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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORTS TO
IMPLEMENT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS COMMON CORE STATE
STANDARDS

A Dissertation

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Doctor of Education

by

Maria Clara Fernández

May 2017

The Designated Dissertation Committee Approves the Dissertation Titled

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORTS TO
IMPLEMENT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS COMMON CORE STATE
STANDARDS

by

Maria Clara Fernández

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EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2017

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ABSTRACT

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON PREPAREDNESS AND SUPPORTS TO
IMPLEMENT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS COMMON CORE STATE
STANDARDS

by Maria Clara Fernández

The purpose of this study was to: (1) describe elementary teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS); (2) determine how perceptions influenced changes in instructional practices; and (3) to explore ELA-CCSS implementation challenges and/or barriers in supporting teacher development. This study was conducted using a multi-methods research design involving quantitative data from a survey, and qualitative data from interviews. The conceptual framework for this study centered around a history of the Common Core State Standards, education reform implementation research, understandings about the Common Core State Standards, and reconstructing teacher practice. Results revealed that professional development effect on instructional practice was limited; preparedness was a learning process; a mismatch existed between preparedness and instructional practices in relation to teacher change; and supports offered in district were not strong enough to advance reform implementation. Districts, administrators, and teachers are encouraged to integrate teacher participation in decision-making processes; develop a robust professional learning community model; ensure alignment of teacher supports with actual teachers' needs, and augment teacher agency as a barrier to implementation passivity.

DEDICATION

There are many significant people in my life that I would like to dedicate this dissertation, who have served as the greatest inspiration allowing me to accomplish a doctorate degree.

My loving parents, I proudly dedicate this dissertation with immeasurable gratitude. Without your enviable support of me, your generous love, inexplicable patience and acceptance, blind confidence in me, and unceasing encouragement - I'm not sure I would have accomplished this. Por estas cosas y mucho más, les doy mil gracias. Este doctorado es tanto suyo como mío. Mamá, tengo la alegría de poder mirar lo orgullosa que estas de mí. Papá, siento tu alegría desde el cielo, donde estás al lado de Dios.

Vedant and Clarita – my two beautiful children, who served as the greatest inspiration for pursuing one more educational goal. Since coming into my life, you've been the motivation behind so much of what I've done. I know I was not always there for you (mentally or even physically) as much as I would have liked to during this journey, but this sacrifice was done in the service of safeguarding your future.

Alma, Sylvia, Chava, and Lupita – queridos hermanos – I also dedicate this dissertation to you. Thank you for believing in me, for your unconditional support and encouragement along the way- including your forever mantra of "tu puedes hacerlo."

Johnny, Aaron, Arath, and Betzaida – my beloved nephews and niece, whom I always wanted to set a good example for you as your aunt, while opening doors for you to attain your own educational goals.

My husband Eddie, for his love, support and encouragement including the numerous times you had to listen to my "dissertation issues," which were not always the most entertaining.

Lastly, I would also like to extend this dedication to my dissertation chair, Dr. Noni M. Reis. Your professional guidance, as well as your support provided me with the tools required to complete this arduous journey of knowledge. I also dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Vicki Park, and Dr. Jean Gottlob, my committee members for their feedback and support upon completion of the dissertation milestones.

All of you, have like invaluable pieces of a puzzle, come together to brighten and strengthen my life and making my dream come true. Therefore, I dedicate this dissertation to you all, without which none of my success would be possible.

Go Fernandez's Troop!

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Chapter I: Introduction

American public education is fundamentally undergoing a dramatic transformation, one that "represents one of the most important developments in the education policy world in recent years" (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011, p.103). The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) serve as the nation's first and most comprehensive attempt to provide students access to a standard of education through a national set of shared standards. As such, the CCSS provide new expectations for teaching and learning, and in order to effectively implement these new standards, teachers are having to make profound changes to the ways they approach teaching and learning in ways that affect former instructional practices. As a result, the Common Core the and pedagogical shifts that accompany such, demand that we deepen our understanding of teachers' perceptions about their preparedness to implement the mandated English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS), and how preparedness perceptions on implementation affect teachers in reconstructing their instructional practices. In exploring teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS, we can learn about factors that contribute to, or hinder a teacher's ability to change instructional practices. Additionally, exploring teachers' perceptions can also help determine ways to support teachers by learning about the challenges and/or barriers associated with implementation of educational reform.

Background of the Problem

Proponents of the Common Core State Standards claim that the new standards are crucial in ensuring equality of learning opportunity in achieving high levels of learning

for *all* students regardless of their social and economic circumstances (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Hence, the desire for one set of common standards that will enable students to compete in a global scale, compounded by a yearning for standards that will ensure that all United States' students are prepared for college and workplace; and the ambitious goal to have all student graduate college-ready, have become crucial factors assisting in the transition of the Common Core State Standards (Gropman, 2008). It must be noted, however; that the aforementioned politics or beliefs in support of the Common Core Standards directly contest arguments against the Common Core, such as (a) imposing a "one-size-fits-all" national curriculum, (b) the [new] standards being inferior to the former standards, and (c) a lack of research existing on whether the Common Core will actually improve student learning.

However, regardless of debates, Common Core Standards' proponents have maintained that one of the main potentials of the Common Core is that all students will be college-and-career ready. For example, contrasted to the intentions behind the new Common Core Standards' reform to those of the former NCLB reform act, the hope has been that via the implementation of the CCSS, "levels of achievement across the United States would become more consistent and at a higher level of quality than the previous 'patchwork quilt' of standards that varied from region to region in terms of quality and enforcement" (Zimmer, 2014). Further, compounded to the CCSS providing all students with a uniform set of standards, the claims in support of the CCSS have also posit that these new standards are internationally benchmarked, expectations are consistent for all, standards are focused, coherent and clear (albeit literature points to teachers' lack of

clarity and understanding in terms of teachers understanding and interpreting the Common Core Standards as being one of the main challenges in the implementation of the standards) (Bridwell-Mitcher, 2015; Conley, 2011; Liebtag, 2013; McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012; Nadelson, Pluska, Moorcroft, Jeffrey, & Woodrad, 2014; Porter, Furaselli, & Furaselli, 2015; Sawchuk, 2012, 2002, 2012; Zhang, 2014), and that the standards create a foundation to work collaboratively across the nation (Liebtag, 2013).

Nevertheless, opponents of the Common Core State Standards still question how *equitable* the Standards will be specifically, in terms of *how* the current rollout (implementation) of the Common Core Standards has been taking place. For example, one of the main arguments is that inequities already exist in the varying levels of CCSS implementation: "The claim that CCSS implementation will be totally equitable is devalued because of the inherent variability within each of these approaches for teacher training, materials used, and experiences offered to students" (Liebtag, 2013, p.60). This argument is further supported in the literature where teachers are expected to implement new standards without having a solid understanding of what these mean in terms of transferring the language of the standards to actual learning objectives and classroom application (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013; Kaniuka, 2012; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). It must be noted that the new Common Core State Standards articulate the essentials, but lack direction on how to meet goals, how to connect the new standards into both teaching and student learning characterized by a lack of curriculum to support the implementation of the new standards: "The CCSS state than an intentional limitation was not to spell everything out. Consequently teachers are required to unpack the standards,

design curriculum, and make instructional decisions for their students (as cited in Liebtag, 2013). The implications for meeting the conditions for implementation of the new CCSS, put additional weight on the challenges that classroom teachers are already facing. Thus, it is critical to explore and thus, learn about how teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement a new reform, such as English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS), affect the degree to which teachers engage in teacher change as defined by a reconstruction of their instructional practices.

As states and local districts continue to implement the new standards, ignoring teachers' implementation preparedness perceptions could be drawbacks undermining transitional efforts towards implementation of the ELA-CCSS. As will be discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, several factors have been found in the literature as influencing the ways in which teachers engage in changing their instructional practices. Some of these factors include a fragmented educational system, distinct implementation contexts, and teachers' roles on reform implementation. Teacher beliefs on interactions among structure, teacher identity, and agency have also been found in the literature in influencing teachers' motivation to change practice. Again, given these factors, it is imperative to be able to describe and understand how teachers engage in change by adjusting their pedagogies to meeting the expectations of the ELA-CCSS. Unfortunately, there currently exists a literature gap on teachers' perceptions about their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS), and the ways to support teachers during implementation of educational reform.

Implementation implications. As aforementioned, the Common Core reflect an effort to nationally standardize what (albeit not necessarily how) teachers teach, what and how students learn, as well as to what assessments to use to measure learning (Perks, 2015). When it comes to assessments, it is argued that "teachers won't be inclined to change what they are doing until they become familiar with assessments aligned to the new standards" (Sawchuk, 2012). This further supports the notion that the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represent a sweeping curriculum reform effort of unprecedented scale (as cited in Porter, Furaselli and Furaselli, 2015). Ultimately, **i**n implementing the new standards, "we are entering a new era, a new chapter, in what we believe represents the next, logical progression, or evolution of American education from a highly loosely coupled to a more tightly coupled education system" (as cited in Porter et al., 2015, p.112). Consequently, because of the monumental changes accompanying the Common Core, it is pivotal to investigate the field of reform implementation at the school level, through teachers' perceptions, especially since it is at the school level and more specifically, at the classroom level, that implementation efforts take place with actions that either support or hinder the intentions behind the new standards.

Teachers as implementers of policy. Of all educators at all levels of the educational system, teachers face the major challenge of successfully implementing the Common Core State Standards, as "School change depends heavily on what goes on at the classroom level" (Porter et al., 2015, p.115). Compounding to this, the implementation of education reform can become even more challenging if teachers' experience with top-down restructuring is limited, as "this requires the teacher to negotiate the proposed

reforms and changes by modifying their behavior in the classroom to align with the 'top-down' mandates" (Talbot & Campbell, 2014, p.418).

Ultimately, regardless of the Common Core State Standards' merits or weaknesses, it is the paradigm that is currently stipulated and thus, school-based educators are having to implement the new standards. In doing so, teachers whether voluntarily or not, have been vested the power to either "make or break" the implementation of the Common Core Standards as it is at the school level that education reform succeeds, or fails to achieve its goals. In this sense, teachers are truly key players in determining the extent to which policies are implemented in schools as they "[…] can refuse to implement or can substantially modify policies they dislike, such as curricular reforms" (as cited in Porter et al., 2015, p.113). Therefore, if teachers do not believe in the need for change, then the reform is not likely to impact everyday classroom teaching. Moreover, change might be superficial (if at all) and not lead to the profound paradigm shift envisioned by the new reform, which if "compliance is the goal of policy implementation, then how local practice can change through public policy initiatives is especially problematic" (Spillane, et al, 2002, p.388).

Common Core State Standards' key drivers. One of the main promises of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is that the standards will improve student learning, so that students can be better prepared for college and the workforce. Briefly stated, the CCSS "are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to take credit bearing introductory courses in two-or four-year college programs to enter the workforce" (as cited in Nadelson et al., 2014). After the publication of *A*

Nation at Risk (1983) report, which warned that American's schools were inadequate and not globally competitive, a sudden need to reform the U.S. educational system took prominence. Being an extension of former standardized school reforms, the Common Core State Standards are currently considered as providing a framework for increasing student learning in mathematics and English language arts preparing students for college, and ensuring that the demands of a "highly skilled" and internationally competitive workforce are fulfilled (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). Hence, proponents of the CCSS, anticipate that the new standards will enable students to learn more effectively, develop deeper content knowledge, and progress more successfully. However, as with any reform, the effectiveness of the Common Core Standards is highly dependent on the implementer-in this case, the teacher who will implement the standards. Therefore, it is pivotal to understand the degree to which teachers experience, perceive, and understand the standards as this can have a direct influence on the implementation of the Common Core. Equally important, a commitment to offering teachers the supports they will need (whether it be through professional development or other means) to transform the way they teach needs to be examined.

Problem Statement

This research posits that the majority of teachers are not, yet prepared to implement the new standards, which represents a problem because despite merits or deficits of the Common Core State Standards, the adoption of these new standards in conjunction with the implementation of such, represent the current educational reform mandate that is changing what is happening in classrooms across the nation, on a daily basis. And in

recognizing that teachers are key participants in how these standards are implemented in classrooms, a close study of their individual preparedness perceptions on implementation of the ELA-CCSS is needed. In addition, learning about ways to support teachers during reform implementation needs to be explored. This is crucial as the current available literature is limited on teachers' perceptions about their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS and how these in turn, may affect teacher change as reconstructing instructional practices. Compounding to this, there is also a literature gap in ways of supporting teachers during educational reform implementation in the context of Common Core.

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of this exploratory, descriptive study was to describe elementary teachers' perceptions about their preparedness to implement the English language arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) at the school-level, at three public elementary (K-6) schools. The second purpose was to determine how teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement influenced changes in instructional practices. The last purpose of this study was to explore the implications for supporting teacher development of ELA-CCSS implementation by examining implementation challenges and/or barriers.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS)?

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2. In what ways do teachers' perceptions on implementation preparedness affect changes in instructional practice?

3. What are ways to support teachers during implementation of ELA-CCSS education reform at the school-site?

To answer these questions, the research design utilized in this study consisted of a mixed-methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative components that included two data sources: (1) survey and (2) interviews.

Significance of the Study

Teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement standards and education reforms, such as the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) are currently a prevalent missing element in the field of educational research. Additionally, there exits minimal understanding on how teachers' perceptions on implementation preparedness affect changes in instructional practice during reform implementation. This missing area of research limits the supports that educational leaders and school districts, may offer to teachers during implementation of education reform. This is a concern because with the recent adoption and implementation of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) across the nation, teachers need increased specialized content knowledge, requiring fundamental changes in their instructional practices. As a result of the current gap in research, it is important to understand how teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement education reform, contribute to teacher changes in instructional practices as called for by the ELA-CCSS. Ultimately, this research hopes to contribute to a broader understanding of how

teachers' perceptions on implementation preparedness in the context of the ELA-CCSS, affect changes in instructional practices. Furthermore, it is also hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to informing decisions about the supports that educational leaders, and school districts provide to teachers as these engage in reconstructing their instructional practices.

Definitions of Terms

   Standards. Formal guidelines adopted to guide instruction. These define what students should know and be able to do at each grade level (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015; Perks, 2015).

   Common Core State Standards. A set of academic standards in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010) for what every student in grades kindergarten through twelve grade should know and be able to do in the stated subject areas at the end of each grade. In the text, the terms "new standards," and "Common Core Standards" interchange with Common Core State Standards.

   Implementation. The process and practices used in the classroom by teachers to put (execute) the Common Core State Standards into effect (Liebtag, 2013; Perks; 2015).

   Teacher Change. Reconstruction of instructional practice(s) in the context of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards. This includes, but is not limited to teachers' active and productive relationship between teacher knowledge and knowledge-of-practice (Liebtag, 2013; Goldsworthy; Suppovitz, & Riggan, 2013;

Spillane, 1999), where "teachers learn to describe, discuss, and adjust their practices according to a collective held standard of teaching quality" (Darling-Hammond & Richardson; 2009).

Preparedness. Teachers' individual and collective knowledge and competencies, resources, and ability to support implementation of standards (Perks, 2015), specifically related to the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards, where teachers align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the standards.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I includes a background of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose, and significance of the study, the research questions that guided the study, and the definitions of terms. Chapter II provides a review of the research related to the variables of the study. Chapter III outlines the research methodology used for this exploratory, descriptive study and how the data were collected; it reviews the purposes of the study, the research questions, and the analysis of the data. Chapter IV provides the results of the data analysis and discusses the findings of the study. A summary of key findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research studies are found in Chapter V.

Chapter II: A Review of the Literature

This chapter provides a review of literature on the following areas as pertained to the purpose of this study: (1) History of the Common Core State Standards, (2) Education Reform Implementation Research, (3) Understandings About the Common Core State Standards, and (4) Reconstructing Teacher Practice. Literature review areas were selected to provide both a solid background to the study, as well as to support the study's main components: implementation of educational reform as affecting teacher change in reconstructing instructional practices, and educational reform implementation supports. It must be noted that during this study, there is limited research on the perceptions of school-based educators on their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core, and how these perceptions affect changes in instructional practices. Further, there is also a gap in the literature on implementation supports for teachers in the context of ELA-Common Core State Standards.

The first section reviews the literature on the conceptual and financial origins of the Common Core Standards. Specifically, this section explores issues related to how sectors of the general public and academia were not included in developing the standards, while also reviewing venues of support toward a national set of standards. Common disputes over the Common Core State Standards will be challenged by validations in favor of the standards given the implications of former reforms, such as the No Child Left Behind.

The next section examines the literature on education reform implementation as related to teacher change. It includes discussions on implementation context given the recent adoption of the Common Core Standards, while analyzing how the literature on

implementation has thus far, focused on several implementation variables confusing an effective implementation of education reform. Areas in this section include a discussion on the current and ongoing fragmented educational system, which has resulted in further hindering successful implementation of reform; the importance of context as affecting implementation efforts; and the crucial role of teachers in advancing reform implementation. This section also offers an in-depth analysis of additional factors affecting reform implementation, such the role of organizational context, teacher emotions, decision-making processes for the teacher, the role of teacher experience, teacher capacity, and the implication of professional learning communities (PLC's) as a means for teachers to make sense of reform.

The third section discusses current understandings about the Common Core Standards by analyzing literature on teachers' knowledge on the new standards (as a prerequisite to implementing the CCSS); the implications for effective professional development, given the current challenges to implement the new standards; the alignment between assessments and standards; and the focus on college and career readiness as the definitive goal of the CCSS.

The final section initiates with a review on the literature on teachers' change and beliefs. This section discusses teacher attention to reform; the impact of social influence and perceived professional obligations as affecting teacher change. This is followed by a review on teacher identity and agency with a focus on how teachers as an individuals, engage in change. Then, this section applies a sociocultural framework for understanding how interactions among structure, identity, and agency help shape teachers' experiences

of professional vulnerability leading to mediated teacher agency, culminating with a discussion on the role and relations between school district officials and teachers in advancing teacher change. Each section is organized to include a description of the central concept, a brief review of relevant applications and a synthesis of significant research and empirical studies.

Background: History of the Common Core State Standards

    Conceptual and financial origins. Educational reform has been an ongoing and contentious topic in the United States taking predominance in the 1980's as a response to a call for the "standardization of education." Intensifying this, Americans are constantly looking for ways to improve their educational system, while aspiring to afford their children with better educational opportunities than were provided to them. Hence, educational reform for the sake of improvement, continues to be one of the most significant topics gaining the attention of voters and politicians each year-the Common Core Standards (CCSS) being no exception to this.

    Despite 46 states and the District of Columbia having adopted the CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015), many people were left out during the origins of Common Core State Standards. And, while accounts about the origins of the standards vary, one widespread theme remains salient: the general public was left uneducated in regards to the new standards as evidenced by the following quote: "A significant effort to educate the public about the Common Core was neglected, however, possibly because the nature of many state governments meant that the standards could be adopted without public input, or with

minimal amount of such input" (Zimmer, 2014). Further, the majority of the versions about the origins of the Common Core have coincided in that a either a person, a foundation, or a report- all of which contributed to the creation of the Common Core Standards, were left out (Zancanella & Moore, 2014).

Sir Michael Barber, a British educationist and current Chief Education Advisor to Pearson, whose signature project in the arena of school reform was the "National Literacy Strategy," which included framework for teaching along a set of national targets stipulating the percentage of students who were to reach a particular standard by a given year (p. 273), began speaking to the US and other countries about education reform in the early 2000's. By 2006, Barber had already gained enough prominence in US school reform groups. Coming from a public service reforms' background in the United Kingdom during the Blair years (1997-2007), Barber's school reform models were characterized by large-scale, top-down reform where "designing all the materials at the national level and training everybody in a cascade out; using the accountability system to publish results and school inspection to check that people were adopting better practices," (p.273) became the agenda. Ultimately, Barber saw the current educational structure of teaching as an obstacle to top-down reform.

Barber's push for a top-down reform would ensure that teachers were held more accountable, while increasing governmental control over the teaching profession with a focus on controlling what teachers did in the classroom. The ultimate goal was to find ways of ensuring teacher practices where aimed at supporting and strengthening government policies by "providing" teachers with the *what, how* and *why* of teaching

whereby, instruction was to be solely determined by a central controlling power (the government), and then pushed out to teachers to adopt the model. However, such a strategy ignored a critical factor: taking into account teacher input. As asserted by previous research in the area of implementation, "a key missing voice in school reform effort is that of teachers and successful school reform will depend on listening to teachers as they implement reform and experience successes, failures and difficulties" (as cited in Kaniuka, 2012, p.332). As such, "Barber appears to have been one of the most important voices arguing that something like the CCSS should figure significantly in any large-scale reform plans in the US" (Zancanella & Moore 2014, p. 274). Barber's work in the United Kingdom can strongly be regarded as a precursor to current reform efforts in the US, specifically in regard to the development of the Common Core State Standards. In much a similar way, it can be argued that the CCSS are a product of large-scale reform driven from the top-down, where standards were created at the national level and teacher training has been phased out in stages (derived from the product of the preceding), while implementation is enforced by an even more robust accountability system than the previous one, ensuring that teachers and schools enforce the prescribed changes accompanying the new standards.

In hopes of moving forward with a national standards' movement, the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of the Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), turned to like-minded business leaders, and testing companies, where "In 2008, Gene Wilhoit, the CCSSO executive director, and David Coleman, the future architect of the Common Core, traveled to Seattle to meet Microsoft founder and leading

philanthropist Bill Gates and his wife, Melinda" (Neem, 2015). This meeting appears to

have been advantageous to those in support of a national standards' movement as it

resulted in the Gates Foundation awarding a vast amount of money in its efforts to move

forward with the Common Core' cause (Neem, 2015).

The story of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's involvement appears to be

better known than that of Sir Michael Barber. However, even those who have heard about

the Gate's efforts related to the Common Core Standards, may not be fully aware of the

profound effects of such. The majority of the Gate's efforts have been targeted towards

financial contributions to proponents and/or programs in support of the Common Core

Standards. As maintained by Zancanella and Moore (2014):

> In addition to the 35 million given to the National Governors Association
> and the Council of Chief State School Officers to direct the CCSS,
> awardees included everything from state departments of education, to
> education think tanks and advocacy organizations, to curriculum
> developers, to professional organizations, to teacher unions, to
> universities. (pp.275)

Currently, the Gate's influence has impacted pre-K through college educational

institutions primarily due to their strategy of building support via financial contributions.

Consequently, many of the Gates Foundation grants' recipients have expressed a very

positive stance about the effects of having a national set of standards (Zancanella &

Moore, 2014) further advancing CCSS adoption. These positions of support can be

largely attributed to the fact that the Gates Foundation has not only been responsible for

financially supporting the research and development of the Common Core Standards but

moreover, to the vast lobbying and public relations campaign that preceded the launch of

Common Core. The Gates Foundation for example, has made donations to almost every

major institution that has had input into the formation of education-related policies and legislation. Ultimately, the foundation's strategy of awarding money to major institutions in support of the Common Core Standards has been highly beneficial in terms of promulgating both the need for, and the benefits of having a set of national standards. Conversely, this same strategy has raised questions about the ethical stance taken by grant recipients in support of the Common Core.

An example of how conflict of interest with recipients and founders can surface is best illustrated in the following quote: "There can be an exquisite carefulness about how we're going to say anything that could reflect badly on a foundation" (as cited in Zancanella & Moore, 2014, p.275). As can be inferred, neutralizing opposition has been a powerful means by which not only the Gates Foundation, but also other proponents of the Common Core Standards have been able to quickly gain terrain in terms of advancing with the adoption and ultimately, the implementation of the new standards. As maintained by Zimmer (2014), "The reason for this rapid adoption and the relatively low levels of resistance to the Common Core can be traced back to the manner in which its development was financed." As aforementioned, the Gates Foundation provided the majority of the support (via financial contributions) that made the Common Core possible, which helped lessen fears of what Common Core might be, while building support among both the business community and the major lobbying education organizations including teachers' unions. Furthermore, within the development and support of Common Core State Standards, there have been additional aspects that have remained silent or at least, unknown to the general public.

One notable example is the story of the "work group" behind the development of the Common Core State Standards, where "it was clear from the beginning that the standards would be designed in-house, with little input from the academic community" (Neem, 2015). Although disagreement still exists between the actual number of people in the Common Core working group with some literature stating that the group consisted of 14 group members (Zancanella & Moore, 2014), while another stating that the group consisted of 10 members (Neem, 2015), both concur that the members of this group consisted primarily from the assessment and business industry (Neem, 2015; Zancanella & Moore, 2014). The majority of the working group members came from the testing organization ACT, Inc., and the College Board- producers of the two most widely used college admission exams. Consequently, on the assumption that the standards were directly influenced (in terms of their content) by who was in the room when the standards were written, biases and/or conflict of interest by the members, may have directly determined the outcome of the standards. Thus, this brings to question the missing link of research in developing the standards, where as maintained by Zancanella and Moore (2014), "the nuances of research fall to the wayside in an effort to convey a sense that the solutions to educational problems are simpler and clearer than they actually are" (p. 278).

Equally important, is the small number of members comprising the working group (whether they were 10 or 14 members) as a relatively small and alike thinking and/or interest sharing group, as tasked with developing and writing the CCSS — standards that would impact an entire nation comprised of 49.8 million students in public elementary and secondary schools. Of these, 35.1 million in prekindergarten through grade 8 and

14.7 million in grades 9 through 12 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Once again, the lack of objective and perhaps, unbiased input from various stakeholder

groups, has been maintained as one of the main concerns in moving towards a Common

Core era: "Critics point to the failure of Common Core's proponents to solicit adequate

amounts of objective feedback from the public and from the academic world […]"

(Zimmer, 2014). The lack of public input and the missing link of valid and reliable

research in the development of the Common Core State Standards, bring into question

how effective the CCSS will truly be in improving what have been perceived as weak

schools, weak teachers, and weak students (Nichols & Berliner, 2007).

   Implications of former reforms. As history has attested, the US educational system

has experienced an abundance of initiatives on improving schooling (Zimmer, 2014).

According to Wallender (2014), the following four justifications (now part of the CCSS)

have at one point or another, filtered through former educational reform initiatives

ultimately, resulting in an arduous transition toward the Common Core Standards: (1)

creating a set of national standards, (2) ensuring that students graduate ready for college

and or a career, (3) quality education for all students, and (4) rising the rigor in schools.

These four areas have formed the foundation of U.S. public educational initiatives with a

new and stronger focus on increasing rigor in schools as the main driving force for CCSS

educational reform.

   In 1983 during the Reagan era, the standards-based reform gained momentum with

the federal educational goals and objectives highlighted in *A Nation at Risk* (Nichols &

Berliner, 2007, p.4). This report published by the National Commission on Excellence in

Education (1983), warned that America's schools were inadequate and not globally competitive. Specifically, *A Nation at Risk* criticized "equity over excellence" as a response to the ESEA act of 1965 in that "increased efforts toward providing a quality education for all students was done at the expense of lowered academic standards and achievement" (Wallender, 2014). As a result of this, one of the Commission's recommendations was to strengthen the curriculum with rigorous standards. This federal interest in reforming education lasted through the Bush ("America 2000") and Clinton eras known as "Goals 2000" (Kirst & Wirt, 2009, p.22) resulting in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) educational reform act in 2001 as an example that "numerous attempts at large scale reform of education have been made over the years, usually in the aftermath of the release of research showing the poor performance of the U.S. educational system in comparison with the systems of other developed nations" (Zimmer, 2014).

One of the major implications of the NCLB reform was to identify specific skills and levels of competency that all students needed to attain in order to move through the educational system. This reform was considered a direct response to the demoralizing notion of schools as being: "terrible and that something needs to be done about the situation" (Krashen, 2014). In the one hand, NCLB required individual states to develop standards, assessments, and proficiency levels for students' academic progress (Wallender, 2014), while on the other, it also emphasized teacher quality, research-based instruction and academic improvement to be measured by Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) on state tests. However, despite NCLB creating a nation-wide accountability structure, implementation from state to state varied resulting in variable implementation and overall

results. NCLB standards and its accompanying assessments varied by state and contained a wide variety of rigor, while *all students* (whether English language learners or not) were required to score proficient by the end of the 2013-14 school year (California Department of Education, 2014). And, though it can be argued that California developed and held its students accountable to rigorous standards, the same was not true nationwide. Ultimately, the definition of "proficiency" varied greatly as states created their own standards, the rigor of their tests, and the stringency of their performance, where states could demonstrate student proficiency according to their *own* measures. As a result of this, the definition of proficiency was not consistent nationwide. In the end, the enforcement and robust accountability of NCLB produced 50 states, with 50 sets of standards, a wide variety of rigor, and no common expectations nationwide. In short, NCLB fell short of establishing a national standard of "educational excellence." As a result, the next movement was toward a national set of standards that took place in 2009 as a response to the diverse range of standards that had been enacted unequally across the nation. In 2009, the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) joined forces to form the Common Core State Standards Initiative (Wallender, 2014; Zimmer, 2014): "The development of Common Core began in 2009 and by 2015, the standards had been fully developed and adopted by forty-six states for use as state educational standards" (Zimmer, 2014). However, similar to the development, adoption and implementation of NCLB, the movement toward the Common Core also failed at including the voices of various stakeholders, including those of teachers.

Education Reform Implementation

Implementation context. The field of implementation is complicated, as educational reform implementation has been studied from various angles:

> Implementation scholars have offered numerous explanations for how policy is implemented that focus on the nature of social problems, the design of policy, the governance system and organizational arrangements in which policy must operate, and the will or capacity of the people charged with implementing policy. (Spillane et al., 2002, pp.389)

In 1981, for example, implementation was explained as what "takes place between the formal enactment of a program by a legislative body (or, in some instances, a chief executive or the courts) and its intended and unintended impacts." Back in 1977, implementation was redefined as a series of games of political pressures and counter pressures, in which implementation was described as "the continuation of politics by other means" (as cited in Porter et al., 2015). Yet, in 1991 another explanation of implementation was provided; this time with a focus on how educational reforms were being enacted at the moment: "local educators did not want to implement such programs (the will was not there), but also that they did not know how to implement them (the capacity was not there) (as cited in Porter et al., 2015).

However, despite the current implementation literature that points to various and distinct variables affecting policy implementation, most scholars have coincided on the difficulty of implementing policy reform in a system where power and authority are decentralized to the degree found in the United States (as cited in Porter et al., 2015). One prominent argument on the area of decentralization is that although many individual schools in various school districts have made progress, the system as a whole has not

improved: "the decade ended with little evidence of meaningful gains in learning" (as cited in Fuhrman & Malen, 1991, p.2). This has been attributed to the fragmented and multi-layered educational policy system in which policies are regarded as the major "implementation barrier." As supported by Spillane et al., (2002) "The segmented policy system sends a mélange of mixed and often competing signals that can undermine the authority and power of policy" (p.390), which teachers often ignore.

Other factors have also been noted as affecting policy implementation. In a 1971 study of educational innovation implementation, researchers identified four significant barriers to effective policy implementation: (a) lack of clarity and understanding of the innovation, (b) inadequate skills and knowledge (capability) necessary to implement innovation, (c) inadequate material resources, and (d) incompatible organizational arrangements (as cited in Porter et al., 2015). In 1984, researchers also found organizational disunity, lack of coordination, improper organizational communication, insufficient time, and inadequate (often poor) planning as additional impediments to policy implementation (as cited in Porter et al., 2015). Therefore, if teachers lack a clear understanding of what change entails, and the reasons for change, then teachers may easily resort to resisting change. Further, this lack of knowledge and/or understanding can result in a strong impediment to policy implementation, especially when it is compounded with a lack of other implementation resources as maintained by the following, "Implementing agents and agencies also often lack the capacity-the knowledge, skills and personnel, other resources-necessary to work in ways that are consistent with policy" (as cited in Spillane et al., 2002, p.390).

To a similar extent, in a 2012 study founded by the Gates Foundation on initial CCSS implementation in four different states, it was found that: (a) educators' knowledge and awareness of the CCSS is growing rapidly, but not necessarily in terms of the deeper level of mastery that students need to meet the standards; (b) many educators were focused on the new common assessments and the accompanying technology issues associated with their deployment; and (c) there was widespread initiative fatigue in the field. These findings were also supported in a study conducted by Porter (2013), where it was found that even *experienced* teachers reported feeling as novice educators (despite their multiple years of teaching) as they found themselves having to start from scratch, which in turn, resulted in an initiative fatigue, in addition to teachers reporting that they felt as they were putting in a vast amount of personal investment in terms of time and energy (as cited in Porter et al., 2015). Hence, teachers recognizing that they do not have sufficient knowledge and awareness of the CCSS to implement the standards successfully, may find themselves having to resort to any Common Core aligned materials they can put their hands on. On this, researchers Fuhrman and Malen (1991) maintain that "Teachers are not prepared with the kinds of knowledge and skills required if schools are to change to deliver more challenging curriculum" (p.4). This can create an overload of materials, where teachers need to dedicate an extra amount of time and energy to first locate, and then analyze to determine what is worth using as they build their confidence, and expertise.

Teachers' experiences and perspectives on their role in the reform process are also a prevalent theme in implementation literature. On this area, teachers are recognized as

"the ultimate enactors of any change effort, regardless of where it emanates" (Porter et al., 2015, p.115) in the reform process. In one qualitative study (2009) on teachers' perspectives on their role in the reform process within their professional organization, it was found that teachers' experiences were influenced by contextual elements, such as tensions between and among various levels within their organization (as cited in Porter et al., 2015). Teachers' tensions aggravated as reform implementation took place. Researchers contributed this to teachers' feelings of frustration, and loss of professional autonomy (p.116) during the implementation phase.

To a similar extent, Porter et al., (2015), allude to the Common Core educational reform being received by teachers with a variety of emotions (depending on the individual), such as with enthusiasm by some, and fear by others given the multilayered context in which complex school reforms take place. Porter et al.'s (2015) view appears to be an extension of previous findings on how teachers interpreted and responded to reform initiatives in the context of organizational settings. It was found that organizations (and the individuals therein) engaged in four modes of interpretation: (1) as complex social systems, organizations respond to information processed from the environment, (2) interpretation occurs at both the organizational and individual level, (3) managers play a role in shaping interaction at the organizational level, and (4) organizations consist of subsystems which themselves engage in organizational interpretation (as cited in Porter et al., 2015, p.117). In this view, how interpretation of implementation is processed (made sense of) is dependent on the success of an organization's structure and decision-making processes. It appears then, that in order to navigate through change successfully, an

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organization needs to focus on being explicit about what constitutes a change, and what needs to happen in order for change to occur: "it is not enough simply to communicate the policy. There is a critical need to structure learning opportunities so that stakeholders can construct an interpretation of the policy and its implications for their own behavior" (Spillane et al., 2002, p.418).

Teachers benefit from being part of the decision-making processes as they work together with other stakeholders to define what change is and it is not as a means to advance school reform, while furthering their capacity because "Recent reforms that engage teachers in the decision-making process or redistribute leadership have demonstrated the need for enhanced teacher capacity in order for these reforms to improve student achievement" (as cited in Kaniuka, 2012, p.328). Being part of decision-making processes can directly assist in making sense of new reform given that often, teachers have to juggle with sense making and interpreting change as a result of policy ambiguity. As noted by Fuhrman and Malen (1991), teachers feeling great responsibility for educational improvement, have experienced frustration given the mixed signals and administrative requirements that accompany individual programs (p.3). However, by default of teachers being part of the decision-making process, they will have a better chance at co-defining a common understanding of any given reform.

