(s) and/or attitude(s) have been effected in teaching reading. Ms. Sands from School A, mentioned “longer hours of preparation time” needed to prepare materials, which was also reiterated by Ms. Ponds from School B. In discussing the lack of time, teachers of both schools spoke of the “lacking resources,” which were needed to assist them in teaching the students the new standards. Several teachers indicated they spent “long hours” searching for materials and preparing lessons that did not always “prove to be “beneficial” to student learning.

Teachers also noted that much of their teaching style and belief(s) about reading instruction was ignored, even though they felt their knowledge of teaching reading was substantial based on their training from college courses, professional development throughout
their career, and conversations with other colleagues. Ms. Sands from School A said, “They have thrown the baby out with the bath water.” Ms. Punch still uses things she “knows work for teaching reading” regardless of the new standards set in place. Several teachers also discussed having a gut feeling in knowing if the reading instruction they employed was “right” for the students.

In analyzing interviews, teachers voiced strong attitude(s) about training in the implementation of the CCSS in reading. A teacher from School A called it a “train wreck.” Another indicated, “So little training has been offered, and what has been was unhelpful.” One teacher from School B mentioned she watched “You Tube Videos” of instructional reading approaches to assist her in implementing the reading standards. School B noted “time spent in collaboration” was helpful in beginning to understand the CCSS in reading. Ms. Ponds said, “Collaboration with teachers from other middle schools and from my same grade level during a professional development day, was one of the most rewarding days of my career.” Most teachers spoke of the “expense” and “financial stress” the CCSS in reading has placed on them in order to be able to “incorporate the CCSS in reading for their classroom.” This “financial burden” was due in large part because these teachers indicated the “pride taken in their work,” and wanting to have all the “resources necessary to do a good job.” It was voiced, that the district had done “as best as it could” given the time period to implement the new standards. However, all teachers indicated that a basal reading series was still in use, but was reformed by the district to be used in accordance with the CCSS in reading. The district has provided the “guaranteed curriculum” which has intertwined the basal series with the use of novels in assisting teachers in the implementation of the CCSS in reading. However, teachers indicated this has caused much more
confusion and frustration with several grade level misalignments and incorrect worksheets and postings used in instructional practices.

Teachers largely disagreed with the evaluation tool citing developmental appropriateness as a major concern in the evaluation, as well as, using student test scores to rate teachers. Most teachers felt that the tool was not designed for measurement based on what students are capable of doing at proper stages of development. “To be scored on something that students cannot developmentally achieve because of their age is inappropriate,” said Ms. Punch. Noted by a teacher from School B was the portion of the evaluation tool which focuses on “classroom management,” in which students gather all the materials needed for the activity on their own. The teacher indicated, “Inevitably, it would take an entire class period for students to gather everything on their own.” She specified that part of her preparation for an “effective lesson includes providing students with the items needed to complete the activity in a smooth and timely fashion.” Teachers shared that the tool required a more student led classroom, which was not always appropriate. Teachers in both schools have felt that while the discussion groups were helpful, they do not replace the instruction sorely needed in mastering the skill of reading. All observations included some form of student led discussion. During the observations, students ventured off topic and often needed redirection. Specific attention was focused on text-based evidence in all classrooms during reading instruction. Although some teachers gave specific, direct instruction on how to locate and answer questions, others did not. All teachers disagreed with student test scores being a factor in the evaluation process because student growth is achieved at different rates in a student’s educational process. “A more cumulative approach to evaluating student progress could be incorporated into a portion of the teacher evaluation,” stated Ms. Ponds.
It should be noted that teachers in grades 3, 4, and 5 had strong beliefs about reading approaches from a skills based view, including the teaching of phonics. Grade 1 believed in a balanced approach to reading with an emphasis on phonics and skills instruction, while Grade 2 favored a more “wholistic” approach to the teaching of reading. All teachers indicated that strong readers are adjusting to the new standards with much more ease than the weaker readers. “These students just bring more to the table,” stated Ms. Pine.

Teachers voiced strong opinions about parent participation in the development of the reading curriculum. All teachers believed it is best left to the professionals to develop reading curriculum. “Even though parents are educated, it doesn’t mean they understand all the components of reading that need to be incorporated to make a reader good,” said Ms. Candy.

