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Exploring the Implementation of Reading Common Core State Standards in an Elementary School Setting

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EXPLORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF READING COMMON
CORE STATE STANDARDS IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SETTING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the implementation process of five teachers and two administrators of the Common Core State Standards in Reading. This ethnographic case study investigates one group's attitudes and instructional practices. The researcher focused on three questions in order to provide an in-depth analysis of the data collected. These questions include: How do educators implement and develop reading curriculum from the Common Core State Standards? How does the mandated requirements of the CCSS impact the attitudes of reading teachers? How do primary grade teachers approach the CCSS in comparison to upper elementary teachers?

The study followed an ethnographic analysis method detailed by James P. Spradley (1980) in his book, *The Participant Observer*. Data collection included interviews, observations, and documents gathered by the researcher. While this was a qualitative research study and not generalizable, the researcher sought to provide a detailed analysis of the data collected and suggests conclusions that can be inferred from the study.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

“Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imagination so they can create the world of the future” (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, and Rycik, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

A primary topic in the field of Education today is the Common Core State Standards Initiative (International Reading Association, 2012). This state-led effort has been adopted in 45 states including, The District of Columbia thus garnering national attention (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012). The Mission Statement of the Common Core Standards states:

“The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy” (NGA, 2010).

While the standards outline, “what all students are expected to know and be able to do,” the National Governors Association makes the distinction that the standards do not imply or define “how teachers should teach.” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, pg. 3).

The International Reading Association Common Core State Standards Committee (2012) recognized the challenge for educators trying to implement the standards in reading and published the *Literacy Implementation Guide for the ELA Common Core State Standards*. Also, countless researchers have published articles suggesting how educators should approach implementation. McLaughlin and Overturf (2012) published, *The Common Core: Insights Into the K-5 Standards*. This article details ways that teachers should approach the new standards and gives a brief reflective, qualitative analysis of “Mary”, a teacher in Kentucky, one of the first states to adopt the CCSS. The researchers reported that in regards to implementation, the teachers from their study “know they must integrate what they know about best practice in the teaching of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language and the CCSS every day” (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012, p.161). Hollenbeck and Saturnus (2013) recently published *Mind the Comprehension Iceberg: Avoiding Titanic Mistakes With the CCSS*. The authors detail comprehension strategies to support common core implementation. Researchers also provide a look into a fictitious “Mary”, a character that was concocted, and her implementation process based on the strategies that are discussed within the selection. Roskos and Neuman (2013) also acknowledged in their publication, “The Common Core is not a curriculum. It is a set of standards around which curriculum (aka reading programs) can be built” (p.6).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2011) reported that fourth grade reading comprehension scores were unchanged since 2009.

Recently, the 2013 NAEP reported a continual, unchanging progression of fourth grade reading comprehension scores. The publication of the progression of scores reflects poorly on previous educational strategies of implementing curriculum based on state standards. There is much work to be done by researchers, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to move our education system forward. Now, we are in a new era in the history of education and as any part of history it is critical for the players to chronicle the practices taking place for future reflection.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the implementation process of educators within one school setting. The researcher investigated connections among the participants' personal histories as educators, reactions, and implementation practices. By utilizing James P. Spradley's model of data collection and analysis, this researcher hoped to detail: How do educators implement and develop reading curriculum from the Common Core State Standards? How do the mandated requirements of the CCSS impact the attitudes of reading teachers? How do primary grade teachers approach the CCSS in comparison to upper elementary teachers? The researcher will attempt to gain insight into this process through teacher interviews, observations, and document collection.

Setting

While reading this section keep in mind that the estimates from the Census Bureau are rounded in order to avoid recognition of the town. Roosevelt Jr. High School is located in a small rural village in Northern Louisiana. The

graduation rate among residents is 70%, and median household income is twenty-eight thousand dollars (CB, 2007-2011). In the 2007-2011 American Community survey found that 12.6% of the population was below the poverty level (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990-2013; National Assessment of Educational Progress, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Riverton School District

There are seven schools within the district with approximately 3,000 students in Pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade. The district employs approximately 200 teachers with a student: teacher ratio of 14:1. Demographics include: Students who identify as African American 44%; Students who identify as Caucasian 40%; Students identifying as with different ethnicity than African American or Caucasian 14%. More than 30% of third graders in the district were identified by the Louisiana Criterion-Referenced Test (iLEAP) for the 2012-2013 school year as having an achievement level of unsatisfactory or approaching basic. In fourth grade, 40% of students were identified as approaching basic or unsatisfactory (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990-2013; National Assessment of Educational Progress, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Roosevelt Jr. High School

Roosevelt Jr. High School serves approximately 500 students ranging from Pre-Kindergarten to eighth grade. 33 teachers are employed with a student: teacher ratio of 16:1. 80% of the student population qualifies for free

lunch. Another 5% qualifies for reduced lunch. More than 60% of fourth graders during the 2012-2013 school year were reported as approaching basic or unsatisfactory on the LEAP test (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990-2013; National Assessment of Educational Progress, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Significance of the Study

This study investigating the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in Reading was a qualitative study that analyzed connections between teachers' attitudes, personal histories, and implementation strategies. The investigator aimed to explore educators' everyday instructional practices, discuss their views, and record their reactions to this issue. The process of implementing the standards is both challenging and complex. This study sought to explore a series of observations and interviews within a particular school setting over a four-week period. While there are various studies outlining ways to approach and implement the standards, there is little on the actual strategies that teachers are using. This study may provide insight to other educators and researchers regarding how teachers are experiencing this shift.

Research Questions

This study focused on the following questions:

1. How do educators implement and develop reading curriculum from the Common Core State Standards?
2. How do the mandated requirements of the CCSS impact the attitudes of reading teachers?

3. How do primary grade teachers approach the CCSS in comparison to upper elementary teachers?

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Standards Based Instruction

President Lyndon Johnson created the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)* which allowed the federal government legal authority over education funding to insure educational equality for all public school students. Originally this legislation was enacted to provide assistance for special education students and those who were educationally deprived and was considered a major part of his “War on Poverty” (Ellis, 2007). The goals of ESEA have been expanded to the creation of standards for all students and to hold school systems accountable for meeting these standards in core subjects (Crawford, 2011). Since the enactment of ESEA in 1965, close to \$400 billion has been spent on public education, but the results do not show any significant change in achievement of students in reading or math (Yell, Katsiyannas, Shiner, 2006).

During the Reagan administration in 1983, the report, “A Nation At Risk” (1983), was published. This report mounted a plethora of statistical evidence that revealed the decline of the American public school system. The report called for immediate action from all parties to improve public schools. The researchers also acknowledged that while America should be proud of how it once competed globally in a variety of fields, it was soon to be overtaken. The report issued five major changes that should take place in order for the quality of American education to advance: content needed to change; longer school year; improvement of teacher quality; leadership and fiscal support; and higher

standards and expectations of students (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Early in his term, Former President H. W. Bush conducted an Education Summit from which these six goals emerged and were to be achieved by the year 2000: “All children in America will start school ready to learn; the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent; American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter in all subjects in order to be productive citizens in our modern economy; U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement; every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary in a global economy; and every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a safe, disciplined environment conducive to learning” (New York State Archives, 2009). In order to see these standards through, Bush pressed for legislation, America 2000. However, the bill died due to Bush not being reelected for a second term.

Succeeding Bush, President Bill Clinton served consecutive terms in office, stretching from 1993-2001. Events surrounding his presidency included: seeing the “the lowest unemployment rate in modern times, the lowest inflation rate in thirty years, the highest home ownership in the country’s history, and reduces welfare rolls.” Educational Reform was a major issue during his campaign. In 1993, Goals 2000: The Educate America Act that granted support to states that were implementing standards-based reform and assessments that measured the standards was the product (New York Archives, 2009). Clinton

also saw to the reauthorization of the ESEA, now called Improving America's Schools Act. In his second term, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act, Vocational Education Act, Higher Education Act, and the Workforce Investment Act were implemented.

The evolution of education nationwide and internationally has required that the goals of ESEA be expanded even further than originally set by President Johnson. ESEA has been reauthorized six times since its enactment, with the latest reauthorization in January 2002. The latest version of ESEA is known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and was created by President George W. Bush (Crawford, 2011). NCLB was set to expire in 2007, but due to disagreement between lawmakers, it has been extended, rather than reauthorized, to give more time for improvements to be developed.

President Bush's main priorities with NCLB were to equalize student achievement across school systems and to provide students with access to highly qualified teachers (Hess & Petrilli, 2009). Another priority was to expand the federal government's role in education by tying school funding to student achievement. NCLB requires that states develop measureable milestones in order to judge success of students and school systems, and the milestones that must be achieved are known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). These requirements include: Teachers of core content subjects must be considered "highly qualified" by their state departments of education, federal money is provided through Reading First grants to help educate low-achieving students in reading, and state programs utilizing federal funds must demonstrate they are

implementing effective scientific research-based programs (Yell, Katsiyannas, Shiner, 2006).

High standards of accountability continue with the presidency of Barack Obama (New York Archives, 2009). Common Core Standards emphasize the importance of students being prepared for college and careers (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Also, the president's Race to the Top Program calls for the adoption of rigorous standards and better assessments (The White House, 2013). With the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2011) showing that fourth grade reading comprehension scores were unchanged since 2009 and concluding that two-thirds of the nation's fourth graders are not reading at grade-level, and eighty-two percent of low-income students are not proficient in reading, there is still change that needs to occur in order for educators to meet the needs of today's students.

Assessment of Standards

In the United States, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) has been used since 1969 to judge student academic success. It is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and is considered nationally representative of our students because it is administered uniformly (Vockley, 2009). It has been used to try to improve the United States education system, but after the passage of NCLB, it became even more important. In order to receive Title I funds, every state is now required to take part in NAEP assessments to test students, in the areas of mathematics and

reading, in grades 4 and 8. Each state has their own assessment systems in place, so comparisons were made by Vockley (2009) in an attempt to outline the alignment between the NAEP assessment and state-mandated assessments.

The report, prepared for the CCSSO, states that school officials have become increasingly interested in the alignment between: “standards and curriculum, standards and instruction, and standards and assessment” (2009, p.8). School officials are interested in how similar their state assessment systems are to NAEP, if they cover the same general knowledge and skills, what ‘proficient’ means for both sets of assessments, if students achieve the same standing in a group regardless of the assessment implemented, and how NAEP results can aid school improvement initiatives. To answer these questions, the NCES suggested the use of three approaches that could be utilized by school system: the NAEP ESSI Procedural Manual, the HumRRO Model, and the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC) Model.

The first model presented, the NAEP ESSI Procedural Manual, was created by the NAEP Education Statistics Services Institute. It outlines specific procedures to follow that allow the state assessments to be compared and aligned to NAEP. First, a “Plan of Comparison” which is comprised of “Key Questions” that serve to guide school systems in deciding if this NAEP ESSI Procedural Manual is the correct model for them to use and what kind of comparisons would be most beneficial for their specific needs. Then, a list of “Procedures” is given to allow for more refined analysis of similarities and differences between state assessments and NAEP.

The HumRPO Alignment Model was presented next by Vockley (2009). This model was created by the Human Resources Research Organization, which provides independent research and consulting. Their model was created to assist in aligning state standards with NAEP through the use of eight tasks: matching state standards and NAEP content expectations, matching state and NAEP released items onto the NAEP matrix, sorting state and NAEP items onto a state taxonomy, comparing state and NAEP item format, comparing state and NAEP reading passages, linking operational state assessment items to NAEP content expectations, comparing test administration procedures, and comparing test scoring procedures.

The last model presented is Survey of Enacted Curriculum Alignment Model (SCO), which was created by the CCSSO (Vockley, 2009). The SCO was developed into a web-based system that allows states to see reliable data in a visual manner to allow teachers, administrators, and educational policymakers to easily see the “how” and “what” that is actually being taught in the classrooms in their districts. The methodology of this survey focuses on “content of instruction” and “content of instructional materials” by using surveys, content analyses and alignment indices. This is accomplished by following four steps outlined in the SCO: training educators; collecting data; synthesizing data; and analyzing, comparing, and reporting content data.

Vockey (2009) concludes her report by stating that with any alignment study, there are no easy answers produced that states simply provide a “yes” or “no” to the question of if a state or district’s standards are aligned with NAEP.

This answer depends on many factors including: “subject and grade level; the region, district or school; the students or groups of students; and so on.”

Alignment studies must serve as a tool to check how rigorous an assessment system is and future changes that could assist it in being more successful.

NCLB has had a significant impact on education in American and the ability for teachers to teach in the manner they see fit. The perceptions of teachers regarding NCLB and its implementation also vary greatly. Generally speaking, teachers do support the principles that are behind NCLB and think that schools should be held accountable for the performance of their teachers and students. While other educators worry that the quality of education, at least for some students, has been reduced and that there is not enough support by administration to enact these policies. When speaking of teacher perceptions of this legislation, accounts should be taken that educational views vary greatly based on states and regions.

Before NCLB, many states had already developed test-based accountability systems so that they could adequately measure the progress of their educational systems locally and at the state level. These states include Texas, Massachusetts, Kentucky, and Florida (Murnane & Papay, 2010). In states that already had a system in place, NCLB legislation simply overlaid the existing systems that were already in place. States that did not already have a test-based accountability system in place began to develop one shortly after the passage of NCLB. This legislation allows significant leeway to each state to develop their own system, including allowing them to: determine their own

content standards, criterion-referenced tests, and required passing scores.

These are used to determine if students have met proficiency standards. Due to the amount of choice given to each state based for creation of these assessments, there is a marked difference in the required scores for proficiency between states.

According to a comparison done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), in 2007, Massachusetts has a Mathematics proficient score of 254 required on the Mathematics exam for fourth grade while Tennessee has a proficient score of 198 on an equivalent exam. The NAEP deemed a score of 249 to meet proficiency standards for their organization (Bandeira de Mello, Blankenship, & McLaughlin, 2009).

Teacher Perceptions of Accountability and Standards Based Instruction

Invernizzi, Landrum, Howell, and Warley (2005) researched “disconnect between research and practice in reading assessment and instruction that may be an unfortunate byproduct of increased accountability and growing emphasis on scientifically based reading research.” Through their research, the authors identified eight standards to hold policy makers and researchers accountable for providing educators with standardized tests. These standards require testing to be valid and reliable; provide educators with professional development regarding the assessment: how, why, theoretical framework, scales, norms, and score comparability; prepare tests that are free of bias and is relatable across cultures; and report scores from these evaluations in language that is suitable for teachers and not statisticians. The authors reported educators of reading

implementing different assessments some regarded by the teacher as relevant to instruction such as running records as well as conducting tests from external forces such as end of the year state standardized tests. The researchers call for assessments that are scientifically based but provide teachers with the data to guide instruction.

Numerous educators question the usefulness of standardized test scores, based on a marked difference in required scores across states. In research conducted by Murnane and Papay (2009) educators concluded that the scores reported based on these assessment do not reflect students ability to learn the skills necessary to compete in today's world. Hoffman, Assaf, and Paris (2001) reported that educators felt that the emphasis on high stakes testing was negatively affecting their instructional practices and beliefs. Harman (2000) also acknowledges that educators often change their instructional practices from literacy based to focusing on teaching the test. Smith and Fey (2000) acknowledged that pressures of high stakes testing affect reading teachers as well as reading specialists. Both of which are responsible for student performance. Assaf (2006) found that in a particular school setting, regardless of teacher beliefs regarding effective reading instruction, educators reported "feeling overwhelmed by testing pressures" so "changed instructional practices in order to teach to the test." She also reported teachers dreading informing students and parents of results of the high stakes test that was administered at the site of study. Assaf also acknowledged that educators in the study were torn between providing what they knew to be effective reading instruction and solely

providing instruction students on how to pass the high stakes test. Mathews (2004) concluded that educators are losing opportunities to engage students based on a higher emphasis on test preparation.

The requirement that students make AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) is hard to quantify due to the varied differences between states in testing and required scores. Because of this, school districts face different challenges when it comes to making sure AYP is met. Some districts view NCLB as a small annoyance, while others view it as a piece of legislation that may cost their district jobs and funding due to their inability to meet requirements. The stakes are high for low-performing districts; in turn these teachers may have more pressure from administration to make sure student scores meet requirements of the state. Most low-performing districts serve low-income populations and immigrant communities and are in greatest need of funding to provide adequate services to their students. Due to not making AYP, they face sanctions and possible loss of funding (Rashid & Johnson, 2011).

Teachers across the country have varying thoughts on the effectiveness of NCLB legislation, due in part to the various criticisms reasons mentioned above. Murnamne and Papay (2010) collected research regarding teachers' views about test-based accountability based on state standards and analyzed the research. The researchers noted that there were limitations to each of their collection methods, including a low response rate in one-study and self-selection issues in two other studies. Even with these limitations, their research is helpful in identifying general consensus among teachers and also where

teachers have opposing viewpoints. The researchers also highlighted that the beliefs were not specifically about NCLB, but some valid points were raised that can be applied to NCLB.

The first point addressed in Murnane and Papays' (2010) analysis is that generally teachers support the increase of pressure on states to develop demanding content standards. A number of teachers surveyed believed that students should be taught from a curriculum designed to help students pass exams that prove they have mastered knowledge of these demanding content standards. With the passage and implementation of NCLB, educators think that schools are now more focused on the achievement of their students, and this focus is putting more attention on the curriculum development to ensure student achievement.

Teachers also reported that after the implementation of NCLB, there seems to be a greater focus on identifying low-achieving students so schools can receive special assistance. With the focus of NCLB on the areas of ELA and Mathematics, a common strategy implemented in most schools is additional time spent on these content areas. This concentration has been shown to increase scores in mathematics but not in reading. Across the board, student scores on national tests have risen, but it is not possible to attribute this increase to NCLB exclusively.

Another detail recorded by Murane and Papay (2010) is there are a number of educators that have concerns of students being taught specifically so they can pass the exams. The researchers concluded that teachers were

worried about the lack of emphasis on the students understanding and retaining the information that was imparted. When this approach is taken, students also do not learn skills and knowledge they can apply to other tasks outside of passing the exams. This is known as score inflation, “an improvement in students’ test scores with no improvement in their underlying proficiency,” and teachers consider this the byproduct of teaching to the test (Murnane & Papay, 2010, p.156). Teachers also reported that they have found methods and implemented strategies to strengthen their students’ performance on standardized tests without the students actually learning material that will scaffold learning in the coming grades.

The researchers concluded that score inflation could cause educators to resent their administration for taking away what they consider valuable instructional time in order for them to meet the standards that have been set by the state and federal governments. Murnane and Papay (2010) highlight the fact that research is providing basis for the concern regarding educators’ belief that raising scores does not raise the students’ human capital. Multiple researchers have found that there has been a greater and faster increase in student state test scores than on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). Reporting that this is due to the fact that instructional time is being disproportionately spent on test preparation for the required state exam rather than learning of the actual content.

Murnane and Papay (2010) also highlight emphasis placed on students who are near the proficiency threshold and whose scores can be boosted in

order to bolster the data. These students are known as “bubble kids.” The large amount of instructional time spent trying to get these students to pass the proficiency threshold is spent “at the expense of the most academically able students and also low-achieving students” (p.164). This is all done in hopes that schools will meet AYP requirements, not to make sure students learn more.

Another concern of teachers under NCLB is that the increased attention to mathematics and reading skills is done at the cost of instructional time in other content areas. This raises the question of if students are losing the ability to form knowledge bases in other areas because they are not emphasized or required to meet AYP. Currently there is no solid research evidence that this is indeed happening, but it is a concern of many teachers.

As reported by Murnane and Papay (2010) one of the most common concerns among educators is that the AYP standard is not a valid measure of their success in the classroom for several reasons: “First, the rules treat a school as ‘failing to meet AYP’ if it fails to meet the standard for any single subgroup. Secondly, the AYP formula does not reward substantial improvements in the performances of very low-achieving children unless they manage to meet the proficiency standard. Third, many teachers believe that the formula does not adequately take into account schools serving high concentrations of economically disadvantaged children, those with special needs, and those who have limited English proficiency face greater challenges in making AYP than schools who serve primarily middle-class, native-born students” (Murnane & Papay, 2010, p.164). Teachers were reported as being

frustrated with this situation and raised concerns that it could be causing a deficit of talented teachers from districts that need them most. Teachers can be penalized if they choose to work at a school that serves mostly low-achieving students rather than a more affluent school. The research presented by Murnane & Papay (2010) does seem to show that higher teacher turnover in these districts contributes to organizational instability and low performance by students. What is not clear is if this is due specifically to NCLB and the AYP provision or if this is caused by different state mandates.