Similarly, Spillane et al., (2002) assert "What a policy means for implementing agents is constituted in the interaction of their existing cognitive structures (including knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes), their situation, and the policy signals" (p.388). Hence, teachers' local behavior to enact new policy is also dependent on both their individual

and collective sense making of policy in terms of processing basic information, as well as the complexities and influences involved in the processing of information, and the ways social context and social interaction affect sense making. To change their practice, teachers need to first make sense of what the reform means by analyzing how their current behavior is likely to change or not, depending on the meaning they [teachers] create from the reform (Spillane et al., 2002). From this perspective, how teachers interpret policy implementation depends to a great extent on teachers' prior knowledge and experience where, "Teacher learning is influenced not only by the opportunities that are available for learning but also the personal resources of the learner, including their prior knowledge, dispositions and beliefs" (Spillane, 1999, p.157). This idea is further extended by Kaniuka (2012), as it was found that teacher experience provided the prerequisite knowledge upon which teachers shaped their views on teaching, learning, and decision-making where their efficacy developed as a result of experience (p.341).

In a framework consisting of intuition, interpretation, integration, and institutionalization, which placed interpretation within the context of the overall learning and implementation reform process, it was found that all four phases became involved as part of organizational learning and effective implementation of reform at the individual, team, and organizational level (as cited in Porter et al., 2015, p.117). In contrast, in a study on Comprehensive School Reform (CSR), integration and institutionalization were underscored in their importance in successfully implementing and sustaining reform as it was concluded that, "schools with high faculty and staff capacity most effectively integrated reform into daily practice such that the reform became institutionalized and

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was much more likely to be sustained over time" (p.117). Thus, the difficulty in better understanding implementation factors affecting teachers' role in this capacity. It must also be noted that, from this study, capacity was asserted as being a key factor in reform implementation. This makes sense at least when capacity is regarded as a precursor to integration of reform where teachers first acquire an understanding of the reform (sense-making) to then being able to act on it (actual application), as a means of institutionalizing it. It seems logical that teachers for example, would need to first have the ability to understand and experience the changes involved with a reform prior to being able to authentically integrate such changes into their instructional practices, to then institutionalized how the organization (in this case the school) operates. In support of this, Spillane et al., (2002) have stated that,

> Teachers' prior beliefs and practices can pose challenges not only because teachers are unwilling to change in the direction of the policy but also because their extant understandings may interfere with their ability to interpret and implement the reform in ways consistent with the designer's intent. (pp.393)

Accordingly, of chief importance is *how* teachers as implementing agents, choose to respond to policy based on *what* they understand themselves to be responding to. Moreover, research points to how prior experience shapes teachers' thoughts about learning and instruction (Kaniuka, 2012).

   In a comparative case study to explore the ways educators at the school level implemented the Common Core, a cross-case analysis of two North Carolina public elementary schools in implementing the CCSS was conducted. The schools in this study shared similar demographic profiles, but differed in their selection of paths in

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implementing the Common Core. One school opted to implement the standards within selected grade-levels one year in advance of the mandate, while the other school opted to wait to adopt the standards for all grade-levels at the same time (Porter et al., 2015). In an effort to triangulate data, the study consisted of four data sources consisting of a collection of surveys, focus groups, interviews, and document analysis from which two major findings emerged. The first finding was the impact that Common Core implementation had on teachers' personal and professional lives. Many teachers compared their experiences in implementing the Common Core to their experiences with being a novice teacher. These teachers felt as if they were beginning anew and starting from ground zero. This could be attributed to teachers' lack of understanding of the standards and the absence of a Common Core aligned curriculum, and materials hindering implementation as exemplified by the following: "Teachers are wrestling with an absence of truly aligned curricula and lessons. Added to those concerns that the standards are pitched at a level that may require teachers themselves to function on a higher cognitive plane" (Sawchuk, 2012). On this, teachers could benefit from collaboration with other teachers as they work in "unpacking" the standards whereby, teachers get together to discuss what the standards mean in terms of teaching practices and student learning given that:

> Implementation as a minimum includes shared understanding among
> participants concerning the implied presuppositions, values, and
> assumptions which underlie a program, for it participants understand
> these, then they have a basis for rejecting, accepting or modifying a
> program in terms of their own school, community and class situation. (as
> cited in Spillane et al., 2002, p.392)

Furthermore, on the first finding on teachers' professional and personal lives, teachers reported that the demands placed on them to implement the Common Core required a significant personal investment of time and energy. Again, this could be attributed to the lack of materials to address the new standards, where teachers find themselves having to find outside resources (usually on their own) as they strive to be compliant in terms of teaching to the new standards.

The second finding pointed to the importance of context as a key factor for successful implementation, as well as to the instrumental role played by district and school leadership in facilitating effective implementation of the Common core (p.132). Implementation literature points to the importance of context as a key factor in successful implementation of reform (Porter et al., 2015), where context is maintained as directly affecting implementation of curriculum and overall standards reform. In a 10-year study of school reform in South Carolina (2000), it was concluded "many school communities still struggle to implement reform because they underestimate the complexity of school change (as cited in Porter et al., 2015). It is worth to further explore the role of context during implementation of reform because teacher context has been directly related to teacher efficacy on teaching (as cited in Kaniuka, 2012, p.329).

In terms of the role of districts, this draws attention to how districts, states or other bodies are preparing teachers to implement the new curricula including how districts are both interpreting and then, communicating the reform message to teachers as, "The inability of state or federal policymakers to craft clear and consistent directives with respect to the behaviors desired from implementing agents and agencies can undermined

local implementation" (as cited in Spillane et al., 2002, p.390). It must then, not be assumed that implementers understand a policy's intended messages.

Teachers' contexts also include the role that professional learning communities (PLC's) play in enabling implementation of reform as, "there is accumulating evidence that teachers' professional communities play an important role in policy implementation" (as cited in Coburn & Russell, 2008). Teachers in schools with strong professional communities are more likely to make changes that produce increases in student learning when compared to those teachers without this support. PLC's provide opportunities for teachers to construct meaning and explore implications of reform. PLC's as a support in its many phases, play a pivotal factor in advancing reform implementation because "[…] the complex changes in instruction that characterize these reform proposals will require substantial learning by those who are expected to implement these changes" (as cited in Spillane et al., 2002, p.379). As such, PLCs provide the space for teachers to share ideas, discuss teaching strategies and work together in planning, teaching, and advising.

Teachers that engage in, or are provided with professional learning communities are least likely to work in isolation resulting in positive changes in instructional practices. The space and support that professional learning communities can provide are important because "School reform is not performed in isolation; rather the context in which it occurs must be considered as to how it influences the implementation and ultimate success of the reform" (Kaniuka, 2012, p.327). For example, evidence exists that social capital defined as "the resource available to actors as a function of their location in the

structure of social relations" (as cited in Coburn & Russell, 2008), influences a range of outcomes related to reform implementation.

Competing implementation arguments. The literature on implementation is complex as educational scholars have utilized a wide range of theoretical frameworks in the process of studying it (e.g., political science, diffusion of innovation, evaluation, organizational learning, organizational change, organizational leadership, professional development, curriculum reform, institutional analysis, network theory, critical theory) (Porter et al., 2015). Correspondingly, there exist different definitions of implementation and no agreed upon set of terms, or methods to study implementation. To date, there have been studies on the art of implementation, where one of the main guiding questions pertinent to this area of study has been "What happens between the establishment of policy and its impact in the world of action?" (as cited in Porter et al., 2015). The answer to this question has ultimately, rested upon the angle taken by researchers in studying implementation whereby, most studies have resulted in mixed findings. Nonetheless, the similarities between findings that have resulted between sets of studies have notably come to concord that (1) implementers shape implementation of policy, (2) characteristics of the policy and context influence implementation, (3) policies that do not account for complexity of schools are unlikely to be implemented effectively, and (4) variations in implementation is the rule rather than the exception (Porter et al., 2015).

Given our U.S. educational policy implementation system characterized by a linear, top-down manner, it is pivotal to investigate teachers' perceptions on education reform implementation. It would be too risky to assume that teachers will rationally and

predictably carry out the reforms they are instructed to implement as a result of new policies. In reality, and as supported by the literature in the field of implementation, teachers' implementation of educational reform is messy, and the success of such is dependent upon various factors. These include the degree to which teachers interpret policy and how this in turn, merges with individual teacher's beliefs and situational contexts as it is at the school level that implementation is shaped. Equally, it is therefore imperative to conduct an in-depth study and analysis of teachers' perceptions on the actual reforms under consideration, in this case, the Common Core State Standards reform. This type of research can develop knowledge that could help inform how teachers interact with change leading to supports that educational leaders and school districts can offer to teachers during the change process.

Understandings About The Common Core State Standards

    Teachers' knowledge of the Common Core State Standards. The ultimate goal of the CCSS is to establish what students need to learn to be college and career ready. Consequently, to implement effectively, "teachers need to be knowledgeable of CCSS content and be trained in best practices for implementing high-quality standards" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). In a survey study consisting of 323 teachers (4 of these participants were school administrators) ranging from elementary to high school, drawn from a convenience sample of teachers who had participated an average of 27.5 hours of professional development, to determine differences between teachers' knowledge and perceptions of the Common Core State Standards (Nadelson et al., 2014), teachers reported having moderate levels of knowledge

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and perceptions of the Common Core State Standards. More specifically, teachers reported not having a well-developed knowledge of the standards. Furthermore, an important finding from this study pertinent to the focus of this dissertation was that teachers held multiple interpretations of CCSS, including the potential for conflation of CCSS elements with elements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The findings of this study also indicated that as professional development on Common Core increased, so did teachers understanding of the CCSS. Hence, it is important to engage teachers in professional development as a means of increasing their knowledge and perceptions of the Common Core whereby, "Effective teacher professional development must be designed which begins by deconstructing the CCSS and helping teachers understand the differences between current state standards and the new CCSS" (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013, p.70).

As evidenced by the literature, the implementation of CCSS represents several challenges at various levels with the major challenge being at the teacher level as it is teachers who "must address the challenge to change their instructional approach to ensure students' success on assessments built on the CCSS" (Zhang, 2014, p.466). Thus, it is crucial to explore teachers' implementation perceptions on ELA-CCSS, as a means to help teachers to develop understandings of the CCSS, as well as teacher supports needed as these directly impact educational outcomes for students. In a qualitative study to identify and explore the challenges that teachers experienced in the implementation of the CCSS, Zhang (2014) utilized a survey method with open-ended questions to gather data. Initial findings from surveys demonstrated that teachers were struggling with: (1)

understanding the language of the CCSS for clarity and guidance, (2) relating the content in the CCSS with deep and appropriate content knowledge, (3) enhancing student learning with pedagogical content knowledge, (4) coping with issues of curriculum resources, and (5) improving preparation for teaching the CCSS with time and support (p.467). In understanding the language of the CCSS for example, teachers reported that the CCSS were vague and isolated. Consequently, teachers often resorted to self-interpreting the standards and "putting together" standards that they could understand. Ultimately, when it came to understanding the language of the CCSS, "teachers reported needing time to process (digest) the standards, strategies for translating the standards into the lesson objectives and activities, and more experience in teaching the CCSS" (Zhang, 2014, p. 468). Based on these findings, professional development appears to be a promising teacher support process whereby; teachers can be afforded with opportunities to better understand the CCSS. However, a pivotal question remains: What does it mean to be Common Core State Standards prepared? That is, what are the understandings about CCSS preparedness?

Again, the Common Core State Standards emerged from a convergence of several factors, such as students being able to compete globally and the ambitious goal to have all students graduate college-ready. These implications directly affect how teachers come to think about what it means to be prepared to implement the standards. The hope is then, for teachers to recognize that a need exists to adapt their instruction to help students meet the expectations of the standards. According to McLaughlin and Overturf (2012), in implementing the CCSS, there are six essential tasks that teachers in the primary grades

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(K-5) must partake in order to apply the new standards (p.155). First, teachers need to familiarize themselves with the College and Career Readiness Standards to gain an overview of the expectations of the Common Core, as the new standards delineate what students should be able to do when they graduate. On this, it is presumed that teachers need an understanding of what the standards mean by looking at the "big picture;" whereby recognizing how each grade standards build upon each other to ultimately, preparing students for a college, or a career path. Next, teachers need to understand what students are expected to know *before* and *after* they are taught a particular grade. That is, teachers need to acquire an understanding and the knowledge of what students should know coming in class, and what they will need when they leave class. It is important to note however, that nothing is mentioned about what teachers are to do in terms of interventions when students do not come "Common Core grade ready" to the new grade level. The third step involves teachers *fully* understanding what each grade-level standard focuses on. The fourth step of CCSS preparedness involves not only the teacher having a deep content knowledge on the standards (across all grade levels), but also aligning the content with teaching strategies that will help students increase their understanding-which is step five. That is, the fifth step posits that teachers need to assess students on their background knowledge in order to begin teaching the CCSS. The last step, step six focuses on teachers using formative assessments to measure student progress in planning future instruction (p.155-157). Considering the aforementioned in-depth understandings about CCSS preparedness, one needs to reconsider once again, the role that professional development plays in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The

comprehensive tasks herein mentioned, require time, resources, and ample opportunities to study the Standards and plan for their implementation (Perks, 2015), thus the pivotal role of professional development aligned to teachers' needs in developing their knowledge on the ELA-CCSS. Assessment also need be a direct product of instruction that focuses on developing strategies and skills for students to become college and career ready (Conley, 2011, p.1). It is presumed that in order to accomplish this, teachers need to move classroom teaching away from an emphasis on worksheets, drill and memorization activities towards a more engaging and challenging curriculum (Conley, 2011). Taken this way, the development of a more engaging learning environment need be the result of teachers' understanding for applying a range of instructional modes and techniques. Essentially, teachers who are implementing the new standards should demonstrate an ability to incorporate ways of making the Common Core State Standards in ways that elicit deeper thinking (p.2) as representative of the higher rigor being called for by the new standards. On this, Conley (2011) goes on to suggest that one way to create challenging student learning environments is to look at the expectations students will encounter in college and careers and work backward from there (backward planning). This suggestion appears to be a direct product of Conley's 2005 study, in which he analyzed the content of various entry-level college courses and found that courses at two and four year postsecondary institutions expected students to be proficient in the following cognitive strategies: (1) Problem formulation, (2) Research, (3) Interpretation, (4) Communication, and (5) Precision and Accuracy (p.3). Consequently,

the use of a standards' aligned curriculum that includes investigations, presentations and projects are some of the forms of learning that would help maximize learning.

Unfortunately, at this point, it is unclear how effective teachers will be at creating, and in engaging students in a more challenging learning environment. According to a Gates Foundation report on measures of effective teaching, "teachers received relatively low scores on their ability to engage students in 'analysis and problem solving,' to use 'investigation/problem-based approaches,' to create 'relevance to history, current events,' or to foster 'student participation in making meaning and reasoning" (Sawchuk, 2012). Again, it is important to stress that the focus here is the understandings about teachers' CCSS preparedness by ensuring that teaching practices reflect the changes required by the new standards. Overall, the current consensus on what it means to be Common Core prepared emphasizes teachers being able to focus and organize their instruction toward preparing students for college and careers.

Reconstructing Teacher Practice

Teacher change and beliefs. In recognizing that "While policy makers and reformers at all levels of the system are crucial if these reforms are to be enacted locally, teachers are the key agents when it comes to changing classroom practice: They are the final policy brokers" (as cited in Spillane, 1999, p.144), Spillane (1999) studied teachers' efforts to reconstruct their practice in the context of national, state and local instructional reforms. Spillane examined teachers' "will" versus "capacity." The study took place over a five-year time period between 1992 and 1996, and it employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study also included initial survey responses to which the

researcher followed up with interviews and observations adding to the triangulation of the data. This study's focus on will and capacity was of particular importance in relation to teachers' role in implementation of instructional reform. Capacity is defined as teachers' *ability* to make effective school reform decisions causing it to be a critical element in the educational reform process (as cited in Kaniuka, 2012, p.328). In turn, teacher *ability* has been defined in terms of a teacher's will to practice in ways recommended by reformers; where 'will' translates in to a teacher's *motivation* to change their practice to carry out reformers' recommendations (p.144).

In the following study, Spillane made explicit his positionality as researcher in his belief that teachers' will (motivation) and capacity (ability) converged as teachers changed their teaching in response to change. Spillane also stressed his belief about teachers' "zones of enactment" as being a crucial factor affecting teacher change. On his view, teacher change was not only dependent on individual teacher capacity, but also on the teacher's enactment zone where:

> Absent a teaching population with both some threshold level of individual capacity to appreciate the core reform ideas and access a rich array of social and material resources to support their learning, external reform initiatives alone are unlikely to bring about substantial changes in the ore of practice. (Spillane, 1999, p.171)

Spillane specifically focused on teacher attention to reform as a variable affecting teacher change. He explored teachers' attention to core ideas about practice during reform demands because in his view,

> To attend to the core reform ideas, most teachers would have to appreciate the inadequacies of their current understandings about instruction relative to the reform proposals – thereby seeing a need to learn. Attention to policy, then, is in great part about enactors' learning and understanding. (Spillane, 1999. pp.155)

Adding a focus on teachers' attention to the core ideas about their teaching practice as essential for the successful enactment of reforms, Spillane also considered teachers as needing to develop new understandings as they incorporated changes: "Teachers' beliefs, dispositions, and knowledge about students, subject matter and teaching, as well as their prior practice, influence their willingness to change their practice in response to reform and their ability to practice in ways suggested by reformers" (p.157). Ultimately, the findings of this study suggested that teacher change depended on the individual characteristics of teachers' zones of enactment in which, reforms were acted on-something that was anticipated by Spillane. The characteristics of these zones of enactment focused on whether these were social instead of individualistic; if the zone involved in-depth discussions about the substance of the reform(s), and the practicing of these reform ideas with other teachers; and a zone that included material resources that supported discussions about instruction and its improvement (p.171).

In another study, Bridwell-Mitchell (2015), conducted an investigation in an urban public school undergoing state-mandated reform. In this study, the researcher sought to determine how teacher activities could either advance, or hinder mandated state reform. This study originated from the researcher's assumption that "One reason reform does not dramatically change public schools is because instructional practices are highly institutionalized" (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2015, p.140). The researcher advanced his

proposed theory by examining teacher change through the lens of teachers as institutional agents, where "Teachers are institutional agents because their day-to-day instructional choices shape the implementation of reform and thus persistence or change in institutionalized instructional practices" (p.141). Bridwell-Mitchell (2015) considered that teachers' resistance to change was determined by activities involving teachers' interests, micro-politics, and social conflicts, whereas activities involving policy implementation, community collaboration, and practice adaptation enabled teachers to enact reform. The findings of this study found that social comparisons, feedback through observation and conversation, and social influence resulting in adjustments to instructional attitudes and practices *could* result in the effective implementation of reform (Bridwell-Mitcher, 2015). More specifically, in this study, the strength of the relationship between teacher change, and maintaining institutionalized instructional practices was best predicted by how much innovation versus socialization existed in peer learning; how much cohesion versus diversity was involved in community interactions; and how much cognitive and normative discrepancy versus merging characterized teachers' shared understandings, aims and practices (Bridwell-Mitcher, 2015).

In another study on the effect of how implementation of reform can influence teacher change based on how teachers think about their teaching, student achievement, and expectations, Kaniuka (2012) sought to provide insight into the issue of teacher change and how the change was reflected in the thoughts, expectations and perceptions of teachers in the study. The findings revealed that, albeit teachers were first centered on their own abilities, over time they shifted onto the students and what students could

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achieve. A second finding was that teachers' level of experience was a factor in shaping teachers' expectations, and their sense of efficacy where, experience also influenced what they considered possible; in particular their teacher ability to affect positive outcomes for students (p.341). This study posited that efficacy developed as a result of experience and that "mastery experience" is an influential predictor of how teachers see themselves. For example, a teacher who might have not originally believed that she/he could do more to affect what students could do, was able to change this perception once the teacher gained a better sense of knowing what to do. To this end, the desire for certainty seemed to be a strong motivator for teachers in this study to persist when reform efforts appeared unknown and daunting, (Kaniuka, 2012) where 'not knowing what to do' –served as a stimulus to learn and do more. Overall, the study suggested teachers' beliefs about their efficacy changed as they experienced changes in their students' learning.

In further support of the influence of teachers' beliefs influencing teacher practice, Talbot and Campbell (2014) maintain that teachers' beliefs play an important role in shaping teacher behavior given that "while other factors may play a role, such as social environment, resources, and formal training of the teacher, beliefs emerged as the primary factor influencing teacher's behavior" (p.419). To prove this, via a qualitative study, Talbot and Campbell (2014) investigated a teacher's collection of beliefs in implementing a new intervention program aimed at meeting the individual needs of students at the high school level that were either failing or receiving an incomplete on an assignment or test. It is of importance to mention that a single teacher (n=1) participant was selected for this study; hence, the findings need to be interpreted with caution when

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generalizing results. To this point, the researchers reported: "A single participant was selected as the purpose of this study was to study in depth how 'collection of beliefs' can offer explanatory power of teachers' behavior in the classroom" (p.425). Hence, this research can be a descriptive study versus one from which to generalize its findings. Nonetheless, the findings of this research indicated that the power of beliefs on teacher instructional practice was based on (1) the teachers' beliefs, (2) actual practices, and (3) the connections between the beliefs and observed practices (p.432). That is, teacher beliefs merged with the practices observed in the classroom implying that beliefs have a direct impact on praxis. Hence, on the condition that the results of this study can be generalizable, reform efforts that take into account the implication that teacher beliefs have on teachers' implementation reform and in reconstructing teacher practice, may benefit from focusing on aligning reform with teachers' beliefs. Doing this may ultimately, help advance teacher change. Moreover, this relationship between teacher beliefs and reform efforts could help produce an opportunity for teachers to feel that their beliefs are not being supplanted, but rather, enacted on, as a springboard for development. This should be of critical importance as "Some [researchers] have explained the difficulty in changing teaching practices as a mismatch between beliefs of individual teachers and the goals of reform, or as a problem of individual teacher knowledge, or both" (as cited in Webel & Platt, 2015, p.204).

Webel and Platt (2015) looked at perceived teachers' obligations as affecting teacher change. In their view, efforts to help teachers change their instructional practices needed to focus on acknowledging teachers' obligations as both constraints and affordances. That

is, according to Webel and Platt (2015), rather than considering obligations as obstacles to change, obligations could be regarded as a means by which, a more critical examination of teaching practices could be generated as this "could lead to more sophisticated thinking about what kinds of confusion might support a particular kind of learning" (p.214). In direct contrast to the former studies that departed from a resistance stance on teacher change, by employing a case study approach, Webel and Platt (2015) looked at teacher participants who *were* interested in making changes to their teaching. The researchers operated from an appreciate inquiry in trying to determine what "gave life" to teacher change. For this study, two high school teachers from a ninth-12 grade high school in a mathematics class, with a focus on improving their teaching, were selected. The context of the study took place in a high school located in a suburban area near a large city. Results of the study demonstrated that for both teacher participants, their professional obligations influenced their decisions to enact instructional strategies that differed with their expressed goals (p.213). That is, despite the teachers' desire to change, their obligations seemed to constrain their teaching as (both) teachers resorted to applying disciplinary obligations when teaching, as illustrated by the following quote: "In Amy's case, rather than open up opportunities for students to try their own solution strategies, she often directed them to use algebraic methods in accordance with a disciplinary obligation to teach efficient solution methods" (p.213). Overall, both teachers demonstrated a strong sense of obligation about what processes to follow in teaching mathematics. Hence, the teachers' sense of obligation went beyond their beliefs

on praxis, to which the researchers attributed as having roots in the culturally grounded notions of what is appropriate for mathematics teachers to do.

Teacher identity and agency. Currently, the research is limited about the ways in which teacher identity interacts with reform mandates (Lasky, 2005; Sloan, 2006), especially during times of monumental reform shifts, such as with the Common Core Standards' Reform: "Accounts that detail the variability and complexity of teachers' actions vis-à-vis accountability are a rarity in the public discourse that has, for the most part, "devolved into a dichotomy in which accountability is either 'all good' or 'all bad' " (as cited in Sloan, 2006, p.119). The following two studies help provide some current research information about the ways teachers as individuals, engage in change.

By employing a sociocultural framework for understanding the active interplay among teachers' identity, agency, and professional vulnerability during an educational reform transitional period, researcher Lasky (2005) analyzed the interactions among structure, identity and agency in shaping teachers' experiences of professional vulnerability. The study specially, investigated the way in which, teachers came to understand and experience reform through the lens of professional identity, as well as how teachers' experiences mediated the ways in which, they felt vulnerable in support of the notion that,

> The concept of mediated agency is especially useful in analyzing whether government mandated school policy mandates create a mediational system with new tools and expectations for teaching; to possibly discern the ways teachers' sense of professional identity affects how teachers understand and interact with new mandates; and to explore how this dynamic might affect teachers' experiences of professional vulnerability. (Lasky, pp.900)

As exemplified above, agency is not concerned as to whether, or human beings have

agency (or not) but rather, it focuses on the *ways* that cultural environments shape human

cognitive functioning and the ability for actions. That is, what teachers believe, and how

they think and act is shaped by cultural, historical, and social structures that are reflected

in teachers' daily classroom actions that in turn, are shaped by policy mandates,

curriculum guidelines, and state standards. As result, reform then serves as a mediating

system affecting teacher identity and the conditions under which teachers teach: "agency

is always mediated by the interaction between the individual (attributes and inclinations),

and the tools and structures of social setting." Moreover, in recognizing that "While it is

true that teachers are not simply pawns in the reform process-they are active agents,

whether they act passively or actively" (p. 900), and that

> […] educational literature presents teachers as mostly passive agents
> whose teaching behaviors are leveraged (negatively or positively) in
> seemingly predetermined ways by accountability-related curriculum
> policies, such as rigidly scoped, sequenced, and benchmarked curricula
> that are vertically aligned, and high-stakes tests. (pp.121),

 teachers' actions in this study were juxtaposed against the structural contextual elements,

such as the resources available to them, the norms of their schools, and externally

mandated policies.

The data gathered in this study pointed to the following findings:

- Early professional training and political and social context mediated development

  of professional identity;

- Notions of identity were intimately linked with beliefs about the right ways to be

  a teacher, and the purposes of school;

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- The ways new policies were being implemented and the political tone accompanying implementation were a threat to teachers;

- Teachers succeeded primarily by satisfying others' definitions of their work;

- Professional vulnerability has an open/willing component, as well as a more protective/inefficacious component;

- Teachers experienced open or willing and protective or inefficacious vulnerability simultaneously;

- Teachers (in this study) believed in the legitimacy of public schooling; they also believed that their professionalism was being systematically eroded by the current reform context;

- Teacher change 'agentry' was compromised, as the locus of control for generalizing change became more centralized;

- Teachers became reform mediators, rather than reform policy generators (p.913);

- Teachers firmly believed that being openly vulnerable and authentic with their students was essential for creating safe classroom conditions for learning.

Overall, teachers' capacity to "make a difference," by exercising some sense of power was challenging given their context as this brought new professional expectations and professional tools. In addition, in a much similar way to the current mandate of the Common Core Standards' implementation characterized by a lack of CCSS aligned curricula, teachers in this study struggled with the lack of familiarity with the new curriculum resulting in negative student learning outcomes. However, teachers still held on to their beliefs about student relationships being integral to students' safety nets of

support as evidenced in the following quote: "One of the most powerful enduring elements of participants' agency was their unwillingness to change their identity as individuals working in a human-centered profession, which required making real connections with their students" (p.913). Ultimately, this study thus suggested, that mediational systems might have limited influence on changing individuals' long held notions of professionalism. That is, political, social, and economic mediational systems may shape school reform policy, which in turn mediates teacher identity and teacher agency. Yet, the findings of this study indicate that external mediational systems may have a deeper or more direct effect on the formation of teacher identity versus on reshaping a teacher's prior (securely) established professional identity (p.914).

In a different study with a focus on how teachers experienced, and then responded to local-level accountability-related curriculum practices, three elementary school teachers' experiences were studied employing classroom observations and teacher interviews. Researcher K. Sloan (2006), examined issues of *teacher identity* and its formation as a springboard from which to explore *teacher agency* during accountability reform process. The primary finding of this study suggested that teachers do not experience and respond to policies in predictable, mechanistic, or unidimensional ways. Rather, individual teachers demonstrated varied, and unique ways to actively respond to accountability reform, which served to support that "the degree to which a person becomes a reflective agent within any cultural system or figured world depends on the interrelated issues of identification and expertise" (Sloan, 2006, p.141). Hence, the degree to which a teacher can be said to experience, and exhibit agency depends on the ways he or she identifies

within his or her context/setting and his/her level of expertise within that setting.

Furthermore, and much in agreement with the Lasky's study (2005), this study also

concurred that teachers' degree of teacher agency within a school setting is dependent

upon the degree to which they identify/connect themselves with, or to the school setting.

This is in addition to the amount and quality of both their professional and personal

knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy (Sloan, 2006, p.142).

Districts' Role in Providing Support

School districts' approach to reform can impact teachers' perceptions on reform

implementation. In a study examining teacher change from a district role framework

regarding teacher learning and change, Spillane (2002), maintains that districts' offices

have a direct influence on how reform is implemented in the classroom (p.377). In

particular, Spillane argues that district officials as being both interpreters of others'

policies, and makers of their own policies and programs help guide teachers' instructional

practices.

In this study, the role of the district office in enabling teacher change was considered

critical as teachers depended on the district to provide them with policy interpretation

along with the resources in terms of training and the curricular materials to implement

reform. Spillane (2002) found that district change agents' theories about teacher learning

and change fell into three categories: behaviorist, situated, and cognitive — where the

behaviorist perspective dominated among district officials (p.409-410). Under this

perspective, teacher behavior in terms of actions was regarded as an indicator of teachers

knowing, teaching, and learning, and thus it was concluded that, "the prevalence of the

behaviorist perspective may be cause for concern with respect to the implementation of the fundamental changes in practices pressed by standards-based reforms" (p.410). In this view, districts operating from a behaviorist perspective may not be as effective in supporting teachers' implementation of the new standards. In contrast, districts that operate from a 'situated perspective' may be more effective in supporting teacher change of practices in that "this perspective views knowledge as distributed in the social, material, and cultural artifacts of the environment" (Spillane, 2002, p.380). The situated perspective considers teachers as being part of their communities and environments and consequently, knowing is recognized as the ability of individuals to participate in the practices of communities. As such, professional learning communities (PLCs) that provide a space for teachers to collaborate are an example of a situated community whereby, motivation to engage in learning is as an outcome of developing and sustaining teachers' identities in the schools and/or grade levels in which they participate.

Furthermore, according to Spillane (2002), the prevalence of the behaviorist perspective at a district level may be due to the relations between district change agents and classroom teachers. These relations may work against a situated, or cognitive approach to teacher change. Thus, it is suggested that districts work on gaining the confidence of teachers, as a means to understanding teachers' learning needs and designing and with this, fostering learning opportunities that build on teachers' prior knowledge and experiences (p.410). The literature maintains that teachers' prior knowledge and experience are pivotal elements in both effective reform implementation

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and successful teacher change leading to student achievement (Fuhrman & Malen, 1991; Kaniuka, 2012; Porter et al., 2015; Spillane, 1999; Spillane et al., 2002).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework utilized in this study consisted of four main areas: (1) History of the Common Core State Standards, (2) Education Reform Implementation Research, (3) Understandings of the Common Core State Standards, and (4) Reconstructing Teacher Practice. The first approach focused on both the conceptual and financial origins of the CCSS and the implications of former reforms, such as No Child Left Behind. The conceptual and financial origins framework opened a larger area of study involving the initial development of the new standards tied to the support of standards-based reformers who have, for decades, noted the need for a common understanding of what teachers should teach and students should learn. Further, a broad analysis of former educational reforms showed how a reformers' movement towards standardization within the K-12 education, significantly influenced the development and ultimately, the adoption of the new standards.

The concept of implementation research was developed based on implementation context and the competing implementation arguments pointing to the varied definitions of reform implementation, as they currently exist in the literature. This was further supported with a discussion on the diversity of methods for studying implementation in the field of education. Implementation context was then exemplified as a result of teachers being key agents of implementation. Furthermore, it was discussed how implementation is affected by teachers' involvement in decision-making processes,

involvement in professional learning communities, and teachers' prior beliefs and practices as related to making sense of policy leading to either supports, or barriers of policy implementation.

Teachers' understanding of the Common Core State Standards, the third theoretical area herein reviewed, focused on teachers' knowledge of the new standards as a prerequisite to engaging in the changes being called for by the Common Core. Teacher challenges in implementation of reform were analyzed, as well as some of the essential tasks for teachers in understanding the new standards.

Finally, on reconstructing teacher practice, attention was drawn to how teacher identity and agency can be constructed to support both the individual and collaborative learning and growth of teachers. Various teacher change factors, such as individual teacher capacity and how teachers' professional vulnerability influences teacher agency to enact change, were presented. In particular, it was discussed how change and teachers' beliefs on such, affect the degree to which teachers engage in such change given their zones of enactment, will and capacity to change, level of experience and motivation to engage as institutional agents. Districts' role in providing teacher support in the implementation of education policy embedded in teacher change was also analyzed. Areas of discussion included support for professional learning communities, communication of policy, and how the prevalence of a behaviorist perspective is ineffective at providing the required supports (via resources and structures) necessary to sustain teachers' involvement in change of praxis.

Conclusion & Further Research

The preceding review of literature and research indicated that American education is at a pivotal point in educational reform. American education is changing, nationwide, with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards. Originating from a movement on national standards advanced by like-minded people, and supported via vast financial contributions, the CCSS (with a focus on college and career readiness) is changing the daily teaching and learning that is happening in classrooms. Conversely, as implementers of reform, teachers are having to learn to interpret what the new standards mean, while simultaneously, reconciling these understandings with their current practices and beliefs leading to teacher change. Regrettably, as the literature has reflected, teacher change does not come easily and will take time. It is a process that encompasses many variables.

However, with the majority of the states having rapidly adopted the CCSS, teachers are not being able to follow through a progression of change, as time has run out. The time to implement the new standards is *now* even as teachers might not be prepared to do so. It is for this reason, that exploring and describing teacher perceptions on their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS, and how such perceptions affect changes in instructional practices is essential. Moreover, exploring teachers' challenges and/or barriers on implementation of educational reform, can advance knowledge on potential implementation supports that can better support teachers. This research can offer school administrators and school districts useful information for guiding their implementation efforts as they support teachers in leading the necessary changes.

Chapter III will describe the research methods used in the study. It will also include a description of the population and sample, instrument development, data collection, and limitations of the study.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to address the research questions of this study. The chapter includes the purpose, research questions, rationale for the research design, and research design. This description of this study also includes population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures and analysis, and limitations of the study.

Purpose Statement

This study had three main purposes as it sought to: (1) describe elementary teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS); (2) determine how perceptions influenced changes in instructional practices; and (3) explore ELA-CCSS implementation challenges/barriers in supporting teacher development of ELA-CCSS implementation.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS)?

2. In what ways do teachers' perceptions on implementation preparedness affect changes in instructional practice?

3. What are ways to support teachers during implementation of ELA-CCSS education reform at the school-site?

Research Design

This study was an exploratory, descriptive study. A descriptive study was appropriate to provide a description of teachers' preparedness perceptions on implementation of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS), while determining how such perception influenced changes in instructional practices. Further, the descriptive study also allowed for an exploration of implementation challenges/barriers for supporting teacher development of ELA-CCSS implementation. A descriptive study, according to Gay (1996), "involve collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. A descriptive study determines and reports the ways things are" (p.249). Further, Issac and Michael (1995), note that the purpose of descriptive research is to "describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest, factually and accurately" (p.50). The study was descriptive because it determined and reported existing phenomena and measured what already existed. Additionally, the study was exploratory because no previous studies were found during the literature search on the same, or related topics. Lastly, research questions in such studies focus mainly on "what" questions" (Yin, 2014).

A sole researcher conducted this study. Instruments were developed by the researcher in order to gather data that addressed the joint purposes and research questions. The researcher collected, analyzed, and then shared data gathered from the teachers implementing the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS).