*Teachers to Parents.* Varied views about the CCSS in reading emerged from the data analysis between teachers and parents at School A and B. An important note is the mention of “rigor” did not surface from parents at both schools. Parents at School A did note a rise in “memorization of words,” and a focus on “exact answers.” Parents at School B mentioned “less creativity.” From observations, it was clear that students were more focused on attaining correct answers to a given question. Every lesson recorded from the observations involved students locating the exact answer in the text. Teachers at both schools mentioned the rigor and challenge of the CCSS in reading, but indicated that it was due to the change in reading materials.

Most parents, as well as, teachers strongly supported the use of the basal text in teaching reading, due to the sequential steps needed to develop reading skills, and the age appropriateness of the text selections. However, Ms. Candy from School A and Ms. Tabbs (Parent from School A) preferred a more “wholistic approach” focused more on student selection of text and less on skills needed to read and understand text.
Teachers noted little change in reading achievement since the implementation of the CCSS in reading, and most parents agreed. The parents who did not agree believe their child’s reading has improved based on the notion that more “memorization” of words is occurring. Both parents and teachers mentioned, stronger students in reading are doing better or can maintain their reading level because they came to the table with more to offer, whereas, a struggling reader, was at a disadvantage because less skill instruction was occurring. Several classroom observations, with one exception, revealed no direct instruction in any reading skill other than text dependent questions and answers. Some teachers simply instructed students to get the selection, read, and discuss the answers in a group with group consensus on the correct answer.

Teachers responded in the interviews with a need for more time and resources available for the CCSS in reading. Parents indicated that teachers needed more time to “understand” the new standards in order to “properly implement them.” Another point of agreement between teachers and parents were resources. Teachers noted, “Resources were not readily available, and we were piecemealing things together.” Parents indicated a “lack of resources” inhibited them from being properly capable of assisting their child in school work which led to “frustration.”

In analyzing data from the interviews of parents and teachers, it appeared that neither like the current evaluation process and tool in use. Parents cited the “stress” the children are under to perform both classroom and performance tasks. “The stress on teachers, has put more focus on my child trying to perform something, rather than learning,” noted one parent from School A. Teachers indicated, “Having to train students to do tasks associated with my evaluation that are developmentally inappropriate is unfair.” One teacher from School B suggested a more “cumulative” approach to evaluating teachers. Parents and teachers feel a better tool needs to be
devised that is assistive in improving teacher performance, while considering the “needs of individual learners.”

Lastly, teachers firmly believed parents should have “little to none” input in selecting a reading curriculum. The teachers believed that reading curriculum should be left to the experts, such as the “doctorates, and universities who study reading in depth.” However, several parents supported the idea of being able to have some voice in the reading curriculum. Most parents that cited an interest in participation of the reading curriculum had children in the upper grades (3, 4, and 5). The main reason for participation was a desire to give input on the “novel selections” the schools are implementing as part of the “rigor and challenge” associated with the CCSS in reading. All agreed that “education professionals” should be the designers of the reading program.

Parents to Parents. Parents had many similar views about the CCSS in reading. All parents indicated a strong need for more information about the implementation of the CCSS in reading. Many received their information through internet sites, homework assignments, and communication with other parents. Several parents felt that the school poorly communicated the goals and expectations of the CCSS in reading. Many of the parents indicated if it weren’t for their involvement with their child, things would have “definitely been worse.” Parents felt teachers needed more time to adjust to the new standards and expectations, so these things could be clearly communicated. “It seems that the teachers really don’t understand all of the CCSS in reading, and there is a lot of shifting in the curriculum,” noted a parent from School B. Another area of concern with parents included the availability of resources to assist their children. “It seems as if the teachers lacked resources for the teaching that was being required, in turn leaving us searching for ways to help our children,” stated Ms. Fields.
Parents from School A and B unanimously agreed that the implementation of a new reading curriculum, such as the CCSS in reading needed to begin in the lower grades. Parents mentioned the implementation occurring at all grade levels that some children at a disadvantage because the CCSS in reading assumed the child had mastered a number of skills, thus, leaving the higher level readers able to cope with the expectations easier than those who are struggling readers. Some parents noted that the CCSS in reading does not take into account the “experiences of the children.” Ms. Fields from School A said, “They are being asked to reason and think about things that they have no experience with.” This was noted by parents in grades 3, 4 and 5. Parents mentioned that there has not been much of an increase in their child’s reading achievement. Ms. Fields indicated, “My child is holding on and doing ok because of her teacher and myself working with her.” Ms. Snow noted, “My child has improved in reading because she is memorizing more words, so she can read better than before.” Parents expressed a concern for the rapid pace of instruction, with teachers only touching on subject matter.