In implementing standards based instruction product of No Child Left Behind, David Russo proposed that many school districts are struggling to keep up with the demands of both NCLB and AYP because the original implementation of standards was not done correctly (Rashid & Johnson, 2011). Russo suggests that too much emphasis was put on the requirements of becoming compliant with the law, rather than the purpose of NCLB and the way for students to make adequate progress – improving instructional practices. Deci, Siegel, Ryan, Koestner, and Kauffman (1982) concluded that standardized testing affects the relationship between student and teacher by pushing the teacher to become more authoritarian in nature. Johnson, Afflerbach, and Weiss (1993) found that educators who were held to higher testing status accountability were less descriptive when detailing children's' literacy development.

During this time The International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English Joint Task Force on Assessment (1994) stated

that the educator in the classroom with the student is the main source of assessment and concluded that no test would be as in tune with the learner as that teacher. Stallman and Pearson (1991) acknowledged, that with the push to high stakes testing there needs to be further emphasis on assessing more than just one element of reading. For example, most assessment practices, particularly criterion based testing, oversample narrow aspects of literacy, such as sound-symbol knowledge. In response to the accountability movement, reading teachers were caught up in trying to provide research based reading programs, which were provided by the basal reading programs (Shannon, 1989). In Shannon's book, *Broken Promises*, he discusses the entrapment of reading teachers and administration by the government and states, "the roles of the teacher and text book seem to be reversed...wherein teachers become a support system for the textbook rather than the other way around." Barrentine (1999) stated, "Teachers are falling into line and teaching to the test not because they agree with instruction that is driven by standardized testing, but because the consequences of low test scores are so great" (p. 5).

Methods of Standards-Based Reading Instruction

During the era of standards-based instruction from the years of George H. W. Bush to this day, there were and continues to be different methods of literacy instruction used by educators. One popular method was basal reading programs such as the popular series produced by Scott Foresman that taught using the characters Dick and Jane. The basal program utilizes the method of memorization or look-and-say and offers controlled vocabulary stories that

increase in difficulty as the reader progresses. At the end of each selection, students are given questions that measure comprehension of the story. Also materials are provided to the teacher for student use such as: workbooks, activity sheets, activities, and a teacher edition book (Pennsylvania State University Statements, 2013).

Whole language was coming into a third decade of being a widely used method of reading teachers (Pearson, 2002). This method introduced by Smith and Goodman was more holistic in nature. Goodman (2005) provides a rationale for whole language instruction and develops an explanation of the approach. During this work, he explains that educators have tried teaching students to read while inadvertently making the process meaningless and broad thus making it difficult for students to grasp. Goodman calls for teachers to put aside their carefully scripted lessons and basal readers and let students conduct meaningful conversations and use language in a more natural approach. He concludes by stating that this method provides “relevance, purpose, meaning, and respect while empowering students (Goodman, 2005).” In this method, students engage in the four-cueing systems: phonological, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic (Lemmann, 1997). The phonological system is comprised of letter-sound relationships and applications include the following: “pronouncing words; decoding words when reading; using invented spelling; reading and writing alliterations and onomatopoeia; noticing rhyming words; and dividing words into syllables (Tompkins, 2007).” Within the syntactic system, the reader can “add

inflectional endings to words; combine words to form compound words; add prefixes and suffixes to root words; use capitalization and punctuation to indicate beginnings and ends of sentences; and write simple, compound, and complex sentences (Tompkins, 2007).” The semantic system focuses on “learning meanings of words; discovering that many words have multiple meanings; using context clues to figure out an unfamiliar word; studying synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms; and using a dictionary and thesaurus (Tompkins, 2007).” The pragmatic system has “learners varying language to fit specific purposes; reading and writing dialogue in dialects; and comparing standard and nonstandard forms of English (Tompkins, 2007).”

Phonics instruction was also a competing philosophy during this time (Adams, 1990 & Stahl, 1992). Phonics instruction begins by teaching phonemic awareness, the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate phonemes. The educator is scaffolding students’ ability in order to move to the next level of letter-sound correspondence and spelling patterns. The goal of this method is for students to be able to decode words and sound out unfamiliar words while interacting with text (Tompkins, 2007).

This is most commonly known as the “Reading Wars,” and it seemed to come to a boiling point in the early 1990s (Lemann, 1997). Lemann’s article details Bill Honig’s, former California governor, switch of California’s reading instruction to that of whole language. Honig, according to Lemann, began as the state’s superintendent of public education championing his campaign to convert

the state's curriculum to that of "great books and ideas (Lemann, 1997)," which he succeeded after being elected.

Lemann (1997) then tells of Marion Joseph, a former state employee that was well connected. Joseph had issues regarding her grandson's reading ability after receiving whole language instruction. After researching the method, Joseph met with Honig to discuss whole language and make a case against the approach. Following the meeting, Honig told Joseph that he would "think about it (Lemann, 1997)." Joseph set up a follow up meeting to press the issue. Honig advocated a balanced reading approach after further research succeeding his term. As a result of whole language implementation during Honig's term in 1992, The National Assessment of Educational Progress released a study showing California fifth from the bottom in reading competency scores giving fuel to the phonics advocates (Lemann, 1997).

At the behest of congress in 1997, the National Reading Panel was formed and published in 2000 five key components of reading: Vocabulary, Comprehension, Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, and Fluency. The panel specified that there was no specific order to teaching the components, and the components could occur simultaneously (National Reading Panel, 2000). With these findings, a relatively new method began to emerge the concept of a balanced literacy program. This program utilizes whole language and phonics simultaneously as well as other components and in some eyes ends the reading wars (Cowen, 2003; Vukelich & Christie, 2004). Spiegel (1998) notes a balanced reading approach "is built on research, views the teacher as an

informed decision maker who develops a flexible program, and is constructed around a comprehensive view of literacy.” Examples of research include: studies showing the interconnectedness of vocabulary and comprehension emerge (Coyne, Simmons, Kameenui, and Stoolmiller, 2004). Oakhill, Cain, and Bryant (2003) note that there are simultaneous factors that happen simultaneously to affect comprehension. Studies revealing the importance of students interacting with nonfiction texts begin to gain more prominence (Duke, 2004).

What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is a set of standards released by the National Governors Association (NGA) in June of 2010 and was adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia (Reese, 2011). The CCSS are based upon the previously developed initiative created to develop college and career readiness (CCR) standards (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013). These CCR standards covered the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. The aim of the creation of the CCSS was the establishment of educational learning goals that would allow children across the United States to succeed academically and professional. Proponents of these standards argued that America’s students need to be able to compete internationally, and a common set of standards that all students learn by would make sure that educational opportunities were more achievable by everyone throughout the country. It is important to note that the CCSS identify what should be taught with

standards, but do not specify how these standards should be met through actual teaching methods and required curriculum.

The driving force behind the CCSS was collaboration between the NGA and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (Bell & Thatcher, 2012). These two organizations received the support of their members to create voluntary, state-led standards. All states with the exception of Alaska and Texas were behind this initiative. Currently, all but four states (Alaska, Nebraska, Texas and Virginia) have adopted the CCSS.

Move to Common Core State Standards

The National Governors Associate mission statement states: “The National Governors Association (GA) is a bipartisan organization of the nation’s governors. Through NGA, governors share best practices, speak with a collective voice on national policy and develop innovation solutions that improve state government and support the principles of federalism” (National Governors Association – About, 2013). The NGA was founded in 1908 and is made up of the governors of the 55 states, territories, and commonwealths that make up the United States.

The other organization that led the development of the CCSS with the NGA was the Council of Chief State School Officers. This organization is comprised of public officials that head education departments throughout the country. The council also provides leadership and assistance to public officials. Their goal or mission statement is: “Our Promise is to lead chiefs and their state education agencies by focusing on state-driven leverage points that they

are uniquely positioned to address and increasing their capacity to produce students read to succeed as productive members of society” (CCSSO – Who We Are, 2013).

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation also supported the creation of the standards. This organization states a belief that clear, consistent standards are most helpful in preparing students for college and the workplace (Phillips & Wong, 2012). To this end, they invested \$76 million, between the years of 2009-2011, in projects that would assist teachers in enacting the new CCSS in classrooms across the country.

Through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s College-Read Work team, Phillips & Wong (2012) have worked with professionals in many fields to create tools for teachers based on a set of design principles they follow: “First, we wanted to focus on the pattern of behavior we were trying to address... Second, we wanted simple elegance: tools that were flexible, slender, and able to slip into a teacher’s instruction without requiring them to read through hundreds of pages of implementation manuals... Third, we wanted to honor the creative tension in teaching... Fourth, we wanted teachers as cocreators and codesigners of these tools from the start... Fifth, we wanted the tools we developed to evolve and improve over time based on the wisdom of practice... Sixth, we wanted to point teachers toward the big changes required by the Common Core and begin to shift the existing curriculum even before the new summative assessments come online” (p. 32).

The lead writers for the CCSS were David Coleman, Susan Pimentel and Jason Zimba, who are founding members of the Student Achievement Partner. Their mission is simple: “to help all students and teachers see their hard work lead to greater student achievement” (Achieve the Core – Principles and Purpose, 2013). The three guiding principles followed are: The organization does not reserve any intellectual property rights; they do not compete for federal, state or district contracts; and do not accept money from publishers.

A large problem behind the implementation of NCLB and specifically CCSS is the lack of funding behind the mandates and reforms. Great costs go into the development and implementation of standardized tests, and the states are expected to cover the majority of these costs.

Beginning in 2011, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) began to track states’ progress in implementation of the CCSS through survey sent to deputy state superintendents of education or another party they designated to reply for them (Kober & Rentner, 2012). The purpose of this study was to find out the strategies being utilized to fulfill implementation of the CCSS, policies that were enacted, and challenges that each state has faced.

The first survey was sent out shortly after the CCSS were released in Fall 2010. The initial survey’s purpose was to determine initial steps the states had taken to ensure they would be able to implement the CCSS. The initial survey had responses from thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia. Of these respondents, three states said they could possibly change their original decision

to implement the CCSS. The major factor in this possible change was cited as lack of funding to implement the required standards changes.

Thirty responding states answered that they agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS implementation would require significant changes to current curriculum and instructional methods. These changes cost funds that many districts do not have. Race to the Top funds are available for states who are willing to implement standards to help students succeed after high school, and the states who are participating in Race to the Top reported the ability to adopt the CCSS standard sooner than states that did not participate in Race to the Top (Kober & Rentner, 2012). Only two of thirty-three states stated that they believed finding resources to implement the CCSS in the 2011-2012 school year would not be a challenge for their state. The CEP stated their belief that state education policymakers need to keep in mind that implementation of the CCSS could be delayed or possibly halted altogether due to financial constraints.

Another impact of the CCSS on funding is the potential loss of Title I funds for schools whose students do not make AYP. Failing schools have the potential to lose up to twenty percent of these funds for general education use (Long, 2011). The schools do not initially lose the funds totally but must shift them over to supplemental educational services. The funds can also be spent towards allowing public school choice.

While school districts struggle financially to develop and implement curriculum changes required to keep up with the CCSS, there are groups that are profiting off the implementation of these Standards. One group that stands

to profit from the passage of NCLB and implementation of CCSS are educational publishing companies (Arce, Luna, Borjian, & Conrad, 2005). These companies, such as McGraw Hill, Harcourt, Pearson, and Riverside have subdivisions that develop standardized tests and also textbooks. There is very little public review of these corporations and they continue to grow tremendously.

Another company that has grown due to use of standardized tests is Education Testing Services (ETS). ETS creates and analyses standardized tests for both students and teachers. Many states, including Louisiana, require teachers to pass ETS-created tests in order to become certified and deemed highly-qualified (ETS, 2013). One example includes that on California, in 2003 ETS secured a \$175 million contract to cover student testing (Arce, Luna, Borjian, & Conrad, 2005). Between 2002 and 2008, it is expected that states will spend between \$1.9 to \$5.3 billion to prepare students for, and administer, standardized test required by NCLB.

Another private sector group that is profiting off of NCLB and CCSS are private consulting firms that must be hired by states and districts in order to collect and analyze data required for proof that students are meeting AYP and other NCLB requirements (Arce, Luna, Borjian, & Conrad, 2005). Connecticut has fought back against these costs and sued the federal government in 2005, claiming that they were required to spend resources on NCLB data requirements rather than being allowed to use them in more student-oriented way, such as educational interventions and school reform actions. The state

claimed that from 2002 to 2008, they would spend \$19,250,000 meeting these requirements while the federal government would only contribute \$1,033,000.

IRA Suggestions for Implementation

The International Reading Association published a document that outlined each specific literacy issue related to the implementation of CCSS and also included recommendations for educators to approach these issues (IRA, 2012). The IRA guidance offered in this document represents a consensus of thoughts from leaders in the field of literacy. The literacy issues addressed: use of challenging texts, foundational skills, comprehension, vocabulary, disciplinary literacy, and diverse learners.

The IRA suggests that students read texts with varying levels of difficulty throughout the school year, including texts that are easier than the required standards. They also suggest that teachers be offered, and engage in, professional development activities. These activities help them to adequately offer proper support to their students, which will make them more capable of achieving AYP.

The second suggestion by the IRA is that teachers start early with the teaching of foundational reading skills. This should be done in a clear, systematic way that will make the students more successful in learning to read. The IRA also believes that the foundational skills should be taught in conjunction with instruction related to reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language areas specifically addressed within the CCSS.

Thirdly, the IRA concerns the ability of students to comprehend the material they are learning. The CCSS standards for reading do not specifically outline how teacher should teach students correct cognitive strategies that will allow them to interpret texts, only that students should know how to be close and attentive readers. In order to achieve this, teachers must help students learn how to read high-quality texts closely and critically. Research-based reading strategies that involve “gradual release of responsibility” have proven most useful in this endeavor (IRA, 2012). This allows students to learn the comprehension strategies from their teachers and slowly take more responsibility for comprehending the text. Also teaching students to effectively apply the strategies they are taught when reading challenging texts assists in comprehension.

The fourth suggestion offered by the IRA concerns vocabulary development and its association to the CCSS. Vocabulary development affects not only student performance in ELA, but also their overall academic achievement. All students must have a firm understanding of vocabulary in order to read, write, and comprehend all subjects. Normally vocabulary instruction is linked to reading comprehension, but the CCSS emphasize it in the Language strand of the Standards. The IRA suggests that teachers study all strands of the CCSS to look for vocabulary development references, because they are easily overlooked. Another suggestion is to teach students not only the meanings of the words, but also word-solving strategies that will help them

determine word meanings from context. The instruction in word-solving strategies should be taught throughout the day, not just in ELA lessons.

The next suggestion from IRA concerns the writing opportunities in regards to increasing reading comprehension. Recent research has shown that reading comprehension can be increased if students are given the opportunity to write about texts that they read. The CCSS mandate that students know: “how to summarize text, critically analyze the information reported in texts, and synthesize information from multiple texts, using what is drawn from sources as evidence in support of students’ own ideas” (IRA, 2012). In order to write effectively using multiple texts, students should be taught the importance of both print and digital texts. The IRA also suggests that the best way for teachers to address this part of the CCSS is extensive professional development in which the teachers do their own writing and analysis of student writing.

The sixth CCSS issue addressed by the IRA is the emphasis of disciplinary literacy: the use of reading and writing skills across the curriculum. In order to meet this requirement, content teachers will have to take responsibility for teaching their students the literacy strategies that will be most beneficial to understanding their specific content area. The best way to accomplish this is for districts to make sure their content teachers get adequate professional development on literacy practices that are appropriate for use in their area.

The final concern from the IRA regarding the CCSS is the fact that, although the goal is a set of standards by which every child can be held to and achieve, but it does not state how this must be achieved. The best way to assist diverse learners is to vary the amounts of “input” they required based on the “output” they are required to achieve. To assist English learners in this endeavor, the U.S. Department of Education provides financial support to “Understanding Language”, which creates resources to assist English learners. It is also important to monitor student learning, and make adjustments when needed, to make sure that students are meeting the requirements set forward in the CCSS.

Reading Common Core Implementation

Coleman (2011) notes that students will have to develop reading, writing, and speaking skills that can be utilized within different content areas. David Conley (2005) focused on the need for students to be college prepared. In his book, *College Knowledge*, he states that students who are successful in college-level science classes are able to display these skills: “Formulate research questions and develop a plan for research; use research to support their own opinions; and identify claims in their work that require outside support and validation.” Draper (2010) also concludes that there is a strategic method of representing findings in mathematics and science that uses a “particular literacy.” Norris and Phillips (2003) acknowledge that students must be equipped to differentiate between facts and theories in science. Perfetti, Britt,

and Georgi (1995) note that students should garner from history texts what are facts, persuasive arguments, and historical biases.

With the push for college and career ready curriculum that requires students analyze a variety of text across disciplines, reading and writing connecting these texts, and using research to justify findings, it is important for educators of upper-elementary to high school students to prepare students with reading and literacy strategies that will help them succeed in the upcoming shift. Yore and Treagust (2006) conclude that teaching literacy strategies during content area instruction can enhance learning in these subjects. However, Lester (2000) found that most content area educators feel that the instruction of literacy strategies falls to the English teacher. Also, O'Brien, Stewart, and Moje (1995) found that when literacy strategies are implemented in classrooms, content area teachers find them to be "time consuming, inefficient, and inappropriate." Pressley (2002) concluded after a yearlong study of fourth and fifth grade teachers, who had been termed effective by their respective districts, that while the students were given assignments to use comprehension skills or strategies, the teachers never went over the method of utilizing the strategy or explain the purpose of utilization.

While some educators in content areas might agree with the implementation of literacy strategies, Bean (1997) found that teachers tend to teach the way that was shown to them by their teaching placement teacher or the way they were taught. Spitler (2012) recognizes that providing content area preservice teachers a positive perceptiveness about the incorporation of literacy

strategies, showing them the relevance, and how to incorporate the strategies might develop a new view and motivation to implement the strategies. Risko et al. (2008) found that preservice teachers often had beliefs of implementing a hands-on approach to learning, but when asked how they would implement the strategies, the interns admitted to using a text-based method. Radcliffe, Caverly, Hand, and Franke (2008) provide that most educators do not teach the strategies necessary to navigate a textbook, so students are not prepared to interact with the text.

However, Kennedy (1971) acknowledges the use of the textbook in the classroom of content area teachers and cites three uses of the textbook as the source of curriculum development in the classroom: “the content of the curriculum; the skills to be learned; and the sequence in which these skills are to be learned (Kennedy, 1971).” Kennedy also calls for teachers to be aware of the text and to educate students about the book before assigning reading passages. Awareness of the text according to Kennedy includes: “the table of contents; the use of special devices that note significant content or skills; and the questions at the end of the chapter (Kennedy, 1971).”

Wilfong (2009) worked with a fifth grade science educator to incorporate literature circles using the textbook in the classroom and noted that this strategy could help transition students from the heavy literary based instruction from the primary grades since literature circles tend to be a common practice. The roles used were “discussion director, summarizer, vocabulary enricher, and webmaster.” Students would independently read the selection and make notes

then come together to complete a graphic organizer and discuss the information. Based on the observations completed by the researcher and teacher along with exit slips completed by the students, Wilfong concluded that this strategy enhanced motivation of working with the textbook.

After reviewing the literature of the time, George Spache (1958) concluded seven fundamental reading methods that students would utilize across content areas and prepare them for high school and college. These skills are: “understanding and interpreting content; grasping the organization of content; developing special vocabularies, concepts, and symbols; evaluating critically what is read; collecting and collating materials; recalling and applying what is read; and broadening interests, tastes, and experiences” (Spache, 1958).

Pardo and Raphael (1991) call for the use of effective instructional designs to be used by content area teachers by “utilizing grouping practices and comprehension strategies; designing flow to instructional practice that builds; educators leading students in meaningful conversations as a whole group; giving students the chance to provide their thoughts and knowledge of the subject; sharing experiences; learning from difficult texts; motivating students; group practice of strategies; working to create text; and using text for small group discourse. Individually, teachers should provide students the opportunity to reflect; set goals; practice strategies; and relevant assessment.”

Yore (2004) offers guidelines for integrating literacy strategies in the science classroom: “assessing the importance, validity, and certainty of textual

claims; generating questions about the topic to set the purpose for reading; detecting main ideas and summarizing them; inferring meaning; skimming, elaborating, and sequencing; using text structure to anticipate and comprehend ideas; improving conceptual networks (concept mapping) and memory; monitoring comprehension; and self-regulating to address comprehension failures” (p.484).

Massey and Riley (2013) implemented a two-year long case study approach to analyzing Massey’s approach to teaching mathematics and if reading comprehension strategies were implemented. At first, Massey was unaware of the strategies that he was implementing during instruction, since his instruction was lecture based and students were required to do little reading if at all. Over the course of the study, Massey and Riley came to notice specific strategies that were being taught by Massey.