With the understanding that the selection of research methods depends largely on the situation and the appropriateness of the measure, the use of mixed methods research was

selected because "the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods provides a better understanding of the research problems and questions than either method by itself" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p.298). Quantitative data from the surveys provided useful information "to describe trends about a large number of people" (p.299), and explanation of the relationships between preparedness and implementation variables as affecting change of instructional practices. The qualitative data, on the other hand, gathered via interviews, assisted in offering multiple perspectives on the study topic that afforded the researcher with a complex picture of the situation adding to a detailed understanding of the phenomenon (p.299).

Semi-structured interviews were selected because they enabled the interviewer to combine a pre-determined set of open questions that prompted discussion on the phenomena with the opportunity to explore particular responses further. Moreover, qualitative methods were well suited to address the focus of this study because qualitative research is conducted when a problem or issue needs to be explored in the context in which participants address a problem (Creswell, 2013). Given the missing literature on teachers' perceptions as related to reform implementation preparedness in the context of ELA-CCSS, and ways to support teachers in implementing educational reform, qualitative research allowed for the study of a group of teachers — variables that could not be measured, by enabling silent voices to be heard. Moreover, mixed methods research was appropriate to address the questions of this study given the different, but related questions that this study sought to answer (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 298).

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was all kindergarten through sixth grade elementary school teachers who were responsible for implementing the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) within their classrooms, at three of the Alianza Union School District (pseudonym) school sites. There were a total (n=88) teachers among the three school sites. The sample for this study was comprised of adults between the ages of 23 and 65, who were employed by the Alianza Union School District.

Selection Criteria for the Sample

Setting and participant selection. Purposive sampling was used to identify and select research sites (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010; Yin, 2014) based on the purposes of this study. This study focused on three schools within a single district. Schools selected were chosen due to the fact that they were in their third year of ELA-CCSS implementation — three years is enough time such that all teachers will be in some phase of implementation, beyond initial pilot (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Smith, & Dulton, 2012). Finally, the data collection schools were selected because although the researcher was an assistant principal in the district, she did not have any supervisory connection to the teachers working within the selected school sites. It was an opportunity to truly enter as a learner and researcher — someone who could learn from the experts in their contexts and settings.

Overall, this study utilized purposeful and convenience-sampling methods to identify those individuals who had been implementing the ELA-CCSS into their teaching

practice. These types of sampling methods were determined to be the best means of obtaining relevant data to address the research questions. Convenience sampling was used because the participants were accessible as their location was relatively close to the researcher. Convenience sampling was also used because specific individuals and sites best benefitted the research problem and central phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2013). In recognizing that purposive sampling "provides information that is useful, that helps us learn about the phenomenon, or that gives voice to individuals who have not been heard" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p.252), for this study, data from three public elementary schools was collected and analyzed because these sites best benefitted the research problem.

The three school sites selected for this study followed a traditional year school calendar, with classes beginning in mid-August and continuing until early June. Schools offered English language classes (ELC) formally designated as Structured English Immersion (SEI) classes and mainstream English only (EO) classes. With the exception of one school, bilingual classes were offered (designated as Bilingual Transference (BT)) at two of the three school sites. Base program at all three school sites included implementation of class size reduction, implementation of Common Core State Standards in core areas (English Language Arts and Mathematics), English language development, and related professional development, bi-weekly grade level teacher collaboration and planning time, and continuous improvement strategies (e.g., formative assessment and action planning) to support implementation of the CCSS.

In 2013-2014, all three schools transitioned to Common Core standards-based instruction. The transition included implementing Common Core State Standards' (CCSS) pacing guides, piloting the Engage New York (ENY) English Language Arts Curriculum; and implementing common CCSS language arts and mathematics pedagogy. Teachers at the three school sites were provided instructional materials (Everyday Math curriculum and Engage New York for Mathematics and English language arts). Key district initiatives consisted of CCSS English language arts and math entry points and CCSS writing. CCSS entry points included: Close Reading and Evidence-based question and response for English language arts, Opinion and Argument Writing, Language Objectives in Content Lessons, and the 8 CCSS Standards for Mathematical Practice and related pedagogy. In 2014-15, school sites furthered their transition to Common Core State Standards base instruction by using pacing guides in ELA and math; district-wide implementation of the Engage New York curriculum in ELA and math; emphasized application of entry points related to Close Reading and Evidence -based question and response in ELA and math; focus on flexibility and reversibility to support mathematical practices; writing based on the opinion genre for students in kindergarten through fifth grade, and argumentation writing for students in sixth grade.

It must be noted, that Common Core State Standards implementation and curricula adoption occurred primarily at the district level with minimal input from teachers leading to a top-down implementation process at all school sites. Furthermore, the district to which all three-school sites belonged, was recovering from a period of uncertainty and changes in governance during the course of this study. The District was working on

maintaining effective and supportive relationships between stakeholders by clearly

delineating the distinct roles that each team had in creating a culture of trust, mutual

accountability, and positivity focused on improving outcomes for students. The

frequency of changes made it challenging for staff throughout the District to become

comfortable with roles, workflow, and relationships- a task that was further undertaken

by a new superintendent beginning June 2016.

Instrumentation

This study utilized two instruments, which were both developed by the researcher as

no existing instruments that assessed the purposes of the study were found. The creation

of instruments by the researcher is acceptable when "no instrument may exist for

measuring the variable of interest so the researchers need to develop their own

instruments" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p.189). The instruments included a survey

and an interview protocol. They are described in the next section.

Survey

Plano Clark and Creswell (2010), maintain that surveys are used to identify trends in

attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of a large group of people and that

surveys also help in identifying important beliefs and attitudes of individuals at one point

in time. They also maintain that survey research is appropriate when a researcher: (1)

studies the attitudes, opinions, or behaviors of a large group; (2) chooses a large number

of participants using random selection; (3) gathers information and describes trends in the

data; and (4) makes conclusions about the larger population — all of which, formed part

of this study.

Phase 1. A survey was developed for teachers in this study that consisted of questions that assessed individual teachers' thoughts, opinions and feelings, thus aligning with the first characteristic outlined above by Plano Clark and Creswell (2010). The survey was designed to gather participants' perceptions on preparedness and supports to implement the ELA-CCSS. The survey also acted as a screener for Phase 2 of the study (one-on-one interviews) by identifying novice, mid, and end-of-career teachers (implementers) by surveying teaching faculty at three school sites. The goal was to "select a large number of participants so that the results are more likely to resemble those of the population" (p.75). The researcher also analyzed survey data to describe the frequency of responses gathered from survey questions about teachers' attitudes, opinions and behaviors. The survey for teachers developed for this study ultimately, consisted of the following parts: (1) Background Information; (2) Familiarity with the ELA-CCSS; (3) ELA-CCSS Preparedness; (4) ELA-CCSS Implementation; (5) Teacher change; and (6) Implementation Supports.

Part I. Background information. In this part of the survey, teachers were asked to provide background information about their gender, age, teaching grade, number of years teaching, and degrees earned. Further, this section also asked teachers the number of years implementing the ELA-CCSS. The researcher used this information to establish a descriptive profile of the teachers who participated in the study.

Part II. Familiarity with the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards. This section asked participants about their familiarity with the ELA-CCSS, participation in professional development or training related to the ELA-CCSS, and the length of time spent in professional development or training on the ELA-CCSS.

Part III. ELA-CCSS preparedness. This part of the survey asked participants to identify the degree to which they agreed to their professional development or training (on ELA-CCSS) having prepared them to implement the ELA-CCSS, as well as to identify the rate of usefulness of the information provided in preparing them to implement the ELA-CCSS. This included teachers receiving information about how the standards would change their instructional practices; information about how the standards would change expectations for teachers; access to curricular materials aligned to the standards; access to assessment aligned to the standards; more planning time; more time for collaboration with colleagues; and more information about how the CCSS were different than previous standards. The option of "other' was also provided to allow participants to list other factors influencing individual teachers' level of preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS. Teachers rated their degree of preparedness using a Likert scale on which 1= "Not Useful," and 5= "Very Useful." Factors provided to teachers (via a list), were identified through a review of relevant literature affecting teachers' preparedness to implement the Common Core State Standards.

Part IV. ELA-CCSS implementation. This section asked the participants to identify the extent to which they implemented the ELA- CCSS into their classroom teaching practice, and their involvement in ELA-CCSS implementation, such as involvement in

decision-making processes. Respondents were asked to rate their degree of involvement on a four-point Likert scale. Options ranged from 1= "Not at all," to 4 = "Always."

Part V. Teacher change. This section asked participants to rate the degree to which ELA-CCSS required them to do things differently, how their self-perception as teachers changed, and to identify the degree to which ELA-CCSS implementation preparedness perceptions affected changes in instructional practices. This section also asked participants to select factors that impacted reconstructing teaching practice(s) as a result of their implementation preparedness perception on ELA-CCSS. Factors (affecting reconstruction of teaching practices) included in the survey were identified through a review of the relevant literature; some of these included: professional learning communities, personal teaching experiences and perspectives, personal prior (teacher) beliefs and practices, and professional obligations.

Part VI. Implementation supports. This section asked participants about implementation supports received, and the effectiveness of these supports. Additionally, participants were asked to select supports (from a list provided) that would help them feel better prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS. These included: supports in exploring the language of the ELA-CCSS, developing knowledge of the ELA-CCSS, comparing and contrasting the new standards to the former California ELA State Standards, familiarizing with the College and Career Readiness Standards (as part of the CCSS), understanding the "big picture" by learning about pre and post current grade level standards, aligning content with teaching strategies, developing new teaching strategies, assessing students' background knowledge, and creating formative assessments to monitor student learning.

The option of "other' was also provided to allow participants to list other supports influencing teachers' implementation of the ELA-CCSS.

Interview Protocol

Phase 2. An interview protocol was used in Phase 2 of this study. Plano Clark & Creswell (2010) support that interviews permit participants to describe detailed personal information. Based on the understanding that "The qualitative researcher poses general, broad questions to participants, and allows them to share their views relatively unconstrained by the researcher's perspective" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p.256), the interview protocol was developed to gather information that would deepen the researcher's understanding about (a) teachers' preparedness perceptions on implementing the ELA-CCSS; (b) how teachers' preparedness perceptions affected teacher engagement in change of instructional practices; and (c) in ways to support teachers during educational reform implementation.

The interview protocol also provided teachers the opportunity to (a) describe their individual and unique experiences about their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS; (b) describe their individual processes and practices in implementing the ELA-CCSS exposing some of the challenges associated with such; (c) describe the ways in which CCSS implementation preparedness impacted how they reconstructed their practice in the context of Common Core State Standards; and (d) to express their opinion on how preparedness affects the implementation of standards. This information could have not been obtained with a survey.

The questions for the teacher interview protocol were divided into the following parts: (1) Background questions; (2) ELA-CCSS Implementation; (3) ELA-CCSS Implementation Preparedness and Teacher Change; and (4) Implementation Supports.

Part I. Background questions. These questions were designed to address teachers' perceptions on preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS. Teachers were asked to describe their thoughts on ELA-CCSS implementation; identify their degree of preparedness in implementing the standards, and to describe the ways in which their preparedness perceptions impacted how they engaged in changing their instructional practice.

Part II. ELA-CCSS implementation. This part was designed to gather information about the ways in which teachers engaged in implementation of the standards, and the changes teachers needed to engage in to meet the demands of the new standards.

Part III. ELA-CCSS implementation preparedness and teacher change. Part III asked questions regarding the effects of ELA-CCSS implementation preparedness on teacher change. Teachers were asked to describe factors influencing how they engaged in reconstructing their teaching practices.

Part IV. Implementation supports. These questions were designed to elicit information about the types of supports teachers deemed necessary to be able to implement educational reform specifically, in the context of English Language Arts Common Core State Standards. Participants were asked to describe the challenges and/or barriers associated with implementing the ELA-CCSS, and the types of supports

received. Teachers were also asked to identify a support gap (if any), which if addressed, could help them do a more effective job in implementing educational reform.

Information gathered from the interviews was designed to (a) support or refute the data collected from the survey and (b) deepen the researcher's understanding of the ways, if any, in which teacher perceptions on preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS influenced how teachers engaged in changing their instructional practices; and (c) to learn about ways to support teachers during educational reform implementation at the school-site level.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures for the study are described in this section. All data collected was used to answer the research questions in the most valid, ethical and succinct manner possible (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). All kindergarten through sixth grade teachers, at three school sites undergoing implementation of the ELA-CCSS, employed by Alianza Union School District (pseudonym), were invited to participate in Phase 1 (survey) of the study. Principals at all three school sites in AUSD, on behalf of the researcher, informed teachers of the study and invited teachers to participate in the study by providing a link to the online survey (see Appendix A). The survey began with a Letter of Consent. Only those participants who indicated that they "agreed" to the conditions outlined in the Letter of Consent, advanced to the survey. Those who indicated that they would like to "opt out," automatically exited the survey.

At the end of the survey, participants were asked to provide their email addresses if they wished to be contacted for a follow-up interview, or they could contact researcher

via email or phone (Phase 2). No other individually identifying information was collected. Of the survey participants (n=59) whose responses indicate that they were willing to continue to Phase 2, seven participated in 1:1 interviews. The interviews were semi-structured using an initial protocol, but also relied on the researcher to prompt, probe, and clarify as needed (Creswell, 2013). There was an opportunity for the participants to ask questions of the researcher and learn more about the purposes and background of the study beyond what was initially shared. This reciprocity was a means of building trust and rapport (Stake, 1995). Interview respondents included two novice teachers, two mid-career teachers and two veteran teachers (n=7). Interviews each took no more than one hour. Interviewees had the option of conducting the interview over the phone, in-person, on-line, or via email. The interviews were recorded on a password protected audio recorder, then transcribed and stored in an on-line data storage, coding and analysis program. Interviewees were assigned codes based on the number of years of teaching and referred to simply as 'teachers' in the findings sections to protect their anonymity.

The survey and interview data provided a more balanced and holistic, description of teachers' perceptions for this study. Information collected from the interviews helped to answer the study's research questions by providing a narrative for how teachers described their preparedness perceptions to implement the ELA-CCSS, and how teachers' perceptions on implementation affected teacher change in reconstructing instructional practices. Further, interview responses were used to determine ways to support teachers during implementation of educational reform at the school site level.

Organization of the Data Analysis

The data analysis for both quantitative and qualitative data was organized and aligned

with the research questions (see Appendix E). The data analysis included a comparison of

responses and addressed the perceptions of teachers regarding their preparedness to

implement the ELA-CCSS and implementation supports.

In Chapter IV the quantitative data for each research question from the survey are

presented first. They are followed by the qualitative data for each research question,

which includes summary data from both the questions on the survey and the responses

from the interview schedule.

The qualitative and quantitative data are then examined for similarities and

differences. Triangulation with the literature was also used to support similarities and

differences between the quantitative and qualitative data in this study, and to the extent

possible, with previous studies found in research literature. Isaac and Michael (1995)

note: "the triangulation of measurement process is far more powerful evidence supporting

the proposition than any single criterion approach." They further state "there are serious

risks in making recommendations based on a single criterion" (p.45).

Data Analysis Process

Quantitative data analysis. The demographic data from the survey, which included

participants' gender, age, grade level being taught, number of years in teaching, degrees

earned, and number of years implementing the ELA-CCSS, was analyzed and presented

first. The frequency of responses for each demographic variable served to profile the

teachers who participated in this study. Frequencies of responses were also used to

examine the remaining responses on the survey. All of the quantitative data was summarized and displayed in frequency tables, as applicable.

Qualitative data analysis. Qualitative analysis for this study included: organizing the data, coding and identifying themes, representing the data and interpreting findings (Creswell, 2013). The process was based on a framework of initial themes from the literature review and was allowed to evolve throughout the process.

To organize the data, the researcher relied on the transcriptions and a matrix board to align data collected to research questions and initial themes. Once the matrix was completed, data coding and theming initiated (Creswell, 2013). The transcription files were uploaded to an on-line program for storing, coding, theming and analyzing the data. The researcher also used charts and color-coding to support analysis and organizations.

Limitations

While this study illuminated understandings on teachers' preparedness perceptions on implementing the ELA-CCSS and how these influenced teacher change on reconstructing instructional practices, the interpretations and transferability of the findings are limited to contexts with similar defining characteristics; the study was confined to the faculty of three school sites within a single district. Further, one significant limitation of this study was related to the sample size, which was comprised of a relatively small number of teachers (n=59). Hence, this limitation of the study must be considered when analyzing the findings.

An ultimate limitation in this study; however, was the role of the researcher as both researcher and administrator within the same district under, which the three study school

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sites operated. Research was conducted at a site where the researcher was in her fourth year as an assistant principal at the time of the research implementation. The potential power dynamic involved posed a central limitation to this study, as this situation could have represented a potential bias to teachers' perceptions about their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS and how such perceptions, influenced teacher change. In order to address this limitation, the researcher incorporated three components to the research: (1) triangulation of the data; (2) repeated interactions with the participants; and (3) involvement of participants in all phases of the study.

Summary

Chapter III described the methodology and provided a rationale for the study. The population and sample were described. Developments of the survey and interview guide, along with procedures for data analysis were also described. Finally, limitations of the study were discussed.

Chapter IV presents an analysis of the data and discussion of findings of the study. Chapter V presents key findings, conclusions, recommendations for action, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter IV: Data Analysis and Findings of the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this study was threefold: (1) to describe elementary teachers' perceptions about their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) at the school-level, at three public elementary (K-6) schools; (2) to determine how these perceptions influence changes in instructional practices; and (3) to explore the implications for supporting teacher development of ELA-CCSS by examining implementation challenges and/or barriers. For this exploratory, descriptive study both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed as a means to better gather participants' perspectives via an online survey and face-to-face interviews. This study focused around three research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS)?

2. In what ways do teachers' perceptions on implementation preparedness affect changes in instructional practice?

3. What are ways to support teachers during implementation of ELA-CCSS education reform at the school-site?

These questions were addressed using an online teacher survey from 59 (n=59) teacher participants and seven follow-up face-to-face interviews. The following information describes in detail the demographic data for the teachers that participated in this study.

Sample Profile

The sample included 59 kindergarten through sixth grade elementary school teachers

who were responsible for implementing the English Language Arts Common Core State

Standards (ELA-CCSS) within their classroom, at three school sites in Alianza Union

School District (pseudonym), a district located outside the southern portion of the greater

Bay Area, California. Table 1 presents teacher characteristics of the sample along with

the quantity and type of data collected from teachers in this study.

Table 1.

Teacher Characteristics & Distribution of Surveys

Profile Characteristics	Number of Teachers (by grade level band)	Number of Surveys for Teachers Sent Online	Total Online Surveys Completed
K-2nd Grades	38	38	24 (41%)
3rd-4th Grades	25	25	21 (36%)
5th-6th Grades	25	25	14 (24%)

Note: N=59.

Data was collected between November 10, 2016 and December 16, 2016. Surveys

were emailed to 38 kindergarten through second grade teachers, 25 third through fourth

grade teachers, and 25 fifth through sixth grade teachers for a total sample of 88

kindergarten through sixth grade teachers (N=88). Of these, completed surveys were

obtained from a total of 24 kindergarten through second grade teachers, 21 third through

fourth grade teachers, and 14 from fifth to sixth grade teachers (N=59). The return rate

was 67 percent. This met the required minimum return rate of 67 percent, or over two-thirds, as set by the committee chair of this research study (Table 1).

Of the 59 who completed the online survey, seven teachers also participated in face-to-face interviews. Interview respondents included two novice teachers with zero-10 years of teaching practice, three mid-career teachers with 11-20 years of teaching practice, and two veteran teachers with over 21 years of teaching practice. All interviews were face-to-face. Six of these interviews were conducted at a school site during after school, while one interview was conducted at a teacher's home, per teacher request. All interviews were conducted after the participants completed the online survey; at the end of the online survey, participants were asked to provide their contact information if they were willing to follow up on their survey responses via an interview. The interviews took between 25 to 50 minutes to complete. All interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim (see Appendix A). Both survey and interview respondents represented the three school sites of this study.

Demographic Profile of the Sample

The demographic information on the survey was analyzed first. The frequency of responses for each demographic characteristic was used to profile the 59 teachers who participated in this study. The online survey gathered data on the demographics of each respondent as displayed in Table 2.

Table 2.

Demographic Profile of the Sample

Characteristic	Category	# of Responses	% of Responses
Gender	Female	51	87%
	Male	8	14%
Age	24 or younger	3	5%
	25-34	18	31%
	35-44	12	20%
	45-54	11	19%
	55-64	15	25%
	65 or older	0	0%
Current grade level	Kindergarten-2nd	24	41%
	3rd-4th	21	36%
	5th-6th	14	24%
Number of years as classroom teacher	0-5	22	37%
	6-10	6	10%
	11-20	19	32%
	Over 21	12	20%
Educational attainment	Bachelor	41	70%
	Master	18	31%
	Doctorate	0	0%
Years Implementing the ELA-CCSS	1	8	14%
	2	16	27%
	3	21	36%
	Over 3+	14	24%

Note: N=59.

As displayed in Table 2, there were 59 kindergarten through sixth grade teachers who participated in this study representing all elementary grades. Eight were male, 51 were female. Approximately, 31% (18 of 59) teachers were between 25-34 years old. Forty-one percent (24 of 59) teachers who participated in the online survey were teaching in the kindergarten through second grade level band. Thirty-seven percent (22 of 59) teachers had zero to five years of being a classroom teacher.

Sixty-nine percent (41 of 59) teacher participants reported having a bachelor degree as their highest level of educational attainment. Including the academic year 2016-17, thirty-six percent (21 of 59) teachers had at least three years of implementing the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) into their teaching at the time that they participated in the online teacher survey.

Data Analysis

Analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data was organized and aligned with the research questions. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed first in order to determine key trends or patterns resulting from (1) highest response rate of responses from the quantitative data (surveys) with a minimum response rate of at least 50% (30 of 59) teacher participants' responses. Open-ended questions from the qualitative data (interviews) were analyzed qualitatively, by identifying emergent themes within the responses with a minimum response rate of at least 50% (four of seven) teacher participants' responses. Examining both the response rate for each survey question along with comments provided during interviews provided a deeper exploration and understanding of the survey responses. Selected quotes relevant to the research from comments from the seven teacher participants during interviews are provided. Ultimately, this study employed a multi-methods approach as it relied on both quantitative and qualitative data sets to effectively inform the research (see Figure 1). Triangulation with previous studies in the literature is also used to discuss similarities and differences between the quantitative and qualitative data in this study.
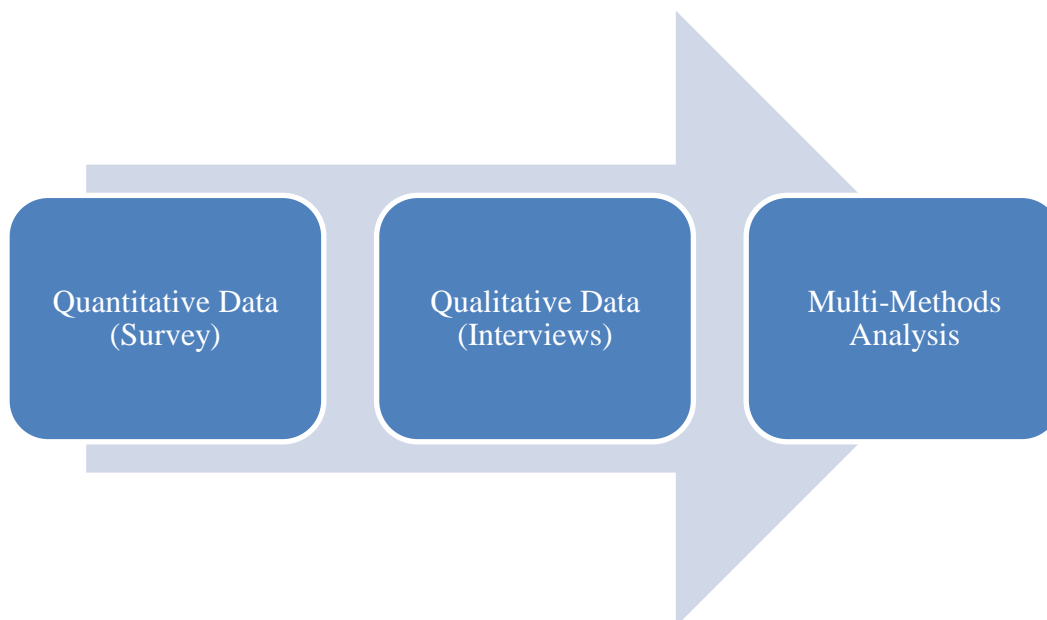
Figure 1: Multi-methods study.

Items on the survey were broken down into six major sections. The sections included: (1) Background Information (demographics); (2) Familiarity with the ELA-CCSS; (3) ELA-CCSS Preparedness; (4) ELA-CCSS Implementation; (5) Teacher Change; and (6) Implementation Supports. Items on the interview included four major sections: (1) Background Questions; (2) ELA-CCSS Implementation; (3) ELA-CCSS Preparedness & Teacher Change; and (4) Implementation Supports.

Teacher Perceptions on Their Preparedness to Implement ELA-CCSS

The first question in the study addressed teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS. Teacher perceptions were gathered through survey items on the following sections: (a) Familiarity with ELA-CCSS, (b) Preparedness to Implement, and (c) ELA-CCSS Implementation.

Familiarity with ELA-CCSS: professional development necessary but not sufficient to become familiar with ELA-CCSS. A comparison was made of teachers' perceptions about their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS from the survey and interview data. Survey responses indicated that 59% of teachers (35 of 59) were somewhat familiar with the ELA-CCSS. Interview data indicated that teachers continued to work on familiarizing themselves with the standards, where as mentioned by one teacher: "I preview the standards connected to a particular lesson I am teaching, working to become more familiar with the CCSS."

Eighty-one percent (48 of 59) teachers on the survey reported having received professional development or training related to the ELA-CCSS. Interview data revealed that teachers were trying to apply what they learned in trainings, but that it was often difficult: "I try to implement what I learn from trainings. It is often overwhelming and changing." Likewise, 58% of teachers (34 of 59) agreed that the professional development or training on ELA-CCSS had prepared them to implement the ELA-CCSS. However, interview data indicated that the professional development or training provided had not prepared all teachers to implement the ELA-CCSS. This indicated that while, professional development was happening, not all teachers were benefitting from it and that what was learned in professional development was not being transferred into actual classroom application. On this, one teacher commented, "As a new teacher, I have not been provided with any type of support. Unfortunately, there is a complete misalignment between the curriculum that I am being asked to implement and the CCSS." This

indicated that the professional development offered was not effective at preparing

teachers to implement.

Most specifically, survey data indicated that most teachers in this study were familiar

with the ELA-CCSS, and that the professional development had contributed to their sense

of familiarity. Survey responses further indicated that teachers were developing their

knowledge of the standards at the same time that they had to implement such standards.

The theme of familiarity with the standards emerged during interviews as participants

relayed the importance of having had prior knowledge and/or experience on the former

California English Language Arts Content Standards, commonly referred to by teachers

as the "CSTs." As described by one respondent, "I think what I've seen of teachers who

were very versed in CST will rely on that knowledge and practice when there's a hole in

the Common Core or in their knowledge of Common Core." Furthermore, interview data

indicated that implementation of ELA-CCSS was affected by teachers' familiarity with

the ELA-CCSS, whereas commented by one respondent, "Implementation of the

Standards is, I would say, in full swing in assessment but not necessarily fully

implemented in instruction based on several factors…the variation of familiarity with the

CSTs before Common Core came."

This pattern is of pivotal importance given the high response rate of teachers

indicating that they had been provided with professional development or training on the

ELA-CCSS. This trend suggests: (a) that the professional development or training that

teachers received, was not effective in terms of deepening teachers' knowledge of the

standards and/or (b) that teachers had not been afforded with sufficient professional

development time or sufficient opportunities to deepen their knowledge on the new

standards. As evidenced by survey data, 47% (28 of 59) teachers reported having spent

less than one week in professional development or training on ELA-CCSS at the time of

the study. Conversely, 58% (34 of 59) teachers "agreed" that overall, the professional

development or training on ELA-CCSS had prepared them to implement the ELA-CCSS.

Hence, at the same time that teachers reported professional development as contributing

to their sense of familiarity about ELA-CCSS, the professional development was viewed

as "necessary but not sufficient."

All things considered, as reflected in the data, teachers were implementing the ELA-

CCSS, while still developing their familiarity of the standards, where they found

themselves having to constantly refer to the former CA English Language Arts Content

Standards (if they had this prior knowledge), as well as having to spend additional time

on previewing and reviewing the current ELA-CCSS. As commented by one teacher, "I

still need to learn in depth what the standard really means because it's very

superficial…I'm prepared but I still need more in order to understand it and implement it

a lot better."

ELA-CCSS preparedness: preparedness takes time. Fifty-nine percent (35 of 59)

of teachers reported feeling prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS. Further, teachers

reported receiving information on certain preparedness implementation factors as

mentioned in the literature, as useful in preparing them to implement the ELA-CCSS.

Implementation factors with the highest response rate included teacher access to

curricular materials, and assessments that are aligned to the standards.

In describing preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS, interview data supported the findings on the usefulness of teachers being provided information on assessment as teachers described their preparedness in relation to implementing the ELA-CCSS in this area, as well as how the ELA-CCSS are different from the former California Content Standards for English Language Arts. Teachers also mentioned the need for having a standards' aligned curriculum as a means to being better prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS. These findings are important because the literature points that a lack of curriculum can result in teachers resorting to any resources or materials that they can find, especially when they lack a solid knowledge and awareness of the CCSS to implement the standards successfully (Fuhrman & Malen, 1991), which in turn, may hinder an *effective* implementation of educational reform. As evidenced by the data compiled in this study, teachers had to go (on their own) to find resources that they believed addressed the new standards. Engaging in this practice however, brings into question the criteria being used by teachers in selecting ELA-CCSS resources, which can be alarming given that "Teachers are not prepared with the kinds of knowledge and skills required if schools are to change to deliver more challenging curriculum" (p.4), especially in the context of new reform.

It is important to highlight that literature on reform curriculum, has noted that,

> There has been a growing realization, however, that ultimately it is not possible to have a teacher-proof curriculum since teachers mediate curriculum in ways which are often antithetical to policy intentions, leading to an implementation gap and often to unintended consequences. (Priestley, Biesta, Philippou, & Robinson, 2015)

Hence, it appears that teachers would have benefitted from time for focused professional development aligned to the standards and assessments, as well as from time for teachers to collaborate with other colleagues in terms of discussing curriculum implementation (Perks, 2015). For example, professional development and/or grade level collaboration time could have been used to focus on addressing CCSS implementation challenges experienced by teachers such as: (1) understanding the language of the CCSS for clarity and guidance; (2) relating the content in the CCSS with deep and appropriate content knowledge; (3) enhancing student learning with pedagogical content knowledge; (4) coping with issues of curriculum resources; and (5) improving preparation for teaching the CCSS with time and support (Zhang, 2014, p.467) — all of which, may have allowed for teachers' opportunities to learn by unpacking the standards.

Overall, in terms of preparedness to implement, interview data revealed that novice teachers felt prepared in regards to assessment and the use of Common Core Standards' aligned curriculum, but not necessarily prepared in regards to implementation of ELA-CCSS in instruction. In contrast, mid-career teachers described their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS as a "learning process" as they struggled to implement the standards given a lack of a standards' aligned curriculum. Similar to the mid-career teachers, one of two veteran teachers described her preparedness to implement as "still developing," whereas the other veteran teacher felt implementation was not happening. The one veteran teacher felt that she was implementing the ELA-CCSS effectively. Overall, four of seven teachers who were interviewed reported being prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS albeit, in respect to different areas of implementation.

In describing current preparedness in implementing the ELA-CCSS, the following patterns emerged from the interviews: (a) preparedness was still developing (six of seven); (b) there was a lack of clarity in how the ELA-CCSS were written (four of seven), hence teachers had to refer back to them constantly to ensure that they were implementing the standards with fidelity (four of seven); (c) preparing to implement the ELA-CCSS was time consuming where at times, this time was lacking (six of seven); and (d) teachers found themselves having to look for supplemental materials to address the lack of a standard's aligned curriculum (four of seven).

In particular, novice teachers described their preparedness in implementing the ELA-CCSS as still developing as they had to constantly look over the ELA-CCSS given the lack of clarity in the standards. Mid-career teachers also described their preparedness as developing where they too, had to constantly refer to the standards, while having to look for resources to supplement the current curriculum. Veteran teachers concurred with both novice and mid-career teachers in that their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS was also developing due to the same reasons mentioned by both novice and mid-career teachers. This suggests that overall, regardless of the number of years teachers have been practicing implementation preparedness takes time. Whereas for some teachers who had been practicing for a longer time period resorted to their prior knowledge and experiences on the former standards, *all* teachers described their preparedness as still developing. McLaughlin and Overturf (2012), found that preparedness involves not only a teacher deeply knowing the content of the standards across all grade levels, but equally important, a teacher having the skills to be able to align the content with teaching

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strategies that will help students increase their understanding. However, the data in this

study revealed that teachers were still working on familiarizing themselves with the

standards. Thus, teachers were not, yet prepared to undertake the second phase of

implementation in regard to effecting changes to their instructional practices.

Survey data revealed teachers' sense of preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS

(see Table 3).

Table 3.

Teacher Perceptions Toward Preparedness

Item	Very Prepared		Prepared		Somewhat Prepared		Not at all prepared	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Preparedness in implementing the ELA-CCSS	8	14	27	46	22	37	2	3

Note: N=59.

As displayed in Table 3, interview data revealed that preparedness was still developing as

respondents described preparedness as a "learning process" affected by many factors.

One teacher reflected, "my personal preparedness is developing still. I know now-after a

few years of practice with them, I now know I can maybe call out a couple [ELA-CCSS]

by number or by code in my head." Another, teacher also commented, "I feel like it's a

learning process. It hasn't been something that anyone teaching coach, or the district has

been able to really truly prepare the teacher for." This raises the question of what would

make teachers feel prepared, an area that was also explored in this study.

When asked to identify (useful) factors affecting preparedness, responses included more access to curricular materials and assessments, additional planning time and collaboration time with other teachers, specifically to discuss instruction and deeper explorations about the standards (see Table 4).

Table 4.

Teacher Responses to Preparedness Implementation Factors

Factors	# and % of Teachers That Received Information	Degree of Usefulness
How to access curricular materials that are aligned to the standards	43 (73%)	Useful
Accessing additional planning time for yourself in planning lessons	40 (68%)	Useful
How to access assessments that are aligned to the standards	37 (63%)	Somewhat Useful
How the standards will change your instructional practice	36 (61%)	Somewhat Useful
Accessing time for collaboration with other colleagues	36 (61%)	Useful
How the ELA-CCSS are different from other standards	34 (58%)	Somewhat Useful
How the standards will change expectations for teachers	33 (56%)	Somewhat Useful

Note: N=59.

As displayed in Table, 4, teachers found that being provided with information on: (a) how to access standards' aligned materials; (b) accessing additional individual planning time; and (c) accessing time for collaboration with other colleagues were useful in better preparing them to implement. These survey findings were supported during interviews, as respondents agreed that a lack of a standards' aligned curriculum limited the extent to which they felt prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS as evidenced by the following quote: "I think I've implemented to the best of my ability, but because of the constraints given the curriculum that we have, I think I'm constantly looking for things to meet the standards that we have because the curriculum doesn't quite do that."

Kaniuka (2012) maintains that successful reform implementation is dependent on listening to teachers' successes, failures, and difficulties as they implement reform. It is for this reason, that it is crucial to provide teachers with the information that will help them move forward with reform implementation based on *their* particular experiences and needs to avoid making erroneous assumptions about teachers' preparedness. For example, based on survey results only, it may be deduced that teachers were indeed, prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS. However, as evidenced by the interview data, preparedness was still developing. The same rationale applies in terms of the information being communicated to teachers, as districts for example, may assume that certain information is not needed to be shared with teachers when in reality, this information may help advance teachers' implementation preparedness. Consequently, it is crucial to provide teachers with opportunities to be part of decision-making processes as a means

for school sites and districts to expound on implementation factors that are useful in preparing teachers.