Only parents in grades three, four, and five indicated a desire to participate in planning a reading curriculum. However, it was based on the fact that these parents wanted to participate due to the novel selections currently being used for instructional purposes at their child’s school. All parents to some degree preferred a reading curriculum designed by educational professionals that included teacher input, with instruction on phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension. Two teachers and a parent from School A indicated a preference for more student selected text to exist.

Parents believed the evaluation tool is being poorly used. Parents indicated that because teachers are stressed about student performance on in class tasks and performance tests their
child is more “stressed about school and learning.” One parent said, “While a tool for teacher evaluation should exist, it should not be at the expense of their children.”
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Findings

After careful review and analysis of data from interviews and observations, several findings emerged. Before summarizing the findings from this investigation, one must look back at the initial questions which guided this inquiry: (a) What are the teachers’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to the implementation of the CCSS in reading in the elementary grades? (b) What are the administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to the implementation of the CCSS in reading in the elementary grades? and (c) What are the parents’ belief(s) and attitude(s) related to the implementation of the CCSS in reading in the elementary grades?

While keeping in mind the questions that served as a guide through the investigational process, five themes emerged. In obtaining the themes, it should be noted that the majority of the participants held a reading belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to a skills driven approach to reading. One teacher, one parent, and one administrator preferred a more “wholistic” approach to teaching reading. However, the themes that emerged from the investigation were present regardless of the reading belief(s) and/or attitude(s) held regarding reading. These themes, intertwined with the reading belief(s) and/or attitude(s) regarding the implementation of the CCSS in reading shaped the interpretation of the implementation of the CCSS in reading. The five themes to emerge, with regard to belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to reading instruction related to the CCSS in reading were: (a) time, (b) resources, (c) training, (d) evaluation tools, and (e) gaps in reading skills instruction.

Time. The swiftness of the implementation of the CCSS in reading was considered a major inhibitor to the success of the reading standards. Administrators spoke of the original time frame for implementation of the CCSS in reading, and both noted that the multi-year implementation
plan was overhauled in favor of a “quicker” implementation of the CCSS. They admitted that this led to frustration and confusion for districts, schools, and communities. Research indicates that for school reforms to have a positive impact, they need to be adjusted repeatedly and worked into school environments over a period of time (Weinbaum & Supovitz, 2010). Included in research from Eilers & D’Amico (2012), administrators need time themselves to devise a timeline that will enhance the implementation of new standards for their schools. This would require administrators having the time to purchase materials, provide appropriate training and guidance, and address teacher concerns. Both administrators noted that they are trying to be as “assistive” as possible to teachers and parents, but it had been difficult due to the time the state adopted the CCSS in reading and the actual implementation.

Teachers indicated the lack of time did not allow them the ability to fully comprehend the changes in the CCSS in reading, allow them the time to practice and incorporate new instructional strategies to assist parents and students in achieving the level of reading intended for the grade-level, and incorporate the appropriate activities into their existing knowledge of teaching reading. Teachers had “little time” acclimating themselves to the CCSS in reading and therefore, expressed little understanding in how to incorporate these standards into classroom practices. Many teachers indicated they only “performed” the new instructional strategies during times of observation, but often returned to the instructional practices they knew “worked for reading.” Some teachers supported more time to work with the standards in collaborative groups would have proved to be fruitful in understanding the CCSS in reading. Research by Eilers & D’Amico (2010), and Roskos & Neumann (2013) was consistent with teachers need to collaborate in order to better align their instructional approaches to that of the new standards.
Parents desired more time for information on the CCSS in reading. Most parents indicated a preference for meetings and seminars about the changes was warranted. Parents felt that due to the “quickness” of the implementation of the CCSS in reading, little time was made available for them to find out about the changes that would affect their children. Parents feel some level of responsibility for their child’s reading progress and want to offer assistance to their child. Research by Evans, et al. (2004) suggested the majority of parents will take an active role in helping their child to read. Therefore, it is imperative that parents be considered a vital link in assisting their child in learning to read, and providing information about changes in the curriculum, such as the CCSS in reading, is crucial to student success.