These researchers concluded an action plan that could be implemented across content areas. The steps include: “educators read the section of text that will be assigned to students; write down the thinking processes used by the teacher to make sense of the text; model the process for students; develop a shared language with students; and collaborate with other faculty to learn what phrases they use to describe their thinking” (p.584). These strategies are representative of an effective content area educator that incorporates literacy strategies in his or her classroom providing students with an overarching experience that should prepare him or her for future interactions with content specific texts.

Professional Development

A common thread in concerns from teachers regarding implementation of the CCSS is the need for professional development opportunities. According to a study conducted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, teachers were encountering problems engaging their students in higher-order, cognitively demanding tasks, such as the ability to synthesize, analyze, and apply information (Saswchuk, 2012). In order to combat this, it is necessary to offer teachers professional development opportunities that will allow them to develop their abilities. This can be achieved on the front-end, with preservice teachers, but this needs to be followed up with opportunities for teachers who have been in the field for years. This is true for training in both content and pedagogy, as most teachers will teach as they were taught. Also it will be hard for teachers to understand why they need to implement changes without becoming familiar with the assessments that are aligned to the new standards.

The ultimate goal of professional development is to increase the ability of teachers in impart necessary knowledge, from teacher to student, that will allow the student to be most successful. Jenkins and Agamba (2013) found that teachers embrace professional development opportunities because they strive to be better teachers in the end and believe it will assist in this quest. It is sometimes difficult to judge the effectiveness of professional development opportunities because it is hard to correlate their implementation to improved classroom practices that ultimately lead to increased student achievement. To help evaluate their validity, the National Center for Educational Statistics

(NCES) developed the following six research-based features that are crucial to the design and evaluation of professional development: focus on content and focus on method, active learning opportunities, duration, collective participation, format, and alignment (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013).

Another goal is to have a seamless educational process that moves students through the educational system from the earliest ages in prekindergarten through college. Preparing students can accomplish this goal with the correct pre-requisite knowledge for them to be most successful in the higher educational setting (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013). Once these knowledgeable students who want to become teachers reach university level, they are able to focus more on learning the skills that will assist them in being successful in teaching under CCSS. These students will then graduate and enter their educator careers prepared to teach CCSS. Thus the circle begins again, and they teach their students pre-requisite knowledge that will make them more successful in higher educational settings.

Along with trying to effectively implement the CCSS, many states are focusing on how to adequately assess AYP to meet standards while saving money. To these ends, the US Department of Education awarded two contracts in 2010, to separate consortia, in order for assessment systems to be developed (Long, 2011). These contracts and creation of systems would allow for all states participating in the CCSS to choose from the assessment system that best suits their needs. The aim was to provide states with valuable assessment systems that would help school systems and teachers make

informed decisions on curriculum adjustments that would best help their students to meet AYP. Two important issues faced by both consortia are ESL learners and students with disabilities and also providing teachers with information in a timely manner so it can actually be useful in the classroom.

The first consortium discussed by Long (2011) is the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), which is composed of 24 participating states. PARCC's goal is to make sure all high school graduates are prepared for college and careers. They believe this is best accomplished by providing teachers with high-quality assessments that they can administer throughout the year so that teachers know where to focus extra time and support to student learning. PARCC created a system of technology-based assessments that will test the range of CCSS in ELA and mathematics. The ELA portion is built around a five-part assessment system, with three components coming throughout the year to provide informative data. The last two components are given at the end of the year to measure student achievement, and this data is combined into one summative report.

The second consortia discussed by Long (2011) is the SMARTER Balance Assessment Consortium, which is composed of 29 participating states. SMARTER Balanced's goal is to utilize the latest technology and research in order to provide high-quality assessments to measure students' preparation for college and careers. In order to do this, they provide optional technology-based assessments that allow local school systems and teachers to track individual student progress throughout the year. This data can be quickly and easily

accessed so that changes in instructional practices can go into effect as soon as possible. To support these changes, SMARTER Balanced Digital Library was created to provide teachers access to resources and tools to assist them in the classroom. These include scoring rubrics and examples of student work.

States are finding that it is more effective to train teachers directly rather than the ‘train the trainer’ model that has been implemented in the past. Examples of this method of professional development opportunities already been put in place on the state level can be found in Delaware, Utah, and Arkansas (Saswchuk, 2012). In Delaware, a system of online lessons that explain the state’s shift from previous content expectations to the new CCSS is delivered directly to every teacher. In Utah, which has a larger geographic area than Delaware, has found it easier to train people in each district in the hopes of shifting the professional development responsibilities to the local districts. This was done in the 2011 by training 120 facilitators who have proven their performance in the past with high student achievement scores. These facilitators need held “academies” in their districts for the teachers employed there. Springdale, AR provides their teachers with up to four days off in order to develop units that align with the CCSS, and they are encouraged to work together as teams.

Summary

Educators throughout the nation are implementing the Common Core State Standards. As stated by the National Governors Association (2010), the standards do not dictate how teachers should teach, but rather the standards

provide a map of where the student should be performing. The study conducted by Murnane and Papay (2010) reveal educator frustrations regarding standards-based instruction and revealing concerns about testing and lack of quality professional development practices among other worries.

This new shift to college and career readiness is a needed, but it is crucial that educators do not discard proven instructional methods in favor of criterion-based test preparation strategies. Literacy Instruction requires a balanced approach that prepares students to be successful, lifelong readers. Dole, Duffy, Roehler, and Pearson (1991) reported that content area educators at the middle and high school levels maintain that students have learned the necessary reading comprehension strategies in order to be successful learners before entering their classrooms. Educators at the primary and upper elementary levels should be preparing students for these teachers. It is important for these teachers to collaborate and provide students with instruction based on curriculum developed by them as professionals. Teacher education programs prepare educators with skills to design lessons based on standards. With these tools, educators should be able to design curriculum to meet these new standards while implementing a balanced literacy program in which students can succeed.

Chapter 3: METHODS

Design and Methodology

James Spradley (1980) wrote,

“I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?” (pg. 34).

There has been considerable debate among researchers regarding the use of qualitative and quantitative methods. While respective methods have strengths and weaknesses associated with both processes, research methodology is determined by the questions asked by the researcher (Creswell, 2009). This researcher proposes a qualitative methodology for this study. Matthew B. Miles, a social psychologist, and A. Michael Huberman, a former professor of education among other great accomplishments, commend the findings from qualitative research in their book, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, by stating: “Words, especially organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a reader- another researcher, a policymaker, a practitioner- than pages of summarized numbers” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.1). Gretchen B. Rossman, Professor of International Education and Chair of the Department of Educational Policy, Research & Administration at the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Sharon F. Rallis, Dwight W. Allen Distinguished Professor of Education Policy Reform at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, describe qualitative research as the product of two attributes: “the researcher is the means through which the study is conducted and the purpose

is to learn about some facet of the social world” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 38). John W. Creswell, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, defines the process qualitative research as “involving emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants’ setting; analyzing the data inductively, building from participants to general themes; and making interpretations of the meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2009, p.232).

Framework

This researcher explored the experience of a particular group in one setting based on the members’ own perspective through observation, interview, and perhaps documents based on an interpretive or qualitative perspective (Sharan B. Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) in her book, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, describes the qualitative research design as being “emergent and flexible, responsive to changing conditions of the study in progress” (p.173). While this is true of qualitative research in order to explore the questions proposed by this researcher, an ethnographic case study model detailed in James Spradley’s *Participant Observer* book will be utilized in an attempt to collect, analyze, and interpret the data to be gathered (Spradley, 1980).

Spradley (1980) detailed steps to achieve this goal in his book, *Participant Observer*. This method called the Developmental Research Sequence Method was developed by Spradley to provide a more effective method for ethnographic research. This study followed the steps detailed by Spradley in his D.R.S. model.

Social Situation

The first step proposed in Spradley's method is to identify the social setting where the study will take place that are characterized by "a place, actors, and activities" (p.39) which contribute to a "single social setting" (p. 40). For this investigation, the researcher conducted the study in a Title 1, public school in a rural area. The investigation focus was to interview, observe, and analyze data gathered from elementary teachers grades one through five and two administrators. Participants were chosen based on availability and administrative reference that fell within the researcher's qualifications. These qualifications included a variety of teaching experience, certification, and highly regarded teachers of reading in grades one through five. Activities for data collection included interviews from each participant, observations of classroom teachers' implementation of the CCSS in Reading, and included documents gathered such as worksheets, stories, and instructional materials. This study lasted four weeks.

Participant Observation

Within this step, Spradley (1980) explains levels of participant observation defining duties of the participant observer as "seeking to become explicitly aware of things usually blocked out but to avoid overload" (p.55). The levels progress starting with passive observer and gaining interaction with, passive, moderate, and active to full participation. Spradley (1980) describes the role of the passive observer as being " present at the scene of action but does not participate or interact with other people to any great extent" (p.59).

For this investigation, the researcher participated as a passive observer while conducting the observations progressing to moderate participation while conducting interviews. With the study being carried out in the second semester of the school year, January 24, 2014 through February 21, 2014, educators and students seemed to be accustomed to observations being conducted. It is unrealistic to be passive while conducting an interview. There was interaction between the researcher and participant such as clarification of a misconception about a question, or the researcher asking for clarification about an answer.

Ethnographic Record

Spradley (1980) relays in this section the specifics of data collection in regards to the study. With his “verbatim principle,” he cautions the researcher to error on the side of safety and use the data gathered to keep the researcher from using his or her “tendency to translate” (p.67). These records include: “field notes, tape recorders, pictures, artifacts, and anything else that documents the social situation under study” (p. 63). The researcher used a recorder in order to record the interviews and observations. Also, a journal to record field notes was carried to record thoughts and reflections before, during, and after each interaction with participants. The goal of this method was to provide the researcher with enough data to accurately recall the material upon analysis.

Descriptive Observations

Spradley suggests nine categories for participant observation in a cultural setting:

1. Space: the physical place or places
2. Actor: the people involved
3. Activities: a set of related acts people do
4. Object: the physical things that are present
5. Act: single actions that people do
6. Event: a set of related activities that people carry out
7. Time the sequencing that takes place over time
8. Goal: the things people are trying to accomplish
9. Feeling: the emotions felt and expressed (Spradley, 1980, p. 78)

After conducting each interview and observation, these themes were analyzed to provide scope of the data.

Domain Analysis

“It (Analysis) refers to the systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationship among parts, and their relationship to the whole” (Spradley, 1980, p.85). The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of the CCSS by teachers. While analyzing the data gathered from this study, the researcher searched for “patterns” (Spradley, 1980, p.85) reflecting teachers’ attitudes and the comparison of implementation between primary and upper elementary teachers. The data revealed domains or themes, which were reported at the conclusion of the study.

Focused Observations

Spradley suggests after identifying the different domains or themes to look at one carefully than looking at multiple themes with the same dedication to

provide an in-depth investigation (Spradley, 1980, p.101). Focused Observations occur after descriptive observations and the identification of the major domains and are represented in Chapter Four within the interviews. Observations were conducted which provided the researcher with the grand tour, and interviews began to reveal three main domains.

Taxonomic Analysis

Spradley (1980) defines taxonomy as “ a set of categories organized on the basis of a single semantic relationship” (p. 112). Within this step, the researcher looks for categories or domains based on the language used within the culture being studied. In this case, the data analyzed produced three major domains that are discussed in the conclusion of this study. With the emergence of these themes, focused observations were conducted in order to address the acceptance of these themes or dismissal.

Selected Observations

After the first two collections and analysis, this stage serves to fine-tune the findings of the study. Spradley (1980) describes this step as a funnel used to narrow down the study (p.128). These can be conducted using informal or formal interviews. Researchers discuss the emergent property of qualitative research. This characteristic is reflected in this step of Spradley’s method. Through the process of initial interview and observations and drawing from the data presented, the themes that are identified are then followed up with questions. Selected interviews are based on those domains identified that have been analyzed and in order to provide that in-depth look into the selected theme

the researcher constructs follow-up questions that can be asked in a formal or informal setting based on the investigator's discretion. Spradley suggests "dyadic and triadic" questioning within domains in order to narrow the domain (p. 125, 126). Dyadic questions compare two counterparts of a domain and contrast these elements. Triadic questions compare the domains. This allows the researcher to see the comparisons and contrasts within the themes.

Componential Analysis

Conceptual Analysis, according to Spradley (1980), is the "systematic search for attributes (components of meaning) associated with cultural categories" (p.131). During this stage, the researcher looks at the cultural domains that have emerged from the data. The interconnectedness of the data is then plotted, and similarities and differences are reported. The researcher chooses the domains in which to analyze, set up the columns that represent the sub-topics, and searched for the similarities and differences among the data.

Cultural Themes

"Every culture is a complex pattern" (Spradley, 1980, p.141). Rossman and Rallis (2012) recognize that many researchers are not allowed an in-depth ethnographic study and instead conduct "mini-ethnographic" (p.141). These consist of immersion drawing from the data collected during the study. Although, an in-depth immersion into the school's culture was limited by time constraints, characteristics were drawn from the data regarding the culture of the school and reported and analyzed in chapters four and five.

Cultural Inventory

The final step in Spradley's method, cultural inventory requires the researcher to compile the data that has been gathered to analyze before writing the final product. This point in the stage allows for reflection and provides the researcher the opportunity to register changes that need to be addressed before continuing. In order to complete this step, this researcher gathered the data throughout the study and analyzed the domains and sub-categories identified.

Biases

Sharan B. Merriam (1998) describes the researcher in qualitative study as "the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data (p.317) – the investigator as human instrument is limited by being human- mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, personal biases interfere" (p.318). As a qualitative researcher it is a daunting task to be privy to others' thoughts and feelings. It is imperative that the researcher record and present the data without purposefully adding his or her biases. In an effort to circumvent any bias being present, the researcher approached participants with the data collected and had them read over and decide if the information disclosed was representative of their views and expressions. The participants were allowed to keep or strike information that was relayed. The goal of this study was to explore the implementation of the CCSS in reading by the participants not to exploit their methods as negative or otherwise.

Summary

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) describe four contributing factors of trustworthiness for the ethnographic researcher as cited in Sharan B. Merriam (1998, p.24, 39).

1. Collecting data for long periods-provides opportunity for continual data analysis and comparison.
2. Informant interviews-are less abstract than many instruments used in other research designs.
3. Participant observation is conducted in natural settings.
4. Ethnographic analysis incorporates researcher reflection, introspection, and self-monitoring.

While the debate regarding the validity of qualitative research will continue. This researcher used all the resources and strategies learned to provide a credible study. This study explored the implementation process of the CCSS from the view of five educators and two administrators. The hope is that while the research is not generalizable, it provides researchers and educators a perspective of a new implementation process that is being faced.

Chapter 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interview with Principal

Background/Education:

This study began with the interview of the principal of Roosevelt Jr. High School, Mrs. Danes. She began the interview by describing herself as a “white, female” not disclosing her age (Danes Interview, 2014). Mrs. Danes received her bachelor’s degree from an accredited four-year college in Northern Louisiana. During her teaching career, she pursued and received her master degree from the same university in Educational Leadership. Mrs. Danes was hired as a Pre-Kindergarten teacher for a local school and then transferred to a neighboring school as a fourth grade Math, Science, and Social Studies teacher, where she stayed for eight to nine years. After spending time in the classroom, she continued on as a Math Facilitator, Links in-class facilitator, and then began a math lab using the same pull out methods as a reading specialist with small group interventions. When funds were cut to provide the math lab for the school, Mrs. Danes began working for the parish school board as their SBLC interventionist. For the next two years, she would travel from school to school providing students who were referred to the special education program intervention services. Mrs. Danes then received an assistant principal position at yet another Jr. High/ Elementary School within the same parish and continued there for another four years, before taking the principal position at Roosevelt Jr. High School. This is her first year at this school and first as a principal (Danes Interview, 2014).

Introduction to the Common Core State Standards:

Mrs. Danes initially became aware of the standards during her service as Assistant Principal at a neighboring school. She mentioned that her then principal and she would hold conversations about the standards, while maintaining that her foci at the time centered around discipline enforcement and providing classroom instructional guidance for teachers. She would however read informational selections regarding the then up-coming standards, but acknowledges as an assistant principal, she did not receive the chance to attend training sessions that were provided to her principal. Mrs. Danes did attend a professional development opportunity regarding the standards the previous month to this study that focused on providing the purpose, origin, and how the standards were developed which she classified as “really good” (Danes Interview, 2014).

Planning and Implementation:

Mrs. Danes provided that there was no set implementation plan or process for the Common Core Standards in place at the school. She acknowledged that her faculty and herself “kind of just jumped into it, and it was probably not done as well as it could have been” (Danes Interview, 2014). Mrs. Danes provides that her teachers are still becoming familiar with the standards, and all are using different curriculum choices that were provided by the parish, school-board office. These choices include: “Engage New York, Louisiana Believes, and Laying the Foundation” (Danes Interview, 2014).

Principal Danes discussed her disappointment of the lack of professional development that has been provided to her faculty and expressed interest in having the speaker that she heard midyear at the professional development session she attended come speak at the school. She has provided a small amount of professional development opportunities at the school and spoke highly of a central office person that is funded with Title One funds who comes in two times a week to provide teachers with materials for implementing the standards, relaying that she has provided teachers with copies of the standards and showed them where to find resources. Mrs. Danes was not knowledgeable as to how exactly the standards were explained to teachers at the school, because she was hired three weeks before school started. She does have two teacher leaders who have went to Shreveport to receive training on implementing the Common Core, however, their training has only addressed implementing the Math standards.

Reactions to Implementation:

Mrs. Danes described the biggest challenge that has faced her staff during this transitional phase as figuring out what exactly to do in regards to curriculum. The district office provided the curriculum choices two weeks before school began. Some choices were still in the process of being developed and modules were given to teachers progressively, so the teachers were not able to have the summer to prepare or preview the modules before implementation. She also provided that some teachers started using one curriculum option and chose to switch to another as the year progressed and also acknowledged that

implementing reading and setting up a progression of skills is still being worked on since some of the curriculum choices, for example, do not provide phonics lessons for lower elementary grades: “And it's not until you get into something that you're realizing, Oh, there's a hole here. We didn't address that. So this has been an interesting year because everybody's learning and figuring out what works, what doesn't work, scrambling to get materials for them” (Danes Interview, 2014).

When asked about what she perceived to be challenges associated with implementing the standards in regards to reading, Mrs. Danes stated:

“Um, I guess continuity. To me it would be everybody on the same page, speaking the same language, teaching the same... You know, our Phonics needs to be the same across the board. Um, the strategies need to be the same across the board. And, you know, I don't-We're not quite there yet. We're working on that, but, um, and just to make sure we are looking at the data to make sure that the kids that aren't-You know, we just had a PD where we were looking at their Dibbles, their mid-term Dibbles, to see, you know, where we need to-how we've gotta get them to read. We've gotta get them reading and comprehending. So, to me, it's looking at ways to meet those kids and get them where they need to be before we move them onto the next grade and you get a kid in third or fourth grade who can't read” (Danes Interview, 2014).

She also felt that teachers were more upset about curriculum and not the actual standards. Mrs. Danes noted:

“The standards I don't have a problem with, you know, because it's-you know, they used to say you taught a mile wide and an inch deep, and the kid, you were spending every-the beginning of every year reviewing because they didn't learn it. Here-and I'm more familiar with the math than I am the reading, but, if you're teaching fewer standards, but you teach them much more in-depth and at a higher level, and you never move on to the next grade work, even with your better kids. They-you go back and give them more challenging, more in-depth problems at the level that they're at so that they can do it any old way you give it to them” ... “With the reading, I mean, the same thing goes for there. You know,

they're-You're teaching fewer standards, but much, like I said, much more deeply to where you're having readers. They're able to read. By the time they, you know, get to Third Grade, they should be-we shouldn't have any non-readers. I don't see-I don't have a problem with it. I think the problem that everybody's having conniptions over is the particular curriculum that they're teaching to meet the standards. That's kind of- That's my perception of it" (Danes Interview, 2014).

Mrs. Danes last comments during the interview addressed the teachers that she was sending the researcher to observe. She mentioned that her recommendations were made on the bases of teacher qualifications such as certification and experience since she did have some who are working towards certification.

Interview with Assistant Principal

Background/Education:

The assistant principal, Mrs. Moss, began the interview by identifying herself as a white, female, but she did not disclose her age. Mrs. Moss has taught Kindergarten for ten years at the same school within the parish and has been assistant principal at Roosevelt Jr. High School for three years. She graduated from an accredited four-year university in Southern Louisiana in the field of Political Science and moved back to her hometown. Following her move, she could not decide which career option to choose, so she decided to teach. Mrs. Moss underwent an alternative certification program in order to become a teacher. While maintaining a position as a Kindergarten teacher, she obtained her Master degree in Educational Leadership from a different university in Northern Louisiana and also received her plus thirty certification.