It is important to note that during the time of this study, participants were utilizing several curriculums, but the 'Engage New York' curriculum was used as the main curriculum for English Language Arts in grades three through six. However, the use of such curriculum posed many challenges. First, due to printing costs, the district selected only certain portions of the Engage New York curriculum resulting in many foundational learning gaps in students, as essential foundational skills were not taught. Secondly, teachers found that they needed to backtrack in order for students to be able to access the Engage New York curriculum. At the time that this curriculum was adopted, teachers were not teaching to the grade-level rigor required for students to be able to access Engage New York. Lastly, the Engage New York curriculum was later found by teachers, as not being aligned to the ELA-CCSS-something teachers discovered as they went about teaching. Consequently, teachers found themselves needing to supplement the Engage New York curriculum to address curricular gaps, and to meet the standards in order for students to have a fair chance at accessing both the curriculum and the grade-level's ELA-CCSS.

In addition to the aforementioned challenge in terms of the curriculum, lacking a solid knowledge on the standards was clearly a factor affecting teacher preparedness. One teacher shared how her preparedness related to knowing "just the basics" of any particular standard resulted in an awareness that she still had lots of learning to do in order to fully be prepared, "I feel prepared because I know now the basic stuff that in

included in the standard." Similarly, another teacher also commented on her (superficial) knowledge of the standards, and where she struggled with applying the standards in more meaningful ways: "Where I feel a little weak is going deep; how to use them deep with project based learning which is what I would like eventually…but as far as your basic standards, I feel like I'm okay." As evidenced by the data, teachers defined their preparedness as not only having knowledge on the standards, but also, being able to apply them. Hence, it appears that teachers had a concern for the rigor of the standards needing to be augmented, and while needing to be prepared to support learning at higher levels (Darling & Hammond, 2009).

Other areas affecting teacher preparedness included the amount of (extra) time that teachers reported spending on preparing themselves to implement the ELA-CCSS, whereas shared by one teacher, "it has to be the teachers willing to spend a lot of time to prepare themselves." Likewise, most respondents stated that they needed to spend additional time reading over the standards (given the lack of clarity on how the standards were written), reviewing the standards (as teachers were not able to recall from memory), and searching for outside resources (to address the lack of a standards aligned curriculum): "I think I'm prepared to teach, you know, again, constantly looking for other things to add to the curriculum because it doesn't quite cover everything." Another teacher commented, "Unfortunately, there is a complete misalignment between the curriculum that I am being asked to implement and the CCSS," and overall, the extra time spent in having to understand the standards to be able to transition the standards into actual classroom application. Finding or being afforded with extra time is in and of itself,

a challenge as mentioned by one teacher "a lot of the times, we're in a rush and we really don't focus on the standard." It appears that the lack of time affected teachers' implementation preparedness, as they were not able to truly unpack the standards to then be able to apply them into classroom instruction. It is pivotal then, for districts and school sites to develop systems, whereby teachers are afforded with sufficient and/or an extra amount of time as teachers will have a greater need to deepen their professional knowledge as they prepare themselves to implement new reform, especially because insufficient time is maintained in the literature as an impediment to reform implementation (Perks, 2015; Porter et al., 2015).

There was a lack of consistent, and regular supports and structures to enable teachers' learning and application of ELA-CCSS, as demonstrated by the data. Lack of time, lack of clarity in standards, and having to seek outside resources constrained teacher preparedness. It appears that the district and/or school sites failed at addressing the aforementioned constraints by not establishing a systematic way of affording teachers with the much needed time to "unpack" the standards, especially when as reported by teachers, the standards were not written in accessible language. Time for unpacking the standards would have allowed teachers to dissect the meaning of the standards, determine the depth and rigor of each standard (allowing for meaningful application of such), match essential questions with outcomes, determine what proficiency looks like, co-create (with other colleagues) grading rubrics, determine lesson delivery steps, and determine students' prior knowledge to build new learning from. Moreover, affording teachers with

this "unpacking time" would have also supported teachers' in building awareness around the criteria to be used when selecting outside resources to fill curricular gaps.

Ultimately, the data in this study reflected that teachers had to spend additional time, which was already very limited or absent, in seeking outside resources to address the lack of standards aligned materials. Teachers spending time on familiarizing (unpacking) with the standards by both expanding and deepening their standards' knowledge base could have made a better use of this time. It is likely, that few teachers on their own, will be willing to spend the extra time and effort in preparing themselves, which may result in early implementation "burn out." Early implementation burn out, is supported by Porter et al., (2015), whereby even experienced teachers whom reported having to start from scratch, encountered 'initiative fatigue' due to the vast amounts of personal investment in terms of time and energy. Consequently, districts overall, risk losing (reform) implementation momentum if they fail at providing teachers with sufficient time to prepare themselves.

ELA-CCSS implementation: inconsistent implementation. Survey data indicated that 49% (29 of 59) teachers reported implementing the ELA-CCSS into some areas of teaching, but not others. Likewise, interview responses in relation to teacher involvement in ELA-CCSS implementation indicated that 47% (28 of 59) of the teachers were "not at all or rarely" involved in decision-making processes about educational reform implementation in their district or school site. This finding is supported by Dawton (2012), where it was found that "[…] the decision-making powers of teachers have been diminished." Increasing efforts at including teachers in decision-making processes can

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have many benefits to effective reform implementation, such as enhancing teacher capacity for educational reforms to improve student achievement (Kaniuka, 2012). As revealed by the data in this study, teachers were still developing their preparedness in terms of their knowledge of the standards. However, if teachers are part of key decision-making groups at both district and school site levels, they can work collaboratively to efficiently develop and/or enhance professional development that is tailored to teachers' actual needs, especially when "teachers are still active agents, either actively engaging with reform agendas, passively accepting them, or rejecting them, often in ways that are shaped by their social contexts" (Dawton, 2012).

Interview data indicated that teachers' implementation was affected in part, by teachers' lack of familiarity with the ELA-CCSS (six of seven), as well as from a lack of prior knowledge and/or experience with the former California State Standards (four of seven). On this, the literature maintains, "teacher learning is influenced not only by the opportunities that are available for learning but also the personal resources of the learner, including their prior knowledge, dispositions and beliefs" (Spillane, 1999, p.157). However, it appears that teachers' prior knowledge and experiences were not taken into account by the district, or school sites in this study, but rather, implementation supports were developed based on *assumed* teachers' needs. This can be an impediment in advancing teachers' implementation preparedness as former, reform agendas have been,

> built on the assumption that teachers had the capacity to dramatically improve schools; all they needed was freedom at the local level to do so. These agendas were built on the simple paradigm of teacher professionalism: give control to the teachers and expect good things to happen. (pp. 193)

It appears that such was the case for the participants in this study, where they were provided with professional development supports (albeit inefficient) and then expected to be prepared for implementing the ELA-CCSS. It is pivotal to recognize that teacher change will not occur despite our beliefs about individualism and notions of change, where "we like to believe individuals have agency, the power to make a difference to the state of affairs" (p.194). Rather, it is necessary to authentically engage teachers in the reform process itself, as a means of increasing teacher knowledge within contextual implementation structures of the school and/or district because teachers' role on school improvement is the most significant (Priestley et al., 2015).

In describing how implementation of ELA-CCSS got started, interview responses more frequently mentioned were: (a) via Close Reading as part of a district initiative (five of seven); and (b) modification of former instructional practices as to align with the new standards 57% (four of seven). As evidenced by the interview data, there was a lack of coherence on how ELA-CCSS got started. Spillane et al., (2002) maintain that "The segmented policy system sends a mélange of mixed and often competing signals that can undermine the authority and power of policy, which teachers often ignore (p.390)." Thus, the need to work collaboratively with teachers to develop a clear message of what constitutes change, and how change is to be achieved.

During interviews, teachers were asked about how implementation of ELA-CCSS got started at their particular school. It must be noted that all three-school sites selected in this study, followed a similar ELA-CCSS implementation process as mandated by the district. Across the series of interviews, one main theme emerged: aligning former

English Language Arts instructional practices and curriculum with the ELA-CCSS via

the strategy of 'Close Reading' (as part of the district's entry points to the Common Core

State Standards) marked the beginning of the implementation of ELA-CCSS:

> The biggest thing they had us do was the Close Reading…So I think I was
> already kind of doing that, I just tweaked it a little bit to make it
> match…So it's more or less the same but just a tweak it to-as education
> goes, as you learn something you kind of tweak it to go into what you've
> already done and what works and then, ok, this works, let's make sure that
> part of the standard is embedded inside what already works.

Close Reading directs the reader's attention to a text by engaging in a critical analysis of

a text as the reader focuses on significant details or patterns to develop a deep, precise

understanding of the text's form, craft, structure, etc. Overall, Close Reading is a key

requirement of the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association

Center for Best Practices et al., 2015).

Teachers referred to the district initiative of Close Reading as a trial-and-error district

process to get teachers to quickly "connect the dots" to the new standards. That is, Close

Reading was characterized as an expedited transition method by which teachers were to

immediately initiate ELA-CCSS implementation. As commented by one teacher "the idea

was to tie in the standard the next year; to tie the standards to the language arts'

curriculum that we had, we spend a lot of time trying to figure out how we could get his

new Common Core Standard… to mesh them-mesh together." It is important to note that

this district was at least three years behind in implementing the ELA-CCSS when

compared to other neighboring districts that began piloting the ELA-CCSS since its

adoption in 2010. It appears then, that this resulted in an urgent rush from the district, to

implement *now*. Perhaps, due to this, the district was not able to afford teachers with a

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period of awareness, nor of (phased) transition before having to implement. On this, one teacher shared, "When I was in the classroom, we knew that the new Common Core was coming but we did start late because we were already two years, three years when we actually started looking the Common Core." Having to rush into implementation, may have in turn, negatively affected teachers' implementation preparedness by not affording teachers with sufficient time to familiarize themselves with the standards, and not being afforded with effective professional development and supports, as there was no time to collect teacher input. Similarly, it appears there was no time to co-define change by involving teachers in decision-making as an ultimate result of what constituted ELA-CCSS implementation.

In terms of implementation supports, survey data showed that, although teachers responded favorably to having received sufficient information and/or professional development to implement ELA-CCSS, most teachers were implementing ELA-CCSS in "some areas of teaching, but not others" (see Table 5).

Table 5.

Implementation of ELA-CCSS

Item	Fully Implemented		Implemented into some areas of teaching, but not others		Not at all implemented		Don't know	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
ELA-CCSS Implementation Extent	26	45	29	49	2	3	1	2

Note: N=59.

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Partial implementation is problematic in that the expectation for teachers in this study was to incorporate the standards into *all* areas of classroom instruction in order for students to reach college and career readiness by the time they graduate high school. As called for by the ELA-CCSS, students need to be prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices et al., 2015). However, students' readiness can be compromised if teachers are not focusing on reading and writing in other disciplines to build knowledge within and across subject areas.

This finding is important because districts and school sites need to increase efforts on collecting data on what is in resources and/or training that enables teachers to implement reform into some areas of teaching but not others, as well as on what are the challenges and/or barriers hindering teachers' full implementation. As evidenced by the survey data, implementation of reform does not depend only on teachers receiving information and attending professional development, but also on districts increasing efforts at understanding teachers' learning needs and building learning opportunities on teachers' prior knowledge and experiences (Spillane, 2002).

Teachers were also asked about their degree of ELA-CCSS implementation involvement during implementation of educational reform as supported in the literature (see Table 6).

Table 6.

Teacher Involvement in Educational Reform

Item	Always		Often		Sometimes		Not at all/rarely	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Decision Making Involvement	3	5	8	14	19	33	28	48
Actions, Contributions & Ideas	2	3	15	26	21	36	20	35
District Support	10	17	12	21	31	53	5	9
School Site Support	12	21	20	35	21	36	5	9
Changing Teaching Practices	20	35	26	45	11	19	1	2
ELA-CCSS Implementation Preparedness	16	28	16	28	22	39	3	5
Preparedness Affecting Implementation	27	47	21	36	8	14	2	3

Note: N=59.

As displayed in Table 6, teachers' involvement in decision-making during implementation of reform was rare to completely absent. However, "the degree to which a person becomes a reflective agent within any cultural system or figured world depends on the interrelated issues of identification and expertise" (Sloan, 2006, p.141). It appears then that had the district and/or school sites provided opportunities for teachers to be involved in decision-making, this might have positively contributed to teachers' implementation preparedness. Teachers may have reflected on former instructional practices in light of the new standards bounded by their current implementation context, while also co-constructing shared, new understanding based on their prior experiences. In terms of supports, teachers working collaboratively in decision-making groups may have also augmented the positive effects of teacher training by better aligning supports to teachers' needs, especially when data revealed that teacher input in (designing) district support was only "sometimes" taken into account.

How Preparedness Perceptions Influence Changes in Instructional Practice

The second question in the study determined how teachers' perceptions about their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS affected changes in instructional practices. Changes in instructional practices based on teachers' implementation preparedness perceptions were gathered through survey items on the teacher change section.

Teacher change: rethinking instructional practices & the influence of personal knowledge/experience. A comparison was made of the ways teachers' perceptions on implementation preparedness affected changes in teachers' instructional practices using survey and interview data. For this study, it was important to explore teacher perceptions

in relation to their instructional practices because one of the points stressed in the
literature is that teacher reflection upon their practices can bring about benefits to the
entire school system (as cited in Riveros, Newton, & Burgess, p. 206, 2012). Survey data
indicated that teachers did perceive their implementation preparedness as affecting
changes in their instructional practices; however, interview data contradicted this finding.

Responses on the survey data indicated that 78% of teachers in this study (46 of 59)
agreed that they had to do things differently as a teacher as a result of ELA-CCSS.
Further, 68% (40 of 59) agreed that ELA-CCSS required them to change how they
perceived themselves as teachers (see Table 7).

Table 7.

Teacher Change

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
ELA-CCSS requires doing things differently	21	37	25	44	11	19	0	0
ELA-CCSS affects teacher self-perception	20	35	20	35	16	28	1	2

Note: N=59.

The theme of changes in preparedness emerged as participants mentioned the ways in
which they *now* had to prepare to teach the ELA-CCSS. In particular, teachers
commented on having to spend more time now (given lack of teacher familiarity with the
ELA-CCSS) in referring back to the standards and searching for resources and/or

materials to supplement the current curriculum. In terms of having to spend addition time on the standards, one teacher commented, "… it's having to constantly go back and forth…constantly trying to get them internalized so that I don't have to, ok, let me just make sure that goes or-it's the back and forth, so it's just learning." In addressing curricular gaps, one teacher commented, "I've spent a lot of money throughout the years getting a good program that I thought was good, that I could use…I guess you can call it piecemeal but I bring in things that have to be pulled in. Like in-there's a lot of gaps, lot of gaps." As cited in Spillane (1999), teachers are key agents in changing classroom practice as they can either make or break policy (p.144). Consequently, effective reform implementation needs to focus on teachers' capacity to make effective decisions that impact their behavior in the classroom in terms of the instructional strategies being applied, and overall, lesson delivery as much as on teachers' ability to change. Based on the findings of this study, however; it appears that teachers were not provided with the appropriate, or the on-going supports that would have enabled teachers to deepen their professional capacity; at the time of this study, teachers were still working on familiarizing themselves with the standards.

Forty-two percent (25 of 59) teachers agreed, that their ELA-CCSS implementation preparedness affected to a "great degree" how they have changed their teaching practices. Interviews; however, revealed that teachers had to change their *preparedness* practices, but not their *instructional* (pedagogical) practices. During interviews, teachers reported preparing differently to implement the ELA-CCSS, but there was no mention of changes to instructional practices (zero of seven) — except for a greater reliance on the use of a

scripted curriculum (three of seven). In particular, teacher interview responses indicated a

greater investment of time as affecting teachers' implementation of ELA-CCSS as they

needed to (a) constantly refer back to the standards (three of seven), (b) spend more time

in supplementing the standards given current curricular gaps (three of seven), and (c)

having to learn how to implement the current mandated curriculum (two of seven)

pointing to a change on how teachers were now preparing themselves to teach the

standards. However, teachers did not recognize a need to change current instructional

practices in response to implementing the ELA-CCSS; rather, change was identified in

the ways teachers were now having to prepare, such as by spending additional time

reviewing standards and supplementing the curriculum. This suggests that teachers' lack

of familiarity with the standards, and lack of overall knowledge on the standards, may

have been attributed to a rushed implementation, whereby both a lack of time and lack of

opportunities for teachers' involvement in reform prevented teachers from recognizing a

need to change their praxis. Consequently, teachers did not yet, have the knowledge

needed to recognize that a change in instructional practices was required in order to be

prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS. Researchers Riveros et al., (2012) posit: "[…]

organizational change must go beyond the simplistic idea that subjects can be influenced

to change" (p.208). As a result, it is necessary for districts, school administrators, and

policymakers alike, to take into account the many interrelated factors affecting teacher

change to be able to pave the way to successful reform implementation.

Survey data also indicated that (a) personal teaching experiences and perspectives

63% (37 of 59); (b) professional learning communities 63% (37 of 59); and (c) personal

knowledge on the ELA-CCSS 53% (31 of 59) affected changes in instructional practices as a result of ELA-CCSS. Interview data was consistent with survey data in that the following factors affected changes in instructional practices: (1) personal knowledge/experience (five of seven); (2) superficial professional development (three of seven); and (3) the supports provided via grade level collaboration time (three of seven). It was important to explore factors affecting teacher engagement in change because according to Spillane (1999), "Teachers' beliefs, dispositions, and knowledge about students, subject matter and teaching, as well as their prior practice, influence their willingness to change their practice in response to reform and their ability to practice in ways suggested by reformers" (p. 284).

Professional learning communities (PLC's) obtained the highest response rate for both survey and interview data, as affecting changes in instructional practice. This suggests that PLC's have a great potential for enabling teachers to engage in change in response to reform implementation. A caveat however; has been noted by Riveros et al., (2012), in the area of collaboration time via professional learning communities (PLCs) in that, "the underlying assumption in professional learning communities is that peer collaboration has the potential of transforming teaching practices in ways that will bring about higher rates of student achievement" (p. 204). Unfortunately, it has been common practice that the purpose of professional learning communities has been to improve student achievement/learning. However, a key-missing element of PLC's is the lack of how teaching practices are to change or look like to have an effect on increasing student learning (Riveros et al., 2012). Teachers in this study, noted grade level collaboration

time as affecting their instructional practices. Grade level collaboration should be an integral part of PLC's, where the focus is on instructional practices first, to then move towards application of standards in instruction to further student learning.

When asked to identify factors impacting reconstruction of teaching practices in response to reform implementation preparedness, responses included personal teaching experiences and perspectives, professional learning communities, personal knowledge of the ELA-CCSS, and level of experience on the ELA-CCSS (see Table 8).

Table 8.

Personal and Institutional Factors Impacting Teaching Practices

Personal	Frequency of Responses		Institutional	Frequency of Responses	
	#	%		#	%
Teaching experiences and perspectives	37	63	Professional learning communities (PLC's)	37	63
Knowledge on the ELA-CCSS	31	53	Professional development/training received	27	46
Level of experience on the ELA-CCSS	30	51	Support for ELA-CCSS	24	41
Motivation to change	28	47	Initial development of the ELA-CCSS	23	39
Professional obligations	25	42	District role in providing support	22	37
Capacity/Will to Change	22	37	Involvement in decision-making processes at district or school site level	20	34

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Prior (teacher) beliefs and practices	21	36	Implementation context	18	31
Ability to change	20	34	Communication of educational reform by district or school site leaders	16	27
Teacher identity	16	27	Top-down reform mandate	15	25
Sense-making of educational reform	12	20	Varied definitions of reform implementation	6	10
Teacher agency	7	12	Other	2	4
Professional vulnerability	7	12	None of the above	6	11

Note: N=59.

As displayed in Table 8, teachers' experiences and perspectives are crucial in impacting instructional practices. Teachers' experiences and perspectives on reform implementation can help to further the knowledge on how to best support teachers. For example, implementation successes and/or frustrations can be exemplified as teachers share their experiences during the implementation phase. This information can then be used to provide timely supports as frustrations may aggravate with time. Moreover, knowing that teachers experiences and perspectives influence how teachers reconstruct their teaching practices, then more work should be done with a focus on how teachers are paying attention to reform and whether they recognize (or not) a need to change based on their current understandings.

In sharing ways in which the implementation of ELA-CCSS affected teachers, during interviews, teachers commented on being affected by the amount of extra time they needed to spend given the lack of a standards' aligned curriculum, whereby they had to spend extra time on learning the district mandated curriculum, in addition to still working on learning the standards: "It is more time consuming, so I find myself staying later at work and bringing home more materials over the weekend and spending more time trying to plan my lesson…" In agreement, another teacher shared,

> I look at things differently from the CSTs to now, but it's also hard
> because it is time consuming in trying to learn the standards, trying to
> learn the curriculum, not having a specific curriculum that covers those
> standards and yes, no curriculum is perfect. But, at the same time it's like I
> have to go beyond and try to pull from other resources so that I make sure
> that I cover the standard correctly.

When asked about preparedness perception affecting changes in instructional practices, teachers commented on having to teach the standards via a scripted use of (district mandated) curriculum, "I think it definitely changed my practice the way that the curriculum … was meant to be implemented. It changed everything about how I do things. I was on a page by a certain day versus experiencing a novel that I was reading with my students." This quote speaks directly to the incongruity between the teachers' and the district's definition of change. Teacher appeared to have interpreted teacher change differently from how the district might have. For example, the district interpreted application of ELA-CCSS as implementing a scripted, district-mandated curriculum, whereas as evidenced by the teacher in the previous quote, she was unsure whether such curriculum was even aligned to the standards. Another teacher shared, "I know there's some principals who probably are a slave to the curriculum because that's what they're

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used to …I don't want to be a slave to the curriculum because the curriculum doesn't match what I think we're supposed to be teaching." As revealed by the data, there is a mismatch between teachers and the district in terms of what constitutes change.

Teachers also noted personal knowledge/experience as a factor influencing reconstructing/changing teaching practice. One novice teacher commented,

> I did initially become someone that read from the binder…even when we knew against our own personal will or perspective that you're not supposed to stand in front of these kids and read from a binder, I didn't have anything else; I was too new. So as I become more familiar in my personal knowledge of the standards themselves separate from a curriculum, my teaching practice is changing as well, back to what I believe it should be and what it can be versus how I was implementing them when I first began.

A mid-career teacher commented, "personal teaching experiences because that's how I grow, it's reflecting on what is working, what isn't working," while a veteran teacher shared, "Things have changed so I feel like I'm back to the beginning when I first started. Having to relearn a lot of the things, so that's kind of shifting and making us kind of stressed more." This suggests that it is difficult to learn the ELA-CCSS regardless of the number of years teachers have been practicing as prior experience on ELA-CCSS specifically, is currently missing. Accordingly, is not enough to provide teachers with a curriculum and expect to see changes in their instructional practices, and on their perceptions on teaching and learning. Rather, it is pivotal to recognize that change is a difficult process for teachers and as such, change will require both time and effort.

Teachers also mentioned the (superficial) professional development/training, and grade level collaboration as influencing reconstructing/changing their practice. The current professional development at the time of the study, was described as negatively

affecting teachers' ability to reconstruct their instructional practices as evidenced by the following teacher quote: "I appreciate the district trying to provide a lot of professional development but I'm not sure if I've experienced the professional development I personally need to really make teaching the standards super clear." On the other hand, teachers mentioned the benefits of grade level collaboration on helping them reconstruct their instructional practices as this process afforded teachers with the much needed time and space to share concerns and frustrations, while being able to "unpack" the standards as teachers engaged in dialogue with other peers: "Getting more comfortable with what the standards say by talking about them with the grade level. I think it helps to talk about what is the standard really saying?" Another teacher also commented, "In collaborating with your peers you're able to, oh, yeah, that works. That's a good way to teach that, and that's a good way to keep them going. And preparedness, you know… as a grade level, trying to make sure that we were all doing what's comfortable for us but in similar ways, so that we can talk about it collaboratively."

As evidenced by the data, the professional development thus far provided, was not effective at preparing teachers to implement the ELA-CCSS as this was limited to simply reinforcing the district's message of what curriculum to use and how to go about using it, ambitioning to build teachers' knowledge on the standards and teachers being able to recognize (necessary) changes to instructional practices as called for by the ELA-CCSS. On the other hand, grade level collaboration through Professional Learning Communities (PLC's), was effective at providing teachers with the much needed time and space (albeit limited) to share concerns, resources, and to gain a much-needed sense of (support)

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approval from other teachers enabling them to take risks and try new things. PLC's are then valuable to changing teachers' instructional practice, as teachers may be less reluctant to adopt new practices or procedures, and as risk of failure is most likely to be minimized in these contexts. Likewise, as reported by teachers, the standards are not self-evident as there is lack of clarity in how the standards are written. Hence, there are lots of ways in which teachers have to dissect what the standards require (knowledge, skills, etc.), and to then be able to transition standards into actual classroom application. This is complex practice and learning, where numerous factors affect the change process.

Implementation Supports

The third question in the study explored teacher challenges/barriers as a means to determine teacher implementation supports. Teacher perceptions were gathered through survey items on the implementation supports section.

Implementation supports: supports offered not strong enough to advance reform implementation affecting preparedness. A summary was made of ways to support teachers during the implementation of ELA-CCSS education reform. Survey data indicated that 66% percent (39 of 59) teachers had been provided with ELA-CCSS implementation supports' however, 42% (25 of 59) teachers in this study also reported that the supports provided in implementing the ELA-CCSS had been only "somewhat effective" (see Table 9).

Table 9.

Implementation Supports

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Agree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Implementation supports have been provided	7	13	39	67	9	16	1	2
	Every Effective		Effective		Somewhat Effective		Not Effective At all	
Effectiveness of supports	5	9	23	40	25	44	4	7

Note: N=59.

Teacher comments during interviews, indicated that the professional development (seven of seven), coaching support (four of seven), and current grade level collaboration (three of seven) were not meeting teachers' needs in relation to preparing them to implement the ELA-CCSS.

The theme of supports not being strong enough to advance reform implementation surfaced as participants mentioned the supports offered in preparing them to implement the ELA-CCSS (see Table 10).

Table 10.

Supports for the Implementation of ELA-CCSS

Response	Frequency of Responses
Professional development (non-effective)	7
Collaboration time (non-effective)	4
Instructional Coaching (non-effective)	4
Vertical articulation/planning	3
Blind leading the blind	2
Lack of focus	2
Piloting of curriculum	1
Document listing standards	1

Note: N=7.

As noted in Table 10, the responses more frequently mentioned were: (1) non-effective professional development; (2) non-effective collaboration time; and (3) non-effective instructional coaching. In terms of the professional development being offered, one teacher commented, "So there were attempts at professional development. But, it was all very brief… not necessarily-hey, sixth grade, this is what you have to do, let's figure out how you're going to do it." Another teacher shared, "With professional development we're identifying the problem and then trying to fix it, instead of 'Here's what's going to happen, let's prepare you in advance'." Overall, all interviewed teachers (seven of seven) reported the professional development thus far provided, as not meeting the individual needs of teachers in terms of preparing to implement the ELA-CCSS.

As commented by one of the teachers, the professional development was reactive rather, than proactive in enabling teachers' preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS. Teacher training for example, was planned only after teachers encountered implementation failure, as evidenced by teachers' comments. As a result, a primarily reason for the ineffectiveness of teachers' professional development can be attributed to this being geared toward only *superficial* changes resulting in teachers' use of new curriculums, and/or making minor modifications to teaching procedures or classroom formats, but not toward deep, meaningful changes in altering current instructional practices.

Interview data also revealed a teacher support gap (four of seven). During interviews, teachers commented specifically, on the misalignment between the supports being provided and actual teacher needs. Specifically, teachers spoke of being provided with (a) an exaggerated amount of supports in relation to being handed several curriculums (five of seven); while (b) teachers having to focus on several initiatives at a time (five of seven)-hindering teachers' ability to become experts at any one thing before having to move on the next; (c) a gap in coaching (five of seven); and (d) the misalignment between supports and actual teacher needs (four of seven).

On being handed several supports, one teacher reported, "When each new thing is thrown at us, even if it's the greatest solution to anything that's ever happened, I can't get good at it because the next one's coming…it's suffocating and we're drowning." Hence, it is important to reconsider the goal of supports and with this, being selective in terms of supports that will *authentically* enable teachers to implement reform. In speaking about a

coaching gap, one teacher noted her frustration with the instructional coach, "We have a coach…I see her making posters, going online-same thing that I do for my students. To me, a coach is there to coach me. How do I get better? Come into my classroom, observe me, and help me out." On the district having too many district initiatives, one teacher commented, "there's gaps with the district having so many initiatives and not concentrating on the standards as a district, that's a gap. We're trying to hit a lot of things and we're not really becoming experts about anything."

Instructional coaches need to be able to provide high-quality professional development. However, based on teachers' comments, it appears that the instructional coaches were not addressing the day-to-day issues that teachers encountered in their classroom. Thus, instructional coaches were not able to help teachers to change their instructional practices to advance student learning in relation to the ELA-CCSS, as they were not providing supports aligned to the standards, curriculum, and assessment. This brings to question the professional capacity/preparation of coaches in terms of their experience on working with teachers during implementation of reform, and their personal knowledge on the ELA-CCSS. Further, this also brings to question the social capital of instructional coaches as whether they were regarded by teachers as experienced, highly accomplished, and well-respected educators. At the bare minimum, the issue of trust between coaches and teachers requires attention, given that a key to successful coaching is trusting relationships between teachers and coaches. Teachers need to know and feel that they are not being evaluated, but rather, supported. Given these reasons, districts

must consider the instrumental role of instructional coaches as being key drivers of both district and school-wide professional development efforts.

Teachers' supports need to be effective in altering teacher's behavior and beliefs in order to move reform implementation forward. Unfortunately, there is a current gap in the literature on implementation supports for teachers in the context of ELA-Common Core State Standards; however, it is hoped that the findings of this study will help commence the knowledge on this area. Teachers in this study were asked about supports that would help advance their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS (see Table 11).

Table 11.

Supports That Advance Teacher Preparedness to Implement ELA-CCSS

Support	Frequency of Responses	
	#	%
Aligning content with teaching strategies	38	64
Developing knowledge of the ELA-CCSS	31	53
Understanding the "big picture"-being knowledgeable on pre, post and current grade standards	31	53
Creating formative assessments to monitor student learning	24	41
Developing new teaching strategies	23	39
Exploring the language of the ELA-CCSS	21	36
Familiarizing with the "College & Career Readiness Standards" as part of the ELA-CCSS	20	34
Assessing students' background knowledge	15	25
Comparing and contrasting the ELA-CCSS to former CA State Standards	11	19
Other	4	7
Small group instruction	1	2

Note: N=59

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As displayed in Table 11, survey data indicated that (a) aligning content with teaching strategies 64% (38 of 59); (b) developing knowledge of the ELA-CCSS 53% (31 of 59); and (c) understanding the "big picture"-that is, teachers being knowledgeable on pre, post and current grade standards 53% (31 of 59), helped teachers to advance implementation preparedness. The last point refers to a third-grade teacher for example, needing to be knowledgeable on both second and fourth grade standards, in addition to current third grade standards.

These findings were further supported by the interview data. Teacher comments included (a) the usefulness of being afforded with time to "unpack" the standards to develop their knowledge on the ELA-CCSS, while (b) being able to focus on a standard or group of standards at time, and (c) meeting across grade levels to better understand the "big picture" by looking at both pre and post standards in addition, to current grade level standards. And, while teachers did not report extensive professional development by the district, the importance of school districts as key institutional agents in educational reforms is critical (Datnow, 2012).

McLaughling and Overturf (2012), maintain that an essential task for implementing the CCSS is for teachers to not only possess a deep knowledge of the content standards, but to also be able to align the content with teaching strategies. They also posit that teachers need to possess a knowledge on what students should know coming in and out of class along with what they will need when they leave class. This point speaks directly to teachers being able to fully understand grade level standards, and being able to see the "big picture" by becoming knowledgeable on previous, current, and subsequent grade

level standards (Perks, 2015). In turn, it is important to reconsider the purpose and impact of professional development on teachers' ability to augment their implementation preparedness by recognizing that effective professional development for teachers require time, resources, and ample learning opportunities for teachers.

In providing an example of an implementation support that was helpful in assisting with the implementation of ELA-CCSS, teachers mentioned: (a) having grade-level collaboration, but when it first started (note that qualitative data revealed that current grade level collaboration is not effective); and (b) being provided with a document listing the standards. On being provided with a useful support, one teacher commented, "… you were provided with the standards, which was nice, and again we were provided with time with other colleagues on other sites who might have had a little bit more experience of exposure to the standards." As reflected by the data, sometimes, being provided with a simple yet basic foundational support, such as receiving a document listing the standards, can make a big difference in teachers' preparedness. Undervaluing the foundational supports for the sake of larger professional development endeavors may further hinder the prerequisite knowledge of teachers to be able to alter their instructional practices. Moreover, despite multiple challenges/barriers to reform implementation, there are also multiple opportunities to better support teachers in this process if (a) teachers are afforded with time and space for learning and decision-making; and (b) if supports are matched to teachers' needs. Thus, setting up transparent and inclusive professional learning development via PLC's designed to *authentically* meet the needs of teachers can, support teachers in implementing the ELA-CCSS.

Professional learning communities (PLC's) can advance reform implementation (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Laver & Wenger, 1998). Hence, teachers may find targeted support via PLC's as they engage in collaborative discussions with other peers in unpacking the standards as "[…] the complex changes in instruction that characterize these reform proposals will require substantial learning by those who are expected to implement these changes" (Spillane, 2002, p.379). In this view, professional learning communities may help in providing the space for teachers to share ideas, discuss teaching strategies and work together in planning, teaching, and advising, while deepening their knowledge. The space and support that professional learning communities can provide are important because "School reform is not performed in isolation; rather the context in which it occurs must be considered as to how it influences the implementation and ultimate success of the reform" (Kaniuka, 2012, p.327), and as such, PLC's provide for teacher learning opportunities.

In this sense, in order for professional learning communities to be effective, PLC's must also acknowledge the situated character of teachers in their context of practice in order "to give a new meaning to the claim that groups of individuals co-create knowledge in the context of schools; namely, that professional knowledge is *enacted* in the teachers' practices and actions" (Riveros et al., p.209, 2012). That is, PLC's need to take into account teachers' current implementation context in order for teachers to find a benefit in these, while supports needing to be aligned to teachers' needs. It would make no sense for teachers to engage in PLC learning, when they are not able to authentically apply new practices given contextual constrictions. Unfortunately, as evidenced by the data, teachers

were constricted to many factors; the use of district-mandated curriculums, and the implementation of Close Reading as evidence of ELA-CCSS implementation — to name a few.

Overall, it is important to engage teachers in meaningful, and effective professional development as a means of increasing their knowledge and perceptions of the Common Core whereby, "Effective teacher professional development must be designed which begins by deconstructing the CCSS and helping teachers understand the differences between current state standards and the new CCSS" (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013, p.70). Fortunately, grade level collaboration via professional learning communities is maintained as having "the potential of making a difference in the landscape of school reform in policy if priority is given to teachers' agency and teachers' learning" (p.204). Data revealed that teachers found grade level collaboration and PLC's as affecting their implementation preparedness. Hence, professional development needs to afford teachers with the time and space to learn with and from one another, while teachers deconstruct (unpack) the standards by building their personal knowledge of the standards to then, be able to align current instructional practices. Furthermore, teachers also need to be provided with a (safe) learning environment where they are able to express their needs and frustrations associated with implementation of reform as they come together to engage in decision-making processes were failure is not an impediment to teacher change (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Summary

This chapter reported and analyzed all of the survey and interview data collected through the online teacher survey and face-to-face interviews with teachers. Using the comments given by the participants when addressing the questions provided significant evidence. As such, participants were quoted to ensure accurate representation of the perceptions (Creswell, 2013).