Resources. Lack of available resources to implement the CCSS in reading was voiced repeatedly by administrators, teachers, and parents. Administrators did indicate that novel resources were provided to the teachers to introduce more rigor and challenge in reading instruction to students. However, one administrator, teachers, and parents indicated that the lack of a sequential order, and what was considered “developmentally appropriate” for students in reading instruction caused further frustration and confusion. Parents noted not being able to assist their children in a way that they felt was helpful because the “tools” were not available. Teachers noted the “time and money” used to locate resources for the implementation of the CCSS in reading was frustrating because many resources were not available to assist them in teaching the new standards. Some indicated that after purchasing what appeared to be “CCSS for reading” materials, it turned out to be “crap.” Again, had more time been allotted in the implementation of the CCSS in reading, resources could have been readily available for use in classrooms and at home.
Training. Administrators, teachers, and parents expressed a need for more training. Administrators felt that although the district provided some type of training in the CCSS in reading, not enough had been done. Administrators implied that the state needed to do a better job of instituting training to implement the CCSS in reading due to a shift between the old standards and new standards. Teachers indicated they would have liked “more participation in the creating and implementation of the CCSS in reading.” Many felt left out of the process by indicating, “I was thrown to the wolves,” and “they threw the baby out with the bath water.” These statements are supported by research that indicates often with new instructional approaches incorporated in reading, the “new is considered good, while the old is consider bad.” (Poulson, et al. 2001). Teachers suggested more training based on their “teaching style” would be beneficial to helping them incorporate the changes instituted from the CCSS in reading. It is here that teachers’ theoretical orientations should be consider during implementation. Research supports an approach that considers teachers’ theoretical orientation to reading instruction plays a role in assisting teachers in how to implement reform efforts into the classroom. Therefore, considering teachers’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) during an implementation of reform efforts would be beneficial to approach teacher training based on their theoretical orientation of reading. In this instance, most teachers had a skills driven approach to reading, indicated through interviews, but were trying to weave a more “wholistic” approach to reading by incorporating more student led activities in the classroom as noted in the observations. Teachers voiced concern over more student led reading instruction, and perhaps a more theoretical approach to instituting reading changes in curriculum may be suitable to create the necessary changes the policy is asking teachers to adhere to. Lastly, teachers wanted to be able to incorporate the new instructional approaches into what already existed in their beliefs and attitudes related to reading.
Teachers felt less time would have been “wasted” searching for resources and trying to “learn” these new approaches, which could have been done simpler and easier through a way in which training utilized what they already knew and employed in their instructional reading practices.

Parents suggested that if administrators and teachers received more training, teachers would be better equipped to provide students with sequential instruction and proper materials to assist students in receiving reading instructional that is beneficial to achieving the new standards. Most parents held a skills driven approach belief(s) and/or attitude(s) to reading, which furthered their belief that the implementation of the CCSS in reading has been “touching” on reading skills with no real sequential order in place.

Gaps in Reading Skills Instruction. Administrators, teachers, and parents noted that if an increase in reading existed, it was minimal. The majority of the participants indicated that the increase in reading achievement has been mostly ascertained by students who were already “good readers.” It was noted if students had a “grasp” on reading prior to the implementation of the CCSS in reading, then they were maintaining their reading level. It was suggested, the success is due in large part to the teachers themselves, and not directly linked to the CCSS in reading, which some indicated fall short in the instruction of reading. Administrators, teachers, and parents, acknowledged it is likely due to the “experiences” the reader has had with reading that has allowed the student to maintain their reading ability. However, if a student was a “struggling” reader (reading below level), the reader was at a disadvantage because the CCSS in reading assumed all students were reading on level, thus thrusting these students to be more behind than ever before. School A indicated more time is being spent to “remediate” students in an effort to catch up to their peers. Both schools acknowledged that in helping the “struggling” students the “burden falls onto the teacher.” Most believe this is in fact due to a lack of
sequential order to develop reading skills. There was a consensus that if the implementation had occurred beginning in the 1st grade, the progression of reading would have been much smoother and more assistive to all involved.

*Teacher Evaluation Tool.* Administrators, teachers, and parents agreed that the evaluation tool currently being used in the implementation of the CCSS in reading did need to be revised. Many citing the dislike of student test scores attached to the teacher evaluation tool based on student learning differences. Teachers indicated they felt that they were “training” students to perform certain tasks at their grade level, such as student led discussions on text that did not concur with the student age and grade level. This forced teachers to do “performance like” tasks with students to receive a decent score on the evaluation tool, which teachers described as “a waste of time.”