Introduction to the Common Core State Standards:

Mrs. Moss continued that she had been introduced to the Common Core Standards through the reception of memos and readings regarding the standards through her role as assistant principal, but acknowledged that she has received no formal training. She did note that the teachers and principal at her school had received some training but was adamant about her lack of professional development regarding the standards.

Planning and Implementation:

When asked about the implementation plan for her school, Mrs. Moss responded by referencing that there was a map somewhere indicating her office, but she was not familiar with the process and could not recall the details. Mrs. Moss mentioned that there was no formal lead-in to the implementation, all grades began implementing the standards at one time, and teachers were able to choose what curriculum to implement from the parish choices that were provided.

Mrs. Moss explained that the central office had provided some training at the beginning. However, she described the main source of information regarding implementation as: The principal imparting information as she receives it to faculty, and ladies from the state department had been by discuss issues with teachers and provide them some information, but she did not detail what the information was or explain what was presented or discussed with teachers.

Reactions to Implementation:

When asked about the challenges and success she has seen during the

first year of implementing, Mrs. Moss stated:

“That... They, they, they're starting to see, their kids are picking it up now, and they're starting to be able to do it and understand it better, but when it first hit, it awful because they didn't like it. They didn't, they didn't know enough about it, and they still don't. That, that's they problem. They don't... They just told us, you know, last year we start hearing about it over the summer, and then, boom, it's here, and they expect you to do it, and you haven't had any training. Like, I haven't had anything, so I don't feel prepared at all for it. They know more than I do, and it shouldn't be that way. So, you know, that it... It should have been slowly adjusting this year and then next year, here's what we're gonna do. And they didn't do that. They kinda just threw it on everybody, and they stayed frustrated all at the beginning of the year. They're still frustrated, but it's getting better. But I, I think they're starting to see that it's helping, that it's not as bad as we thought”(Moss Interview, 2014).

She also noted that in order to prepare teachers for testing the school would continue to offer after school meetings where the teachers would study data such as Dibels testing and try to identify weaker areas and address them in the classroom.

When asked about challenges in regards to implementing the standards in reading, she identified three major challenges: Struggling readers, funding, and professional development. Her reaction to the standards in regards to reading is as follows:

“I'm not as familiar with them as I should be because we have ten grade-levels here, and I... There's no way I can, I can do all of them... Um... But... We needed some time. We needed more time to be ready. That's basically what it boils down to. It.. It was just thrown on them, and it's just enough time for principals or teachers to be prepared to teach the way they need to teach... Mm...They, um... Uh... It's not that... Well, I don't know what I need to say... The teachers aren't, I guess they're trying not to fuss so much, so I'm not seeing. I'm not hearing as much as, you know, I'm not getting as much input because they're trying not to, but um... I, I know it has its pros, but... I don't know. I don't even know how to answer that. But... I don't know. 'Cause I'm not familiar enough with all of it to, to be able to answer, answer it because I, I can't possibly go through ten... Ten grade-levels of it and learn it. Especially when it just

popped... Popped in on us all of a sudden and it, you know, I don't know"(Moss Interview, 2014).

Interview with Mrs. Caston, First Grade

Background/Education

Mrs. Caston began by identifying herself as a white, female and an older teacher. She teaches first grade, all subjects at Roosevelt Jr. High School. Mrs. Caston received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from the nearest four-year accredited university. She also continued at the same university over a number of years while teaching, receiving her master degree in Curriculum and Instruction, her plus thirty certification, and an Educational Leadership certification. Mrs. Caston has taught twenty-three years in first grade at different schools within the parish. She served as Assistant Principal at Roosevelt Jr. High for five years. Then went on to serve as principal for a neighboring school for eight years. She returned to Roosevelt Jr. High to be a Reading Interventionist and Reading Coach for seven years. After funding was cut to her program, she returned to teaching first grade, and this is her third year back in the classroom.

Introduction to the Common Core Standards:

Mrs. Caston discussed becoming aware of the standards during her first year return to the classroom after serving as reading specialist. She did elude to a gradual implementation of the standards by implying that her grade level switched to the Common Core standards the previous year, but refuted herself by concluding that the teachers were given the ELA Common Core Standards two weeks before school started this school year. When asked how well she

was prepared for the implementation of the standards, she responded, “Not prepared very well at all” (Caston Interview, 2014). At first the educator was adamant about receiving no professional development opportunities regarding the standards. Eventually, she did recall a two-day seminar before school began during which time the educators looked over the Math and ELA standards. Mrs. Caston was aware of the Common Core support website that provides comparisons between the Louisiana GLEs, Grade Level Expectations, and the Common Core Standards, but she admitted to not studying the differences. She was however aware of gaps that needed to be addressed within her grade level and discussed the challenges she felt her students would encounter the following year based on curricular changes. For example, she explained the progression from first to second grade in writing. The standards place a greater emphasis on writing than what she has been teaching due to the GLEs that were previously in place. Mrs. Caston expressed that she places a considerable amount of emphasis on foundational skills; in consequence her students may not be adequately prepared for the amount of writing now required in second grade. The educator went on to explain that there had been no formal meetings with upper grades to discuss the progression of skills, gaps that need to be addressed in order to prepare students for the upcoming grades, or formal training for the new curriculum choices, but she did mention that the teachers do discuss these changes and will try to better prepare for the upcoming year. Although later in the interview she expressed her frustration to adequately prepare for the upcoming year, because there is dissension within the parish as

to what curriculum should be implemented the following year.

Planning and Implementation:

Mrs. Caston began by discussing the developmental progression of reading skills stating, “First grade’s emphasis is on foundational skills” (Caston Interview, 2014) and cited trouble addressing this within the standards. Here she was presented with a gap and was unsure how to address the issue. She began the year using the Louisiana Believes Curriculum that was given to her as a choice by the school board for lessons that addressed Comprehension and supplementing the foundational skills with the lessons provided by the previous basal reader series that was utilized by the school. After employing the new curriculum, she chose to return to the basal reader series exclusively but noted that she is using different comprehension strategies during her lessons that address the standards.

She mentioned parents having more trouble with the implementation process than the children in her class again stressing more emphasis on comprehension and writing in Reading while she focuses on foundational skills than is suggested by the standards. With a more focused measure on Comprehension, Mrs. Caston reported struggling readers having difficulties, but she is receiving help from parents.

Reactions to Implementation:

Mrs. Caston concluded the interview with a positive reaction to the standards citing no problems. However she was unsettled about the implementation of the standards in regards to curriculum and professional

development. Stating, “It’s a parish problem. It’s also a Louisiana problem” (Caston Interview, 2014). She was concerned about not knowing what was expected of her to teach the remainder of the year and the upcoming school year. Mrs. Caston is unaware, because she notes that Louisiana delegates what teachers are allowed to teach, and the parish chooses the method. However based on her experience and expertise, she favors a more phonological approach. Where students learn all sounds and letter-sound combinations before progressing to whole words. Which is reflected in her instruction.

Grand Tour

Mrs. Caston is regarded with high esteem among her colleagues. Most have been under her leadership and received her council whether during her time as assistant principal, principal, or reading interventionist. Her many years of experience and background have provided her a certain standing among the faculty and administration. Mrs. Caston does not have a reputation as having time management or organizational skills but is left to her own devices due to her high-test scores.

All classes at Roosevelt Jr. high exhibit the same cream-colored walls and tile flooring throughout the school. Around the edges within the classroom, one tile from the wall, there is a blue band of tile that runs along the classroom to the outside of the hall. This allows students a visual cue for where to align themselves before venturing into the hall. In every elementary classroom on one wall, there are floor to ceiling, open, lockers for children to store their things. Along the top of these lockers, there are cabinets for teachers to store supplies

with a small amount of space above which is usually cluttered with miscellaneous objects that the educator might utilize during the year. However, every teacher makes his or her room her own.

Mrs. Caston's room is no exception. However upon entering her room, immediately noticed is the absence of a desk. She has opted instead for a kidney shaped table concealed beneath stacks of what may be used for the week's lessons or remedial work she has gathered for her struggling readers. Four, small, blue chairs sit around this table as if waiting for students to come and fill the positions. She has managed to fit a small cabinet and table behind the table to store more resources and house her computer where she must submit attendance and grades. Immediately before reaching her kidney table, there is a small round table that did not move during the course of the study. The small, plastic, blue chairs surround it as well providing space for groups and off-task children to be sent. Keeping with this trend, there is one desk wedged close to these two tables, away from the group that did not change position during the course of this study. The remainder of students' desks was manipulated. This manipulation occurred after the second observation and is shown below in Figure 2. Figure 1 shows the students' desks before the manipulation as observed in Observation 1.

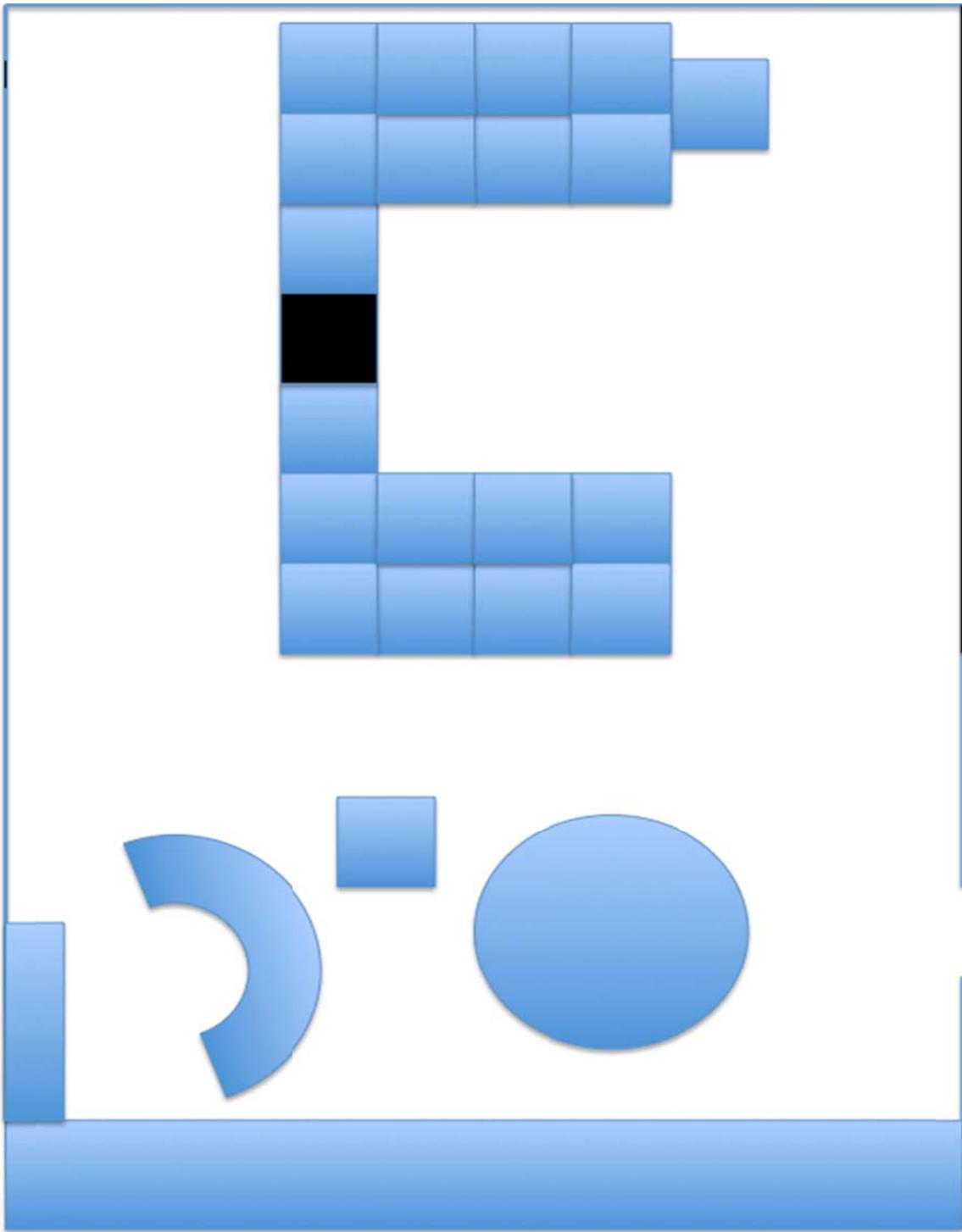


Figure 1

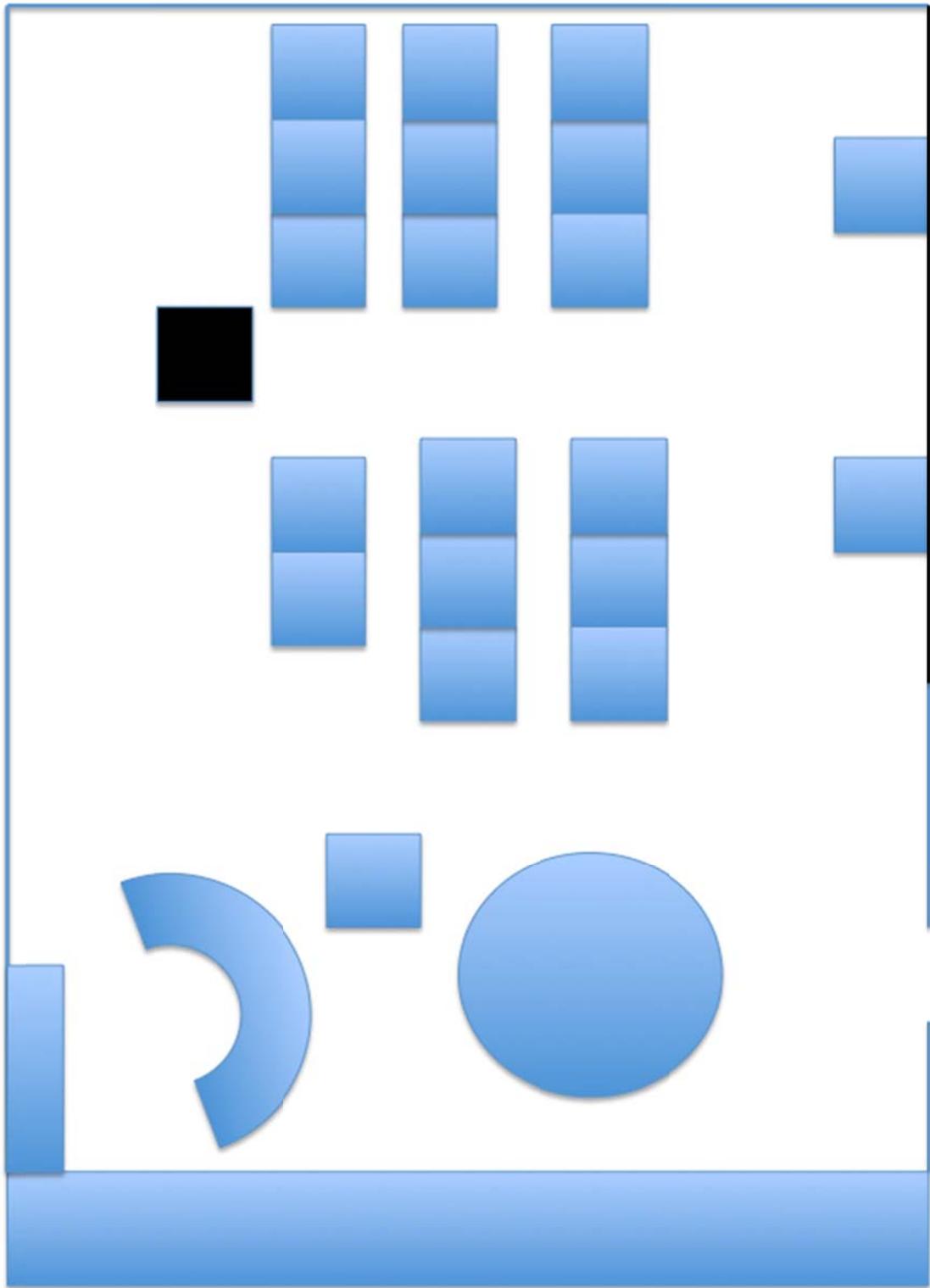


Figure 2

The teacher's center, indicated with the black block, is where Mrs. Caston spent the majority of her instructional time. This center consists of an ELMO projection system that allows her to display lessons for all students. The whiteboard is directly across from her center on the same wall as the door indicated with a space on the right side of the figures.

Upon entrance, noticeable are different components that support reading instruction such as the complete wall adjacent the lockers that is almost entirely covered with a word wall. This word wall contains all sight words that have been used throughout the year as well as words that have been used in instruction such as vocabulary words or interesting words that have been discussed. Alphabet word cards align the top of this wall with supporting phonetic letter-sound combinations and pictures. There is a separate vowel card section for easy reference next to the word wall. Below is a shelf containing big books that support letter-sound foundational skills for easy access by the teacher. Next to this is a small shelf with books that are available for student use. Adorning the back wall are filing cabinets and shelves for manipulatives. There are no set signs or places delegated for reading centers or groups. However, there is space available for students in order to participate in such activities. While it is not the neatest classroom observed, there seems to be a "method to the madness." Students seemed comfortable in the space. There were many visitors to the classroom throughout the study. All seemed to be able to find a seat and were able to interact as was appropriate. The atmosphere was not a formal one, and Mrs. Caston seemed to take interruptions in stride, moving at

her own pace unhindered by her schedule. There was a three-tiered classroom management system in place and was observable by a chart located on the back of the door. This chart contained three levels: red, yellow, and green. In representation of a stoplight, the three circles in the middle of the chart held different faces to indicate how the students are performing. Green corresponded with a smiley face. Yellow was a straight lined face, and red had a frowning face. Both sides of the stoplight held students names written on Popsicle sticks. Girls' sticks were held on one side, and boys' held on the other. Consequences were not displayed, and there were movements observed from one circle to the next.

Observations

Observation 1

Mrs. Caston began her lesson by asking students to retrieve their blue books from the desk and turn to the table of contents. Mrs. Caston reviewed different stories read and had students review the use of a table of contents and the mechanics of finding stories via its use. After review of the overarching theme of "Changes" that are found within the basal series, Mrs. Caston had students turn to the story for the week, "Frog and Toad Together". One student was unprepared by not having her book out or following along with the review. She was asked to move her stick and instruction continued. Mrs. Caston went over the fact that for the new six weeks, students would be studying the theme "Changes in Nature". She then proceeded to do a quick vocabulary, question

and answer segment about the meaning of nature. Answers from students included “bugs and planting seeds”.

During the vocabulary segment, a student brought the bathroom pass, so everyone stopped to take a bathroom break. Upon return, Mrs. Caston immediately began the lesson and employed a variety of reading strategies. She began by having students connect to self and activate prior knowledge by asking the students to look at the title page and think about natural elements found around their own yards. Again responses such as bugs, flowers, and grass were commented. Next students were asked to conduct a picture walk. Mrs. Caston had students flip through the pages of the book, studying each page, in order to give a guess as to what the story may be about. While students were looking through the pictures, Mrs. Caston asked a few phonics questions and cleared up misconceptions about the word afraid as some students wanted to read the word as /fraid/. She employed the use of the word wall for this, showing students the /ai/ sound and recalling the context of learning the sound.

Mrs. Caston then model read to students, stopping to discuss the semantic reading of the word /read/. She gave different contexts in which the word would appear, and students listened to identify the correct usage. After model reading the selection, Mrs. Caston had students group read aloud in sections: boys and girls. Boys read first, and Mrs. Caston tried to keep their pace on track by snapping her fingers, however, she did have some who would

not stay on beat. Next girls read with the same results, and this was alternated by paragraph until the selection was finished.

After reading the selection, students compared and contrasted the genre of the story with a story read the previous week. She did not use the word genre but phrased the question as looking at what kind of story the students were reading. Upon completion of genre review, students were asked to participate in an author study. She went on to ask students about the author and illustrator of the story including the author's purpose in writing the story. When they had talked about the author and illustrator by her reading of the small section provided by the basal, she had students partner up in twos, which she chose. Students quickly complied, moving to different areas of the classroom. The students sat side by side. One facing one wall and one the other, so they could not see one another's books but could hear each other read. The students began reading the selection over again, repeating this when reaching the end until Mrs. Caston called time and moved to a different component of the three hour block allotted for reading.

Observation 2

Mrs. Caston began by having students find the story, "I'm a Caterpillar". When students had reached the page, she had them look at two different life cycles that were displayed in the title page. One was of the life cycle of a frog; the other was the life cycle of a chicken. Students were asked to activate prior knowledge by thinking back to a science lesson where the water cycle was discussed. Mrs. Caston then asked students about the displayed cycles and

talked about the different stages of development shown in each picture. Next, Mrs. Caston asked students to look at the butterfly and caterpillar shown on the page and compare and contrast the visual similarities and differences. Student responses included “the same little bodies, and one can crawl and the other fly”. Mrs. Caston then began to go over each component of the title page with students. This included: Title, Author, Illustrator, and Genre.