Chapter V will provide a discussion of the overall study. It will present a summary of the key findings from chapter IV and included discussion of the implication of findings. Conclusions that address the research questions will be presented, and recommendations for further research studies and action will be specified.

Chapter V: Key Findings, Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendation for Future Research and Implications for Action

Introduction

Chapter V summarizes key findings, and offers conclusions alongside a discussion generated from the key findings. Recommendations for further study and implications for action are also presented.

This study achieved its objectives as an exploration into the perceptions of teachers during implementation of ELA-CCSS reform. The perceptions and experiences of participants in this study were explored via the multi-methods design of this study, which allowed for shared perspectives to be recognized and honored as collective experiences informing this inquiry. The breadth and depth of findings gathered in the survey, and interviews provided valuable insights into teachers' implementation preparedness affecting their daily classroom instruction.

In this K-6th grade district in the southern California portion of the Bay Area, teachers continued building their ELA-CCSS implementation preparedness at the same time, as they were held accountable for an immediate, and effective implementation of the standards. Teachers appeared confused and frustrated, as they had to implement without, yet having the sufficient, and necessary skills and/or knowledge to do so. They had received implementation supports via several professional developments, but these had failed at authentically addressing their needs. Teachers continued grappling with strategies to effectively implement the standards, and making sense of the reform to comply with implementation mandates. This district would benefit from a collaborative leadership that uses a systemic systems' approach that takes into account teachers' prior

experiences with the goal of increasing teacher agency via teacher involvement in decision-making processes as barrier to passivity of reform.

Conclusions and Discussion

Effect on instructional practice is limited. Findings from this study indicated that teachers' lack of familiarity with the ELA-CCSS had negatively impacted an effective implementation of ELA-CCSS. In particular, survey data revealed that 59% of teachers were still working on developing their familiarity with the ELA-CCSS (35 of 59). Previewing and reviewing standards prior, during, and after lessons was a common practice for teachers in developing their familiarity with the standards as evidenced by the interview data. Ultimately, teachers had to implement the ELA-CCSS along with several district-mandated curriculums simultaneously, while lacking a solid understanding and knowledge foundation of how ELA-CCSS translated into actual classroom application.

It is pivotal to address teachers' (lack of) understanding/knowledge during reform implementation as not doing so, compromises attaining the proposed goals of any educational reform. One way to address this is through targeted professional development focused on increasing teacher learning. Survey data indicated that 81% of teachers had received professional development or training related to the ELA-CCSS (48 of 59). However, as supported by interview data, teachers tried to implement what they were learning in trainings, but at times, this was difficult as teachers felt training was overwhelming and not consistent. Hence, it can be concluded that professional

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development is important to advancing teacher knowledge on reform implementation, but it is not sufficient.

Professional development needs to be ongoing and matched to teachers' needs. Further, professional development needs to be designed to provide teachers with multiple teacher learning opportunities to build and strengthen their professional capacity, where deepening teacher knowledge is the main goal. Professional development focused on teachers' professional practice first, may prove much more successful than providing teachers training on initiatives to increase student learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009), which unfortunately, has characterized the majority of teachers' professional development: "improvement initiatives focused exclusively on *student learning* and there was a lack of reflection about *teachers' professional practice*, which generated a lack of understanding about the reasons why the interventions did not accomplish its goals" (Riveros et al., p.207, 2012). Advancing teacher learning on their professional practice can help bring about the desired results that will advance students' academic achievement through the development of teachers' professional capital.

Preparedness is a learning process. Despite teachers reporting feeling prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS, teachers were still developing their knowledge on first understanding the standards and subsequently, learning how to apply standards into classroom instruction. Survey data revealed that 59% of teachers felt "prepared" to implement the ELA-CCSS (35 of 59). However, as revealed by the interview data, teacher preparedness was still developing (six of seven). Further, it appears that there is not a correlation between the length of time that teachers have been practicing and their

perceptions on preparedness, as all three-teacher cohorts (novice, mid-career, and veteran) reported their preparedness as developing. Overall, the implementation of the ELA-CCSS can be characterized as learning process whereby; teachers continue to build their personal knowledge on the standards to then, be able to change current instructional practices as called by the new standards.

To implement effectively, "teachers need to be knowledgeable of CCSS content and be trained in best practices for implementing high-quality standards" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). Therefore, it is pivotal for teachers' professional development to focus on increasing their knowledge and perceptions of the Common Core as, "Effective teacher professional development must be designed which begins by deconstructing the CCSS and helping teachers understand the differences between current state standards and the new CCSS" (Jenkins & Agamba, 2013, p.70). However, as revealed by the data, preparedness is complex and affected by many factors.

Factors affecting preparedness included a lack of clarity in how the ELA-CCSS are written (four of seven); having to constantly refer back to standards to ensure fidelity of implementation (four of seven); preparedness as being time consuming (six of seven); and having to supplement a lack of a standards' aligned curriculum (four of seven). So, contrary to teachers feeling prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS, teachers were still developing their knowledge. As a result, knowledge of standards is essential to preparedness. However, teachers' implementation preparedness can be highly compromised if they lack the most basic foundation in successful implementation of

reform, that of having a solid knowledge on the standards; hence, limited knowledge of standards influences implementation.

Interview data revealed that implementation of reform was affected by teachers' lack of: (a) familiarity with ELA-CCSS (six of seven); and (b) prior knowledge and/or experience with the former California English Language Arts Content State Standards (four of seven). Teachers found their limited knowledge/experience with the former standards hindered their ability to default to prior knowledge on the former standards when it doubt (four of seven) about the current ELA-CCSS. On teachers' prior experiences, it is maintained that,

> […] teachers' prior experiences plays an important role in their achievement of agency, enabling them to develop expansive aspirations in relation to their teaching and to enhance their access to cultural resources as they deal with dilemmas and problems in their day to day professional lives. (Priestley et al., 2015)

Correspondingly, interview data in this study revealed that changes in instructional practice were affected by teachers' personal knowledge/experience (five of seven). Incorporating teachers' prior experiences in developing a reform implementation plan, may allow district leaders to better understand how teachers choose to respond to policy because these experiences influence how teachers approach learning and instruction. These prior experiences may help to understand how teachers interpret policy, such as how and where they see a need for learning and change to happen in accordance with the new policy. Teachers respond differently to policy, "whether it is by actively facilitating and implementing the reform, passively accepting or nonengaging change, or actively resisting change efforts" (Datnow, p.195, 2012).

The importance of teacher participation in implementation of reform. As evidenced by the data in this study, teachers' limited participation in decision-making processes resulted in a partial and superficial implementation of ELA-CCSS characterized by an implementation gap. Not including teacher actions, contributions, ideas, or concerns impeded effective teacher support both at the school-site and district level. For example, both survey and interview data in this study revealed a mismatch between the supports being provided, and actual teacher's needs. This suggested that the district was not compiling, and hence, much less incorporating information from teachers in planning professional development. Likewise, data revealed that teachers felt inundated with the amount of supports being provided, but that these did not altered the instructional practices and beliefs of teachers.

The literature on decision-making processes, posits that teachers benefit from being part of the decision-making processes as they work together with other stakeholders to define what change is and it is not. In turn, this advances school reform as Kaniuka (2012) maintains: "Recent reforms that engage teachers in the decision-making process or redistribute leadership have demonstrated the need for enhanced teacher capacity in order for these reforms to improve student achievement." Hence, this research posits that teachers' involvement in decision-making processes can directly assist with teachers' making sense of new reform as they juggle with sense making and interpreting change as a result of policy ambiguity. Equally important, teachers need to be afforded with opportunities to define school goals for student learning as a means to move from mere "compliance" to "commitment," (Kaniuka, 2012).

Teacher change: mismatch between preparedness practices and instructional practices. Teachers correlated their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS with preparedness practices ("getting ready") in terms of knowing what lesson to teach, what curriculum to use (per district mandate), or having supplemental materials to address curricular gaps. Survey data indicated that 78% (46 of 59) of teachers were doing things differently as a result of ELA-CCSS. Further, survey data also revealed that ELA-CCSS had changed the way teachers perceived themselves as teachers 68% (40 of 59). During interviews or open-ended comments, teachers mentioned having to change their preparedness practices (i.e., having to preview standards and having to spend more time looking for outside resources to supplement the curriculum and/or standards), but not their instructional practices (e.g., changes in pedagogy). Webel and Platt (2015), maintain: "changing teaching practices can be difficult when there is a mismatch between teacher beliefs and the intents of an educational reform or as a problem of individual teacher knowledge, or both" (p.204). As evidenced by the data in this study, (a) teachers had a limited knowledge on the standards and how to apply these; (b) there was a discrepancy between the district's and teachers' definition of ELA-CCSS implementation; (c) the professional development was not sufficient in preparing teachers to implement the ELA-CCSS; and (d) there was a mismatch in teachers supports provided and actual needs. All of these may have obstructed capacity to delineate implementation preparedness as involving changes to current instructional practices in view of the new standards. For example, many teachers reported having to use the district's English Language Arts' curriculum as evidence of implementing the standards.

However, Common Core State Standards' policy and reform are not specifically tied to scripted curriculum. Moreover, teachers also reported not feeling fully prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS because they didn't always know how to apply the standards to their instructional practice.

Supports offered in district not strong enough to advance reform implementation. Implementation supports did not provide teachers with professional development or training aligned to teachers' needs to implement the ELA-CCSS, despite survey data indicating that 66% of teachers have been provided with implementation supports (39 of 59). As revealed by interview data, the majority of supports were ineffective, as these did not meet actual teachers' needs. Specifically, teachers reported that the professional development (seven of seven); and coaching (four of seven) supports had failed at better preparing them to implement the ELA-CCSS.

It is pivotal to recognize the varied needs of teachers in order to align professional development to these, as teachers require different supports depending on their interactions with other teachers, current implementation context, and current instructional practices" (Datnow, 2012). It cannot be assumed that all or any professional development will meet the individual needs of teachers. Districts need to be proactive and not reactive, in terms of increasing efforts at collecting teacher data on designing and delivering professional development. Survey data for example, revealed that (a) aligning content with teaching strategies 64% (38 of 59); (b) developing knowledge of the ELA-CCSS 53% (31 of 59); and (c) understanding the "big picture" by learning about pre, post and current grade level standards 53% (31 of 59) helped teachers feel better prepared in

implementing the ELA-CCSS. In turn, this information can be used to plan professional learning communities, where learning is embedded within teachers' situated work contexts (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Teachers in this study, found PLC's much more helpful at augmenting their implementation preparedness versus professional development. The reason for this being, that PLC's afforded teachers with the appropriate setting and time to share challenges/frustrations, share resources and try new things; feeling supported by colleagues, while the risk of failure being decreased while augmenting opportunities for teacher learning (Darling-Hammond &Richardson, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1998). On the other hand, professional development was reported as simply providing teachers with one more to-do thing to do, (as teachers felt the need to apply professional development learning/skills in the classroom), without examining current teachers' beliefs and/or needs in order for change to happen in classroom application.

Data in this study also revealed a support gap (four of seven), where teachers reported on the misalignment between the supports they had received and their actual needs. Specifically, teachers spoke of being provided with (a) an exaggerated amount of supports in relation to curriculum (five of seven) causing teachers to become even more confused in terms of what constituted ELA-CCSS implementation; while (b) the district having teachers focus on several initiatives at a time (five of seven)-hindering teachers' ability to become experts at any one thing before having to move on the next; and (c) a gap in coaching (five of seven). Overall, teachers were not receiving enough of the kinds

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of supports they felt were helpful to them. This suggests that teachers in this study were not adequately prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS.

The role of districts cannot be underestimated in supporting teachers during reform implementation as they hold both an enormous responsibility, and power in supporting teachers, and in shaping teachers' role in implementing educational reform. Researchers Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich (2008), maintain that the "district is a key institutional actor in educational reform in providing instructional leadership, reorienting the organization, establishing policy coherence, and maintaining an equity focus" (p. 194). As such, teachers receive a vast amount of direction from central office about what and how to teach ultimately, guiding teachers toward implementing standards. Districts need to work alongside teachers in defining what change is and how it affects, and looks in action because change is gradual and it is a process involving extra time and effort. Close collaboration between teachers and districts may greatly help facilitate both the implementation and change process as teachers' prior experiences may help anticipate roadblocks along the way. It is also important for districts to carefully design and plan (by ensuring the inclusion of teacher participation), a *phased out* reform implementation plan where teachers received on-going, timely feedback and support. The literature maintains that taking into account teachers' prior experiences is crucial as teachers' prior knowledge and experience are key drivers of effective reform implementation and successful teacher change leading to student achievement (Fuhrman & Malen, 1991; Kaniuka, 2012; Porter et al., 2015; Spillane, 1999; Spillane et al., 2002).

Notwithstanding, it is also pivotal for districts to work on increasing efforts on gaining the trust of teachers as a means to understanding teachers' learning needs and building learning opportunities on teachers' prior knowledge and experiences (Spillane, 2002). The issue of trust cannot be underestimated in educational reform implementation. And, while trust alone cannot guarantee successful implementation of reform, it can help facilitate it by guiding collaborative teacher work around teachers' responsibility to advance student learning (Datnow, 2012).

There are many ways at advancing teacher supports; however, the key to effective supports is alignment to teachers' needs. As previously mentioned, it is crucial to develop systemic organizational systems that use teacher data as information to design professional development. Likewise, teachers need to be part of the design and planning of training to ensure that the proposed professional development will have the intended results. Equally important, is for districts to be selective in terms of designing and delivering supports as not doing so, may further exacerbate implementation challenges. For example, interview data revealed the following implementation challenges: (a) teachers being provided with a vast amount of ineffective curricular supports (five of seven)-further, confounding teachers understanding of what constituted ELA-CCSS implementation; (b) several district initiatives at the same time- hindering teachers' knowledge and/or expertise in any given area (five of seven); (c) coaching gap (five of seven); and an overall misalignment between provided supports and teacher needs (four of seven). Thus, the importance for districts to reconsider the intent behind every support.

Lack of robust professional learning community model. Teachers in this study did not recognize a need to change their instructional practice (pedagogy) in order to implement ELA-CCSS. However, professional learning communities (PLC's) with a situated cognition perspective can help advance improvement in practice and/or teacher agency. Situated PLC's can help teachers explore change in terms of what change is connected to reform intent, and how such change impacts current learning and teaching understandings, as " the concept of situated cognition shifts the study of cognitive processes from the isolated individual to the situation in which the individual acts" (p.209). Situated PLC's can support teacher change by acknowledging how teacher enact teaching practices and learn about their profession based on their context. That is, situated PLC's work with the understanding that "something" needs to change and/or be improved in the school. Equally important, situated PLC's extend the need for change into also involving a transformation of practices and thinking to enact change (Riveros et al., p. 207, 2012).

As evidenced by the data, reform implementation is not simply adopting a curriculum, but rather, it is much more profound as teachers' instructional practices, beliefs, and understandings must be altered. Again, a reason why situated PLC's can support teachers as these afford teachers the learning space to discuss and share their teaching practices, beliefs and understanding with colleagues within the same context allowing for a deeper exploration and understanding (p.209). Moreover, it may prove fruitful to think about situated professional learning communities as enabling teacher agency in schools, as teachers engage in developing practices that pertain to professional

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learning in making sense of reform initiatives, especially when "People's understanding of policy messages plays a crucial role in the implementation processes because their understanding is evidenced in their practices and the transformation of practices is one of the objectives of reform" (p. 212). Ultimately, situated PLC's can provide opportunities for teachers in ways that deepen both ownership and engagement on their own professional practices (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

    Augmenting teacher agency (via an ecological approach) as a barrier to implementation passivity. As evidenced by the data, teachers in this study were not directly rejecting ELA-CCSS as an educational reform, but they were not embracing it either. Augmenting teacher agency is then recommended as a response to implementation passivity, in hopes of positively advancing reform implementation. Given the results of this study, it is important to note that both teacher passivity and lack of implementation constitute teacher agency, as teachers tend to respond differently to reform (Datnow, 2012). Similarly, how teachers enact practice and engage with policy is a crucial factor in any educational reform success. The following quote illustrates this.

> The most successful educating systems invest in developing their teachers as reflective, accomplished and enquiring professionals who are able to teach successfully in relation to current expectations, but who have the capacity to engage fully with the complexion of education and to be key actors in shaping and leading educational change. (as cited in Priestley et al., 2015)

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that attention be given to augmenting teacher agency via an ecological approach model (Priestley et al., 2015), where consideration is given to contextual conditions shaping teacher agency. Teachers' implementation efforts may be augmented if consideration is taken into understanding the

interaction between teachers' perspectives, and prior experiences *and* their

implementation contexts, where: "what teachers bring to the situation and what the

situation 'brings' to the teacher" (Priestley et al., 2015) are equally important.

Via interviews, teachers in this study shared both how their successes and frustrations

in implementing the ELA-CCSS impacted their overall, implementation preparedness.

However, survey data revealed teachers' actions, contributions, and ideas were not at all,

or rarely taken into account. Undermining teachers' experiences and not affording them

with the space and time to share, explore and be involved in decision processes, appears

to have hindered teachers' understanding of ELA-CCSS implementation. For example, a

mixed message of implementation emerged between the district and teachers in terms

what constituted implementation of ELA-CCSS and implementation supports to help

teachers. Experiences such as the aforementioned, may have surfaced earlier had

teachers' experiences been used to shape teachers' sense making of policy affecting every

day, classroom reform implementation. It must be highlighted, however; that to augment

teacher agency in enacting change, teachers must be enabled with the opportunities and

resources to achieve agency as "[…] it is problematic for policy to demand that teachers

exercise agency in their working practices, and then simultaneously deny them the means

to do so, effectively disabling them" (Priestley et al., 2015). It is within this complex

terrain that the ecological model for understanding teacher agency becomes useful.

The ecological model of teacher agency maintains that the achievement of agency is

always informed by past experience including both professional and personal teachers'

experience. The model also emphasizes that the achievement of agency is always

oriented toward the future based on the combination of both short and long term objectives, and values from past experience. And, where agency is always situated within given contexts, which in turn, can both, constrain or support achievement of agency (Priestley et al., 2015). Hence, the importance of exploring, and listening to teachers' prior and current experiences on implementation of reform within their current context, as a means to learning from experience in planning next steps and anticipating potential implementation obstacles.

Recommendations for Further Research Studies

The limitations of this study included its bounded nature-it was bounded in time by a one-month data collection window, and bounded in resources to three school sites within one district, seven interviews and survey data – all self-report. Hence, context and sample size represent a significant limitations to this study. As a result, interpretations and transferability of the findings are limited to contexts with similar characteristics.

The limitations and findings from this study suggest the following recommendations for further research:

1. This study be replicated with a larger sample of teachers who are implementing the ELA-CCSS. The sample size of this study was relatively small compared to the number of teachers across the nation who are implementing the ELA-CCSS. Hence, it would be of value to compare findings from larger sample sizes.

2. This study be replicated with teachers who work in distinct districts to determine if the findings are similar to those in this study. Participants in this study followed a similar ELA-CCSS implementation trajectory as designed by the one single district.

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3. This study be replicated with a focus on the ELA-CCSS implementation process as this study was not intended to assess the implementation process overall.

4. A case study be designed to focus on how school site level administrators' leadership style influences the implementation preparedness' perceptions of teachers. This study focused on district and site level implementation supports and how these in turn, affected teacher implementation preparedness. However, this study did not focused on the role and/or impact of leadership and reform implementation.

5. A case study be designed to examine long-term teacher perceptions on implementation of the standards as affecting student achievement on state assessments. Data for this study was gathered between the lapses of one month only.

6. A case study be designed to examine the effect of varied teacher ELA-CCSS implementation supports on implementation of educational reform. This study focused on overall district and school sites supports, but did not assess the direct effectiveness of any given support in terms of advancing teacher efficacy and/or advancing student outcomes.

Implications for Action

Administrators. In order to support teachers in implementation of educational reform, site-level administrators should:

1. Augment opportunities for teachers to partake in decision-making processes involving reform implementation. Literature on decision-making processes maintains that teachers and districts benefit from being part of these processes (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Further, the data in this study revealed that the majority of teachers are not part of decision-making groups.

2. Provide multiple avenues for teachers to share/express their implementation perceptions. Data in this study revealed that preparedness is complex and affected by many factors one of which is teachers' professional development. However, this professional development needs to be designed to specifically address the needs of teachers in order for this to affect instructional practices in the classroom that help advance reform implementation. One way to do this is by rethinking professional learning communities as communities of practice where learning is inseparable from doing — situated cognition characterizes these communities of practice as teachers come together to work and engage in continual dialogue to examine their practice and to develop more effective instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1998).

3. Increase efforts to take into account teachers' actions, contributions and/or ideas at all times in designing and/or determining educational reform action steps and/or roll out. As revealed by the data in this study, teachers' prior knowledge/experiences may help to better support implementation efforts as lessons can be learned from past challenges/barriers associated with former reforms.

   Teachers. In order to develop and/or strengthen implementation preparedness of educational reform, teachers should:

4. Become part of both district and site-level instructional leadership teams and/or decision-making groups. Being part of these key groups, has the potential to advance reform implementation as via shared' experiences and the empowerment (of teachers) as decision-makers, teachers can make sense of reform, while co-defining what change

entails given their particular implementation contexts (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

5. Engage in effective professional learning characterized by "collaborative and collegial learning environments that help develop communities of practice able to promote school change beyond individual classrooms" (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009) as to authentically transform teaching. In turn, these communities of practice need to provide systems of support for improving practice, where collective work is typified by trusting environments allowing teachers to take risks and address dilemmas in their own practice. Most specifically, these communities of practice must recognize that learning is the product of the relationship between people, and that learning is part of living, where "…ways of doing and approaching things that are shared to some significant extent among members" (Lave & Wenger, 1998).

Districts. In order to support teachers in implementation of educational reform, district should:

6. In collaboration with school sites, increase support and resources that focus specifically on meeting the professional development needs of teachers. Data in this study revealed a mismatch between perceived supports and actual teacher needs.

7. Provide additional professional development for teachers that focus specifically on understanding the language of the standards to then, assist teachers in reconstructing instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Perks, 2015). As evidenced by data in this study, teachers' limited knowledge of the standards affected implementation hindering teachers' ability to make effective decisions impacting both

teaching and learning. The literature also maintains that knowledge of the standards is essential to preparedness- as this is a first step in advancing teacher change during implementation of reform (Perks, 2015).

8. Eliminate (as much possible) multiple initiatives at a single time and rather, focus on one initiative (at a time) as to allow for teachers to develop both knowledge and expertise. Data in this study revealed that having several initiatives at one single time, hindered teachers' knowledge and expertise in any given area.

9. Increase efforts to include teacher participation in decision-making processes and groups. Teachers are key agents in implementation of reform and how they interpret and define change is dependent upon the learning opportunities they are afforded to either embrace or reject reform. In this vein, context must be integral to teachers' learning opportunities, whereby "How a person learns a particular set of knowledge and skills, and the situation in which a person learns, become a fundamental part of what is learned" (Putnam & Borko, 2000). That is, teachers must be afforded with opportunities to interact with other members within their situational contexts as they deepen their learning by situating their unique learning experiences.

10. Design and provide necessary implementation supports for teachers to be able to use the standards to leverage and support effective teaching and learning, where preparedness is defined as a teacher's ability to: (a) develop deep understanding of the standards to be taught; (b) develop an understanding of the standards across grade levels; and (c) apply knowledge of the standards to design curriculum, instruction, and assessments (Perks, 2015).

Reflections

In conducting this study, it was amazing to discover how far teacher have come in the transitioning from the former English–Language Arts Content Standards for California commonly referred to by teachers in this study as the "CSTs" to implementing the current English language arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS). Throughout the process of initiating the study and reviewing the literature, I was skeptical to conduct research at a district where I was an assistant principal and would also be the researcher. I felt that I would have personal biases related to the implementation of the ELA-CCSS, the supports being afforded to the teachers, or the qualifications of the teachers for that matter.

After gathering the survey data, conducting the interviews, transcribing the data, and analyzing the findings, I was very pleased with the outcomes that this study provided for teachers, who work 'in the trenches,' educational leaders, for our school and district, and for education at large. All of the participants were anxious and excited to be part of this study as they had been through the journey that this district had taken in the last three years in transition to the Common Core State Standards; hence they were eager to share their perceptions and make their voice be heard. This was evident in all of the comments that were provided. Teachers were not shy to share what they were excited about and what they felt needed improvement. Similarly, teachers also shared their successes and concerns with preparing themselves to implement the ELA-CCSS in general, and were specific about their particular frustrations and needs. Teachers were also specific during interviews about their experiences and challenges in implementing the new standards.

As a researcher, this study has enlightened my understanding that there is a larger issue in our educational systems. It is more than designing reform policy that aspires to bring about higher achievement results for all of its students. It is more than providing teachers with curriculums. It is definitely more than just offering professional development on the standards without first analyzing teacher preparedness in terms of teacher knowledge and familiarity on the standards themselves, to then effect changes in instructional practices aligned to the new standards. As evidenced in this study, there is still much to do and much to learn in terms of effectively implementing the ELA-CCSS to its original intent. The core issue then, is for districts and educational leaders to develop their own knowledge and capacity on how to *authentically* and *effectively* prepare teachers first, for them to then be able to afford students with the learning experiences that will prepare them to be successful, critical thinkers that can problem solve in real-world settings.

In the end, successful implementation of educational reform requires strong instructional leadership and well-prepared teachers in every classroom. Hence, in my role as site principal in planning to implement educational reform, my first step would be to evaluate current teacher knowledge and understanding of the [new] reform. This would help me to determine the extent to which teachers possess an understanding of what students are expected to know and be able to do, as well as how instructional practices are to support every student in meeting those expectations. Accordingly, I would create opportunities for teachers to be part of decision-making groups that would allow for working and learning with and from one another.

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Further, in recognizing that preparedness is a learning process, the next step would involve facilitating high quality professional learning opportunities for teachers that are matched to their needs. Again, teacher participation needs to be the driver of any professional development coupled with research-based teacher training and CCCS-aligned resources to meet the needs of all students. Equally important, a monitoring system to inform instruction as a means to establish professional learning, and the tools for evaluating student learning would need to be developed. The last piece, would involve collaboration and transparent communication with all stakeholders including teachers, parents, students, district, and the community. It is crucial to maintain communication and with this, work closely with all stakeholders to develop and disseminate tools that provide information about the new reform and explain the purpose and/or intent of preparing students for academic achievement. Ultimately, effective communication and timely feedback would become the foundation of the reform implementation plan where areas of need are continuously identified.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Survey Instrument with Consent Form

San Jose State University, Research Survey
Request for your Participation in Research
Teachers' Perceptions on Preparedness & Supports To Implement the English Language
Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS)
Clara Fernandez, Graduate Student and Senorina (Noni) Reis, San Jose State University
Professor and Advisor

PURPOSE
The first purpose of this study is to describe elementary teachers' perceptions about
preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards
(ELA-CCSS) at the school-level, in three public elementary schools, and how the
implications of preparedness on implementation affect teachers in changing their
instructional practice. The second purpose of this study is to explore teacher challenges
and/or barriers associated with the implementation of the ELA-CCSS to learn about ways
to support teachers at the school site level, during implementation of this educational
reform.

PROCEDURES
In this voluntary survey, you will be asked to report on your perceptions on preparedness
and supports to implement the ELA-CCSS. We anticipate that the survey will take no
longer than 20 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you are
willing to participate in a follow-up interview to discuss your perceptions in detail. Please
note that you have the right to skip any question(s) you wish at any point during the
survey.

POTENTIAL RISKS
Some people may feel nervous about taking part in the research. However, no identifying
information will be collected or used in the final report. Responses will be confidential.
When necessary, ID numbers and pseudonyms will be used when analyzing and
disseminating our results in the final report. Upon completion of study, individual
surveys will be destroyed.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
While we do not anticipate any direct benefits to individual participants, surveys and
follow-up interviews will help us to better understand teachers' perceptions on
implementation preparedness and how the implications of such perceptions affect
teachers in changing their practice. Further, we will develop a better understanding of
ways to support teachers during implementation of ELA-CCSS educational reform.
However, whatever the outcome of the study, the results will only be used to improve
transition to the Common Core-not application to assessment of teacher performance in
any other capacity.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Survey responses will remain confidential. Pseudonyms and identification numbers will be used throughout the study. Further, once the study is over, individual surveys will be destroyed.

COMPENSATION
No compensation will be given for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University. Additionally, refusing to participate in this study, in no way affects the relationship between you as a teacher, and your school, and the district. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS
You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.
• For further information about the study, please contact Clara Fernandez at 831.840.XXXX or clarafndz@yahoo.com
• Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Arnold Danzig, Director, EdD at San Jose State, 408-924-3722.
• For questions about participants' rights or if you feel you have been harmed in any way by your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of the Office of Research, San Jose State University, at 408-924-2479.

SIGNATURES
Your participation consent below indicates that you voluntarily agree to be a part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participation Consent
I agree to participate in this survey.
I do not agree to participate in this survey.

San Jose State University, Research Survey

Part I. Background Information

Please share a bit of information about yourself by answering the following questions.
Select the response that best describes you.

What is your gender?
Female
Male

What is your age?
24 years old or younger
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65 years or older

What grade level do you currently teach? Select the grade level band that applies.
Kindergarten-2nd grades
3rd-4th grades
5th-6th grades

How many years have you been a classroom teacher?
0-5 years
6-10 years
11-20 years
Over 21 years

What is your highest level of educational attainment?
Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Doctorate Degree

Including the 2016-17 school year, how many years have you been implementing the
English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) into your teaching?
1 year
2 years
3 years
Over 3+ years

Part II. Familiarity with the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-
CCSS)

Please rate your overall familiarity with the ELA-CCSS.
Very Familiar
Somewhat Familiar
Slightly Familiar
Not Familiar

Have you received any professional development or training related to the ELA-CCSS?
Yes
No

Approximately how much time, overall, have you spent in professional development or training on the ELA-CCSS during the 2016-17 school year?
Less than 1 week
1 week
2-3 weeks
4-5 weeks
More than 5 weeks

Part III. ELA-CCSS Preparedness

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Overall, my professional development or training on ELA-CCSS has prepared me to implement the ELA-CCSS.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

On a 4-point scale (where 4 is "Very prepared" and 1 is "Not prepared at all"), how prepared are you to implement the ELA-CCSS?
4-Very prepared
3-Prepared
2-Somewhat prepared
1-Not at all prepared

Have you received information on: "HOW THE STANDARDS WILL CHANGE YOUR INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE?" Please indicate "yes" or "no." If you answered "yes," please rate the usefulness of the information in preparing you to implement the ELA-CCSS. If you answered "no," please predict the usefulness of this information anyway.
Yes
No
Not Useful
Somewhat Useful
Useful

Very Useful

Have you received information on: "HOW THE STANDARDS WILL CHANGE EXPECTATIONS FOR TEACHERS?" Please indicate "yes" or "no." If you answered "yes," please rate the usefulness of the information in preparing you to implement the ELA-CCSS. If you answered "no," please predict the usefulness of this information anyway.
Yes
No
Not Useful
Somewhat Useful
Useful
Very Useful

Have you received information on: "HOW TO ACCESS CURRICULAR MATERIALS THAT ARE ALIGNED TO THE STANDARDS?" Please indicate "yes" or "no." Next, if you answered "yes," please rate the usefulness of the information in preparing you to implement the ELA-CCSS. If you answered "no," please predict the usefulness of this information anyway.
Yes
No
Not Useful
Somewhat Useful
Useful
Very Useful

Have you received information on: "HOW TO ACCESS ASSESSMENTS THAT ARE ALIGNED TO THE STANDARDS?" Please indicate "yes" or "no." If you answered "yes," please rate the usefulness of the information in preparing you to implement the ELA-CCSS. If you answered "no," please predict the usefulness of this information anyway.
Yes
No
Not Useful
Somewhat Useful
Useful
Very Useful

Have you received information on: "ACCESSING ADDITIONAL PLANNING TIME FOR YOURSELF IN PLANNING LESSONS?" Please indicate "yes" or "no." If you answered "yes," please rate the usefulness of the information in preparing you to implement the ELA-CCSS. If you answered "no," please predict the usefulness of this information anyway.
Yes

No
Not Useful
Somewhat Useful
Useful
Very Useful

Have you received information on: "ACCESSING TIME FOR COLLABORATION WITH OTHER COLLEAGUES?" Please indicate "yes" or "no." If you answered "yes," please rate the usefulness of the information in preparing you to implement the ELA-CCSS. If you answered "no," please predict the usefulness of this information anyway.
Yes
No
Not Useful
Somewhat Useful
Useful
Very Useful

Have you received information on: "HOW THE ELA-CCSS ARE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER STANDARDS?" Please indicate "yes" or "no." If you answered "yes," please rate the usefulness of the information in preparing you to implement the ELA-CCSS. If you answered "no," please predict the usefulness of this information anyway.
Yes
No
Not Useful
Somewhat Useful
Useful
Very Useful

Part IV. ELA-CCSS Implementation

To what extent have you implemented the ELA-CCSS into your classroom teaching practice? Please select the answer that best applies to you.
Fully implemented into my teaching
Implemented into some areas of my teaching but not others
Not at all implemented into my teaching
I don't know

Degree of ELA-CCSS Implementation
1. The left column lists several statements regarding your involvement in ELA-CCSS implementation.
2. Please indicate the degree of your involvement in ELA-CCSS next to each statement.
Not at all/Rarely
Sometimes
Often

Always
I am involved in decision-making processes about educational reform implementation in my district or school site.
My actions, contributions and/or ideas are taken into account when discussing ELA-CCSS implementation.
I have received support to implement ELA-CCSS from my district
I have received support to implement ELA-CCSS from my school site.
I am confident in my ability to change my teaching practices, as necessary, to implement ELA-CCSS.
I feel prepared to implement ELA-CCSS.
My preparedness affects ELA-CCSS implementation in my classroom.
Skip to the next row below.
I am involved in decision-making processes about educational reform implementation in my district or school site.
My actions, contributions and/or ideas are taken into account when discussing ELA-CCSS implementation.
I have received support to implement ELA-CCSS from my district
I have received support to implement ELA-CCSS from my school site.
I am confident in my ability to change my teaching practices, as necessary, to implement ELA-CCSS.
I feel prepared to implement ELA-CCSS.
My preparedness affects ELA-CCSS implementation in my classroom.
Please provide an example(s) of your involvement in CCSS implementation (please include what and how often).