Parents voiced concern over their child feeling “stressed” to perform for teacher observations and standardized testing. Although, all agreed an evaluation tool for teachers was necessary. A suggestion included a “cumulative style tool” for both students and teachers to evaluate student progress and teacher instruction over a period of time.

**Summary**

Overall the investigation concluded that time, resources, training, gaps in reading skill instruction, and the teacher evaluation tool had an impact on teachers’, parents’, and administrators’ belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to the implementation of the CCSS in reading. By reviewing the data obtained from interviews and classroom observations, these findings indicate the areas in which further focus should be received. It is through the lens of the teachers, parents, and administrators that this investigation shed light on the impact of the implementation of the CCSS related to reading at School A and B. By uncovering these themes,
and bringing them to the forefront of the investigation, more attention may be shifted to these areas to make the CCSS in reading more suitable and attainable for School A and B.

**Limitations**

The narrow focus of the investigation, CCSS in reading in the elementary grades, could be viewed as a limitation due to the use of only one grade per a grade level one through five, with only five teachers participating. Consideration of the CCSS as a whole instead of a part, could have led to further uncovering information about the implementation of the CCSS across the board. The use of a school with a district grade of “A” is considered a limitation, as schools rated below an “A,” may yield different results about the CCSS in reading. Another limitation included the diversity and socio economic status of the schools in the investigation. The population was not diverse enough to locate participants of various ethnicities. Four teachers were considered white and one mixed. The parents (1 for each grade level 1-5) were white females. The administrator at School A was a white female, while School B was a white male. Therefore, indicating gender as another limitation in this investigation.

**Implications for Further Research**

Continued research in utilizing teachers’ theoretical orientation as a means to provide understanding and implementation of new reforms may be beneficial in offering ways to train teachers in adjusting to new instructional approaches related to reform efforts. The research questions could be expanded to look at schools with different district grades to interpret the impact the CCSS in reading may be having in a district rated below A, offering an opportunity to compare and contrast the districts. Further research can be completed on addressing gaps in reading instruction that appear to have surfaced since the implementation of the CCSS in reading. Lastly, this investigation noted more research is needed on the impact the teacher
evaluation tool is posing since its inception, which occurred at the same time as the implementation of the CCSS in reading.
REFERENCES


Bulletin 746, Title 28, Section 207. Louisiana elementary teacher certification.


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APPENDIX A
CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

1. Study Title:
Exploring the Implementation of the Common Core Reading Standards in Elementary Reading through the eyes of teachers', parents', and administrators.

2. Performance Site:
Elementary School, request of different site by interviewee for convenience ensuring no harm to interviewer or interviewee

3. Investigators:
The following investigator is available for questions about this study,
M-F, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00p.m.
Sheryl Cogliati-555-555-5555

4. Purpose of the Study:
The purpose of this research project is to compare/contrast teachers', parents', and administrators' beliefs toward the implementation of common core, as it relates to elementary reading.

5. Subject Inclusion:
Individuals who are elementary school teachers teaching reading and implementing the Common Core reading standards
Individuals who are parents of students in an elementary setting that is implementing the Common Core reading standards
Individuals who are administrators in an elementary setting that is implementing the Common Core reading standards

6. Number of subjects: 12

7. Study Procedures: The study will be conducted using interview protocol and observation.

8. Benefits:
The community, as well as, researchers will benefit from the study by contributing information about Common Core reading standards being implemented in elementary classrooms.

9. Risks:
The risks involve a possibility of the school(s), district, teachers, parents, and administrators being identified. However, all precautions will be taken to ensure that sensitive material, including interviews, observation notes, and all/any names will be carefully secured by the use of pseudonyms and locking of all information.

10. Right to Refuse:
Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

11. Privacy:
Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

12. Signatures:
The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, lr@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/lrb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature: ______________________  Date: ______________________
APPENDIX B
TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher:

1. How long have you been teaching reading in the elementary setting? When did you start teaching?

2. What is your attitude toward the implementation of common core related to reading in the elementary setting? Have you noticed a shift in your attitude in the recent implementation of Common Core reading standards? If so, How? If not, why?