After looking at each component, students were asked to turn to the end of the story in order to look author study provided by the basal reader. This was not as timely as the previous observation observed. She quickly read over the selection and discussed with students why the author wrote the story. Which consisted of the author wanting to tell the reader about how caterpillars grow and change. The selection did mention magazines, so she gave a brief explanation of the differences between a book and a magazine. During this time two observers, one from the state and another from the school board office came in to observe Mrs. Caston.

Mrs. Caston asked the children to turn back to the title page, and quickly went over the genre of the story. She explained that the story is a non-fiction story, and this means that it is real. For an example, she had students recall the story from the previous week about Frog and Mr. Toad. In the story, both characters exhibited human traits such as talking and walking erect. Mrs. Caston explained that frogs and toads could not do these things in real life, but a butterfly does grow and change. She did not have students read the selection while group for this observation, and the observers left at this point. Mrs. Caston

implored the same partner read strategy and picked the groups for students to read. Most groups tended to be the same partners as the previous observation.

After she felt that students had received enough time to complete the reading, Mrs. Caston called them back to whole group and moved to the phonics allocation of the day. This was completed first in the former observation and after the reading section of the lesson for this observation.

Observation 3

This observation was completed during the same week as observation two in order to see the difference between an initial lesson and a follow up lesson. Mrs. Caston began her instruction by having students group according to where they were sitting. After students were grouped, she designated a page to each group for them to read repeatedly and explained that each group was responsible for telling her everything they could remember from the page. This strategy enables children to practice reading with a partner, learn to summarize, and gives them the opportunity to discuss unknown words during reading.

As students were following instructions, a parent came to discuss a student's progress with Mrs. Caston. She stepped out of the room, which caused most groups to exhibit off-task behavior. Mrs. Caston asked the parent to come in and observe the child. A goodly amount of time passed for students to be reading and summarizing one page, and most were off-task during the activity. When she did ask for students to stop, some expressed interest in going first. Mrs. Caston explained that in order to understand the whole story that they needed to start at the beginning.

One by one, Mrs. Caston had the group read the page aloud to everyone. Then, students had to individually explain what happened on their page. At one point, two students continued reading the contraction /that's/ incorrectly, so Mrs. Caston completed a mini-lesson regarding contractions. Towards the end of the groups, she started asking the groups for evidence from the story.

An aide came by during this time to pass out brochures. After the interruption, Mrs. Caston began going over the life cycle of a butterfly and asking review questions associated with the story although five groups had not presented. Once the progression was discussed, she had the groups read the last five pages with their partners and discuss the ending within each group. She monitored the class during this time, and then asked for students to return to their desks and move to the phonics portion.

Interview with Mrs. Johnson, Second Grade

Background/Education:

Mrs. Johnson began by identifying herself as a Caucasian and female. After identifying as female, she added, "Hear me roar" (Johnson Interview, 2014). She did disclose her age as thirty-three. This is her ninth year of teaching. Mrs. Johnson has taught Fourth Grade, Math and Science. The following year she moved to Second Grade and taught Seventh and Eighth Grade Girls' Physical Education simultaneously at a neighboring school in the parish. She then received a position at Roosevelt Jr. High and has been teaching second grade since the transition. She grew up in the parish and attended Roosevelt Jr. High when it was still a high school. The schools were

consolidated her sophomore year of high school. She graduated from a close four-year accredited college in Liberal Arts and received a Minor in Art. Mrs. Johnson completed an alternative certification program in order to teach. She does plan to obtain her Master degree in Education but would like to wait for her youngest child to get a bit older.

Introduction to the Common Core Standards:

Mrs. Johnson began by saying that the standards were never explained to her. She has explored them during her own time and mostly from looking on the Common Core website and the Louisiana support site. She was aware that the standards were being adapted but expressed her displeasure with being provided two choices of curriculum two weeks before school started. Mrs. Johnson has exclusively taught the basal reader series that was the required curriculum chosen by the parish. This is her first year using a different curriculum. When discussing the previous state standards differing from the Common Core standards, she ventured from making comments on the standards to curricular comments. She began by referring to the Louisiana GLEs as being “widespread” then discussing the Common Core standards as being “more narrowed” to what second graders need and more rigorous. Then, she began drifting to curricular drawbacks of the basal reading series versus what she is being able to implement now in response to the adaption of the standards. She agrees with the smaller amount of focus on Phonics and enjoys being able to read more than one story per week. Mrs. Johnson feels that by implementing the standards, she is able to cover more skills than when using

the basal series and have students apply them to different stories than just associate the skill with the one story that was used the one week the skill was taught. She was one of the teachers that started the year using the Engage New York curriculum before switching to Louisiana Believes. Mrs. Johnson feels that the only drawback to the use of this curriculum is the lack of materials. She is having to pull and copy stories, and she is having students put the stories into binders for use next year. Mrs. Johnson went on to discuss the Lexile level of the stories she is now using versus what she was using previously. She guessed that the Lexile level of a second grader at the end of the year to be 650. She expressed that the stories that they are reading in class now range from 500-700 and up. At first, her colleagues and she was skeptical about the difficulty of the stories, but their children seem not to exhibit problems with the stories. She also pointed out that the stories are not all non-fiction that second grade had just completed a unit regarding Fairytales and Folk Tales. When asked was she offered any professional development opportunities, she shared that she is one of the teachers that travels to do the math workshops, but there has been no professional development regarding ELA.

Planning and Implementation:

When asked how she plans her lessons using the standards, Mrs. Johnson took me through the process she uses to plan. She consults the unit for a list of standards that should be addressed. After deciding which standards to focus for the unit and the amount of time, she pulls stories from a selected list and makes copies of them for her students. She presents students with a new

story each day. After the skill has been presented all week through various stories, Mrs. Johnson pulls a fresh read, story the children have not interacted with during the week, and tests students on the skill. She made note that she is pulling stories from the lists, websites, and old workbooks. She says the main difference between is that she goes over the skills throughout each unit and does not teach the skill once and not return to review.

Reaction to Implementation:

Mrs. Johnson was excited about the standards. She has been following student progress through Dibels testing and a computer program, and she reports that all her students save one have grown almost a full year from the beginning. She reports, “So, I mean, in the past with the old GLEs, what I saw at mid-term is usually what I see at the end of the year, so I can tell that they are growing leaps and bounds” (Johnson Interview, 2014). Mrs. Johnson has not had formal meetings with other teachers to discuss the progression from one grade level to the next but mentions talking to colleagues and discussing the differences. She feels that this prepares students for higher grades. Mrs. Johnson did express a desire to receive more training regarding the standards.

Grand Tour

Other teachers specifically seek out Mrs. Johnson when there is a question regarding technology. She is usually aware about what is happening in the school in response to her service in various areas. For example, she is the lead teacher for the Positive Behavior Team and travels to Shreveport to receive the professional development training sessions for the Math Common

Core Standards. Mrs. Johnson is organized and aware of curriculum. She gives advice on matters of discipline and has an open, positive demeanor.

Mrs. Johnson's room is smaller than Mrs. Caston's, but she has much of the same components in her room. Upon entrance, a teacher desk is immediately noticed. As well as a small table that serves to hold her computer and printer. She arranged different size and shaped tables to allow her students groups that provide them chances to work together, and she noted that it gives more space to the room. Mrs. Johnson's room layout is picture below in Figure 3.

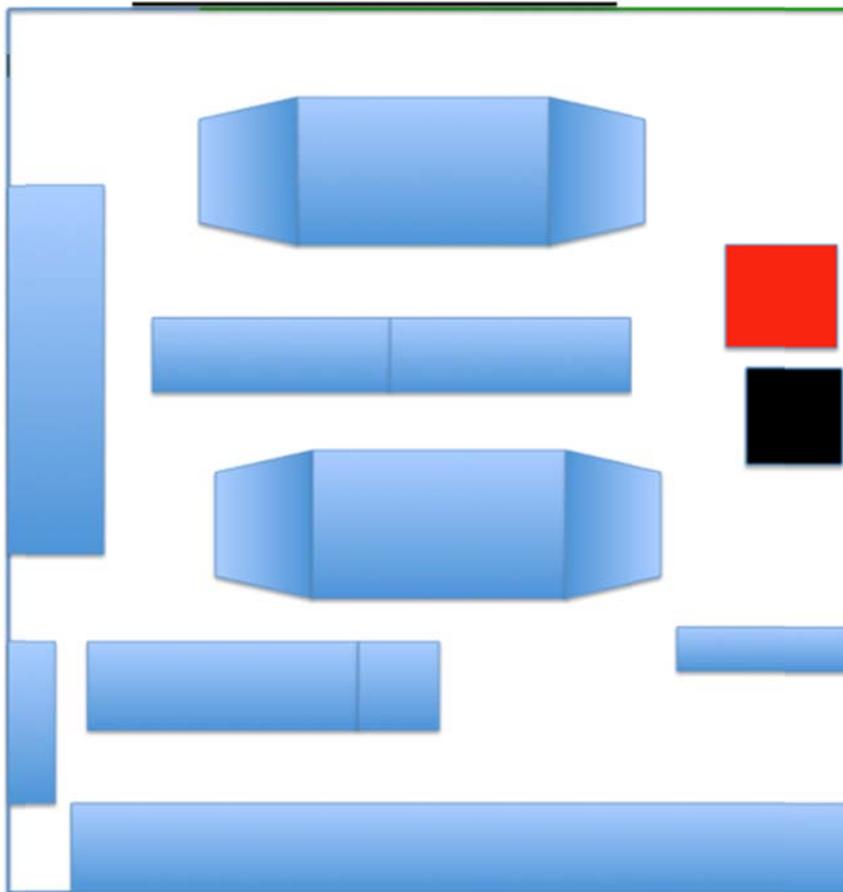


Figure 3

Mrs. Johnson's board runs along the wall adjacent to the lockers indicated with a black line. She utilizes a teacher center at the front of the classroom indicated with the black square. This allows her to use the ELMO and laptop to provide students with visual aids such as: to follow along on a worksheet or show a short clip to engage students. However, this researcher did not witness its use other than a guide for students to follow while working on a worksheet. Along the back wall, she has computers for student use and a shelf that houses her Math manipulatives. To the right of walking in her classroom, there is a small shelf of books for student use. Mrs. Johnson's walls are covered in charts and posters. However, the majority of these are dedicated to Math instruction. Reading displays include: alphabet cards with corresponding picture and letter-sound relationships, standards, and story element print-offs. Behind her desk, she hangs pictures that students have drawn and given to her. There was no observable discipline system displayed, however, there was a small eight by twelve paper print out of rules obscurely hung behind her desk.

Observations

Observation 1

Mrs. Johnson began the lesson by asking students to recall the genre, Fairytales, and meaning of the word moral from the previous week. Most students orally announced that a moral is a lesson. Mrs. Johnson applauded their answer and clarified the response as being a lesson that is needed to be learned. One student assumed this to be a question calling out, "Never talk to strangers". Mrs. Johnson took this opportunity to review a story discussed the

previous week and asked students to inform her of the story that taught that particular lesson, "Little Red Riding Hood". She began to lead students to formulate the sequence of the story. After receiving the correct order of events from various students that were called at random, Mrs. Johnson continued that the class would be studying Folklore. She explained Folklore as being similar to Fairytales as some contains magic but clarified the difference of Folklore exclusively containing animals participating in activities that are normally reserved for humans such as speaking.

Leaders were called to pass out the anchor text for the week, "Half Chicken." Mrs. Johnson asked students to pay close attention to the beginning, middle, and end of the story, in order to summarize the book. She took time to review that summarizing is telling the main points in the story and not every small detail. Seeing that everyone had the story and was prepared to begin, Mrs. Johnson quickly went over the title page. The story, obviously coming from a basal reader, had a small author and illustrator study on the front, which Mrs. Johnson quickly read aloud. The title page also contained a focus for reading the story, cause and effect. Mrs. Johnson told students, "Cause and effect's going to be the one thing we focus on this week with the story, cause and effect. Because this happened, here's the effect. This is the result." She did clarify that it would be discussed after the book was read and added that students should look for the lesson in the story.

Mrs. Johnson displayed the story on ELMO for students to follow. She called the students' attention to the weather vane in the picture as well as other

aspects of the picture such as an egg. While students did not participate in a picture walk before the story, Mrs. Johnson did ask the students to predict what would happen based on the first picture. One answer was, “The egg’s gonna die.” The reasoning was the egg was taking a long time to hatch. Mrs. Johnson continued to read the story to students. This strategy is commonly known as model reading. During the course of the story, Mrs. Johnson also employed numerous other strategies.

Halfway through the story, Mrs. Johnson had students summarize. She had students predict what might happen next. Students were asked to connect to self. The chick was turning and admiring himself in the mirror, and students were asked if they ever did things like that. Another connection to self was, “Have you ever asked a friend to stop and do something, and they weren't trying to be mean, but they kind of looked at you, said, “I don't have any time,” and they walk off and leave you. How do you feel?” After making connections, Mrs. Johnson had students review the story to that point. When the story was finished, she had students think about the lesson of the story. Answers included, “To go to Mexico” and “Special.” Mrs. Johnson then led students to talk about helping others and others will help you, though the lesson was never actually said. Mrs. Johnson then reviewed that there are different types of fiction text and that Fairytales and Folktales are among these different types. Students were then asked to group with their partner and given a tri-fold template to begin the summarization process. Students were asked to summarize the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Mrs. Johnson clarified these

instructions by asking students to tell about when the chick was born; his journey to the city; and the trouble he got into and who helped him. Students began to work. Mrs. Johnson would monitor their work and provide help to those who needed it. This concluded the lesson. Students were asked to put the tri-folds away and would discuss their answers the following day. There was no further discussion of cause and effect as well.

Observation 2

Observation two began with Mrs. Johnson talking to students about missing the previous day due to the weather. She opened by asking students to recollect the focus of the week, Folktales. She gave a brief description including that Folktales are not real, have animals that personify humans, and teach a lesson. With the interruption of the day off, Mrs. Johnson decided not to have students return to the tri-fold to summarize the story, opting for a verbal summarization. Mrs. Johnson took the lead on this, summarizing the story, and asking students yes, no, or one-word answer questions in order to move the lesson forward.

Mrs. Johnson then implemented a short vocabulary lesson involving words from the previous story "Half Chicken". Her method of instruction was to provide students with a sentence, and students use the context of the sentence to provide a definition for the word. Sentences included, "The leaf was tumbling in the wind." "He flung his pencil across the room." Student answers for these included, "Twisting and Falling." Also, "Throw." Leaders passed out the new story for the day, "The Contest". This story was read with teacher modeling and

also round robin reading. This is when the teacher calls on one student to read at a time. However, she did not go in order and called students randomly.

The story was most likely pulled from a basal reader. It contained a section at the bottom of each page: Stop, Think, Write. This section was discussed after the reading of each page. It contained fill in the blank questions and open-ended questions for the students to write in the answer. At the end of the story, there was a read and respond section where students were given clues to find the answers in the story. The teacher displayed the story via the ELMO projection system. This way the questions could be discussed and the answers could be copied verbatim. She did not employ the use of other reading strategies during this lesson except at the very end. Students were asked to summarize the story orally. This lack of strategy and the reliance on the questions provided may have been due to the loss of instructional time due to the day missed.

Observation 3

This observation was conducted the following week. Mrs. Johnson initiated the lesson with a review of Folktales and Fairytales. This was a teacher-led discussion. The educator asked students for the clues that told the reader what kind of story he or she is reading. Clues included, Once upon a time, magic, lessons learned, and talking animals. The lessons learned the previous week were also discussed. Following this lengthy discussion, Mrs. Johnson announces that for the next six weeks students will be reading informational texts. She explained informational texts as stories that are real

and could really happen. Mrs. Johnson also explained that there might be stories that are Realistic Fiction stories. She then led a discussion so students could form an answer for themselves. Mrs. Johnson motivated students by revealing that the class would get to participate in science activities with the readings.

The topic of the week was floods. Mrs. Johnson began by having students connect to self, asking them if they had ever seen a flood. Next, Mrs. Johnson introduced vocabulary that the students would be encountering during the stories. This was done orally without the use of pictures. Mrs. Johnson gave a small description of each word and asked few follow-up questions from students. On the word bend, however, she did have students stand up and bend different ways. The students were enthusiastic about this and seemed to enjoy the small break.

Following the discussion, Mrs. Johnson identified that the main focus of the week would be on Main Idea or Central Theme. She made students aware that this would be the skill tested for the week. Mrs. Johnson connected this idea of main idea to something students are familiar with which happened to be Dibels Testing. She explained that the main idea is what the reader should take away from reading the story. It is what the story is all about. The leaders then passed out the story for the week, "The Storm". This turned out to be a worksheet with a one-paragraph story. The worksheet also contained the question, "What is the main idea?"

Mrs. Johnson quickly read the paragraph for students not pausing to ask

questions or clarify ideas. Students were asked to get with their partner to fill out the supporting details boxes located at the bottom of the sheet. Students began working on the sheet, and Mrs. Johnson walked around monitoring the groups and providing feedback. After a short while, Mrs. Johnson displayed the worksheet on the ELMO and began going over the main idea and details in the story. Students were asked to raise their hands to indicate which answer their group selected. Mrs. Johnson then called on a random group to explain their choice. Next, Mrs. Johnson went through the story again and helped students determine what sentences in the story contributed to the main idea that the storm was strong. The details included: “The rain kept falling hard; The thunder got louder and louder; and The lightening flashed making the sky bright.” This concluded the lesson and students were asked to put the worksheet in their take home folders.

Interview with Mrs. Dalton, Third Grade

Background/ Education:

Mrs. Dalton identified herself as a third grade teacher at Roosevelt Jr. High. She is twenty-four years old, and Mrs. Dalton described herself to be a white, female. Mrs. Dalton graduated from a nearby four-year accredited college with a bachelor’s degree in Psychology. In her last semester of school, she decided that she wanted to teach. Mrs. Dalton laughed at the situation and admitted to enrolling in an alternative certification program to obtain her master degree in Special Education. Her first year of teaching was considered her internship year. During this year, she completed assignments online while

maintaining her third grade position at Roosevelt Jr. High. She graduated the previous summer. While this is her second year teaching, her first year was considered her internship or student teaching, so she is labeled a first-year teacher. Mrs. Dalton does have plans to continue her schooling, however, she is putting her plans on hold in order to start a family.

Introduction to the Common Core Standards:

Mrs. Dalton acknowledged being introduced to the standards and implementing them the previous year. She stated not having any interaction with the Louisiana State GLEs so was unable to compare the two. When asked how she was prepared to implement the standards, Mrs. Dalton mentioned that there had been a workshop regarding the new curriculum this previous summer that she missed, so she garnered most of her knowledge from meeting with coworkers. She continued that she has attended no formal grade level meetings to discuss implementing the standards. Mrs. Dalton meets informally at different times with the two other teachers in her grade to discuss the standards, because one plans reading, one social studies and science, and she plans the math lessons.

Planning and Implementation:

Mrs. Dalton started by explaining that planning to incorporate the standards in reading is “tricky”, because she does not make the lesson plans for reading. The teacher that plans the reading lessons provides each teacher with the lesson plans and worksheets for the week, so in order to know what she is teaching for the week Mrs. Dalton looks at the standard for the day and

worksheet that displays the I can statements and guides herself to cover the material.

When asked what she has noticed about the Common Core in regards to implementation. Mrs. Dalton cited focus on informational texts and writing. She does enjoy how the material aligns to what the students are studying. Mrs. Dalton gave the example of Peter Pan. Students are writing to respond to the text and not a completely different topic as what she did the last year. Mrs. Dalton did mention that her colleagues and herself have to be careful to include language exercises and phonics since material regarding these topics is not included in the new curriculum.

Reactions to Implementation:

From implementing the new curriculum based on the standards versus the basal reader from the previous year, Mrs. Dalton feels that there is a truer representation of how students perform. She noted that more students seemed to pass more readily, because they focused on the same story day after day. Mrs. Dalton mentioned that students are not making honor roll and then making unsatisfactory on the iLEAP examination. There is a greater connection between scores. Mrs. Dalton felt that there is a need to not fall into the negativity surrounding the standards. She stated seeing the pros and cons to the curriculum. Mrs. Dalton made note that teachers feel overwhelmed because of the suddenness of the implementation and lack of materials. For example, she makes note of the Peter Pan books in her classroom. Her grandparents bought the class set for her, and she mentions other teachers having to copy

the book chapter by chapter for their classrooms. Mrs. Dalton views this shift as a positive one and feels that when everything becomes organized the standards will have a better chance of being accepted.

Grand Tour

Mrs. Dalton is considered to be the newbie among the elementary teachers. While she is new to the school and teaching, the teachers and administration hold her in high regard. She is considered by them to be organized and possess time management skills that are not conducive to one with her experience level. Both the principal and assistant principal had nothing but praise regarding her teaching ability.