Part V. Teacher Change

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ELA-CCSS requires me to do things differently as a teacher.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ELA-CCSS require me to change how I perceive myself as a teacher.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

To what degree has your ELA-CCSS implementation preparedness affected the degree to which you have changed your teaching practice(s)?
To a great degree

Somewhat
Rarely
Not at all

Which of the following have impacted reconstructing your teaching practice(s) as result of your ELA-CCSS implementation preparedness (check all that apply).
Initial development of the ELA-CCSS
Support for the ELA-CCSS
Top-down reform mandate
Implementation context
Professional learning communities (e.g., grade-level collaborations)
Personal teaching experiences and perspectives
Involvement in decision-making processes either at district or school site level
Personal prior (teacher) beliefs and practices
Educational reform self sense-making
Varied definitions of reform implementation
Personal knowledge on the ELA-CCSS
Professional development or training received
Personal (teacher) identity
Personal (teacher) agency
Level of experience on the ELA-CCSS
Capacity/Will to change
Motivation to change
Professional obligations
Ability to change
Professional vulnerability
District role in providing support
Communication of educational reform either by district or school site leaders
None of the above
Other:

Part VI. Implementation Supports

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Overall, I have been provided with ELA-CCSS implementation supports.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

On a 4-point scale (where 4 is "Very effective" and 1 is "Not effective at all"), how effective have the supports provided been in implementing the ELA-CCSS?
4-Very effective
3-Effective

2-Somewhat effective
1-Not effective at all

Which of the following supports would help you feel better prepared to implement the ELA-CCSS (check all that apply).
Exploring the language of the ELA-CCSS
Developing knowledge of the ELA-CCSS
Comparing and contrasting the ELA-CCSS to former CA State Standards
Familiarizing with the College and Career Readiness Standards as part of the ELA-CCSS.
Understanding the "big picture"-that is, being knowledgeable on pre and post current grade standards
Developing new teaching strategies
Aligning content with teaching strategies
Assessing students' background knowledge
Creating formative assessments to monitor student learning
Other:

Participation in Follow-Up Interview
Thank you for participating in this survey.
Would you be willing to be contacted to participate in a follow-up 1:1 interview? If so, please provide your email address below or contact me at clarafndz@yahoo.com or 831.840-XXXX Note: your response to this question will be dissociated from your responses to previous questions.

I am interested in participating in...
A one-to-one interview
Thanks, but I am not interested in participating in a follow up study.

See https://goo.gl/forms/b3Km55drSQ2yGy0C3

Appendix B – Interview Protocol

**Teachers' Perceptions on Preparedness & Supports To Implement the
English Language Arts Common Core State Standards
Teacher Interview Protocol**

Date: _____ Participant Name/ID: _____
Site ID: _____ Grade Level: _____

Questions- Part I. Background Questions
1. What are your thoughts on how implementation of ELA-CCSS is going?
2. Please describe your current preparedness in implementing the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) (e.g., knowledge of the standards, instructional practices). Specifically, how prepared are you in implementing the ELA-CCSS?
3. Please describe the way(s) in which your preparedness has affected how you implement the ELA-CCSS.

Questions- Part II. ELA-CCSS Implementation
4. You indicated that you are implementing the ELA-CCSS in your classroom (at your school)-can you tell me how that got started?

5. In what ways has the implementation of ELA-CCSS affected you as a teacher?

Questions- Part III. ELA-CCSS Preparedness & Teacher Change
6. Has your practice changed given your preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS? If so, in what ways?
7. In thinking about reconstructing/changing your teaching practice as a result of ELA-CCSS implementation preparedness, what factors influence that change? (e.g., implementation context, personal teaching experiences/perspectives, personal knowledge on the ELA-CCSS, professional development, level of experience, capacity/will, ability, motivation, other)?

Questions- **Part IV. Implementation Supports**
8. What supports were in place to implement the ELA-CCSS (e.g., professional development, coaching, collaboration time, other)?
9. You indicated that you faced challenges/barriers in implementing the ELA-CCSS. What types of supports could address these challenges/barriers?
10. Is there a teacher support gap? If so, how is it affecting teachers' preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS?
11. Can you provide me with an example of an implementation support that was particularly helpful in assisting you in implementing the ELA-CCSS?
12. Is there anything else you would like me to know?
Thank you!

Appendix C – Interview Consent Form

Request for your Participation in Research
Teachers' Perceptions on Preparedness & Supports To Implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS).
Clara Fernandez, Graduate Student & Noni Mendoza-Reis, Faculty Advisor

PURPOSE
The first purpose of this study is to describe elementary teachers' perceptions about preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) at the school-level, and how the implications of preparedness affect teachers in changing their instructional practice. The second purpose of this study is to explore teacher challenges and/or barriers associated with the implementation of the ELA-CCSS to learn about ways to support teachers during implementation of education reform at the school-site level.

PROCEDURES
In this voluntary interview, you will be asked to report on your perceptions on preparedness and supports to implement the ELA-CCSS. The interview should take no more than one hour to complete. You may "opt-out" of the interview at any time. The interview will be audiotaped for later transcription.

POTENTIAL RISKS
Some people may feel nervous about taking part in the research. However, no identifying information will be used in the final report. Responses will be completely confidential. When necessary, ID numbers and pseudonyms will be used when analyzing and disseminating our results in the final report. Once study is over, audio files will be permanently deleted and transcriptions will be destroyed.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
While we do not anticipate any direct benefits to individual participants, these interviews will help us to better understand the teachers' perceptions on implementation preparedness and how the implications of such perceptions affect teachers in changing their practice. Further we will develop a better understanding of ways to support teachers during implementation of education reform. However, whatever the outcome of the study, the results will only be used to improve transition to the Common Core-not application to assessment of teacher performance in any other capacity.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Interview responses will remain confidential and those volunteering for the interviews may opt for off-site, over the phone, in-person, or on-line communication to maintain confidentiality. Pseudonyms and identification numbers will be used throughout the study. Audio files will be deleted and transcriptions will be destroyed once the study is over.

COMPENSATION
No compensation will be given for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or XXX XXX School District. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS
You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.
- For further information about the study, please contact Clara Fernandez at 831.840.XXXX or clarafndz@yahoo.com
- Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Arnold B. Danzig, Director, EdD Leadership Program at San Jose State University, 408-924-3722.
- For questions about participants' rights or if you feel you have been harmed in any way by your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of the Office of Research, San Jose State University, at 408-924-2479.

SIGNATURES
Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to be a part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant Signature

_____ _____ _____
Participant's Name (printed)   Participant's Signature   Date

Researcher Statement
I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to learn about the study and ask questions. It is my opinion that the participant understands his/her rights and the purpose, risks, benefits, and procedures of the research and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

_____ _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent   Date

May we contact you regarding future and/or follow up studies? *(Please circle one)*
Yes　　　No

Appendix D – IRB Protocol Narrative

<table>
<tr><td colspan="1" style="text-align:center">

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

**HUMAN SUBJECTS-INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
PROTOCOL NARRATIVE**
</td></tr>
</table>

I. APPLICATION

See attached.

II. PROJECT TITLE

*Teachers' Perceptions on Preparedness & Supports To Implement the
English Language Arts Common Core State Standards*

III. INVESTIGATORS AND STAFFING

NAME OF INDIVIDUAL	QUALIFICATIONS	RESPONSIBILITIES
Senorina (Noni) Mendoza-Reis	*Senorina (Noni) Reis is a faculty member at SJSU and holds a doctorate in Organizational Leadership. She has been conducting research for over 15 years, and is the author of several articles in the fields of educational leadership and effective education for English Learners. N. Reis has completed the CITI IRB Training.*	*N. Reis will serve as the Faculty Advisor (FA) for this project and will oversee all phases, including project design, data collection and analysis, and dissemination.*
Clara Fernandez	*C. Fernandez is a doctoral student at SJSU and holds an Associate degree in liberal arts &*	*C. Fernandez will serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) for this project and will be involved in all phases, including project*

	sciences, Bachelor degree in Community Studies, Masters degrees in education and educational leadership plus an administrative credential from SJSU and a teaching credential from UCSC. She has worked in education for 8 years as a teacher and site assistant principal.	*design, data collection (at only two participating schools) and analysis, and dissemination. She will work closely with and under supervision of the FA throughout this project.* *PI will only collect data at the two participating schools where PI has never worked at and has never been in a supervisory position at any of these sites.*
Maria G. XXXX	*M. XXXX holds a Bachelor degree in Human Biology with a minor in Chemistry from UCSC. She currently works as an after school program substitute teacher at a non-participating school district.*	*M. XXXX will serve as the outside data collection (ODC) person for this project at the school site where PI serves as an assistant principal. Her role will be to collect and aggregate the data for the particular school.*
Imelda XXXX	*I. XXXX is the school's secretary at one of the participating elementary schools. She works in the school office and is expected to keep confidentiality in all matters as part of her job. She provides clerical and administrative support as needed; has access to the site's email database.*	*I. XXXX will send an email invitation to participate in the study, accompanied by a link to an online survey to teachers at one of the participating three sites in AUSD.*
Lupe XXXX	*L. XXXX is the school's secretary at one of the participating elementary schools. She works in the school office and is expected to keep confidentiality in all*	*L. XXXX will send an email invitation to participate in the study, accompanied by a link to an online survey to teachers at one of the participating three sites in AUSD.*

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matters as part of her job. She provides clerical and administrative support as needed; has access to the site's email database.	

IV. INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER INSTITUTIONS

a. This research will be conducted in partnership with the XXXX XXXX School District (AXXSD) in XXXX, CA. XXXX will serve as a source of participants (faculty and staff). See Letters of Cooperation attached from district superintendent and the three school-site principals.

b. The FA has no affiliation or financial interest within XXXX. The PI is currently employed by XXXX as a site assistant principal at one of the participating schools. The ODC has no affiliation or financial interest within XXXX.

c. As site assistant principal, the PI maintains a supervisory role, within the district, and at one of the participating schools. The PI has never worked at or been in a supervisory position at the two other participating sites. The study does not involve treating, assessing, or training participants, but the PI may be perceived as an authority who may be in a position to coerce participation from faculty and staff. It will be made clear that participation is entirely voluntarily, that there are no consequences or repercussions for non-participation, and that participants may opt-out at any time during the study. Further, it will also be made clear that participants can skip questions if they wish on the survey (Phase 1) and/or during the interview (Phase 2). It will also be clear in the consent document that refusing to participate in this study, in no way affects the relationship between the teacher, his/her school, and the district. Separate consent forms will be given for Phases 1 and 2 (see Section VII. E below).

The PI will be explicit that her role in this study is that of researcher and thought partner seeking to learn from the participants, as the experts, about their perceptions on preparedness and supports to implement the ELA-CCSS. The ODC will share PI's role in this study with participants, while also being explicit about her role in this study to collect and aggregate data on behalf of the researcher. It will be made clear to participant that whatever the outcome of this study, the results will only be used to improve transition to the Common core-not an application to assessment of teacher performance in any other capacity (See Consent Form).

V. ABSTRACT

As states and local districts implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), ignoring teachers' implementation preparedness perceptions could be drawbacks undermining transitional efforts towards implementation of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS)(Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011). Moreover, while several factors have been found in the literature influencing the ways in which teachers engage in changing their instructional practice, including a fragmented educational system, the distinct implementation contexts, and teachers' roles on reform implementation (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002), there currently exists a literature gap in examining and understanding teachers' perceptions about their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) and the ways to support teachers (at the school-site level) during implementation of educational reform. Consequently, in recognizing teachers as key participants in how these standards are implemented in classrooms, a close study of their individual preparedness perceptions on implementation of the (ELA-CCSS) is needed. In addition, learning about ways to support teachers during ELA-CCSS reform implementation needs to be addressed.

The purpose of this dissertation-an exploratory, descriptive study of novice, mid-career, and end of career teachers is to explore, describe and analyze elementary (K-6th grade) school-based teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) and how these perceptions affect changes in instructional practice. In addition, this study seeks to learn about ways to support teachers during implementation of education reform by exploring teachers' challenges and/or barriers associated with the implementation of the ELA-CCSS.

Through survey and interviews with invested faculty, this study will explore teachers' preparedness perceptions on implementing the ELA-CCSS and how teachers are engaging in changing their instructional practices. Further, implementation challenges and/or barriers will also be explored. Specifically, through survey (Phase 1) and several interviews (Phase 2), this study will explore teachers' responses to the following questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement the English

Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS)?

2. In what ways do teachers' perceptions on implementation preparedness affect

changes in instructional practice?

3. What are ways to support teachers during implementation of ELA-CCSS education

reform at the school-site?

Phase 1. School secretaries at two of the three school sites in XXXX, on behalf of the researcher, will invite teachers to participate in the study by sending an email invitation to participate in the study, accompanied by a link to the online survey to K-6 grade teachers at the site (see Section VI. C. below). ODC at school site where PI serves as an assistant principal, will inform teachers of the study and invite teachers to participate in the study by providing a link to the online survey (see Section VI. C. below). The brief (approximately 20 minute) survey has been designed to gather participants' perceptions on preparedness and supports to implement the ELA-CCSS and act as a screener for Phase 2 of the study (see Section VI. D below). At the end of the survey, participants will be asked if they are willing to voluntarily participate in Phase 2.

Phase 2. Consenting participants at the two school sites where PI has never worked at or been in a supervisory position, will be asked by via email to meet (in person, over the phone, or online depending upon the preference of the participant) to discuss and elaborate upon their survey responses. Participants at the school site where PI serves as an assistant principal, will be asked via email by the ODC to meet (in person, over the phone, or online depending upon the preference of the participant) to discuss and elaborate upon their survey responses. Information collected from the interviews will help to answer the above questions by providing a narrative for how teachers describe their perceptions about preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS, and how teachers' perceptions on implementation have affected changes in instructional practices. Further, interview responses will be used to determine ways to support teachers during implementation of educational reform. However, regardless of the outcome of the study, the results will only be used to improve transition to the Common Core-not application to assessment of teacher performance in any other capacity.

The goals of the proposed project are to contribute to a broader understanding of how teachers' preparedness implementation perceptions on educational reform in the context of the ELA-CCSS, can influence teacher change on instructional practices. It is also hoped that the findings of this study contribute to informing decisions about the school-site supports that educational leaders and their respective school districts provide to teachers during implementation of ELA-CCSS educational reform. Current, descriptive research on teachers' preparedness perceptions on implementing educational reform, such as the study proposed here, is crucial so as to provide teachers the necessary implementation supports to achieve educational reform goals.

VI. HUMAN SUBJECTS INVOLVEMENT

A. SUBJECT POPULATION

To explore teachers' perceptions on preparedness and supports to implement the ELA-CCSS in XXXX, the school secretaries at two school sites and ODC person at the school site where PI serves as an assistant principal, will inform teachers of the study and provide a link to the online survey to all teachers (approximately 90 individuals) to participate in Phase 1 of the study, the online survey (see section VI.D below).

The sample will comprise adults between the ages of 23 and 65, who are employed by the XXXX XXXX School District. No race or ethnicity data will be collected. All participants will be voluntary and have the option to opt-out of any phase of the research at any time. It will be made clear to the participants that they can skip questions if they wish on the survey and/or during the interview. No exclusionary criteria will be used.

Those who consent to participate in the survey will be asked if they would like to be considered for Phase 2 of the study. Of those who consent for this follow-up, we will select approximately 6 participants across no more than three school sites. If more than 6 participants volunteer, then we will select those participants who, based on their survey responses, are implementing English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS) since the year 2013 (section 1, question 6 from the survey). We will seek to have a mix of teachers from the various sites in order to determine a better understanding through multiple perspectives.

B. RECRUITMENT PLAN

All K-6th grade teachers at the three elementary school sites, currently employed by XXXX, will be invited to participate in Phase 1 of the study. To mitigate any possible coercion, the study has been expanded to include three school sites, where two school-site secretaries (on behalf of the researcher) will be inviting teachers to participate in the study at the two schools where the PI has never worked at or been in a supervisory position at the participating sites. For the school where the PI serves as an assistant principal, ODC will be inviting teachers to participate in the study. The survey will begin with a Letter of Consent (see Section VII. E.). Only those participants who indicate that they "agree" to the conditions outlined in the Letter of Consent will advance to the survey. Those who indicate that they would like to "opt out" will automatically exit the survey. At the end of the survey, participants will be asked to provide their email address if they wish to be contacted for a follow-up interview, or they can contact us via email or phone (Phase 2). No other individually identifying information will be collected.

Those individuals from the two school-sites (where PI has never worked at or been in a supervisory position) who provide contact information at the end of the survey, will be contacted by the PI via email to schedule an in-person, phone, or online interview. Individuals from the school where PI serves as an assistant principal will be contacted by the ODC via email to schedule an in-person, phone, or online interview. Prior to the interview, these participants will be asked to complete a second Letter of Consent (see Section VII. E, Consent Forms), which will ask for permission to conduct the interview.

The consent form for the interviews can be sent and returned via email or postal service mail (to include a self-addressed, stamped, return envelope).

C. RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN / PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study is to describe elementary teachers' perceptions about preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS at the school-level, and how the implications of preparedness on implementation affect teachers in changing their instructional practice. The second purpose is to explore teacher challenges and/or barriers associated with the implementation of the ELA-CCSS to learn about ways to support teachers during implementation of the education reform. To meet this objective, we will engage in two phases of research.

For Phase 1, school-site secretaries at two elementary schools and ODC at the elementary school where PI serves as an assistant principal, will invite XXXX teachers from three elementary schools to complete a survey that will identify participants' perceptions on preparedness and supports to implement the ELA-CCSS.

From this survey sample, teachers who have volunteered (provided their contact information on the otherwise confidential survey), will be selected to participate in 1:1 interviews so as to further describe perceptions on preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS, and the challenges and or barriers associated with such. If more than 6 volunteer to participate in this phase of the study, participants will be chosen based on survey feedback that reflects ELA-CCSS implementation preparedness perceptions (e.g., familiarity with ELA-CCSS, ELA-CCSS preparedness, ELA-CCSS Implementation, teacher change, and implementation supports). We will also seek to have a balance of teachers from the three sites so as to collect data from multiple perspectives and have a better understanding of teachers' preparedness perceptions on ELA-CCSS implementation and supports.

The survey data alongside interview data will provide a more balance and holistic perspective for this study. Data will also be compiled, analyzed, and compared to findings on reform implementation and teacher change previously reported in the literature. Analyses will reveal how teachers' perceptions on implementing ELA-CCSS as an education reform, and implementation supports compare to findings in the literature review.

D. MATERIALS AND DEVICES

a. The instruments for this study include a survey and an interview schedule (attached). The survey (Phase 1) for teachers developed for this study consists of the following parts: (a) Background Information; (b) Familiarity with the ELA Common Core State Standards; (c) ELA-CCSS Preparedness; (d) ELA-CCSS Implementation; (e) Teacher

change; (f) Implementation Supports; and (g) Participation in Follow-Up Interview Consent.

Phase 2 of this study is an interview schedule. The interview schedule was developed to gather information that will deepen the researchers' understanding about (a) teachers' preparedness perceptions on implementing the ELA-CCSS; (b) how teachers' preparedness perceptions affect teacher engagement in change of practice; and (c) ways to support teachers during educational reform implementation. The interview schedule provides teachers the opportunity to (a) describe their individual and unique experiences about their preparedness to implement the ELA-CCSS; (b) describe their individual processes and practices in implementing the ELA-CCSS exposing some of the challenges associated with such; (c) describe the ways in which CCSS implementation preparedness has impacted how they reconstruct their practice in the context of Common Core State Standards; and (d) to express their opinion on how preparedness affects the implementation of standards.
The questions for the Teacher Interview Schedule were divided into four parts: (a) background questions; (b) ELA-CCSS Implementation; (c) ELA-CCSS Implementation Preparedness & Teacher Change; and (d) Teacher Implementation Supports. A digital voice recorder will be used record participants' interview responses.

b. No cognitive or psychological tests will be employed.

c. The proposed study includes analyzing initial survey data (Phase 1) then coding, theming and analyzing interview data (Phase 2). The PI will record data on a master spreadsheet, which will be kept on a password-protected computer. Audio files will be permanently deleted once transcribed. Transcriptions will also be stored on a password-protected computer. Further, once the study is over, individual surveys and interview transcriptions will be destroyed.

This link is for the Phase 1 survey and includes the consent form:
https://goo.gl/forms/hObAAaqVxbH20V6Y2
(see also Section VII.E.)

E. CONFIDENTIALITY

a. To protect confidentiality, ID numbers will be assigned to individual participants and will be used to throughout the study. Data and materials will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the PI's home, and at the ODC's home for the school site where PI serves as an assistant principal. Upon the aggregated data being turned to the PI, ODC will destroy all collected data, which will include a permanent deletion of all audio files. Electronic files will be stored on a password- protected computer.

Please see the attached Letter of Cooperation from Superintendent Dr. XXX XXX's agreement to participate in the study. In addition, letters of cooperation from the three

school-site principals have also been included.

***b.** The information described above will be stored electronically on the PI's laptop computer. The laptop will be password protected.*

F. COMPENSATION

No compensation will be offered to participants or students.

G. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

While there are no foreseeable benefits to individual participants, we anticipate that the findings will be generalizable and will be shared to support teachers during implementation of ELA-CCSS education reform, across sites and classrooms throughout XXXX.

H. POTENTIAL RISKS

In general, this study involves no more risk than what participants would encounter in everyday life. Given the procedures described above, there is minimal risk of the release of personal information.

I. RISK REDUCTION

See Confidentiality (Section VI. E.) above.

VII. INFORMED CONSENT

A. CONSENT PROCESS

For Phase 1 (survey), participants will be asked whether they "agree" to the conditions outlined in the Letter of Consent before they are allowed to proceed with the survey. Participants may skip any question or discontinue their participation in the survey at any time. Only those participants who choose to provide their contact information at the end of the survey will be contacted to participate in Phase 2 (interview). Selected participants for Phase 2 will complete a second Letter of Consent (see Section VII.E.) when they are contacted to schedule the interview. During the interview, participants will be able to opt-out at any time, or skip any questions.

B. ASSENT PROCESS AND OTHER SPECIAL CONSENT PROVISIONS

***a.** N/A*

***b.** N/A*

C. WAIVER OF WRITTEN CONSENT

N/A

D. DEBRIEFING

N/A

E. CONSENT FORMS

Letter of Consent (Phase 1) attached (as first page of survey)
Letter of Consent (Phase 2) attached

VIII. OTHER

Agreement Letters from Outside Institutions

Copy of online survey attached

Copy of email for Phase 2 Participants attached for both PI & ODC.

Interview protocol attached

Copy of Survey Recruitment Email

Appendix E – Instrument Alignment Matrix

**Teachers' Perceptions on Their Preparedness To Implement the
English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS**

Instrument Alignment Table

Research Question	Survey Item	Interview Question
(Background/Demographic Information)	Part I. Items 2-7	(Items 2-7 from Survey)
1. What are teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to implement the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS)?	Part II. Item 8-10 Part III. Item 11-19 Part IV. Item 20-22	Item 1,2,4,12
2. In what ways do teachers' perceptions on implementation preparedness affect changes in instructional practice?	Part V. Item 23-26	Item 3,5,6,7
3. What are ways to support teachers during implementation of ELA-CCSS education reform at the school-site?	Part VI. Item 27-29	Item 8,9,10,11

Transcription of Novice Teacher 1

Interviewer read script.

I: Ok, so question number one; what are your thoughts on how implementation of ELACCSS is going?

NT1:   Implementation of the Standards is, I would say, in full swing in Assessment but not necessarily fully implemented in Instruction based on several factors. Including—amongst my colleagues, and myself the variation of familiarity with the CSTs before Common Core came. I think what I've seen of teachers who were very versed in CST will rely on that knowledge and practice that in their classroom when there's a hole in the Common Core or in their knowledge of Common Core. Whereas those of us who weren't super familiar with the CST that came in as the transition might kind of only have the Common Core to rely on so it's happening maybe a little more, maybe not as successfully as it could be, but that's what we have as a base, as a knowledge to rely on.

I: Number two; please describe your current preparedness in implementing the English Language Arts Common Core States Standards, for example, knowledge of the standards, instructional practices. Specifically, how prepared are you in implementing the ELACCSS?

NT1:   Ok, so my personal preparedness is developing still, I know now—after a few years of practice with them, I now know I can maybe call out a couple by number or by code in my head. Whereas formerly, CST numbers were more rapid, you know where to go in your brain for that standard. Also the standards themselves are, in my opinion, written not clearly. So it's not always easy for me to—I try to give like a short version of what the standard says in my own head so I can recall it, like RL2 is text evidence versus the paragraph but RL2 actually is. Your preparedness in implementing—so I would say I'm more prepared now than I was when it was rolled out but I still have a ways to go.

I: Ok. Please describe the ways in which your preparedness has affected how you implement the ELACCSS?

NT1:   Ok. So for my case in particular this year the ELACCSS is longer the basis of my Language Arts instruction in my own classroom because I've been given an intervention system to teach this year. Which is, in my opinion, maybe aligned to Common Core but it doesn't cover the width of the ELA Common Core [inaudible 00:03:45] from my grade level because it is to fill in the gaps that my students have. So in regards to my preparedness in how I implement—I've almost been able to take a breath away from memorizing the standards or pulling materials for the ELA

Common Core Standards in this particular year because of that other caveat that's happening for me.

I: Ok. So the next part; you indicated that you were implementing the ELACCSS in your classroom [inaudible 00:04:25] at least last year, can you tell me how that got started?

NT1:   So in my case my kind of jumping point in for ELA Common Core Standards was when I was teaching sixth grade and we were offered it as a pilot if we wanted to use a new curriculum that was tied to the standards prior to having to take the assessment aligned to the standards. So at that point in time, I believe, we were still testing on the CSTs but we knew this was coming down the line, so we might as well jump in and try it out before it became something that was going to be tied to us. So that's how I got started with it was through the Engage New York curriculum pilot that we were offered at sixth grade.

I: Do you remember how long ago this was?

NT1:   That would have been—I did a full year with it and this is my second year with fifth grade so it would have been three and a half years ago, the spring of three and a half years ago.

I: So at that point it sounds to me that it was more of an optional—

NT1:   Yes.

I: Kind of a jump into the Common Core Standards—

NT1:   Yeah.

I: Other than a mandate.

NT1:   Don't even know if we had been handed a document with the Common Core Standards written out yet, we just knew that California was moving that way, we knew that the CSTs were coming to a close and that this was an opportunity to explore before it was mandated.

I: I see.

NT1:   Yeah.

I: Ok. In what ways have implementation of the ELACCSS affected you as a teacher?

NT1:   Honestly? One thing that I feel and I feel like I've been told also by more experienced teachers, is that my particular implementation which came through that specific curriculum, which was Engage New York, almost stripped me of my own creativity, my own skills when we were trying to implement the curriculum itself. Not necessarily even the standards with Fidelity. I viewed that curriculum as what common core was going to be. It took years, I would say, even to realize that the Common Core Standards were not necessarily even all present in the curriculum let alone taught well in the curriculum. But at the time when I was jumping in [inaudible 00:07:13] implementing, I thought it was implementing the Language Arts Common Core Standards and in an attempt to do it with Fidelity, I was tied to the binder.

And I don't believe that's how I was trained so it did feel like it made me more of a interchangeable unit in the classroom versus a necessary

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member that anybody could come in and open that binder and say what I needed to say that day. So that's one major way that I believe it affected me in the beginning as implementation. As I'm becoming more familiar with the standards and getting ahold of them myself, I'm remembering that when Common Core was on its I was excited about the creativity we were going to have. The opportunities to meet the standard but do it in a way—however it took, whatever we could do to make it happen. And then that wasn't how it got rolled out initially to me. So I'm getting more of that back but in the implementation I felt like it made me more of a robot than a teacher.

I: What would you say would account for you feeling that positive change of you having more of a voice in how you teach?

NT1: Now?

I: Uh-huh, now.

NT1:   I would admit that maybe the freedom that comes along with the other program I'm teaching where now I feel like the ELA Common Core Standards that I do provide for my students are, this might sound terrible, essentially optional because I'm not teaching their Language Arts program. So when I do hit ELA Common Core Standards with my own class I can do it in my own inventive, experimental way where we can write a poem out of fun because I'm not I'm not their actual Language Arts teacher. So the ELA Common Core Standards are being handled their ELA teacher, so I have more of a freedom in it. And also the familiarity that I am developing with the standards themselves versus what I believed were the standards when I was handed the curriculum.

I: I see.

NT1:   Because I tied the two as one, it took some experience to realize that that binder wasn't necessarily Common Core Standards it was a curriculum.

I: I see, thank you. Question number six; has your practice changed given your preparedness to implement the ELACCSS? If so, in what ways?

NT1:   So back to the beginning, I think it definitely changed my practice the way that the curriculum that I was using which I believed to be the standards was meant to be implemented. It changed everything about how I do things. I was on a page by a certain day versus experiencing a novel that I was reading with my students with my students—

I: I see.

NT1:   Developing questions as we went. Questions that I knew that answers for, that I didn't have to go look in the rest of the binder for the answers for. And, it's kind of a buzzword but, teachable moments, like the way that I was trained, the way that I used to practice teaching, although I didn't have much practice before the change happened just my training, was that that's what this was all about. That teachable moments would arise as the students were experiencing a novel or a science experiment or whatever it may be. And those are the moments you capitalized and you pulled in

whatever standards related to it and you hit it right there where it was real for them. Instead of scheduled out by page number and day number.

I: Makes sense. And thinking about reconstructing or changing your teaching practice as the result of ELACCSS implementation preparedness, what factors influenced that change? For example, implementation context, personal teaching experiences or perspectives, personal knowledge on the ELACCSS, professional development, level of experience, capacity, will, ability, motivation, other.

NT1:   Ok, so I can hit several of those. In regard to, I would say, experience and personal knowledge going hand in hand is I was pretty fresh to the job when the changes occurred. So I did initially become someone that read from the binder and I didn't even have other materials to pull so even when we knew against our own personal will or perspective that you're not supposed to stand in front of these kids and read from a binder, I didn't have anything else, I was too new. As I became familiar with the curriculum itself and then realize that it was lacking even in the standards themselves and then became more familiar with the standards, I'm now able to pull form other resources that I didn't compiled over the years now.

          So I do even have my own concerns and I'm only in this four or five years now but as I see brand new teachers, first years, coming in that they're going to feel like this is what they're supposed to be doing. And I feel like even maybe their training is—I feel like it's a mass production of people to stand and deliver versus what I believe was supposed to be or is supposed to be and can be with the standards done correctly. So as I become more familiar in my personal knowledge of the standards themselves separate from a curriculum [inaudible 00:13:45] my teaching practice is changing as well, back to what I believe it should be and what it can be versus how I was implementing them when I first began.

I: I see. So if I'm understanding correctly what you're saying is at first when you were first exposed to the new ELACCSS standards pretty much it sounds to me like you were a slave to the curriculum. And therefore that kind of limited your knowledge of the standards themselves—

NT1: Yes.

I: And how you could address the different sections within even that one standard based on your understanding of what teaching should be or the teaching practice.

NT1:   Yeah. And I'm not even sure why I'm not sure this was ever communicated to me but when Common Core came through as this is what we're going to do now, Common Core, Engage New York Came at the same moment. And I believed that my ability to address the ELA Standards for Common Core was through Engage and nothing else.

I: I see. Ok, question number eight, and this question will be in regards to implementation support.

NT1: Ok.

I: What supports were in place to implement the ELACCSS when it first started? For example, professional development, coaching, collaboration, time or any other support.

NT1: So we curriculums to pilot and there was professional development, if I'm remembering correctly. Like sort of first day of the year check-ins, whole district, not even really site level, where I remember a couple of times where they would hand us a document with the standards. Which for me, for a little while, I couldn't even find that information on hand. Where are these standards, what do they say? So we would be handed, say, a packet of ELA and they would either give us the range K6 or K8. And they would do a short presentation where with your group or your grade level, look at you and then look at what came before you and what came after you. And what do you notice what [inaudible 00:16:03]. But it was all very brief and it seemed very—this is our one shot to talk to everybody let's talk to everybody at once.

Not necessarily, hey, sixth grade, this is what you have to do, let's figure out how you're going to do it. Fifth grade, this is what you have to do. So there were attempts at professional development on the standards and they were, more than once, the standards themselves delivered to us. Which I valued because I didn't know where to find them on my own. At the time of implementation there wasn't collaboration time available, if I'm remembering correctly. There was coaching available but being as new as I was my coaching focused more on general teaching skills versus focusing down to Common Core Standards.

I: Ok. You indicated that you faced challenges or barriers in implementing the ELACCSS, what types of support could have addressed these challenges or barriers?

NT1: I think that the addition of collaboration time helps when used to focus on ELA Standards. I think that would be really beneficial, it's not always able to go that way. I think more time, if we think back to the implementation, more time just with the standards themselves, not with a banded curriculum, not with an idea of what the tests will be and how to teach to it. Just what are these standards, what do they say and what do my kids need to know now.

I: So kind of unpacking the standards—

NT1: Yeah.

I: And then actually kind of visualizing or kind of seeing them in action?

NT1: Right. In regard to the standard itself and not somebody's curriculum, just how do I achieve this standard. Yeah. Unpacking is definitely the word, yeah.

I: Ok. Is there a teacher support gap? If so, how is it affecting teachers' preparedness to implement the ELACCSS?

NT1: Is there a way to clarify that question?

I: Do you feel there's something that teachers need that they haven't been provided—

NT1:   Ok.

I: That could possibly help you as a teacher to better implement the standards? Either at the district level, site level, admin support, colleague support.

NT1:   I would say yes but I'm not even sure 'gap' is what I would use. One issue, I would call it more of a barrier in allowing myself I feel like to be more prepared to teach the ELA Standards is the amount of, I think, perceived support that we are getting. In the way of here's a box of this, here's notebooks for this, here's curriculum, curriculum, curriculum, this will all fix everything. When each new thing is thrown at us, even if it's the greatest solution to anything that's ever happened, I can't get good at it because the next one's coming. And it will be here in a minute and I haven't figured out how to use the last one. So it's almost like an inundating of perceived support, I would say perceived support. I think that whoever it is that makes these decisions isn't doing it to say I want to drown you in all these books.

       I think they believe, oh, this will help them or let's get them this to help them. But from my perspective in the classroom, it's suffocating and we're drowning and time with one element, be it a piece of curriculum or, again, just focusing on unpacking the standards. Or allowing us to find what we need versus being handed things. Which I know that other teachers say, well, if you want me to do this just give me something. And they are times when I'm like, I don't have anything for this. But maybe to let us come to you or come to those people and say this is what I'm looking for, do you have something for this? Instead of blanket deliveries.

I: I would say even more time for teachers to process and have the time for teachers to get familiar with one thing or hopefully with what's being asked at the moment and the initiative before moving on to all of these other layers of initiatives that come.

NT1:   Because if we take it just as ELA Common Core Standards, I still don't know them all by heart. Like I don't know—I mean, there are so many sections there's so many [inaudible 00:21:25].

I: Even the [inaudible 00:21:25] all of these other sub standards.

NT1:   Right, there's point As, point Bs, two, three, four five. So we obviously had to move past that within the years that we've had it, we have to do other initiatives. But we're not even masters at that before we're pulling in excellency in other curriculum that will solve it. Or this curriculum we already gave you has these holes, use these two to fill these holes and now you've got great. And it's overwhelming.

I: Yeah.

NT1:   Every time I feel like we are told or asked or even—this might sound bad, but allowed to focus on the standards alone. Just that, give me data on what you can do in this standard, I don't care where it comes from, I don't

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care how you got there. But when I'm able to focus on the standard alone I feel like I achieve something with my kids.

I: I see.

NT1:   I can see really who got it and who didn't. Not necessarily a curriculum test but it's a standard based assessment, I feel stronger.

I: You feel more successful. Can you provide me with an example of an implementation support that was particularly helpful in assisting you and implementing the ELACCSS?

NT1:   And implementation support that was helpful? I think the introduction of grade level collaboration time was helpful when we were getting started and figuring them out, what are they? What does a fifth grader have to know? I go back to when they handed them to me because I couldn't find them on my own.

I: When it comes to collaboration time with your colleagues, do you feel the focus on the standards has kind of vanished—

NT1:   Yeah.

I: With the time? Like we need to come back to the real—

NT1:   Right. I believe that it goes hand in hand with the barriers that are put there. We've got so much happening that that collaboration time has almost turned into a busy work time. We have to achieve this, this and this because we'll never get to it while we're in the classroom during the day.

I: I see.

NT1:   And we have to kind of check off boxes and I would say there's virtually no connection to a standard or how to attack a standard. There's a lot of scheduling, there's a lot of pacing going on about how are going to do 5.2a. That has been buried under everything else we've got now. Yeah.

I: I see. Is there anything else you would like me to know in regards to your preparedness to implement the ELACCSS?