3. What are your beliefs about the common core, for reading instruction in the elementary setting?

4. How has the landscape of reading curriculum changed since you started teaching reading in the elementary grades?

5. Describe your training in the teaching of reading in elementary grades.

6. Describe your training in implementing the common core in the classroom for reading instruction.

7. With the implementation of Common Core reading standards at the elementary level, have these standards in your view, increased or decreased student capacity in reading achievement? If yes/no, how & why?

8. Describe your educational background.

9. How can you be better prepared to deal with policy shifts in teaching reading?

10. How would you structure a reading program in this elementary school?

11. Does the fact that part of your evaluation will be based on student test scores, affect your belief(s) and/or attitude(s) related to reading instruction? If so, how? If not, why? Is this impacting the implementation of the CCSS in reading at your grade level? How?
APPENDIX C
PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Parents:

1. What are your beliefs about the implementation of common core in the elementary setting?

2. What is your belief of reading instruction at your child’s grade level?

3. What do you know about the implementation of Common Core at your child’s grade-level, specifically, reading?

4. How did you learn about the use of the Common Core reading standards at your child’s grade level?

5. Has the recent implementation of common core changed your view of reading instruction at your child’s grade level? If yes, how? If no, why?

6. Has your child’s progress in reading shifted your belief or attitude toward reading instruction in the elementary setting, particularly at your child’s grade level? If yes, how? If no, why?

7. With the implementation of Common Core reading standards at the elementary level, have these standards in your view increased/decreased student achievement for your child? How?

8. What should a reading program entail at the elementary level?

9. How much input should parents have in the adoption of curricula for teaching reading in the elementary school?
10. How could teachers be better prepared to deal with policy shifts in teaching reading?

11. How did you learn to read? Can you give specifics, such as, age and grade?

12. What is your level of education? What school(s) did you attend?

13. Does your child have other siblings? If so, what are their ages? Do/Did they attend the same elementary school? If not, was there any specific reason why?
APPENDIX D
ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Administrators:

1. What is your opinion of common core?

2. How should reading be taught in the elementary school?

3. What is your opinion toward the implementation of common core related to reading in the elementary setting?

4. How has the landscape of reading curriculum changed since you entered as an administrator/and or former teacher?

5. With the implementation of common core reading standards at the elementary level, have these standards in your view increased/decreased student capacity in reading achievement? If yes/no, how & why?

6. Describe your educational background.

7. How much input, if any should teachers/ and or parents have in the implementation of reading curricula?

8. How would you structure a reading program in this elementary school?

9. How could teachers be better prepared to deal with policy shifts in the teaching of reading? Parents?

10. How has the teacher evaluation tool affected reading instruction at your school in regard to the implementation of the CCSS in reading?
APPENDIX E
OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

The teacher:

_____acknowledges student engagement with the reading task

_____models higher order thinking/questioning for the reading task

_____models reading approaches needed to interact with the reading text

_____provides direct instruction for the reading task

_____aligns reading assessment with the specified reading task

_____uses visual aids to assist students in acquiring knowledge from the text

_____provides individualized instruction for the reading task

_____allows for independent reading to enhance the reading task

_____utilizes student self-assessment techniques

_____corrects and reteaches reading tasks/skills needed to complete the reading task

_____accesses students’ prior knowledge
APPENDIX F
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORM

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted and is used to request an exemption.

1) Principal Investigator: Sheryl Cogliatti
Dept: Curriculum & Instruction
Rank: Graduate Student

2) Co Investigator(s): Please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each.

3) Project Title: Exploring the Implementation of the Common Core Reading Standards in Elementary Reading through the Eyes of Teachers', Parents', and Administrators.

4) Proposal? (yes or no) No
If Yes, LSU Proposal Number
Also, if YES, either

5) Subject pool (e.g., Psychology students) Elementary teachers, administrators & parents of elementary students
*Circle any “vulnerable populations” to be used: children <18, the mentally ill/infants, pregnant women, the elderly, others. Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature: Date 11-6-13 (no per signatures)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted
Signed Consent Waived: Yes
Reviewer: Mathews
Signature: Date: 11/2/13

LSU E8561 LSU Proposal #
Complete Application
Human Subjects Training
IRB Security of Data Agreement
STUDY EXEMPTED BY:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
130 David Boyd Hall
225-578-6992 / www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 11/19/06
VITA

The author of this paper is currently a graduate assistant at Louisiana State University. Her responsibilities include both teaching undergraduate courses and researching various topics in literacy. She is especially interested in diagnosing and remediating students in reading. She expects to obtain the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in summer 2014.