Mrs. Dalton's room is a smaller room such as Mrs. Johnson's, boasting the same elements such as the lockers aligning the back of the classroom, wall colors, and tile colors and arrangement. The layout of her classroom is pictured below in Figure 4.

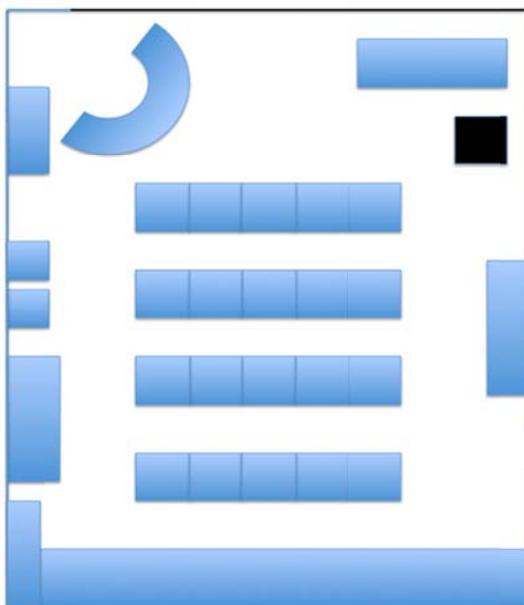


Figure 4

Mrs. Dalton's room features crisp, new posters and printouts that are not aged with time. Her room is bright and cheerful, and it seemed comfortable. Mrs. Dalton did include a teacher desk at the front of the room to the right in front of her white board, which is indicated with a black line. Directly to the left, she has incorporated a small, crescent-shaped table in order to work with small groups. She placed a cabinet behind the table to place files for each week. This way she can catalogue her materials for easy utilization for the next year. Beside the lockers at the back of the classroom, she has incorporated a small shelf and carpet to form a reading center. Mrs. Dalton feels that students should have a chance to read everyday for pleasure and allows students to choose a book for D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything and Read) time. Above the carpet, there is a poster of explaining how to treat books when handling them. The wall adjacent to the door has a small table with bins to place student work. Alongside the table, Mrs. Dalton has placed two small plastic cabinets to keep materials for students and manipulatives.

Mrs. Dalton has placed various visual aids around the classroom to reference when providing reading instruction. Above the table adjacent the door, there are two posters that explain types of writing and the writing process. Neighboring the writing posters are strips of yellow cardstock with Common Core questioning techniques for text, such as, "What evidence can you find....?" Connected to the strips is a pocket chart displaying the week's spelling words. These words are pulled from the Basal Reader series that was the curriculum used the previous year. Interspersed along the remainder of the wall was a

poster related to the correct form of a paragraph and regular paper sized print outs of different story elements.

At the front of the room along the top of the whiteboard, Mrs. Dalton has hung an alphabet. These cards boast clear and crisp real world pictures and not the usual cartoon pictures seen in elementary classrooms. Below the board are a couple of phonics posters such as a short and long vowel chart, beginning digraphs, and endings.

The wall alongside the door contains bulletin boards covering the length of the wall. Mrs. Dalton has utilized one of these to create a word wall. Above the word wall there are different genre posters containing the name and a brief description. The lockers at the back contain student materials and things that Mrs. Dalton might need such as resources. There was a student worker chart displayed on the lockers and a discipline chart at the front. There was never a change in the discipline chart observed. Students seemed aware of behavior expected and how to conduct themselves during instructional time.

Observations

Observation 1

Mrs. Dalton's class had been reading, "Peter Pan". J.M. Barrie retold this version. Mrs. Dalton began the instruction by leading a summarization of the previous chapter. One student mentioned not being able to remember what happened, so Mrs. Dalton called attention to the title of the chapter, "Something Worse than the Night". Mrs. Dalton mentioned that the struggle with recall might have been due to the students receiving a day at home due to the weather.

Students began making assumptions as to what happened with Mrs. Dalton leading the discussion. For example, a few students murmured answers together, and Mrs. Dalton took all the murmurings and answers to acknowledge that Wendy was saved by an acorn kiss, and the lost boys were measured for the tree. This continued until Mrs. Dalton halted students, so she could read the last two paragraphs of the previous chapter eight in hopes of giving students a clearer understanding of where they are in the story.

The end sentence of chapter eight contained the words, “held something worse.” Students were asked to predict what might happen based on those words. One student stated, “Something is coming.” Mrs. Dalton then handed out pieces of card stock to students explaining that they would use the piece to take notes during the reading. Students were asked to write Peter Pan at the top of the card. Mrs. Dalton made note that he is a character in the story. Next, she had students draw three columns below and label them thought, feelings, and actions. She explained that they would be discussing them during the reading.

Mrs. Dalton began reading chapter nine after everyone was ready to continue. The reading strategy she employed was model reading, which consisted of her reading the whole selection. She started on page sixty-nine and stopped on page seventy-four. This pause in the story was for students to think about what Peter had done so far. Mrs. Dalton continued reading again stopping on page seventy-six to again call students attention to Peter and his thoughts, feelings, and actions. After finishing the chapter, Mrs. Dalton had students look up at the front and fill in the graphic organizer that was created on the

cardstock. Before completing, Mrs. Dalton explained that the graphic organizer would help students later when writing. Mrs. Dalton wanted students to have an example to work with, so she helped students fill in the blacks leaving some blank. For example, under thoughts the students and she wrote wants to save Tiger Lily. In the feelings column on page seventy-four they found Peter's motivation to be that he hates unfairness. His actions then manifested in his pretense of being Captain Hook.

This continued though Mrs. Dalton skipped filling in some blanks. She would ask students to fill in what they thought to be the correct answer. Mrs. Dalton also mentioned to students to make sure and cite evidence for their answers. She then passed out a sheet and asked students to place it in their book around chapter nine where they were working. The sheet was part of a learning module from the New York State Curriculum regarding fact and opinion. The sheet was set up with learning targets at the top. The question, "Would you make the same decisions as Peter to give Hook a helping hand? Support your opinion with reasons." Following the question, there was a box for students to write their opinion in with three bullets at the bottom for students to clarify their reasoning.

Mrs. Dalton displayed the sheet on the ELMO and began to explain fact and opinion to students. She gave the example of breakfast. Announcing that if a student ate breakfast, it is a fact that he or she ate breakfast. It is an opinion if the student thought the breakfast was good or not. She then detailed that students would be put in groups and explained the sheet to them. Students

were given time to participate while Mrs. Dalton monitored and provided feedback to the groups. Students participated in this activity until time for lunch. Mrs. Dalton explained that the organizer would be used to write a paper later that day.

Observation 2

Mrs. Dalton began the lesson by going over the students' bellwork from that morning. Students were asked to read a short story entitled "Paul Revere's Stories". The students and Mrs. Dalton discussed that the stories genre was Historical Non-Fiction, which is based on a real even that happened in the past. Mrs. Dalton asked students to tell her the number of paragraphs, which were four. She model read the selection quickly to refresh students' memory of the story. Mrs. Dalton discussed point of view, explained showing evidence, and showed students testing strategies. One strategy was to underline the main words in the question and underline them in the story as well.

Finishing up bellwork, Mrs. Dalton had students turn to chapter ten in "Peter Pan". Students reviewed what happened in the chapter discussing the characters helping the bird in the story, and the bird later returned the favor. Mrs. Dalton tool this opportunity to discuss that while the story was not this type of genre, the bird helping and teaching the lesson of helping and receiving help reminded the reader of a different genre. Students were able to deduce that she was thinking of Folktales.

Mrs. Dalton then model read Chapter eleven pausing once to ask students a question. Students bookmarked the place as Mrs. Dalton questioned

them about Wendy and her motives. She asked students to compare and contrast Wendy's behavior in the chapter with her previous behavior. Students thought quietly about the answer then turned and shared with a partner. Students disclosed that "Wendy wants to go home, and she may be trying to get Peter to remember his parents." Mrs. Dalton continued reading until she finished the chapter.

Upon completion of the chapter, Mrs. Dalton asked students to predict what might happen next in the story. Students were left at a cliffhanger. The pirates were attacking while Wendy and the lost boys were about to return to Wendy's home. Students again paused to think then discussed with a partner. Mrs. Dalton monitored the discussions, moving about the room, and asking students about their choices. When she felt students had been given enough time, Mrs. Dalton called them back to the main group to discuss their answers. One group's answer included, "The pirates stealing Wendy."

Mrs. Dalton then asked students to take out the writing prompts from the previous day. Students had started writing and filling out the prompts. She explained that the students would be the editors for the day and check each other's work of creating a new imaginary scene in "Peter Pan." Mrs. Dalton led the discussion asking students to list things that needed to be included in their partner's writing answers included, "vivid words, actions, adventure, and dialogue." Dialogue was briefly discussed for everyone's benefit. Students clarified that it is when "the characters talk to each other." When finished, students would ask their partner to read their story aloud. The partners would

listen to the story together and make corrections. The student would then rewrite and turn in the story to be graded. Students continued working on this while Mrs. Dalton would walk around and give feedback.

Observation 3

This observation was student-centered. Mrs. Dalton began by detailing that chapter eleven is an important foundational chapter for the remainder of the book. She discussed with students that they need to pay special attention to the events. Mrs. Dalton passed out a worksheet. It was from the New York curriculum as well. The worksheet contained questions that requested text-based answers. It did not list the standards that were being covered as the previous observation's worksheet. She had students detail what the answers should include as in the previous observation. Student answers comprised, "restate question, correct grammar, quotation marks, and vivid words, exciting not boring." Following this, Mrs. Dalton described the paired reading strategy that she was going to implement for this lesson.

Mrs. Dalton told students that they would be placed in groups of two. The two partners would take turns reading a page of chapter eleven. After the students had read the chapter, the groups would answer each question on the worksheet provided. Next, she paired students with a partner, and this seemed to be random at the teacher's discretion.

The group beside me contained a boy on a much lower reading level than the girl paired with him. She would speed read through the chapter, and he struggled through the reading. The young girl would hear him struggle to

pronounce a word and she was not paying attention while he was reading, so she would have to search for where he was and quickly tell him the word. Mrs. Dalton went from group to group listening to answers and providing feedback.

When students had answered all the questions, she allowed the groups to stay together but focus their attention on her and the ELMO. Mrs. Dalton then began to discuss with students their answers and lead them to develop fuller text based answers. She displayed an open rapport with students. No answer was shown to be less than another answer. When there needed to be more support, she would call students' attention back to the text, and the students developed the answer. For example on question stated, "Why didn't Wendy and the boys get to go back home? Support your answer with evidence from the book." Mrs. Dalton gave students a sense of value to their answers and let students discuss whether they agreed if it was a thorough answer or needed more detail. She asked students if they liked an answer. One student said, "I like it." Then, Mrs. Dalton gave reasons why she agreed: "She (the student) stated evidence from the text, and she talked about all the characters that were mentioned in the question, Wendy and The Lost Boys." After completing the worksheet, Mrs. Dalton had the students put it in their daily folder, because the back of the sheet contained another worksheet that would be filled out the next day. She then had students get ready for lunch.

Interview with Ms. Robertson, Forth Grade

Background/ Education:

Mrs. Robertson identified herself as being a “thirty-three year old, black, female” (Robertson Interview, 2014). She received her bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from a four-year accredited college from a Southern Louisiana University. Mrs. Robertson continued going to school while teaching and received her master degree in Guidance and Counseling Education from another accredited college in Mississippi. She is now working towards her doctoral degree from a Northern Louisiana University in Developmental Education. Mrs. Robertson has taught for ten years. Nine of those years have been in fourth grade. However, she did teach fifth grade for a year. Mrs. Robertson specializes in ELA, and she has also taught all subjects in a self-contained classroom. She believes in personalizing instruction to fit individual students, and that all students can learn in the right environment.

Introduction to the Common Core Standards:

Mrs. Robertson was introduced to the Common Core standards through the Louisiana Believes website. She did mention that there has been various professional development opportunities provided, where the standards have been discussed.

Planning and Implementation:

Mrs. Robertson plans to implement the standards by retrieving sample test questions that are released on the website and tailoring her instruction to focus on helping students prepare to pass the LEAP examination. She also pulls

material from Common Core resource books that she has purchased. Mrs. Robertson did cite attending two grade-level meetings where the standards were discussed. She was adamant about using data to drive her planning. The students were given a pre-test at the beginning of the year that tested each standard. The data showed standards that students had mastered and where they need improvement. Mrs. Robertson used that data to plan her instruction for the first part of the year. Recently, the students participated in a posttest. Mrs. Robertson now knows where she needs to focus the more and review standards that students are having trouble with before they are tested. She continued that the standards apply more rigorous goals for students, and the curriculum was thrown on the teachers.

Reactions to Implementation:

Mrs. Dalton described the implementation process as being “very overwhelming.” She went on to mention that her reaction to the process depends on the standardized test. Mrs. Robertson went on to describe her lack of choice in the matter. She feels that she has to like the standards, because her students will be tested on the standards. She did acknowledge a positive experience regarding writing and a student in her class. When he first came to her, he could not write a paragraph. Now he is writing three paragraphs containing at least three sentences.

Grand Tour

Ms. Robertson was highly praised by the principal and assistant principal for her teaching skills and test scores. The special education teacher also

praised the work that she has done with his students that are included in the classroom. The environment of the classroom was open, and students seemed comfortable to speak thoughts and add to the lesson. Ms. Robertson never raised her voice and spoke with students as if discussing with them. She did not talk down to the students and would explain that if they did not pay attention and follow the testing strategies then they would not pass the LEAP examination. Students seemed to realize the importance of the situation and would pay attention during class time. Ms. Robertson did have a discipline chart with colored cards to indicate where the student was at for the day, but I never saw her utilize the chart. The environment of the class was not formal when Ms. Robertson was not instructing. Students regularly moved about the classroom to retrieve things that were needed such as Kleenex or paper or talk with a peer.

This researcher would describe Ms. Robertson's classroom as sparsely decorated. Her walls contained a daily schedule, discipline chart, homework board, cursive alphabet with no pictures, pictures drawn by students, a couple of brightly colored pictures from a bulletin board package, random words in different places throughout the class, and the whiteboard at the front. Ms. Robertson utilized a teacher desk at the back of the classroom directly in front of the door. This desk was covered in paperwork that needed to be attended to and materials. Ms. Robertson spent most of her instructional time seated at the front of the classroom in order to control the Promethean board and display for students the materials that the class was working with for the day such as the workbook. There was a door behind her desk that led to a storage room

indicated in the figure with an arrow line. The Promethean board is displayed as the light gray rectangle at the front of the classroom with Ms. Robertson's teacher center as the black rectangle. The layout of Ms. Robertson's classroom is pictured below in Figure 5.

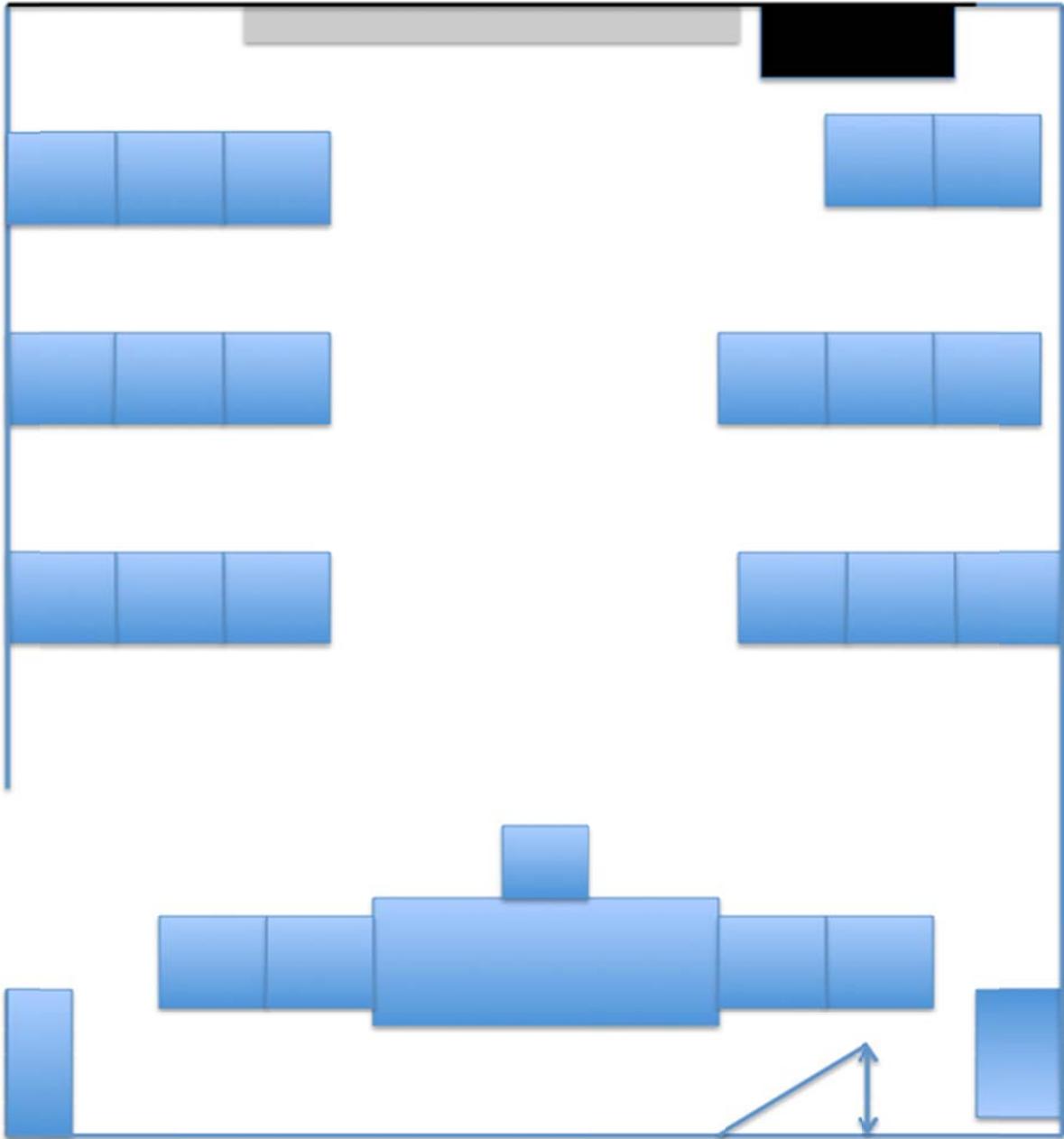


Figure 5

Observations

Observation 1

Mrs. Robertson's class began independently. Students came in and immediately began working on the bell work displayed on the Promethean board, which was a worksheet comprised of a short story and questions. Mrs. Robertson sat at the front during this time and appeared to be completing paperwork. After a short time, students at the front and to the left of the room began to appear restless, displaying behaviors such as talking and moving in their chairs. Mrs. Robertson, sensing the unrest, greeted students and directed their attention to the Promethean board. She continued to stay seated in order to use the ELMO to project the worksheet.

Mrs. Robertson initiated a choral reading strategy, having boys read a paragraph then girls until the selection was complete. Upon conclusion of the reading, Mrs. Robertson called students one by one to read a question aloud. This was a random choice based on teacher discretion. During the reading of the questions, Mrs. Robertson would pause students to discuss and implement testing strategies. These strategies are as follows: underlining key words within the question such as author, field, and rattlesnake; eliminating choices that do not make sense; and show evidence for the answer based on the selection. After the students had gone over the questions, Mrs. Robertson passed out another worksheet, and this process repeated. This round the students would clap to agree or disagree with the fellow classmate's answer. In order to focus students on the lesson, Mrs. Robertson reminded the students that there were

thirty-seven days left until phase one of the LEAP examination that would pass or fail the student for the year.

Mrs. Robertson began the lesson explaining the continuity of their progress in class. She acknowledged that the class had been focusing on writing. Now, they would focus on strategies and hints for the examination and continue this until testing was completed. Mrs. Robertson displayed a powerpoint presentation on the Promethean board. This presentation contained a testing strategy that would be taught and employed by students.

This powerpoint contained an owl named S.H.A.D.O. (Start, Hints, And, Directions, Owl). The owl contained a six-step process that students would employ during the reading portion of the LEAP examination. The first step is for students to read the question. Next, circle key words in the questions and box in the title of the selection. Followed by bracketing each paragraph and numbering the paragraphs. Students would then read the selection making a one to three word main idea by each numbered paragraph. Lastly, students would read the questions again and eliminate bad choices.

After this section of the powerpoint was explained, the next sections contained practice slides for students to see the steps put into practice. For example, one slide contained the question, "Which question about Ant can this paragraph answer?" Students would then tell Mrs. Robertson to circle question, Ant, and paragraph. Another slide displayed an actual reading selection side by side with the questions for the text, and showed the strategies employed. Mrs.