NT1:   I guess just that even though I'm not the ELA Common Core teacher for my grade level this year the release of that responsibility has been challenging and I guess it's good to note also that when these reports come out, when the [inaudible 00:25:00] is done, when there's ELA data on my students that will be tied to my name, and there's not going to be anything that explains that I wasn't their teacher for that block.

I: I see.

NT1:   So I do feel like I'm still—and almost having to double dip them. Like I still have to try and hit every one of those standards super fast and really, like, the most basic version of that. And that might help me learn them even faster, but it's intimidating to know that there will be scores that have my name on them where I wasn't necessarily responsible for teaching those standards at all. There's an intimidation factor there. Yeah.

I: Ok, thank you.

NT1:   You're welcome.

Transcription of Novice Teacher 2

Interviewer read script.
I: We'll begin with the first question. What are your thoughts on how implementation of the ELACCSS is going?
NT2: I think it's going good. Everything now is Common Core in our classrooms and so there is nothing. We still have treasures but I haven't been using them. I have been using the benchmark materials for small groups and stuff so I think it's been going good for incorporating the new standards.
I: Okay. Please describe your current preparedness in implementing the ELACCSS for example knowledge of the standards instructional practices? Specifically how prepared are you in implementing the ELACCSS.
NT2: The knowledge of the standards is just I always have to look over them to remember exactly what they are to remind myself. I feel like I'm prepared, somedays obviously are a little bit up and down but for the most part I feel pretty prepared for implementing the standards. I haven't talked with the California standards so it's easier for me to feel more prepared with Common Core because I didn't have to do any transitioning.
I: I see. That makes sense.
NT2: I feel like I'm pretty prepared for the most part on everything. Before when I was doing my student teaching it was both California and Common Core. It seemed more confusing then but now that I'm actually teaching it seems the Common Core is really not that difficult. It's pretty easy to get in the swing of things of implementing into the classroom.
I: Okay very well. Please describe the ways in which your preparedness has affected how you implement the ELACSS. For example, have you felt you're prepared in implementing the Common Core state standards how has that in turn affected how you implement with students or even you as you see yourself as a teacher?
NT2: For me the standards seem a little bit dry for the kids so one way I prepare is I try to add in ways to make the learning a little bit more fun and that can have the children grasp the material better. That's how I guess it's affected me in implementing the standards. I think when you just constantly make them – when there's nothing hands on for them it gets too repetitive and then they get a little bit bored and then they don't want to learn as much. Is that what the question's asking?
I: Yes. Would you feel the Common Core standards, specifically the ELACCSS, has allowed you to have more autonomy as a teacher or the other hand –
NT2: I think it pulls away.
I: It has restricted you in some ways?
NT2: Yes. There's so much that you have to do now for ELA that it takes away from the other things and so I try and incorporate the other things into the ELA to make it connected.

I: embed the others

NT2: Yes. I'll do science activities that go along with the ELA standard that we're working on so that way they get a little bit of both.

I: Do you find yourself looking out or getting those resources or looking for resources on your own?

NT2: yes

I: Okay. Do you feel you're doing that yourself but not necessarily as a gray level?

NT2: Yes.

I: Okay very well, number four. You indicated that you're implementing the ELACCSS in your classroom at your school. Can you tell me how that got started for you?

NT2: Well the materials were given to us for the curriculum that we have to use and then I also went on my own to look for other additional resources to include, teachers pre-teachers for the most part a lot of them. And I make sure it says Common Core standards on whatever I buy on 'Teachers pay teachers'. That's how I implemented it.

I: Okay, sounds good. What ways has implementation of the ELACCSS affected you as a teacher either positive or negative?

NT2: Neither. When I first read Common Core standards I thought they were awful when I first learned about them. Now that I'm actually teaching them I don't think they're that awful. I mean it's basically the same thing it's just worded a more complicated way I feel like, than the California standards. California standards were I guess more at a kid's level to understand where Common Core is more at an adult level. You have to break it apart to figure out what. I don't know.

I: break apart the staff you're self

NT2: The pieces, yes. It hasn't affected me. I mean regardless you still have to teach the kids how to read and do math. I think with Math the good thing about implementing it as a teacher is it makes the kids have multiple ways of looking at one way to answer a problem versus just having the old way, the one way that I learned as a kid like "You only can do it this way" especially with multiplication. There's four ways to solve the same problem to it reaches more kids that way I feel like rather than just having the one way this way or the highway.

I: Do you feel that your practice has changed given your preparedness to implement the ELACCSS, if so in what ways?

NT2: For me it has not changed since I didn't teach before.

I: To the CST

NT2: Yes. And so I've only been teaching for this Common Core standards so I haven't had to change anything with what I have especially since I've switched grade levels both years. That's changed but not related to Common Core.

I: Thinking about reconstructing or changing your teaching practice as a result of the ELACCSS implementation preparedness what factors would influence that change for example implementation context, you're at the school or district level, personal teaching experiences or perspectives, personal knowledge on the ELACCSS, professional development, level of experience capacity, ability or other?

NT2: I guess the only thing about changing the teaching practice because of the Common Core would be incorporating the other areas to fit it in because with the way hours are

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broken down you can't include science and social studies very often so it has to be embedded in the ELA time block otherwise they're never going to get it in the day.

I: They're not going to get exposed to the other subject areas, yes.

NT2: Most of the times if I don't get it through the week, Fridays are my days where I'll add the science in. That way they can still get it in. But that would be the only thing that would change because of the Common Core.

I: Okay that's good. These questions will be in relation to implementation support. What supports were in place to implement the ELACCSS for example; professional development, coaching, collaboration time or any other?

NT2: We have the coaching, the collaboration and the PD. I don't feel like our PD workshops are very helpful. Coaching, I feel like for the most part I do most of it myself. I'm one that has to do trial and error so for collaboration time our team doesn't collaborate real well.

I: Do you think that would have made a difference for you as a teacher if the team was to collaborate? And if so, on what areas would you say would benefit you particularly?

NT2: To me it would be beneficial to the kids. It's getting better I just feel like it's very old – more so older teachers do not want to switch to newer ways of doing things especially when we were working on narrative writing it was like this way, no, nothing.

I: So not that openness of trying things out

NT2: Yes. That's where the collaboration I guess support. I do it on my own. Navarro works with me but it's kind of separated. I mean **[inaudible 00:10:25]** is always helpful if we have any questions she's always there to support us.

I: But mostly it's on your own

NT2: Yes. I pretty much do everything on my own. I'll share with them and tell them what I'm doing, some things they like, and some things it's not –

I: for them to choose and pick

NT2: It's not related to benchmark specifically so then they won't do it. But if it helps the kids I don't really care if it's not benchmark related as long as the kids are learning that's the ultimate goal.

I: For question nine it's more in relations to challenges or barriers in implementing ELACCSS. In your case have you experienced any personal challenges or barriers in implementing the standards?

NT2: Not for ELA for ELD, I would say that one's more of the one that would be challenging because the standards don't really seem that different from ELA. Now that I'm in first grade I feel like because I only speak English in the classroom they're giving the ELD because I can't speak Spanish. I mean I've noticed the difference from the beginning of the year 'til now the beginning of the year they come and speak to me in Spanish – I don't know what you're saying.

I: Yes so they're forced to use the language.

NT2: Now whenever they want to tell me something they know that and they don't even come to me in Spanish now. They say it in English. For me with my class I feel like they get ELD all day long because I can't speak Spanish to them to clarify in Spanish and so they don't get that support the other teachers are giving them but they're learning the language faster.

I: Yes I see what you mean.

NT2: So for ELA I don't see the challenges. The ELD to me especially in first grade since I am speaking English all day it seems pointless to switch since my kids are getting that all day long.

I: Thinking about support in the case that you were facing challenges or barriers in implementing the ELACCSS. What types of support do you feel you could address these challenges with some of the challenges that other teachers might be facing and implementing the ELA, either district wide or county wide site level? You mentioned something about the professional development not being that helpful. If we were to go down that way what in PD would make it be more for teachers?

NT2: To me hands on activities are where kids learn the most rather than reading to them and then telling them about it but them not actually doing things. There's a few teacher I follow on Instagram that do professional development that's hands on related and to me something that's hands on for PD even for teachers to be able to make things and then be able to bring whatever it is that they learn from that and back to the classroom because it can be differentiated by grade level. But I guess that would be better PDs rather than – I mean looking at a power point gets boring after a while. There's a reason why you like to be creative in your classroom. When we go to a professional development I feel like it's the same thing when we just sit there and listen to someone talk at us all day is when we don't pay attention either.

I: And with that it seems to me that you also as you mentioned incorporate that hands on and teaching in your class for students more of the project base learn let's address the standard but by doing something so that hopefully they can better on understand it. Do you feel there's a teacher support gap? If so how is it affecting teachers; preparedness to implement the ELACCSS?

NT2: I don't really know if there I just think it's – I mean I know the district is trying to figure out what there is best to support us so I think they're working on it at the same time they haven't been in the classroom for a while. Some of them probably haven't ever been in the classroom. Who knows? They don't really know what we need for the support.

I: so a disconnected between –

NT2: teacher's in a district. And so the things that they think that we need are not necessarily probably what we always need rather than I guess asking for teacher input and seeing what we really need versus what they – like the close reading constantly when you hear it once then you hear it a second time and you hear it a third time it's the same thing every single time. But when you don't give us I guess the proper resources for it – I don't know. It gets boring too when it's the same thing over and over again rather than maybe going outside of the blocks and finding new ways. But I think it's just the more that they learn the standards the better the support will be.

I: I see. Apparently you feel there's disconnect between the supports that are being offered to teachers where these supports might not necessarily be what's really needed to implement full on. Maybe thinking about doing a needs assessment what the teachers really need so that then we can go back, the backwards standing. Let's go back and look

at the things that they're asking for and see what would be the best approach or support or curriculum or strategies.

NT2: whatever it might be

I: Question number 11: Can you provide me with an example of an implementation support that was particularly helpful in assisting you in implementing the ELACCSS?

NT2: I know I did my research and then the book for everybody the daily five. I guess that would be a good support. I mean he asked me about it but then he made sure that everybody else knew about it so that he was able to get the books for all the lower grades so that he could try to implement it. That was good for everyone else. I guess for both you and him as you both support us with what we do and trusting us so I guess that's nice.

I: That's fine I mean like I said there's no right or wrong answer. It's just really thinking about hopefully being able to really support teachers knowing like you mentioned what they really need to feel more prepared in implementing. We obviously have a disconnect. There are so many different levels. Is there anything else you would like me to know in regards to your preparedness to implement the ELACCSS?

NT2: Not really. For the most part I feel prepared.

I: Very well. That's great.

NT2: I'm always looking for new things to add on to benchmark but other than that I feel pretty prepared.

I: You've taken on the lead to get yourself prepared.

NT2: Yes. I always try to find new things to make it more – I mean I know I like things to be more creative and the kids want it too.

I: Oh yes.

NT2: It's more fun and then they get more excited.

I: Yes I agree.

NT2: Thank you.

I: Yes.

November 21, 2016

Transcription of Mid-Career Teacher 1

Interviewer read script.

I: Please describe your current preparedness in implementing the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards ELA CCSS specifically, how prepared are you in implementing the ELA CCSS?

MCT1: I feel like it's a learning process. It hasn't been something that anyone teaching coach, or the district has been able to really truly prepare the teacher for. It's something that we've taken some course like some professional development courses for step with the writing, implement some writing standards. And then I know there's the Engage New York professional development sessions that are going on. But that's really just to

implement the curriculum, it's not really standards focused I've noticed. Everything that we've been doing is more – I don't know, I consider it like a banding on the problems, like they're giving us band-aids but they're not – for me, it has to be the teachers willing to spend a lot of time to prepare themselves, they haven't felt like the district has been able to provide that preparedness. I don't know if that's the same nationwide because I haven't really spoken to anybody else in different districts, in different cities and so it could be a nationwide thing. I don't know, I know that my grade level also feels like, "Okay, how are we going to teach this? We don't have curriculum for this. We need to focus on the standard, now we need to pull in these supplemental materials and we need to find what's on line." And so there's nothing that's really encompassing this. This is the standard and this is what you need to use to teach it, and these are the steps or you know, start with this lesson and then it grows onto this lesson. And then looking at the end of your test, the [inaudible 00:02:14] testing it's like, everything that we have does not match what these kids are testing. And so, it's kind of defeating but like learning at the same time. I don't know how to describe it.

I: Thank you. Question three, please describe the way or ways in which your preparedness has affected how you implement the ELA CCSS.

MCT1: Well, because I have to go back and really read the standard and try to understand how it's going to be tested at the end of the year, what is it that the students are going to be asked to do to show that they know that standard, that they've mastered that standard. It takes much more time than just using engage in your curriculum. The curriculum doesn't cover all of the ELA standards, it only covers a lot of the reading portion but not the writing, not the grammar, not the language portion. And then the reading portion is so intense like there's so much to it. It takes a lot of time to implement. So I have to find myself spending more time, trying to shave down the lessons to only pick out the meat that I need so that I can cover the other things. And then I have to sit down and try and figure out what materials am I going to use to cover these other things. And also, how is it going to be tested for the students because I may be teaching this great lesson and then they take it to the test and they don't know how to transition what they've learned to how they're tested. It's a different format using different words sometimes. Like for example, the Engage New York uses the word [inaudible 00:03:55] uses the word central idea. And so I just learned that recently and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, now I have to go back and change all of my [inaudible 00:04:05]" and all the practice we've been doing like [inaudible 00:04:09] and I have to go back and teach them, it means the same, it's synonymous with central idea, with main idea, with central focus, with you know, and it's just – it would be nice to have that information ahead of time when we're introduced to the standards before at the beginning of the year. So okay, this is what we need to teach and this is how it's going to look in the test and so, using this curriculum, using some of these resources we found, let's come up with a plan on how to teach it step-by-step, by step from month August all the way to April when you're being tested. That would be nice but unfortunately, I find that having to do that on my own, and it's very time consuming.

I: It is, that's a lot to do.

MCT1: Yeah.

I: Okay, you indicated that you're implementing the ELA CCSS in your classroom and your school, can you tell me how that started?

MCT1: Miss [inaudible 00:05:13] our principal when I came three – third year of implementing, I think four years ago, this is my fourth year of teaching it [inaudible 00:05:22] and the first year, we did not implement it. I remember I stepped to the California State Standards because she said, "Just stick to the standards." And then towards the middle end of the year, we were told, "No, we need to implement it." so it was jarring to say the least because I didn't know how to implement it. I had left teaching for about four years. So when I came back, it's like I was comfortable with the state standards, but I have heard common core was here or around the corner. So, I remember my first year was awful like they don't think I really implement it at all. I was kind of just learning. And then the second year, Miss [inaudible 00:06:09] focused on – started teaching us about close reading. And I didn't connect the dots and I don't think she had either. It was kind of a learning process of connecting the dots of this standard, just to this close reading that she was trying to teach us to do and then she come back and say, "Okay, this was wrong, let's try it this way." I started trying to put sentence frames up and then that was like the beginning steps. I didn't understand how sentence frames worked, I didn't come from district where we had a high EL population. So it was the majority of African-American and white. And so, I'm noticing the sentence frames really helped these ELL students but they get like they need it, they get reliant upon it. And then when it comes the time for testing, they don't remember them or they don't – they go back to their [inaudible 00:07:02] and then they go back to the way they just normally speak. And so, you need to figure out how to fix that for testing time and just academic talk and getting them to talk without having a sentence going around.

I: Yeah.

MCT1: And I started making anchor charts. I learned how to make anchor charts and then I went online, a lot of research online, a lot of Pinterest, and seeing what other teachers were putting up, and I saw some pictures of Chula Vista and what they were doing, so that kind of helped. And then I would go to other teacher's classrooms and see how are they approaching some of these CCSS stuff, and how are they helping their students with ELA, and I went and visited [inaudible 00:07:44] George Lopez, when he was teaching, I was visiting his class to see how he implemented it. And so, it's just been a lot of beg, borrow, and steal, try to create my own things. I've started incorporating interactive notebooks for the kids because it's just a lot of material that we don't have room on the walls for. So trying to teach them how to use the researches, we're teaching them. But I noticed all these hoops, all these things we have to do, all these hoops we

have to jump through in order to teach these standards and get these kids where they need to be and then testing time comes, and they don't get to use any of those resources. All of the things [inaudible 00:08:22]. Their journals, their notebooks, their anchor charts, their – and I think that's hard for the kids. They stand there like – I don't know if they're thinking, "Is this stuff bad and we can't use it?" I don't know, but it seems like all the things that we were [inaudible 00:08:37] and teach and I think, "Okay, we've mastered it." and then testing time comes and it's like, "What? Why would you put that?" [Inaudible 00:08:45] yeah. I don't know if I answered your question but.

I: Thank you.

MCT1: I felt like I talked in a circle.

I: Question five, in what ways has implementation of ELA CCSS affected you as a teacher?

MCT1: I think in part, it's definitely made me a better teacher because it makes me have to research and have to ask questions and it really makes me reflect more on my teaching practice when I'm going home and thinking about the lesson that I've taught for ELA and thinking through, "okay, did the students understand this concept? Did they master this particular standard? How can I evaluate that?" because the assessments provided don't always evaluate what I'm looking for and so it definitely forces me to think through each individual lesson and how they fit together as an entire puzzle, how to meet that big picture. On the other hand, it is more time consuming. So I find myself staying later at work and bringing home more materials over the weekend and spending more time trying to plan my lesson so that it's not on [inaudible 00:10:20] but more of words integrated into the lessons before and they've kind of worked together and trying to teach the kids that each lesson I'm teaching and they're not separate, they all work together, has been the biggest challenge I think for the students to understand.

I: Kind of setting that purpose or even for the students to see what's the purpose of me learning, you know.

MCT1: This, yeah, X and then how do I use this with what we learned last time and how do they work together, yeah, that's been a challenge. And then again, I hate to beat a dead horse but when they see the test, when they see those practice [inaudible 00:10:58] the ICA, or they take the actual [inaudible 00:11:00] at the end of the year, a lot of them are thrown. Especially those students that have language barriers, if they're using different types of words that we didn't use throughout the lessons, they'll answer it completely wrong. They'll try to guess, "What does this really mean?" and in reality, all throughout the year, they've been doing it, they've been successfully using it, but we're using different phraseology or different verbiage. So it's kind of frustrating because I've taken the practice aspect many times. But when the real aspect comes and I'm walking around

and I have to be [inaudible 00:11:40] and I can't explain that this word means this, this [inaudible 00:11:45] it's frustrating.

I: Question six, has your practice changed giving your preparedness to implement the ELA CCSS? If so, in what ways?

MCT1: Yes, my preparation practice has changed. I have to make sure there's much more material on the wall for our focus walls and our close reading walls and all the things they come in and look for, and my teaching practice has changed because again, I don't always feel prepared and I have to put forth more time and effort to make sure that I understand the standard and then to make sure that I'm delivering the standard in a way the students will get the end result. So a lot of times, I have to do backwards planning. I have to see, "Okay, what is the end result of [inaudible 00:12:59] test." Or a lot of times I find that I'm focusing on the engage assessments and that's a hard balance because the engage assessments don't match what they're going to be exposed with at the end of the year. So I'm trying to fulfill the engage assessments to show our GLT to whether it's the instructional coach, or whether the principal or whether it's the assistant principal to show them yes, we're producing and then also fulfill well, the kids aren't going to be tested that way at the end of the year, so now, what do I have to do to extra to get them ready? So it's like a hard…

I: [inaudible 00:13:48] using the curriculum to engage in our [inaudible 00:13:51].

MCT1: Exactly.

I: And on the other hand, you have the [inaudible 00:13:55] so they don't necessarily match.

MCT1: Yes.

I: How to use the curriculum to prepare them for the [inaudible 00:13:59] and if that curriculum is even giving them support.

MCT1: Right, exactly. And then I know there's some principals who probably are a slave to the curriculum because that's what they're used to or that's what they're comfortable with and I don't have a feel for our new principal yet but I know our previous principal, Miss [inaudible 00:14:23] I mean I remember sitting down with her when I first started at [inaudible 00:14:29] realizing, finally realizing that these standards don't match this engage stuff we have and I just told her, "Can I just focus on the standard? Am I going to get in trouble if I go away from lesson two and lesson four and lesson six? And do I have to do what the whole grade levels do? Or maybe just focus on the standard?" and she gave me the green light, she said, "Yes, use the materials when it enhances your teaching and supports the standard." But I told her, "I don't want to be a slave to the curriculum." Because the curriculum doesn't match what I think we're supposed to be teaching. It

totally doesn't match how they're going to be assessed on the [inaudible 00:15:07]. So I'm going to get them more ready for the [inaudible 00:15:09] then mastering this engage module. And so, she said that was fine, so I've been focusing more on that. I think some of my grade level's afraid to do that because they think, "Oh no, I'm not [inaudible 00:15:23]." And for me, I'm the opposite. If the lesson helps, great, if not, I'm not even going to use it this time, I'm going to have to use some other materials that will support this lesson and the standard and teach exactly what they need to know. But I do find it difficult because I don't find a lot of materials that I can present to them other than [inaudible 00:15:45] that I can print out. But you can only do those so many times. That's just getting them test ready, it's not really teaching the standard. So that's what I'm finding how do I – I'm finding the challenges of how do I find really good material that teaches the standard from the beginning all the way to the end and then gets them ready for that test. That's been a challenge for me.

I: Do you think teachers would feel more prepared if they were to receive that message from administrators or from the district as a whole like we're more focused on standards or standard-based I suppose to the curriculum because I know right now or at least my experience has been like you mentioned at some schools that there's a big focus on using the curriculum at Engage New York. However, I think little by little there's a little – since the transition happened inward, it's like the Engage New York is not really addressing our needs. So where are we? Did we really continue telling teachers to focus on the curriculum or is it a more – let's look at the standard and see how we can address the standard based on the needs of our students.

MCT1: I have to be honest. When I first had that conversation with miss [inaudible 00:16:58], I had three conversations with her, and the first time was my second year of teaching and I remember asking her, can I just focus on the standard and use the curriculum when I need to? When she said yes, I was relieved. But I didn't believe, I thought, yeah she is saying yes but I'm going to get in trouble later on and then the next year, I just told her, "I'm doing this, I'm doing that, you said last year could, is that okay?" and the more she said yes, Sandra, yes, I'm telling you yes, I remember that second conversation, I just felt truly relieved and this was last year when she was just, "Yes, you can focus on the standard, I'm giving you my permission to view your way from the curriculum when you need to, but use it when it will help you." and I just remember feeling a sense of relief and it was at that time last year where I finally was able to focus more on what the standard said and was able to understand the standard on a deeper level because I wasn't fishing through all that curriculum and trying to figure how do I piece this together, and how do I teach it? I had more time to focus my energy and my time on what is this standard? What is it really saying? What can I do to teach these kids? And then look at the curriculum and okay, does this particular lesson help to teach this? Where can I use this in my lesson, I'm not even going to use it at the beginning, I'm going to use it towards the middle or use it at the end. I'm not even going to use this page out of the whole lesson because this is the one that matches what we're really trying to do in the classroom. So I think if other principals told their staff, we're really becoming standards

based. And this is what it looks like to take a standard and actually teach it. And I'll show you how and I don't even think that's a principal's job, maybe the instructional coach, I don't know. Where they would sit down with the grade level or a teacher, I think the whole staff maybe that might need much, I don't know. I could see maybe the instructional coach sitting down and going okay, this is a standard and I'm going to show you how to teach this standard. It's going to take two or three days or whatever. And we're going to use some of the material from the curriculum but I'm going to show you how to look online for other materials or these are great materials I bought online and I'm going to show you how to teach this standard. And then the teachers can sit down and go, "Oh, that's standard focused. I get it." or "That's how we can use the curriculum to enhance the standard. That's a good material we can use online and integrate it." or "That's the production, the creative part of the close reading that we can have the students do later on that matches what they're going to be tested on later. I get the whole picture now." but I don't know if that's happening because I'm not in other sites. I know that what I just described didn't even happen at my site, it's just what I'm taking from what she said, "Yes, go ahead." The green light and then I have to kind of take the ball and run with it. so I think if other teachers heard that, I think we'd feel the same thing I felt at first like, yeah right, you're saying that now but I'm going to get in trouble later. And then later on as time progress…

I: The accountability piece you know, to see how much of the curriculum you're actually using.

MCT1: You're allowing me to teach the standard.

I: Thank you. Question seven, I'm thinking about reconstructing [inaudible 00:20:38] of changing your teaching practice as a result of ELA CCSS implementation preparedness, what factors influenced that change? And then I have here for example, implementation context, personal teaching experiences, perspectives, personal knowledge in their ELA CCSS, professional development, level of experience, capacity/will, ability, motivation or [inaudible 00:21:01]?

MCT1: For me definitely, personal teaching experiences because that's how I grow, it's reflecting on, what is working, what isn't working, what was a waste of time, what do the kids really get, what do I remember from walking around and looking at the [inaudible 00:21:19] last year, I can't remember very well. Does it match, I don't know, I don't remember. Definitely, personal knowledge of the standards themselves like fine, as the years go by, I'm feeling more comfortable with knowing the standards, I still can't recite them verbatim but when I go back, "Oh yeah that's right, I remember the standard. Okay, how do we implement this?" so getting more comfortable with what the standards say, and talking about with the grade level actually during the [inaudible 00:21:53] times, I think it helps to talk about what is the standard really saying? I know we had a conversation on some ELA standards [inaudible 00:22:01] and we were talking about okay, we are using this ELA lessons but we're integrating in our ELA time. What's the

difference between text structure and text format, we were talking about it and we were trying to piece it together and try to disguise what is this standard really asking and what's it going to look like? Not on the engaged assessments but what's it going to look like at the end of the year? What are these kids going to be expected to do in terms of both of these things. I think getting to know the standards better definitely helps professional development. I appreciate the district trying to provide a lot of professional development but I'm not sure if I've experienced the professional development. I personally need to really make teaching the standards super clear. I think there's been a lot of individual sessions, some [inaudible 00:23:08] learning opportunities where I think they're trying to identify certain areas that we're lacking. But it's almost like – what is it they say? Kind of like you're preparing for some problem that's already happened instead of preparing to prevent the problem. There's a saying, I can't think of it but I kind of feel like that. Like our district is always two steps behind trying to fix the problem instead of sitting down and identifying, "This is going to be an issue so let's teach how to…"

I: Anticipating a little…

MCT1: Yes, yes. So I'm just saying, "Maybe I'll think of it…" but yeah, where it's always like, "Okay, we don't have a writing program, so let's do step up the writing," which isn't even a program, they're just strategies, there's no curriculum involved, so then you still to have to go back to square one and find things that you innovate with being engaged or reading or trying to lace everything together and so we got to find more material. You have these great strategies, but then there's no material, you've got to go back to material on it. I think the problem is we don't have any CCSS-ELA material that's been adopted officially, you know, so, I don't know,. I also see teachers that become slaves to the curriculum too, and I don't think that's good too either. So I think teachers, they need to – I think I veered off the question but…

I: No, it's find really.

MCT1: …I'm thinking about [inaudible 00:24:48] changing your teaching practice. Yeah, I think that teachers, myself included, we need to get into the mindset of we're slaves to the standards. And how do we teach these standards using whatever materials are available, working together, finding things online and then sharing them, I don't think we're sharing enough. I think we're kind of pseudo-sharing, but I think when we find really good things, I think a lot of times we're afraid to share because we haven't done it yet, so we wait to see, "Is it effective?"

I: Is this thing working out?

MCT1: Yeah, I know for me, I try to share, but only after I've implemented it, because I don't want to, you know, we're already kind of lost..

I: With everything, right?

MCT1: Yeah.

I: Like all the things that [inaudible 00:25:34].

MCT1: So I don't want to give someone the "This is the way to do it," and then later on, "Sorry, that's not the way to do it," it was awful, it didn't work with my students at all. So I think the learning process is slow because we don't really have anything tangible, anything concrete to provide to each other and I find that we, as teachers, are having to do that, because we feel lost, you know. A lot of times we fell like, "Okay, how do we teach the standards and what are they expecting," and then we have all these crazy timelines and timeframes to get – curriculum line, so I don't know. I think I'm lost.

I: Question eight, what's supports were in places to implement the ELA CCSS? For example ,professional development, coaching and collaboration time, or others?

MCT1: Professional development, we have had some step up to writing – I've only been to one, I'm waiting for the narrative writing, but I went to the opinion writing one, but it was after the fact – it was already after the benchmark was given, so I felt like again, like we're two steps behind, you know, we're identifying the problem and then trying to fix it, instead of, "Here's what's going to happen, let's prepare you in advance."

I: Be more proactive about it.

MCT1: Yeah, proactive, there you go. We need to be more proactive instead of reactive, exactly. I think that's what I was thinking about, yes. With coaching, I don't get a lot of support with the coaching at our school, a lot of times is because I don't ask.

I: And with that, do you feel, teachers should be the ones asking?

MCT1: No.

I: Or again, be more proactive, especially when it comes to instructional coach of being more proactive and kind of anticipating, this is what the district is asking and they cannot [inaudible 00:27:46] and anticipate what teacher's needs might be.

MCT1: Here's what I think. I've envisioned myself as a coach. People have said, " [inaudible 00:27:53] you should become a coach" and I felt like oh no, I just returned to teaching four years ago. I don't feel ready but then I look at sometimes you know, the situation and I go man, I would but that the standard – exactly what I explained to you earlier, I would do that with my staff.

I: I think that would be great.

MCT1: I would do that with my staff.

I: I think those are [inaudible 00:28:14].

MCT1: Thank you, I wouldn't wait for staff members to come to me and say, "I need help with this implementation." Or "I need help, show me how to do it." I would already be training them. And then, after I train them by grade level or individually or whatever, then I go in and show them what the class, what does it really – because it's one thing to say, I would do this and then I would say, now, I have to show proof in the putting. So I have to go and show you on the coach and I'm going to coach you. You watch, I'm going to do – and then the next time, we're going to do it together. And then the next time, you're going to do what I'm going to talk about. And then I'm going to…

I: That reflective cycle that we do, I do, you do, and we do.

MCT1: Exactly right? It's hard for me to ask for help if I feel like someone else is lost also. It's hard for me to say, "Help me." and then in my own mind I'm going, "Oh, they don't know how to do it either." They're lost as well. I feel like, okay, I have to figure it out. I feel like – when I first came to the school, and I heard we had an instructional coach, I had worked – I had taught for about nine years prior to leaving teaching and coming to [inaudible 00:29:28] I've taught for nine years from 2000 to 2009. We never had an instructional coach, I've never heard of such a thing, we didn't have any event in our district, and our district was pretty small, we only have like five schools. So when I heard about an instructional coach in my mind, I already had a vision of what that was, I thought it was going to be someone who was going to come to us and show us this awesome lessons that were going to show us how to integrate standards, and show with us different resources they're finding and not wait for me to go ask for help, it would be someone who they would use their time all day to do that. That's what I thought it was. And when I saw that was not happening, and I kind of asked for some of that help and I met with like an attitude or I met with like just not what I perceived that's a willingness to share. And I was like, oh forget it, I'm not going to be kissing anybody's butt to get the basics, I'll find the basics.

I: I feel like I think for me, the way that I interpret instructional coaches, that person is there to provide resources like an outreach person for the teachers.

MCT1: And not just teachers pay teachers, I can find it out on my own, more substantial.

I: Yes exactly, on the standard. I think I'm kind of [inaudible 00:30:47] because I'm not ready to post it online. But I completely feel you.

MCT1: And I don't want to throw our coach into the bus either, everything is very political in this district. If you're doing this for educational purposes and trying to find out someone's perspective, I know it's not going to go out in this [inaudible 00:31:05] I don't

want to make problems or anything. I think that's probably why I just keep my mouth quiet because I don't want to make waves.

I: This is completely confidential.

MCT1: I envisioned that if I was – if I just had the ideal coach that I think a coach would be because coaches don't have to [inaudible 00:31:23] unless they're doing a lesson for somebody. They don't have to grade papers, they don't have to take work home, and grade or get ready for benchmarks and grade the benchmarks. So it's like I think, okay, as a coach, I would use that time to really identify every single teacher's needs. Talk to them, ask them, give them a survey and then sit down with them and, "Okay, I'm really interested in helping you with X. if I can't help you with X, Y and Z but let's try X first and see how that goes." I'd use my time to help them if I could.

I: That's a great idea, it would be a great idea to serving the teachers. What are your needs, your individual needs and then as a coach saying, how can I address whether the individual means teacher by teacher or even if a few teachers are struggling with the same thing, kind of starting as a starting point.

MCT1: Or just ask them what's your biggest need this year? Just pick one, I'm only one person and you guys are 30 to 35 teachers, just pick one, what can I really try to focus on and help you during this first trimester? And then maybe if that's tackled, okay, second trimester. Is that the same need you have or is there something different? Has it manifested to something different? What can I help you with, and like a growing process where at the end of the year the teacher can say, "I only got one [inaudible 00:32:36], but boy it was a big one, it was classroom management," or, "I know how to assess my students now," or, "I know how to make a connection with my students, where they trust me and they're listening, " or, "I have more time on task now," you know?

I: Yeah.

MCT1: Yeah.

I: Number nine; so this is in regard to challenges and barriers in implementing the ELA-CCSS, what types of supports could address these challenges and are barriers and I think you already spoke to that one there.

MCT1: Yeah.

I: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

MCT1: Maybe, I think sometimes the grade levels [inaudible 00:33:17] to be encouraged to talk about how are you going to implement this as a grade level? I see some great teachers doing thing things individually but I don't only see the grade levels doing it

together or being willing to try something together and then failing and being okay with that, saying, " Okay, let's not do that again. Let's do this instead, or this part has worked. So I'm thinking maybe providing some coaching to the grade level and maybe saying, "This is how I would take this particular unit, or this particular lesson within your unit within the curriculum you have and then modifying it so that you can teach all these other things. And now I would have to see you as a group like as a grade level, I'd like to see what are you guys going to do that's going to give equality to the students instead of, "You're a fantastic teacher and you taught us so well," and you have this fantastic resource for them and the kids know how to use it and they have these notebooks that they can use and then you're a good teacher as well, but you didn't do any of the things that we talked about and so you're kids are struggling and then you're this teacher who's doing your own thing and you know, I'm sure you're a fantastic teacher too, but we talked about doing [inaudible 00:34:35], you know, so just like maybe providing the forum during the GLT's where the teachers can talk about, "This is what's working and this is what we need to be on – I think they're trying to do it at my site, they're trying, but there's no accountability, you know? It's like nobody comes and checks to see, "Did we do that lesson well? Did the kids learned from it? Do we have the same board we were talking about?" They kind of just say, "Okay, make the same anchor chart and that doesn't [inaudible 00:35:05] and it's like a band aid. Like what I said before…

I: [Inaudible 00:35:07] willing to do and will not if they did, but those are not…

MCT1: And then it's like people come in and they look and they're looking for certain, but then in my mind, I'm always thinking, "This is like a dog and pony show," you know, like, you're just looking for – but that doesn't gauge if our kids are really learning, you know? You're looking for the fancy letters and the fancy pictures and the fancy [inaudible 00:35:31] – but I'd rather use the [inaudible 00:35:36] my students and ask them, "What are you doing? What's this lesson about? Teach me how to do this. What does this mean? Why would you use those words?" you know, I'd rather – that would be a good gauge, than just having my classroom look fancy and you know, "Oh, you have this board up, you have this board," kids don't care if the boards are up, if you don't teach them how to use it and then you don't teach them and then you don't teach them how to access that knowledge when they're not up, you know, the kids don't care…

I: I agree 100%.