Robertson pointed these out to students. She asked for questions regarding the strategy, and no one seemed to have a question.

Mrs. Robertson had two students pass out the Common Core LEAP review workbooks. In order to save future stories for review closer to the examination, Mrs. Robertson had students turn to page twelve, a story already completed by students. Students were then given time to implement the strategy with the help of their row or group. After a time, Mrs. Robertson had students stop to read the selection and discuss the process aloud. Mrs. Robertson again had boys read a paragraph then girls read. Students were then called on one by one to explain the process of implementing the strategy. Students began by boxing in the title, "Mission Beach, San Diego". Next students mentioned bracketing and numbering the paragraphs. Mrs. Robertson then asked for the main idea of each paragraph. Answers for the first two included, "beach and everything he saw". Mrs. Robertson accepted the main ideas. The students did not go over the questions for this text.

Mrs. Robertson then had students turn to page sixteen and complete the same process in the exact order. However, students did go over the questions for this selection. Students boxed in the title, "Lucy." Next, the students read the questions and circled key words. For example, "Who is Lucy?" Students circled who and Lucy. Also, "What kind of trip is Katie's father on?" Students circled kind, trip, Katie's, and father. At this point, a bell interrupted the class. Mrs. Robertson had students put the workbooks away and line up for Enrichment.

Observation 2

This observation was conducted four school days after the first observation. Mrs. Robertson displayed the same powerpoint as the previous observation. Students Common Core workbooks were already at their desks, and students were asked to turn to “Luke and the Books”. Mrs. Robertson gave directions: “identify answers using evidence from the text; use actual paragraph numbers and sentences to answer the questions; and follow the steps and strategies; underline key words.” While students were working on this independently, a lady came in to the classroom to give Mrs. Robertson progress reports. The special education teacher followed her in to work with students in the class. A short time after the first two visitors, the fourth math teacher brought in some paperwork and left, and the special education teacher followed him out. Mrs. Robertson took this interruption to remind students that there were now thirty days left until phase one of testing and to make sure to use the strategies. She gave students a short amount of time to finish the exercise and took up the workbooks.

Mrs. Robertson turned students attention to the powerpoint containing the owl. The special education teacher returned, and she proceeded to review the S.H.A.D.O. owl with students by having them call out the steps. Once students had called out all six steps, she displayed the correct order by changing to the next slide for students to check themselves. Next, she had students read the steps in the correct order aloud. She again showed the examples that the powerpoint provided for each step.

She turned the Promethean board off and announced that students would have the chance to correct their reading test. The students had been required to use the steps of the owl strategy and most did not utilize the steps. Mrs. Robertson passed the tests back to students, and they began to work. She paused students to tell them to turn in the reading test when finished. Also, Mrs. Robertson explained that students needed to peer review their writing topic from the previous day to turn in at the end of class. Students continued working whether in pairs reviewing their writing or independently fixing the test. During this time, six students left with the special education teacher to work on their writing, and one student left with the special education teacher. Once students were working independently, Mrs. Robertson resumed her seat at the front of the room in order to monitor students and fill out paperwork.

Observation 3

While Mrs. Robertson's lesson plan detailed a more thorough and involved lesson, however, students were given a writing assignment back from the previous week. Mrs. Robertson announced that students would have thirty-five minutes to complete their final draft. The special education teacher arrived and checked for papers from his six students in the class. Once his students received their papers, he took them to his classroom for one on one instruction. Students continued to work quietly, and Mrs. Robertson displayed a timer tool for students to keep track of time remaining on the Promethean board. While students worked on writing the final draft, Mrs. Robertson filled out paperwork, checked her school e-mail, and made notes. When the timer reached seven

minutes and thirty-four seconds, Mrs. Robertson paused the timer and gave students a list of words to define using the basal reader at their desk. The timer continued, however, the remainder of class time was given at the end of the first thirty-five minutes. Students continued working on their final drafts. Toward the end of the class period, three students were working on the draft; the girls continued working on the definitions; the boys in the left corner continued talking; one of these boys started to break dance until the end of class. There was no formal end to class. Mrs. Robertson did not call for papers. Students placed them in their respective piles before leaving the class.

Interview with Ms. Parker, Fifth Grade

Background/ Education:

Ms. Parker began by identifying herself as “forty-seven year old, white, female” (Parker Interview, 2014). This is Ms. Parker’s fourth year of teaching all of those have been at Roosevelt Jr. High. Ms. Parker has taught fifth grade ELA and History simultaneously. She received her bachelor’s degree from a four-year accredited university nearby in History. She participated in an alternative certification program through the same university to earn her master degree in Education.

Introduction to the Common Core Standards:

Ms. Parker was introduced through the standards by reception of a list of the standards pertaining to her grade. She did switch midyear from the Engage New York curriculum to Louisiana Believes. Ms. Parker did remember attending a professional development opportunity where the standards were discussed,

though she feels that it was not in depth as she would have liked. The secession covered all ELA standards Kindergarten through twelfth and was extremely broad in her opinion. Ms. Parker cited seeing no differences between the GLEs and the standards except having students use I can statements.

Planning and Implementation:

In order to plan and implement the standards for her grade, Ms. Parker looked at what the standards focused on for her grade level. In her opinion, those were main idea and point of view, so she incorporates these elements into her lessons every week no matter the topic. Ms. Parks also cites collaborating with other ELA teachers during the grade level meetings that are held once a month after school. Ms. Parker then explained how she plans using the Louisiana Believes curriculum. The unit provides her with an anchor text and supporting texts. She then plans lessons around these readings since the unit does not provide the teacher with a day-by-day plan. She also reported the trend of seeing more non-fiction text being incorporated. Ms. Parks did seem a little down by not having the opportunity to have students read classic books as she did before the standards.

Reactions to Implementation:

Mrs. Parker reported a strong enthusiasm for the Common Core standards. She feels that she has more control to plan her lessons and choose material. Ms. Parker also cited that the standards not the curriculum allows students the opportunity to become more engaged in the lessons. She provided a positive example regarding one of her students. The student is diagnosed as

having OCD and ADHD. Ms. Parker feels that by providing novels to read engages this student and promotes the student to try harder, because the student is so interested in the material and stories being discussed. Ms. Parker suggested that the reason the standards are not as widely accepted is due to the Math standards and not the Reading standards.

Grand Tour

Ms. Parker's classroom layout is displayed below in Figure 6.

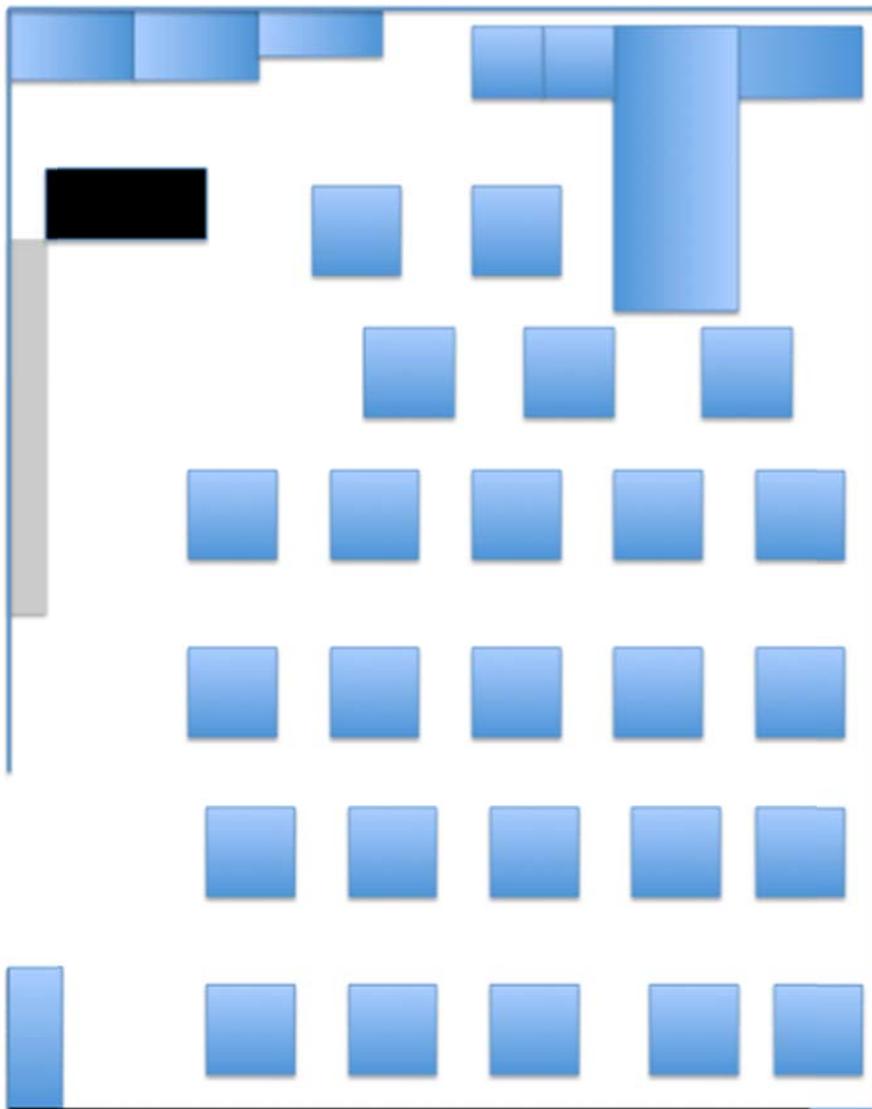


Figure 6

Mrs. Parker had a very calm demeanor and was praised highly for her teaching skills by both the principal and assistant principal. Her room was by far the largest room visited, and she had the highest student population with twenty-five students. As Ms. Robertson, Ms. Parker's room was sparsely decorated as well. However, she did have a more consistent decorating style than Mrs. Robertson. On a bulletin board beside the Promeathean board indicated with a gray rectangle, Ms. Parker posted I can statements such as, "I can identify, summarize, evaluate, prove, etc...." The rest of instructional posters covering the whiteboard indicated with a black line were conducive to Social Studies instruction.

Students' desks were arranged in traditional rows. Ms. Parker opted for a teacher desk at the back of her classroom with a shelf, filing cabinet, and table containing her printer. Her desk seemed to be covered in paperwork and student assignments that had been graded or would be graded at a future setting. Closer to the front of the classroom in the corner behind her teacher center indicated with a black rectangle, Ms. Parker housed two material cabinets and a small shelf with books for student use.

The environment of Ms. Parker classroom was not formal even during instruction. Students would regularly chime in with a comment or joke. Ms. Parker would laugh at the jokes with students and give a rigid look when students seemed to cross her line of tolerance. Students made comments about enjoying her classroom more than the previous teacher that students came from prior to Ms. Parker's class. Ms. Parker had an easy rapport with students, and

the students missed her when she was absent. This was seen when the researcher came in to conduct an observation, and Ms. Parker had to leave early for a doctor's visit. Ms. Parker seemed to enjoy her time with students and while the work seemed to be tedious students still were engaged and participating.

Observations

Observation 1

Ms. Parker began the lesson by displaying a list of ten vocabulary words on the Promethean board. All words were related to the story, "A Nation of Immigrants", that would be read in class. Ms. Parker attempted to activate students' prior knowledge of the words by connecting the words to concepts studied by the class in Social Studies. She orally read the vocabulary words and definitions to students. Ms. Parker explained that students should read the selection silently and highlight words that they did not understand. One student needed clarification asking, "Any word?" Ms. Parker acknowledged that any word was acceptable, and she called the strategy annotating. Students independently completed the task before she called them back to whole group. She asked students to call out some words that were struggled with and underlined them on the Promethean board. Students answered words such as, "immigrants, required, and spanning". There were a number of words mentioned even words that had been reviewed on the vocabulary sheet prior to the story. After all the words had been underlined, Ms. Parker would ask the class for a definition. When there was no immediate answer, she would provide a

definition. This continued until all the words were discussed. Ms. Parker had students put the story and vocabulary sheet away and gave students a choice of whether to work on point of view or main idea.

She had students raise their hands to vote on which worksheet to complete.

The students chose point of view, so she displayed a worksheet containing different sentences for students to tell the point of view. Ms. Parker would read the sentence aloud then call on a student to tell her first, second, or third person. For example, "I ran around the bases and slid into home plate." She called on a student, and he identified the sentence as being first person. Ms. Parker asked him to clarify his choice, and he explained that the sentence had I in it and no one else. When the ten sentences on the page were complete, she moved the students to paragraphs. The paragraphs included the choices: first person, third-person limited, and third-person omniscient. Students were not as quick to answer the questions. Most seemed confused and did not get the right answer on the first try. However, Ms. Parker did provide explanations such as, "It is third person limited. It's only talking about one person. He's talking about his thoughts. Do y'all see?" When she noticed that students were having trouble with the questions, she stopped calling on individual students and asked for the students to raise their hand to indicate their answer. Then she would explain the right answer.

When the point of view worksheet was completed, she moved to the main idea worksheet. Ms. Parker gave students time to read the worksheet

independently and choose their answers before going over it. After a short period of time, Ms. Parker asked individual students for the main idea of the short paragraphs. Then, she would ask another to provide a supporting detail. This continued until the sheet was completed. Students were then asked to put their things away and pack up to change to the next class.

Observation 2

Ms. Parks greeted students and passed out a packet of sheets to be used for the class. She began with the first sheet, which discussed informational texts. The sheet included the definition, examples, purpose, audience, and how to use informational text. She orally read the material to students connecting informational text to text read in Social Studies. Ms. Parks also mentioned that informational text would be a huge part of the LEAP test, so students should pay attention while reading and go back and check for evidence to support their answers. When she reached the audience section of the sheet, she connected the section to a previous writing assignment completed by students. In this assignment, students had written about immigrants to inform the reader.

Once the background had been established regarding informational text, students flipped the page to encounter a concept web regarding informational text. This web showed students key features of informational text. Some examples included, “shows boldfaced words, includes photos, has headings and subheadings.” Again, Ms. Parker read the material to students and connected the descriptions to the social studies book used by students.

Ms. Parker asked students to turn the packet over and focus on the Promethean board. She displayed a powerpoint containing print features of informational texts. The slide shown to students displayed an informational text selection regarding chocolate. Ms. Parker paused to mention that the previous class had digressed from the topic, taking up valuable class time, so she would not participate in such a loss again. Then, she continued with the lesson. Ms. Parker pointed out text features such as the picture, bold headings, and bulleted information. The following slide was comprised of examples of different informational texts such as a Table of Contents, Glossary, and an Index. Ms. Parks quickly went over each type and explained the differences.

Students were asked to return to the packet and the first story, “Early Explorers”. Ms. Parker tried to recruit volunteers to read, however, none were forthcoming, so she chose to randomly call students to read. One by one students were called to read a paragraph until all were read. Ms. Parker had students complete the questions following the text independently. She monitored and walked around stopping to help two students that were unsure of a meaning. One was a word, and the other involved the meaning of a question. Ms. Parker gave exactly ten minutes before having students go over the questions. During the course of answering the questions, Ms. Parker incorporated a miniature lesson involving main idea, topic sentence, and point of view. She was adamant about students restating the question and showing evidence for their answers.

Observation 3

In order to obtain enthusiasm regarding the topic of the day, Ms. Parker chose not to reveal it to students by merely sharing the topic verbally. Instead, she opted to begin the lesson with a brainpop video discussing poetry.

Following the video was a short quiz that had students answer the questions orally and display the answer after a short pause. While the video seemed juvenile for the age group, the students seemed to enjoy the brief program.

Ms. Parker model read “Nothing Gold Can Stay”, by Robert Frost. Following the reading there was no review of vocabulary associated with poetry, and this researcher was under the impression that poetry had not been discussed with the students since the previous year. However, Ms. Parker began to ask students questions regarding the poem. For example, “What is the rhyme scheme of this poem?” When there was no answer, she provided, “A,B or A,A”. Following another lapse in answering, Ms. Parker showed students how to distinguish the rhyme scheme. Another question involved alliterations. A student was able to give an example of alliteration, “Alex Alexander”. She then asked for an example from the poem. One student provided, “Dawn, Down, Day”.

Ms. Parker continued with the same line of questioning involving two different poems, “Ode to an Ice Cream Cone” and “A Babysitter’s Lament”. She model read the first poem again to students, while she called on different students to read sections of the second poem. Ms. Parker continued with the same line of questioning for both poems including rhyme scheme, stanzas, and theme. She concluded her lesson by telling students that should they memorize

a poem and orate it for the class, they would receive extra credit. Students were excited about the prospect and wanted to know if it could be any poem. Ms. Parker had to clarify guidelines by setting a number of lines and content appropriateness.

Similarities and Differences among Participants

The participants in this study were all women employed by the same school system with various educational backgrounds and experience. Three of the participants interviewed started and continued in Education. The principal, Mrs. Danes, obtained a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a Master degree in Educational Leadership. Mrs. Caston, first grade, received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, Master degree in Curriculum and Instruction plus thirty additional hours, and an educational leadership certification. Ms. Robertson, fourth grade, obtained her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, Master degree in Guidance and Counseling, and in working towards her Ph.D. in Developmental Education.

The other four participants first completed a bachelor degree in a field other than education before attending an alternative certification program in order to teach. Mrs. Moss received her bachelor's degree in Political Science before participating in an alternative certification program that certified her to become a teacher. After obtaining certification, she continued and received her Master degree in Educational Leadership and obtained thirty additional hours. Mrs. Johnson, second grade, graduated with a bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts with a minor degree in Art. She then participated in an alternative certification

program to become certified to teach. Mrs. Dalton, third grade, received her bachelor's degree in Psychology. She immediately began an alternative certification program in order to teach receiving upon completion both her certification and a Master degree in Special Education. Mrs. Parker, fifth grade, also participated in an alternative certification program receiving upon completion both her certification and a Master degree in Education. Her bachelor's degree was History.

As in education, all participants have a variety of experience within the field of Education. Mrs. Dalton, third grade, has the least amount of experience having just recently graduated. This is Mrs. Dalton's first year as being employed as a teacher. Her first year was the 2012-2013 school year, however, she was completing her yearlong internship that was required by her alternative certification program, and so this is technically her first year as a certified teacher. Ms. Parker, fifth grade, has taught four years following her internship. This has been exclusively at Roosevelt Jr. High in fifth grade, ELA and History. Mrs. Johnson has taught for nine years. Two years at a neighboring school, then seven at Roosevelt Jr. High, her first year following her internship, she taught fourth grade, Math and Science. Mrs. Johnson has taught second grade in addition to one year of serving as seventh and eighth grade girls' Physical Education teacher. Mrs. Moss, assistant principal, taught Kindergarten for ten years before coming to Roosevelt Jr. High and serving as assistant principal four years. Mrs. Danes, principal, taught for nine years in Pre-Kindergarten and fourth grade, Math, Science, and Social Studies. She served in a variety of jobs

within the field of Education before serving as an assistant principal at a neighboring school for four years. Mrs. Danes was asked to serve as principal of Roosevelt Jr. High school three weeks prior to school starting. Ms. Robertson, fourth grade, has taught for ten years. One year in fifth grade, the remainder has been in fourth grade, all subjects and now ELA. Mrs. Caston, first grade, has obtained the most teaching experience serving twenty years as a first grade teacher. She worked as an assistant principal for five years, principal for eight years, reading specialist and coach for seven years, returning to first grade an additional three years.

All participants live in the parish in which they teach with the exception of Mrs. Dalton. She lives in a neighboring parish and commutes forty-five minutes to work. Participants with the exception of Ms. Robertson and Ms. Parker identified as being married. All participants with the exception of Mrs. Dalton and Ms. Robertson have at least one child.

Chapter 5: FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine educator's experiences navigating the implementation process of the Reading Common Core State Standards in an elementary school setting. In order to explore this transition, the researcher visited a rural school in Northern Louisiana to observe and have the administration and teachers explain their experiences and perceptions regarding the Common Core Standards in Reading. This study was guided by the following research questions:

4. How educators implement and develop reading curriculum from the Common Core State Standards?
5. How the mandated requirements of the CCSS impact the attitudes of reading teachers?
6. How do primary grade teachers approach the CCSS in comparison to upper elementary teachers?

With the use of these questions and through memory, field notes, selected observations, and coded transcripts three major themes emerged from the data collected: Introduction to the Standards; Planning and Implementation; and Reactions to the Common Core State Standards.

Introduction to the Common Core State Standards

This study began with the interviews of the principal and assistant principal of Roosevelt Jr. High School. The principal noted her introduction to the standards,

“Mine was kind of interesting because, as an assistant when all this was coming down, um, you know, I deal primarily with discipline, so I mean, I had some discussions with-with my principal about Common Core, just what I had read up on it and this year, last month, I went to, um, I guess a training in Monroe that was really good. It kind of laid out where it came from, how it was developed, the purpose of it, so I mean really the bulk of it has just been from my own reading just simply because I didn't get to go to the meetings as an assistant. You know, the principal would go and I primarily-I did deal, you know, with classroom instruction and helping teachers, but I did a lot of discipline too so...” (Danes Interview, 2014).

Next, she noted her teachers' introduction to the standards,

“We kind of just jumped into it, and it was probably not done as well as it could have been. It-it-Teachers had known about it last year because we were doing the transition, um, and they have been privy to it, but still I think everybody's still studying their standards, still really getting familiar with them” (Danes Interview, 2014).

The assistant principal explained her introduction,

“They, well, we kinda got memos and things on it. I, really, to be honest haven't really had any training on it. The principal has, and the teachers have, but I really had any. I kind of got left out of the loop” (Moss Interview, 2013).

Fullan (2002) provided characteristics of leadership: Administrators are willing to collaborate with other school leaders to provide positive change maintaining a moral purpose. Leaders acknowledge that change is difficult and oftentimes met with resistance, however, they are knowledgeable about the reformation process and provide support for changes that may cause concern,

bridging gaps between faculty that are accepting of change and those who resist. Effective leaders sponsor discussion among faculty to promote personal and professional growth while providing the scaffolding that supports change focusing on standards that promote student achievement. Murphy (1999) noted that educational leadership scholars suggest that the administration's of a school primary concern should be the improvement of instructional practices of faculty and positive student growth. While Mrs. Danes and Mrs. Moss display evidence of the presented effective characteristics, the administrators have not been provided the necessary professional development to provide faculty with support regarding the standards. Mrs. Danes mentions in the quote above that her knowledge has come through her own investigations, and she did not receive training regarding knowledge of the standards until January of the implementation school year. Also, Mrs. Moss provides that she has received no professional development regarding the standards and has pieced together knowledge. Mrs. Moss explained the Common Core as having, "Popped in on us all of a sudden" (Moss Interview, 2014).

Duke (2004) notes that educators are often resistant to change. Bandura (1997) suggests that educators' awareness of the reform affects their attitudes regarding themselves as effective educators and how they implement instructional practices. Charalambos and Philippou (2010) also found that teachers' personal concerns such as awareness of implementing a new reform directly affected their efficacy beliefs in relation to effective implementation. They also cited teachers receiving one, short professional development

opportunity before implementation and reported educators having to wade through the reform making assumptions and focusing on key words instead of the goals of the reform.

The educators interviewed in this study had varying explanations of how they were introduced to the standards though employed by the same school. Mrs. Caston in first grade gave an explanation that matched Mrs. Danes, the principal's, but was discrepant from the assistant principal and other educators interviewed,

“When I came back to the classroom the first year after being out for all those many, many years, um, the, the first year we had, we became, I was acquainted slightly with Common Core. And that year we changed our – we implemented the Common Core Standards with the State of Louisiana curriculum, and then we, the next year – two weeks before we started to school, we were introduced to the, uh, ELA Common Core Standards and, uh, given a small amount, very small, not enough in-service to be ready for it, but we had to be, so...” (Caston Interview, 2014).

While all educators and administration interviewed acknowledged the implementation year to be the 2013- 2014 school year, Mrs. Caston mentioned in her statement being introduced to the standards a year prior to the others interviewed. Mrs. Danes also discusses being introduced or learning about the standards the year prior to the 2013- 2014 school year. This discrepancy may have been due to the confusion between the actual Common Core State Standards and curriculum choices given to the educators in this case that will be explained during the Planning and Implementation section of this chapter. Other teachers such as Ms. Parker acknowledged, “We were given a copy of the Common Core Standards as they related to our grade” (Parker Interview, 2014).

Ms. Robertson and Mrs. Johnson both noted that one source of information used by them to gain knowledge of the standards was from the Louisiana Believes website. All teachers did report a professional development opportunity prior to the start of the school year provided by the parish school board. However, Mrs. Dalton did not attend, and it was described by Ms. Parker thusly, “It was not in-depth as it needed to be, but we have” (Parker Interview, 2014). Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy (2000) noted a rising concern of researches for practicing educators to be provided with authentic professional development opportunities. All participants in this study expressed a need for more professional development opportunities regarding the implementation standards and admitted to a lack of knowledge regarding the standards.

Planning and Implementation

While the Common Core State standards outline, “what all students are expected to know and be able to do,” the National Governors Association makes the distinction that the standards do not imply or define “how teachers should teach.” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, pg. 3). Williams and Bauer (2006) relay, “When teachers are allowed to make professional decisions, particularly those that differ from stultifying scripted curriculum, it is more likely that they will remain committed to teaching.” Prior to the implementation process of the Common Core State Standards, the teachers at Roosevelt Jr. High School implemented a basal reading series. As previously noted within the literature review, this method of reading instruction is scripted providing teachers with

workbooks, activity sheets, activities, and a teacher edition book. The parish school board proposed curriculum changes to better address the standards two weeks prior to school starting for the 2013- 2014 school year. The teachers were given authority to choose which curriculum to implement, however, they were not given the choice to create their own curriculum. There was discrepancy within the interviews regarding what curriculum is and what are the Common Core State Standards.

Mrs. Danes, principal, and Mrs. Caston, first grade, recognized that they were introduced to the standards the previous year. However, other teachers cited not knowing anything regarding the Common Core State Standards in Reading or how to implement the standards until two weeks prior to the start of school. The three curriculum choices for Reading presented to the educators in this situation were Engage New York, Louisiana Believes, and Laying the Foundation.

Mrs. Johnson, second grade, noted the difference in implementing the curriculum for the Common Core State Standards versus the basal reading series,

“Okay, um, before, it was more widespread, not narrowed to really what their specific needs for Second Grade, what I would considered, were. Now, they geared to more their level – their level. It's geared to more - their Second Grade level is more rigorous, but the only drawback is that we're having to – to, um, find the material to use, but it is... I will say it is better because it's strictly – where as before in Reading, we were doing the same story every day, doing just Phonics and certain things, now we're getting to – to pull in certain stories – every, probably four or five stories a week. And, um, we're getting to have more of them read, more of them explain, more of them doing the skills like main idea, author's purpose. They're getting more skills taught” (Johnson Interview, 2014).

Instead of embracing the challenge of working with a new curriculum and finding supplemental materials to fill in the gaps presented by the Common Core State Standards, Mrs. Caston explained the development of her curricular choices,

“And it's very well stated in there, but there was no, uh... Each individual teacher is left up to, on their own, to find their materials. And, uh, beg, borrow, steal, buy, whatever you have to do with them. You have to buy your own reading materials. You had to order them online. Um... We eventually, uh, began using some of our resources that we'd used previously for the foundational skills, and then we used the Louisiana Believes website for the, uh... the comprehension area. That's what I'm using with what I know – and what I had – what we used previously. We took, uh, information from the previous series and are using it. (Researcher asked for clarification of what the curriculum the teacher was implementing.) That's the Basal Reader, right, and we're using that” (Caston Interview, 2014).

Mrs. Dalton, third grade, relayed her experience planning using the Common Core Standards again not focusing on the standards but the curricular differences,

“Well, it's kind of tricky since I don't really make the Reading lesson plans, but I mean, I can-I have to-you know, since I don't make it, I have to look and see what the standard is that we're supposed to be covering and then, you know, what we're teaching that day and make sure that I teach so that the kids do grasp that standard. A lot of times we're, you know, supposed to be letting the kids-and it is on all the work sheets that I Can statements. You know, I can write a paragraph that includes this, this, and this, and so I think just trying to make sure that I do teach everything that the standard covers and that they understand what they're accountable for. □ I don't know. I think it's been a lot better this year. It's tough, and we've gotta make sure that we are teaching, the writing and informational text, not leaving anything out because it doesn't cover everything like with the Language, they don't. It's not in there. We have to kind of pull and make sure that it all goes to together, but I guess just – I, I, I don't – I don't know. Just trying to make sure that we include it all, and I like how it's all kind of aligning together. You know, with the Peter Pan, we're writing on Peter Pan. We're not writing on some other topic that's different. You know, they all - it all goes together, so it kind of helps them see the big picture, I guess” (Dalton Interview, 2014). □

During observations, Mrs. Dalton was still implementing the basal reading series to address gaps within the Common Core Standards in Reading such as Phonics and Grammar.

Mrs. Parker, fifth grade, planning and instruction was closer aligned with the elementary side than Mrs. Robertson's experiences. Mrs. Parker provided this explanation for her planning,

"We do-We have Reading Comprehension every day. My feeling is, the more they read, the better they comprehend. Like I said, we work on main idea and point of view as our main-are our main, um, standards, so every day they know, if we read something, I'm gonna ask for Common Core Main Idea. So every day I implement something or I put something in my lessons plans for them to read, whether we're annotating a poem or annotating a paragraph on our unit, we're always gonna discuss main idea, point of view, summarization, that kind of thing" (Parker Interview, 2014).

Mrs. Robertson's focus was on testing, which could be due to her high-stakes grade level.

"We gave a pre-test at the beginning of the year that, um, utilized the most common standards that were gonna be on the LEAP test, and, based upon that data, the test results determined which standards I needed to hit really, really hard with the students and which ones that they pretty much had already mastered, so I used that pre-test, and then we did a, um, post-test data also, and that really helped me as far as which ones I needed to go back and re-teach, which ones they didn't-they didn't get and which ones they mastered. Um, I also utilize the Engage New York website. For me, I use it for the activities. It's more activity-based for me versus instruction because they have neat activities that go along with Common Core and with what the kids need to know for the LEAP test" (Robertson Interview, 2014).

□

Mrs. Dances cited,

“I guess the biggest challenge was figuring out-'cause it was laid out to teachers and myself from our district office. You know, they picked whichever curricular route they wished to go, and some of them started out with one, didn't like it and switched. We didn't have an opportunity for teachers to really preview and look in depth at what they-which road, so to speak, they wanted to travel down, and some of them started and then were like 'no', and then they stopped because it just- it wasn't working well. Um, that was a huge stumbling block at the beginning because, um, all this being new, being new to me, being new to the teachers, um, it was a very difficult transition... but they were real unsure about it at the beginning, didn't really like it, but once they've gotten into it and have started using it and are starting to see results with the kids, they like, they like it a lot. The reading we're still tweaking. Um, Phonics, we're identifying areas where it's not, uh, addressed. You know, like we know we have to do Phonics, so, and-and we're- right now we're in the process, I'm trying to get everyone on the same page. We've got to all be on the same page. And it's not until you get into something that you're realizing, “Oh, there's a hole here. We didn't address that.” So this has been an interesting year because everybody's learning and figuring out what works, what doesn't work, scrambling to get materials for them. You know, when you just get this module and you realize you need this and-and that-I'm thinking that next year will be a much more smooth transition into the year because we've been through it once and we're trying to work the bugs out. That's the hardest part is, everybody felt-everybody top to bottom, myself included- dropped into it, and they didn't really feel prepared, um, especially if they went with the Engage New York, which most people did. The modules were being developed as they year went on, so they couldn't-they didn't have time. You know, two weeks before school. These were like 290 pages modules, each one. And so it was just hard for them to not have had the summer to study it, to work on it, to tweak it” (Danes Interview, 2014).

Reactions

Duke (2004) acknowledges educators as the main force driving educational change. Hall et al. (1977) developed a more in depth model of Fuller's (1969) model structuring teacher concerns regarding educational reform within seven progressive stages. Fuller's model focused on three stages: educators' self concerns, task concerns, and impact concerns. The seven stages proposed by Hall et al. (1977) are educators are aware of the new

reform. They try to obtain information regarding reform. After gathering knowledge regarding the initiative, teachers reflect on their skills in order to provide instruction. Next, teachers plan how to implement the reform, implement the initiatives, review student impact, collaborate with other professionals sharing experiences, and offer suggestions on improvement.

In this particular setting, participants all responded positively to the standards with the exception of the assistant principal, Mrs. Moss. She reported her reaction as, “I’m not as familiar with them as I should be because we have ten grade-levels here, and I... There’s no way I can, I can do all of them...” (Moss Interview, 2014). Mrs. Danes noted, “The standards I don’t have a problem with, you know, because it’s-you know, they used to say you taught a mile wide and an inch deep, and the kid, you were spending every-the beginning of every year reviewing because they didn’t learn... I think the problem that everybody’s having conceptions over is the particular curriculum that they’re teaching to meet the standards” (Danes Interview, 2014).

Mrs. Caston’s noted,

“I don’t have any problem with the standards. I don’t have any problem with Common Core. I have, my problem is how it’s implemented that, um, as far as we were concerned, it was much too fast. We were not ready for it. As far as the, the, uh, the standards that, that we are to address, I, I think they’re appropriate. I think, that, uh, we, we really have to, we have to put more into it. There’s a, there’s a lot more we have to put into it now. Uh, and we have to really be sure that the kids are, are getting their foundation, their beginning, so as we build on them, they, uh, are not behind, which a lot of them are” (Caston Interview, 2014).

Mrs. Johnson also had a positive outlook,

“I'm pleased with it. I wish we had more training (LD: Yeah) beforehand. In the beginning – I will say at the beginning of the year we were kinda – we knew what they needed to learn. We were kinda lost as to how to do it because we were kinda last minute finding out. We're gonna use this material. We're not gonna use this material. We knew the Common Core was there, but we just didn't know what was expected. Um, now I feel prepared. Now I feel like I'm assured myself because we've gone into depth with it. I actually think it's a better prog – better process than it was before. I think it's actually gonna help the kids think better when they do to read and answer the questions” (Johnson Interview, 2014).

Mrs. Dalton provided a novice teacher outlook,

“Well, kind of – I mean, oh, I know a lot of people were just blown away by it and it's really been hard for them, but like I said, since I came into it, it's just natural to me 'cause it's what I've used. And I see pros and cons with it, but I mean, I think that would be with anything. You know, I like, like I said, how it is a good measure of their true abilities, and I just don't feel like there's enough support behind it yet. I mean, we're having to copy on the copy machine our books for the kids usually. The Peter Pan books that we're using right now, my grandparents bought my classroom set. So, I mean, you know, it'll - it'll be nice when we finally get all the materials, and we can get organized with all of it, but I have a positive reaction so far, I think” (Dalton Interview, 2014).

Ms. Robertson reports liking the standards however there was a seemingly forced acceptance due to testing,

“I like some of them because it-Well, it really, for my grade level, it depends on the standardized test. And, if these are the standards that are gonna be on the standardized test, then I have no choice but to like it. Like the other standards, to me they, um, geared toward the LEAP test, the old LEAP test, because I did well with those and the results were seen with my test scores. So, if the new Common Core Standards are truly what is being assessed on the LEAP test this year, then I have no choice but to like them because that's what they-the kids need to know” (Robertson Interview, 2014).

Ms. Parker acceptance was more apparent,

“I like the Common Core Standards in Reading. I mean, which Reading is different from everything else, but to me Reading's Reading. I like having more power, I guess you would say, to design-design my lessons. Sure, I'm told what books to read. That's fine, and however I see fit to get them what they need to know, that's up to me, and I like it. I do. I love it” (Parker Interview, 2014).

Summary

Three major themes originated from the interviews of administration and educators interviewed. After coding the data gathered from the study, codes were classified under the three domains. The data gathered serves to answer the research questions that were presented at the beginning of this study. Addressing the first research question, how educators implement and develop reading curriculum from the Common Core State Standards. This researcher found that in this instance educators did not develop their own curriculum instead implementing the curriculum choices that were presented to them by the parish school board. Teachers were aware of “gaps” in the standards such as the lack of focus on Phonics and more emphasis in Comprehension. The specific lapses were discussed in the literature review of this study as identified by the International Reading Association. Issues included: the use of challenging texts, foundational skills, comprehension, vocabulary, disciplinary literacy, and diverse learners (IRA, 2012). While not citing knowledge of this publication, educators identified examples of these issues such as “foundational skills” (Caston Interview, 2014) and “supplementing challenging texts” (Johnson Interview, 2014).

Educators in the lower grades were able to pull materials from the previous curriculum to supplement the lessons. These activities were not cohesive and did not flow with instruction except in the first grade classroom where the teacher had resorted to implementing the basal reading series curriculum from the previous year. An example of the lack of flow in third grade, Mrs. Dalton was using the book “Peter Pan”. She did not incorporate vocabulary, phonics, or grammar except in writing from the story instead relying to fill these gaps with the previous basal reading series (Dalton Observations, 2014).

Secondly, how the mandated requirements of the Common Core State Standards impact the attitudes of reading teachers? The data gathered provided that educators were satisfied with the standards. All reported a positive experience with exception to the pace of the implementation period and the lack of professional development (Participant Interviews, 2014). Responses included positive remarks regarding the material (Parker Interview, 2014), student interaction with a greater variety of text (Johnson Interview, 2014), and more freedom regarding curricular choices (Parker Interview, 2014). Lastly, how do primary grade teachers approach the CCSS in comparison to upper elementary teachers? The educators in this study seemed to approach the standards similarly. All reported using data to guide instructional practices regarding standards in Reading. Primary teachers used Dibels scores, and upper elementary used pre and post testing. Teachers reported that this data helped them realize what standards needed to be focused on for more review. All educators cited a need for more professional development regarding the

standards. Teachers also provided that more interaction between grade levels would be welcomed.

Implications for Further Research

Further research opportunities exist in the different curriculum choices that are available to schools that implement the Common Core standards. An in depth look at each compared to research regarding effective reading strategies could be researched. Also, a qualitative study that documented an educator's own curriculum development of the standards within a district that allows educator the opportunity would provide an alternate route for implementation. The second question regarding attitudes could be followed through the Hall et al. (1977) model and show the progression through the seven stages. It would also be conducive to study approaches to the Common Core of high stakes testing grades versus grades not tested.

Limitations

This study consisted of one school in a rural area, which could be viewed as a limitation. A study interviewing educators from different schools including urban settings could reveal a variety of results. Teachers were also implementing different types of curriculum that was provided by the parish school board instead of developing their own curriculum from the standards. Following educators that are deemed as exemplary teachers that design and develop their own curriculum could enhance this study as well as providing interviews of more teachers in high stakes testing grades.

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Appendix A: IRB APPLICATION

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.

– Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at <http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/cred/human-subjects-screening-committee-members/>



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

– A Complete Application includes All of the Following:

- (A) A copy of this completed form and a copy of parts B thru F.
- (B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
- (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
- (D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
- (E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://php.nhttraining.com/users/login.php>)
- (F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/cred/files/2013/07/Security-of-Data-Agreement.pdf>)

1) Principal Investigator: Rank:
 Dept: Ph: E-mail:

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
*If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space

IRB# <u>E8576</u>	LSU Proposal # _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Complete Application
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Human Subjects Training
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	IRB Security of Data Agreement

3) Project Title:

STUDY EXEMPTED BY:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
130 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 / www.lsu.edu/irb

4) Proposal? (yes or no) No Yes, LSU Proposal Number
 Also, if YES, either This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
 OR More IRB Applications will be filed later

Exemption Expires: 11/24/2016

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)
 *Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature Date (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 Not Exempted _____ Category/Paragraph 1
 Signed Consent Waived?: Yes / No
 Reviewer Mathews Signature Robert Mathews Date 11/25/13

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions for Teachers:

1. Describe your teaching experience.
2. How were the common core standards explained to you? Who did? Were there specific examples of how the common core standards differed from the previous state standards?
3. How were you prepared to implement the common core? Professional development experiences, grade-level meetings, informational documents, etc...
4. Describe how you implement the common core standards in reading. How do you specifically design your lesson plans to incorporate the standards? Reading materials?
5. Explain the differences of teaching the common core in reading (Informational Text...)? How did you become aware of these differences?
6. Explain how students are handling the transition. Specific challenges? Struggling readers? Success stories?
7. Describe the interaction between grade-levels in order to prepare students to meet the standards specifically in reading as they advance from lower elementary to upper.
8. Describe your reaction to the implementation of the common core standards in reading.

Questions for Principal and Assistant Principal:

1. Describe your teaching experience.
2. Describe your introduction to the common core standards.
3. Explain your implementation plan. Were the standards introduced to specific grades first, or did the school implement the standards at every grade-level at once.
4. Explain how your teachers were prepared to implement the common core state standards.
5. Describe challenges and success that you have witnessed during this first half of the implementation phase.
6. Explain how your school will prepare for the second half of the implementation period and testing.
7. In regards to reading, what do you perceive to be the biggest challenges of implementing the standards?
8. Describe your reaction to the implementation of the common core standards in reading.

VITA

Lacy Davis, a native of Gilbert, Louisiana, earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education 1-5 from the University of Louisiana at Monroe in 2010. She continued working on her education receiving her Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus in Reading in May 2011. After teaching for two years in the Louisiana public school system, she began her pursuit of the Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University, under the supervision of Dr. Earl Cheek.