MCT1: They just walk in and go, [inaudible 00:36:01] pretty classroom – I find myself like every month changing something to the boards, putting new info. Taking something off, putting something I think is better and the kids have to [inaudible 00:36:13] they don't even notice that it's changed unless I show them, "Okay, this is changed guys, let's use this instead," and a lot of times, I just feel like, "Oh," you know? People come in and I don't even look up and see who they are. Not to be disrespectful, but it's like, why are you really here? You know, like you're just here to see the show and I don't put a show on, I don't put a show on. I just tell the kids, "You be you and I'm going to be me," and if

I'm ever phony or fake, call me out on it, "Mrs. [inaudible 00:36:39] why are you acting this way?" because you know, you should be able to learn and I should be able to teach and all this people coming and I don't mind, but it's like, "What are you really looking for?"

I: We're really evaluating tat student learning, I mean student engagement.

MCT1: What's the purpose of coming in [inaudible 00:36:58]. Exactly, like, "How many nasty kids?" that's going to be the best test.

I: That's true. Question 10; is there a teacher support gap? If so, how is it affecting teachers prepares to implements the ELA-CCSS?

MCT1: Oh, for sure, I mean, the only thing I'm satisfied when [inaudible 00:37:18]. The teachers, I mean, we learn as the students learn. So we can't trust them that the students will say, "Today, we're going to learn how to learn how to write opinion essays and here's your graphic organizer, fill it out," and now here's your paper, write an essay. It doesn't work that way. The same thing with teachers. Well, here's the standard, "Okay, here's some step up to writing and here are some – do this curriculum and okay, you taught it," no, it doesn't work that way. There's a big gap, so how we fill those gaps, I think it's going to take a deeper level of thinking on the part of the district in terms of providing professional development, development that's going to teach are, what the standards are? How to break them down, maybe, you have a [inaudible 00:38:08] planning on them. What would that look like? How long would it take? What materials could we use for that? Where can you access these materials? How can you assess the students without becoming a slave to the assessment that's in the curriculum. How can you make the assessment similar to how they're going to be tested at the end of the year. And then how often do you need to practice that with the students? Do you need to do some cyclical review throughout the year and what's going to help them to retain this knowledge and retain these strategies, so when they get to the end of the year and they're really testing, they're really ready. They're not going, "This is too much text, I'm not used to it, I can't read all of this, they don't have that rigor, and still they're doing what they need to do to get to the end of the year where they feel company. Last year I've had a couple of student who felt really confident and a couple out of 32 or 33, that's not very many, you know, that's less than 5% that said, "[Inaudible 00:38:59] I was waiting for that test, I took it and I remembered what you said about this, this," and those kids are exceptional students, they're not the norm in our district. You know, so it's getting the kids to where most of them, if not altruistically speaking, all of them could say, "We felt confident [inaudible 00:39:21], we did what we were taught and we remembered the strategies and I didn't get tired reading all that text and I remembered to go back and I knew how to use the highlighting in the curriculum, the computer," you know, "And I knew how to use the note section and I knew how to implement these things into my answer," they don't know how to use those tools. So it's like learning how to start from the standard and the get to that point and seeing that in action, I think there's one thing to hear through lecture and

then of course there's – most kids learn by doing and so do we as adults and I think that we forget that as the district, we forget [inaudible 00:39:59] by doing this. So what opportunities are we providing for them during the professional developments to do, to actually sit down and do a lesson and then present it to somebody. And then talk about what worked and what didn't work? How can I present this to my students now? Where can we go to the next level, how can I use what I just created with this lesson and tie it in to the next standard. And the how can I tie these standards together to tie into the standard. And then how is this going to look once the students test, what do we need to create something? Can we find that only, can we sit down as a team and create it together, can you say "I'll do this piece, you do that piece and then you know. It's a lot. We need to kind of sit down and reevaluate how we're getting teachers prepare. And not just new teacher.

I: I think everybody is [inaudible 00:40:53].

MCT1: The veteran teachers have even more, I think they have even more varies and challenges, because they're keeping themselves from being able to inform because they're stuck on a certain way of doing things or they're negative, you know, they're like, "Ah, this is a common pass. This is like every other pendulum swinging. In 10 years, this won't be here anymore." and so they don't give everything, you know they don't give these new standards their whole heart because they feel like, "Ah, it's going to change again," so it's like teaching all of the teachers, yeah, teaching all the levels, the beginning teachers, the middle teachers, the older teachers that are ready to retire, how do we teach these standards in an effective way to get these students ready to be successful, not just with testing, because that's where all our funding comes from, but in life, how are they going to use these [inaudible 00:41:43] of like? How is it going to help them to promote themselves and to be successful in life? This is what we're trying to do is create awesome student who will become leaders in the community and help the community and find success and break familiar cycles of poverty and ignorance and how is this going to help them in the future.

I: Great. Can you provide me with an example of an implementation support [inaudible 00:42:13] particularly helpful to you and assisting you and implementing the ELS-CCSS?

MCT1: I mean, if I was to talk about like a closer [inaudible 00:42:44] all those things to me is like, a bunch of fancy [inaudible 00:42:45] stuff, like evidence, proof that we're doing things, yeah, I receive some pictures of what other schools are doing during the GLT, that kind of give me an idea. Or going and seeing other teacher s and how they put [inaudible 00:43:03] for ELA that's helps, but for ELA that's helps, but I'm not sure, I'm transferring all of that fancy pants stuff on the walls with my teaching practice, I don't think I've really experienced implementation support with the teaching practice, how do you teach the standard? I don't – I can't think of a time where I've actually had someone sit down with me and go, "This is how you teach the standard. I'd like to see that happen. If I became a coach, that would probably be my goal, is to become that kind of a coach

that could do that and it might take a lot of practice and failure and revising, but I think that's what we need. But think I haven't experienced that yet.

I: Okay. And the last question; is there anything else you would like me to know?

MCT1: I'm hopeful for the future, although today, I've spoken a lot about my gaps and wholes and frustrations, but I'm hopeful and I'm hoping to learn and I think a lot of our teachers in our district are – I think there's a lot of fear probably that [inaudible 00:44:24] for different reasons, fear of the new standards and I know when testing time comes, there's a palpable, negative fearful energy that comes from just the fear of the students not doing well and are we going to be, as a teacher, I can speak [inaudible 00:44:55], "Am I going [inaudible 00:45:00] and I'm teaching these things through these tests and it's stressful, but I'm hopeful that as time goes by, we as teachers will get a better handle of how to teach the standards and what the standards are really [inaudible 00:45:12]. So I'm hopeful for the future, but I think it's going to take a lot of hard work and I think it's going to take a total of revision of how the district sees the standards and how – whomever it is, at the top that's making decisions of professional development and how we assess standards and how we're implementing this stuff and how we're getting ready for that. there needs to be a total change and maybe they need to see from the student's perspective and the teacher's perspective, which I don't always think is happening,, but I'm hopeful I think it will take more time. I think [inaudible 00:45:54] when we first start implementing the standards. She have said it's going to take like I'm going to say five years or something. I mean she said years and I was like, "Really?" and now it's like my third year and I'm like, "Yeah, she was right," another three or four years, I might feel comfortable. Yeah, but I'm hopeful and I'm excited you know, because um noticing growth throughout the years. The kids are starting to get more of a handle but it's super slow growth. It's very slow, so we'll just have to see.

I: See what happens? All right, thank you.

MCT1: You're welcome.

December 1, 2016

Transcription of Mid-Career Teacher 2

Interviewer read script.
I: Okay, so we're going to begin with the first question.

MCT2: Okay.

I: How many years have you implemented the ELA CCSS?

MCT2: This is about the third year.

I: And please describe your current preparedness in implementing the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards. Specifically, how prepared are you in implementing the ELA CCSS?

MCT2: I feel prepared in the sense that I know the standards and I have a plan, a basic guide that helps me make sure that I implement most of the standards. I still need to learn in depth what the standard really means because it's very superficial but as far as implementing, you think you know – sometimes, we do our worksheet or we do an activity and we think we know, but once you read it again, the interpretation varies. And once we talk to each other as a grade level, that's when we clarify things. I'm prepared but I still need more in order to understand it and implement it a lot better.

I: So kind of the understanding of the standard itself varies based on the teacher, it has to be kind of calibrated I guess as a grade level.

MCT2: As a grade level, because you look at the standard but then you have to chunk it because the standard focuses on a lot of things at one time. So you have to be able to cut things out and cover them with the basis or monthly basis because it's very broad. So you have to narrow it and then be able to achieve the whole standard. And sometimes it's kind of hard to do the whole standard. So it's like I know the standards, I have the basic, I can start working with them but I know that a lot more work needs to be done. But I feel prepared because I know now the basic stuff that is included in the standard. But yes, it's time consuming, and a lot of the times, we're in a rush and we really don't focus on the standard.

I: Please describe the ways in which your preparedness has affected how you implement the ELA CCSS.

MCT2: At the beginning it was kind of hard because I do think that knowing the standards, you have to be prepared. You have to be organized and you have to have things in place. So in order to implement it, I had to start from scratch. I had done it with the CSTs where we identify the standard and we try to get as much work that are related to the standard and then created a binder. So every standard had something in it. Then we took it a step further and we did folders. So every time that I was going to cover the standard, I had folder that I knew cover most [inaudible 00:03:25] but CSTs is different from the common core because now, you have to do more critical thinking. Students need to be able to have conversations and basically explain the knowledge in their thinking and that you really can do what the work [inaudible 00:03:47]. So that's the part that I still need to work on. And it's the same idea, I'm organized, I have those folders, I have things that are related to that standard for math and language arts and then I need to take a step further and then look at the standard more closely with the grade level so that I can incorporate the new things for the common core because it's not the same. So I still need to work on conversations, what the students and the group or as a class.

I: So question four, you indicated that you were implementing the ELA CCSS in your classroom at your school, can you tell me how that got started?

MCT2: When I was in the classroom, we knew that the new common core was coming but we did start a [inaudible 00:04:46] because there was already two years, three years when we actually started looking at the common core. The principal kind of started it based on the district initiatives and then we started looking at the standard, but it wasn't a training, it wasn't like dig-in to the standard, it was more like okay, these are the common cores, how are we going to start implementing it? So it was more like me trying to figure out what it meant and what it was and they're working together with the grade level so that we can start implementing. We kind of focus a lot on the language overall.

I: The language of the standards?

MCT2: Yeah, the language section. But I know we have to start working with the RI and the RLs because those are the ones that are really going to help with the critical thinking and making sure that the kids know those standards, then they'll be able to move forward. But yeah, we're focusing a lot on the language.

I: I see. In what ways has the implementation of ELA CCSS affected you as a teacher?

MCT2: I do look at things differently, from the CSTs to now, but it's also hard because it's time consuming and trying to learn standards, trying to learn curriculum, not having specific curriculum that covers those standards and yes, no curriculum is perfect, but at the same time it's like I have to go beyond and try to pull from other resources so that I make sure that I cover the standard correctly. But it does help to have a grade level that is willing to work with you and kind of come together and say, this is how we need to do it because this is what it says here based on the standard. But it's been hard, it's been hard just because everything is on you. And some of us don't want to do the work. It is hard.

I: So for you personally as a teacher, if I'm hearing you correctly, it's been more of a kind dedication and more kind of self-initiative to go and look up for your own resources.

MCT2: Yes.

I: Whereas before, was there a difference?

MCT2: Yes because CSTs were not the same. CSTs we were doing more of a worksheet and following the book and there were not as many gaps as the common core. Because now the common core does look different, we have to come up with activities that are going to have kids thinking and having conversations and discussions and making sure that their points are coming across as they want to, but we don't have time to do that. we're used to doing a lot of direct instruction and we're kind of afraid, or I'm kind of

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afraid to let go and have those groups starting because maybe I'm just a controlling teacher, my style is [inaudible 00:08:11] so I need to know that everyone is working but I need to be sure. And when you're doing groups, everybody's doing their own thing and when if you're checking one, you're not sure what the other ones are doing. So that's where I'm at, whereas like, do I let go? How much can I let go, so it's been kind of hard just on me and the style that I have. And because I've been in the classroom for 20 years, I'm used to the old stuff that is – shifting has been hard.

I: The implementing of practices.

MCT2: Yes, new practices, new standards and also the language that the kids come in, play a role because you want to do the standard but the activity or the standard doesn't lend itself to be able to be applied with the kids because they're lacking their vocabulary, they're lacking writing, they're lacking just overall speaking skills that you're going to have to start from scratch and cover – well not cover the previous year.

I: Like coming in with that common core background to be able to move forward at the grade level expectations.

MCT2: And maybe in a couple of years it's going to be better but it's been a struggle at least for this first three years.

I: Question number six, has your practice changed giving your preparedness to implement the ELA CCSS? If so, in what ways and I think you already went a little bit into that, the shifting, how you carry out your own teaching practice when it comes to letting go of students a little bit more when they're having discussions?

MCT2: Mm-hmm.

I: Is there anything else that you want to add? Something that has changed in your instructional practice with implementation?

MCT2: It has to be more organized and I have to make sure that I know what I'm teaching later on and trying to cover all the standards. Whereas before, we didn't really have a [inaudible 00:10:11]. Now it's like, there's the focus, we do have a [inaudible 00:10:15] and at least that's guiding us even if we don't have the material in the curriculum, we're pulling from other sources, but at the same time, it's taking time from me to do this. So I still believe that we could do a little bit of the direct instruction, but then the grouping is a part that I really have a hard time. Yes, I'm prepared and I'm willing to do the work, but at the same time, am I doing it correctly? And that's the question that's like there, it's like, "Is this how it's supposed to look?" because we haven't really seen a model. Or we haven't seen like teachers really jump into it and say, "This is how it's sup]posed to be." So it's going to take a couple of years. The teaching is kind of like – I'm still doubting myself and I'm indecisive sometimes.

I: So what support will help you know if you're doing – if you're implementing the standards correctly, thinking in terms of supports? Because I imagine many other teachers are feeling the same way, they're questioning whether they're doing – you know, whether they're implementing correctly, so what could help to make teachers feel that they're on the right track, in your opinion?

MCT2: I think more admin visits to the classrooms, and because they have so many teachers, they might see different things throughout the school. And if I get some feedbacks saying, "Okay, this is what's going on. This is what looks to be the strengths," maybe I could start adapting to some of those or if overall we have so many teachers, this is what a weakness looks like as a school, then maybe I can work with that and move forward, but I'm not getting any feedback, we're not getting visits often in the classroom, kind of defeats the purpose. And it makes me doubt myself even more. Because your only support is the grade level and yes, the coach, but even the coach doesn't know it all. And the grade level is kind of in the same boat that I am, so it's kind of hard. So we're just going with the flow.

I: And hoping that you're hitting things here and there in a way.

MCT2: Yes and trying to make sure that we do cover the standards and I'm thinking that maybe in a couple of years, I will be better, because now it's more people doing it, the kids coming with more background and then shifting and having those conversations, because even when we're doing GLT's in collaboration, I'm noticing that we're talking more about it and when we look at the standard, we're kind of having a conversation back and forth and saying, "This is what it says here so this is what it looks like," it's not what we're doing so we have to shift. Si that's working, so we have the support with the grade level, but this is just four or five of us compared to having a bigger group. So maybe some feedback from the admin. And at this point, I don't know what else can we do, just because it's so new.

I: Okay. Question seven; in thinking about reconstructing/changing your teaching practice as a result of ELA-CCSS implementation preparedness, what factors influence that change? For example, implementation, contacts, personal teaching experience or perspectives, personal knowledge on the ELA-CCSS professional development, level of experience, capacity or will, ability motivation or any other.

MCT2: I think it's a little bit of everything. My willingness to look at the standards and learn from it, that helps. The grade level working together, that helps. And they have shifted things and we're looking at standards more closely. Professional development, there's not really a lot to really target the standards. So that's a witness as a school and as a district. Level of experience, I mean, I've been in the classroom for 20 years, things have changed so I feel like I'm back to the beginning when I first started.

I: having to relearn.

MCT2: Relearn a lot of the things, so that's kind of shifting and making us kind of stressed more. But it was a lot more at the beginning, the first year. Now it's like, we kind of got it but we need to look at it in depth. Motivation plays a role, but again, it's self-motivation, grade level motivation, school motivation, I'm lacking.

I: What about at the leadership level? The motivation that leaders at the sites are able to provide teachers, do you see that motivation there?

MCT2: No, I don't see that because that could be brought in like at the staff meeting. Let's look at the standards, let's do a, not a training but let's look at the standard and let's look at the correlation K6, or let's look at across grade levels, fourth and third or fifth and sixth. What does it look like and how is that going to look in fifth grade and then sixth grade? So I don't see that coming from admin.

I: Like the vertical correlation amongst grade levels?

MCT2: Yes, I don't see that. So I think that's a missing piece because, I could say I'm doing it but until you go to the class, the admin could tell me, "Yes you're doing it." or "No, you're not." And they have a better view if they see everybody, to see how many are and how many are not because I do feel that some of us are doing it, and not everybody, and then others are just going with the old stuff. So I know what I'm doing in the class, so it's still kind of like, is this teacher doing it too? Are they going to be able to move those kids to a higher level? Or what's happening at the lower grades? Because [inaudible 00:17:26].

I: There's a lot of unknown [inaudible 00:17:33].

MCT2: At this point, yes.

I: Question eight, what supports grant place to implement the ELA CCSS when it first started? For example, was there any professional development, coaching, collaboration time, other.

MCT2: At the beginning, there was really no professional development, we're looking at the common core and then the principal didn't focus on working with us and trying to get that going. We do have a coach, but again, because it's all new, she doesn't necessarily know…

I: It's like learning together.

MCT2: It's learning together and it's like in a way the blind leading the blind. And also because as a coach, you have to learn K6, so she's not going to know everything specific to my grade level.

I: And that level.

MCT2: Yes, it's more superficial. We do have collaboration time and we do have time to talk to each other. But sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't just because we're at different levels in the grade level, and some are new. So we kind of have to work together and make sure that we're all doing it. So again, I could only say, the coaching collaboration time, the professional development wasn't there.

I: Okay. You indicated that you faced challenges or barriers in implementing the ELA CCSS, what tips and supports could address these challenges or barriers? In other words, what would help teachers to better – to feel better prepared to implement the new standards in your opinion, what's needed? Whether it be at the district level, site level.

MCT2: Targeting the standards more, focusing on maybe just writing and looking at the writing section of the standards. And looking at that very closely for a month or two so that teachers feel comfortable with it and implement it in the class. If we try to focus with everything, it's very difficult because all the standards are very broad. So we have different areas or sections that we could do in chunks and then go from there.

I: Kind of being more selective on the standards to focus on?

MCT2: Yes, because the language I think it's easier to accomplish, but right now, the one that we're really leaving out is the reading information or reading in literature.

I: Okay.

MCT2: And those are not being covered and those are not in the phasing guide. It seems like we're kind of afraid to focus on those, and those would take longer periods of time. So if I could chunk that, the reading literature just by itself and look at it really closely, we do see that there's a correlation between the literature and the information. They're kind of similar but you're using different text. But we haven't had the time to really look at them by sections.

I: So if I'm understanding you correctly, basically, providing teachers more time to actually dig deeper into the standards, unpacking the standards, processing them, implementing them, they're kind of doing that feedback loop and like let's see how it went and hopefully being able to get feedback from admin also saying, this is the way [inaudible 00:21:27] or you need to modify these things.

MCT2: At this time, it mainly is the time. Time to study it, time to learn it, and then apply it because right now, the thing that we don't have is time. And you also need the motivation. Motivation from admin, motivation from teachers or within the grade level just because some teachers are more like, this is too hard, this is not how it's supposed to be, now we're doing it at the service to the students because it was better back then when we were doing other things and not understanding that things have changed and that we need to change. And the revert in the standards is a lot more compared to before. So, we're not really targeting that river. It's working together with the admin, it's working together with the families because we're not informing the parents. We're not letting them know what it looks like as far as the shifts. The student, we're not letting the student know that things too look different, and this is where you're at and this is where you need to be at with the implementation of the common core because my grading doesn't look the same as before.

I: Involving them in the process.

MCT2: Involving them, so that could help a little bit. It doesn't mean that it's going to change everything but at least having the information is going to help me move things forward. But if I don't know what's happening, I'm not going to be able to do anything as a parent, as a student, and they do need the time to really look at the standards.

I: Would you say there's a teacher support gap? If so, how is it affecting teachers?

MCT2: Support gap? Teacher support gap? There are gaps but as a teacher support meaning admin or meaning?

I: Just in general, as a teacher, do you feel there's a support that has not been provided to teachers and therefore it's hindering how they implement the ELA CCSS?

MCT2: Yes, there's gaps. Like I said, with the coach, not having the information and not knowing that there's a gap there. With admin not following through and checking and visiting classrooms, there's a gap there. With the district and having so many initiatives and not concentrating on the standards as a district, that's a gap. We're trying to hit a lot of things and we're not really becoming experts about anything. And maybe the – or the standards should be the starting point so that we learn them and we use them and we implement them in the classrooms. That it affects teacher's preparedness? It does, because they don't have the knowledge and they don't know how to implement. And a lot of us are used to our old ways too. So that creates a gap, but it has to do with teacher's willingness and motivation to that change. So, there's a lot of that.

I: Can you provide me with an example of an implementation support that was particularly helpful in assisting you in implementing the ELA CCSS?

MCT2: The coach coming in and modeling a lesson especially with the closed reading because that was on you. But basically, closed reading is the target after hitting all these other standards. You want to have the kids be able to read and understand the text and be able to take notes and go back to vocabulary that maybe they don't understand. So seeing that in action helped me because now I have a vision, I kind of had a guide. So I tried to make it my own and implement it in the class. So, modeling helps, serving other teachers helped too because, they were going through the same things. And yes, they were not experts at it, but I got ideas that I wasn't doing in my own classroom. And that kind of helped me start implementing some of those things. And yes, it was like the observation itself was more of that's how it looks like with a group conversation or the management as far as like okay, this is what the students are doing, and now let me check in on everybody else. And not giving them the answer or giving them the tools, but questioning and having the students think. So that kind of helped too. So coaching models and then other teachers doing it, and then we absorbing help too.

I: Seeing that in action.

MCT2: Yes.

I: Is there anything else you would like me to know in regards to your preparedness and implementation of the CCSS?

MCT2: I'm trying, I'm trying and I know that things would be a little bit different so I need to make sure that I'm addressing the standard and making sure that the activities that I do in class have a purpose, have an objective and I'm just coming up with a worksheet that has nothing to do with the standards or everything that was occurring.

I: Okay. Thank you.

MCT2: Thank you.

December 7, 2016

Transcription of Mid-Career Teacher 3

Interviewer read script.

I: Ok, so we're going to start with the first question here, what are your thoughts on how implementation of ELACCSS is going?

MCT3:   It's going as a process, I think I've implemented to the best of my ability but because of the constraints given the curriculum that we have, I think I'm constantly looking for things to meet the standards that we have because the curriculum doesn't quite do that.

I: Ok.   Please describe your current preparedness in implementing the ELACCSS, for example, knowledge of the standards or instructional practices.   Specifically how prepared are you in implementing the ELACCSS?

MCT3:   I think I have a good understanding of the standards, I do have to refer to them to make sure that I can, like, ok I've done that standard. And that doesn't mean I'm not going to go back to it but I've done that one, let's see what's next. They seem to me to be organized different than the states standards even though they're just about the same.   There's subtle differences but I think the organization makes it a little more difficult to track as you're going for me.

I: I see.

MCT3:   But I think I'm prepared to teach, you know, again, constantly looking for other things to add to the curriculum because it doesn't quite cover everything. There's some of the foundational skills that are standards and some of them that are not standards and you kind of have to—

I: Fill in the gap?

MCT3:   Yeah, fill in the gaps and make them mesh because you still have to teach that standard but can't teach the standard if they don't have a foundational skill to go with it. So it's kind of trying to match a foundational skill with the standard so that you can keep them going up at the same time.

I: Please describe the way or ways in which you're preparedness has affected how you implement the ELACCSS.

MCT3:   I think I've started to do a little more small groups, in my teaching in the past I did that often and then it seem like our teaching practices got away from that. And now we're coming back to more groups that you can teach a standard according to the students' readiness to go forward. You can teach these things standard but at whatever level they're ready to learn it, so I've got more small groups. All this is preparedness though.

I: How has your preparedness, whether feeling that you're fully prepared, somewhat prepared or not prepared, affected how you implemented the ELACCSS?

MCT3:   I don't think I'm fully prepared but I know that it's more than somewhat. Because, again, it's having to constantly go back and forth because, for me, the organization of how the standards are listed. We've gotten some things Alberto where they're listed more together and that's how [inaudible 00:03:23] so I've been keeping them out. Before I didn't have to keep the standards to teach because I've already internalized them but it's constantly trying to get them internalize so that I don't have to, ok, let me just make sure that goes or—it's the back and forth, so it's just learning. But I think that when I do teach a standard I teach it thoroughly to—I'm prepared to teach it.

I: Ok. Very well. So, question four; you indicated that you're implementing the ELACCSS in you classroom at your school, can you tell me how that started?

MCT3:   The biggest thing they had us do was the closed reading. I was already doing closed reading but not in the fashion, I was asking questions and the higher level questions. So I think I was already kind of doing that I just tweaked it a little bit to make it match what we've been given instructions how to do it. Because I've always, you know, let's read, let's find words we don't know, let's underline the important parts, let's write about it, let's talk about it. You know, I've always had partners A and B—I've always had those things but just tweaking it just a little bit to make it fit the model that—

I: Kind of formalizing the process?

MCT3:   Yeah, formalizing the process of what we've been given in training to how they want it to look. So it's more or less the same but just a tweak it to— as education goes, as you learn something you kind of tweak it to go into what you've already done and what works and then, ok, this works, let's make sure that part is standard is embedded inside what already works.

I: In what ways has the implementation of the ELACCSS affected you as a teacher either positively or negatively?

MCT3:   I'm trying to stay away from talking about the curriculum that we have because the curriculum's not the standards. Trying to use that curriculum for those standards have been frustrating but teaching the standards themselves has been fairly smooth because it's what you're supposed to be teaching. So I've been trying to align the curriculum they've given us to those standards where I don't think it quite is and there are gaps in the thing, the gaps has affected me in a frustrating way because we all know things are missing from there. But if I step away from thinking about the curriculum, then implementing has been fairly smooth.

I: Ok.

MCT3:   Yeah.

I: Question number six; has your practice or instructional practice changed given your preparedness to implement the ELACCSS? And if so, in what ways?

MCT3:   Again, I have gone back to more groups and I really find tune the leveling of the groups before I would—I might have just pick up, you know, you in group A, whoever you are, I've done a little more leveling within my groups because the standards are difficult, the passages are difficult that were given. And to have them just homogenously—maybe I'd have a group with three highs, two lows, that doesn't work. The highs are done and the lows are still trying to catch up, so I've really tried to fine tune, ok, these are my non-readers and these are my decoders. So I really have to really separate them, otherwise we can't do something altogether because they don't have the same capabilities. In that way I can pull the ones who

don't have those capabilities up to where I can and the ones that I can go further. That way I don't have within a group someone sitting there going. So I fine-tune my groups so that's a practice that I've changed, whereas before I did groups but it didn't have to be so set in who was in there.

I: So it has, in a way, kind of forced you to be more conscientious about student abilities and—

MCT3:   Well I was before, but because the rigor is more difficult you can't just have them all together they have to be separate. Otherwise the ones who can't do it are still not going to do it at all. But if you have them all together, they're more comfortable, they're asking more questions, you know, even, what's this word, and it might even be a site word. And so—

I: They're able to support each other.

MCT3:   They're able to support each other and I can do things, like, if we were reading this and this, ok, find the word 'arts' and some of them are, like, looking for A words. And so if I tell my higher group find Art, oh, here it is and then they're still waiting for the next. I can't accomplish anything so that has helped in that way. Where, like I said, the rigors is different so I really have to separate them. Before you could do small group and it didn't matter who was in your small group unless it was, you know, such a gap. And then, you know, just making sure that I have supports within—if I'm meeting with a group I make sure I have supports with the students I'm not meeting with. Especially since I now have some that are non-readers, they need support while I'm not working with them so they can continue working.

Before when we had a few highs in a group and a few lows, they support each other. But when you have to separate them completely and you set those ones that are non-readers by themselves. I've made sure those supports are in place so they can continue working instead of doing nothing while I'm meeting with the higher groups.

I: I see.

MCT3:   So it's just, I guess, making sure more things are in place to support the ones that the rigor is too hard for.

I: They need that extra [inaudible 00:09:49]. In thinking about reconstructing or changing your teaching practice as a result of the ELACCSS implementation preparedness, what factors influence that change? For example, implementation context here at the site or at the district level, personal teaching experiences or perspectives, personal knowledge on the ELACCSS, professional development, level of experience, capacity, will, ability, motivation or other.

MCT3:   So I think some of the personal developments have helped construct some of the ways that I am able to deal with the rigor of the curriculum that we use in talking with, you know, so just what we want our kids to do, collaborate and critically think. So in collaborating with your peers you're able to, oh, yeah, that works. That's a good way to teach that, that's a

good way to keep them going. And preparedness, you know, we even, as a grade level, trying to make sure that we were all doing what's comfortable for us but in similar ways, so that we can talk about it collaboratively.

I: I see.

MCT3:   Not like, oh, you're doing that, I'm doing this, you know, you might be doing a different story that day but we're all doing the—

I: Still focusing on the same—

MCT3:   Same standard.

I: I see what you mean.

MCT3:   Yes so that we can all talk about the standard, you know, how were you doing on this standard and what were you doing on that standard. We pick the stories that we're comfortable with and that's what Ruth Miller said, that you're comfortable with throughout the curriculum and then focus on the standard for that.

I: I see.

MCT3:   So then it's been able to collaborate really well with our team.

I: That's great.

MCT3:   And then personal teaching experiences, I try to make sure that I still include things that I know that have worked since I started teaching. Because you can't drop those off just because the curriculum changed or even though [inaudible 00:11:57] the common core standards so they're still so very similar and they're still made of the same foundational skills, they still need some of the same repetitive things. You can't just drop off just because there's a new label.

I: Some of the practices that have proven successful per se for you as a teacher.

MCT3:   Yeah, because if you drop those off then you have to have some—just like the kids, they have to have some background on what they're doing. And if you start new every time then you're going to be lost every time, teachers and children. So you have to start with what you know, build upon it and add things that are expected.

I: The changes.

MCT3:   Yeah. And learning more about the capacity of the children because even on a certain level you have to figure out what are they developmentally ready for, how can I get that standard and teach it with something else that they'll understand.

I: Yeah.

MCT3:   Including with our children here, you know, some of the background knowledge they just don't have for some of those stories, they are so lost when they read them. So making sure that I have pictures and I have other explanations, and I have maps to show them where these books are from and why, you know, people talk like that. And so just making sure there's, you know, so many more scaffolds because the stories are so not what they're used to seeing.

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I: Much more complex.

MCT3: Yeah. Not to say complex just like, you know, the library in al-Bazrah, as a third grader, I don't think even knew where Bazrah was. You know, just those things and so if we're going to use that curriculum then there's so much more you have to give them for information. And yet they don't want you to frontload so that's kind of—

I: Yeah, and that's another thing that the message has been kind of step away or step back from frontloading or even front loading too much, but yeah.

MCT3: And yet they want you to do that in ELD—

I: Our students are not yet even coming with the Common Core background so there's all these gaps that you're mentioning that need to be, you know.

MCT3: Yeah, filled in before you can even start with the curriculum. So it's like trying to make sure you use your practices that you know, make sure they have the foundational skills that you know they need and then go to the curriculum. So I've been looking for other books to read that have similar context but without having to frontload so much. Because if you're talking about the library we can find another story about a library and then—

I: Make it more of a connection.

MCT3: And there's some like there's one I just totally skipped, it was *The Boy Who Ate Words*, we read it and we talked about it and it was fun. But they couldn't make connections, it was just bizarre to them. So this year I didn't even read it but we read a next story and they really made a connection with that. So it's like I'm trying to find the ones that they can make a better connection and do those better instead of trying to do more and then not making a connection with the story.

I: I see.

MCT3: So I've been kind of paring things down so that I can do a better job.

I: Ok, so question number eight. These questions are in regards to implementation support, so what supports were in place to implement the ELACCSS, such as professional development, coaching, collaboration time or other supports that you might think of?

MCT3: I think our grade level collaboration is, you know, we've been using it and discussing the standards and seeing how they work for us. So I think that works really well. Within that time we have our coach there with us and some of the professional development are so broad that I—there's been a few good ones that we've been having lately. Dr. Chamberlain has done a few that were real concise. For some of them, you know, are so broad that it's again, you're taking this broad CCSS and it's like, ok we need a focus.

I: Classroom application.

MCT3: Application, we need a focus we need, you know, some more to make it work. Because otherwise it's just like giving you the stack of the standards, yes, we probably teach all of them but which are the ones that

are we need to focus on just like they used to have the Power Standards before.

I: Right.

MCT3: So which one—and I know you don't want to go back and say make them just have a new name. But you still need a focus, otherwise it's going to be so broad that you're not going to do any one well. So some of the professional development I believe and coaching collaboration time has been good. I can't think of any other in place already.

I: Ok. And thinking about challenges or barriers in implementing the ELACCSS, what type of supports could address these challenges or barriers?

MCT3: Well, going back to the professional development, just having a classroom application for that development, of whatever it is. I know you can't just choose a standard because they knew we'd have professional development every week because there's so many standards. But if you could choose a group of standards, maybe it's part of the vocabulary or the grammar part, because there are grammar standards embedded. Giving it a classroom focus, using one of the books or something like that. It's just narrowing it down so that we can have a routine because I think children learn best with the structure in a routine.

I: Yes, I agree.

MCT3: Yeah. If there's not a way to go—as teachers we develop our own routines but if they keep giving us more stuff to, ok, now use this, now use Grammar Gallery. We've got a green workbook and a pink workbook and another, they've given us so many different workbooks we need to focus and have a routine. We can't say, well I'm going to pull from this one this day, pull from that one this day. Give us something you want us to use so we can develop strategies and routines with it and then we, you know, we've done so many things.

I: Piecemealing it together—

MCT3: Yeah.

I: I'll pull here, I'll pull there but not really having that focus to drive your instruction per se.

MCT3: Yeah. I think this year I've done better because I've done more or less the same thing three years but they keep giving more things and I tried it and I'm like, oh my gosh. And I've got to make copies of all that too and I've got to make copies of this one. So it's like I use some of it they give us but some of it stays on the shelf because why do we need more and where does it fit? All those things they give us are good things but why keep buying things then if we don't know where they fit? Because we start trying to—then your structure really goes again, you've got to—

I: I see.

MCT3: Yeah, you've got to—

I: Kind of see how to fit the new stuff in with probably what you already have, but then even how to mesh those together or either get rid of one to use the other.

MCT3:   To use the other. But if what I was using was working but you want me to use that, why do I need to use that if what I'm doing is working? So it's like the implementation of some of those things is hard because they keep giving us more stuff every time we go to the place there's another book. So where do you want me to use this book and why? Why is it different from what you've already given me? And if what you've already given me is that not good anymore?

I: Kind of like answers are not really, you know, as teachers when you ask these questions you're never really getting an answer. So all of these unknowns and try this or try that.

MCT3: Yeah, and if you find something really good let us know.

I: Yeah.

MCT3:   It's like, ok, well I think I'm going to stick with what I know is working so that I don't keep trying to reinvent the wheel every time we have—

I: Even your own focus.

MCT3:   Yeah. You know, all these things I have and a lot of this I go, wait a minute, I just need to put those on the shelf because if I don't do that and use what I know is already working I'm going to be frustrated. I tried to implement some of those things and, like, I'm frustrated. I'm going to go back to what I know works, the students are following me, they're structured, they know their routine, they know what to do. When I pull in something new, it's ok once in a while but constantly, every time we have a, you know, and we have one about once a month, you know, try and use it and the kids are like, what happened to that?

I: Yeah [inaudible 00:21:55] even where are we heading with that—

MCT3:   And they ask you, they ask you what's this for, didn't we have a green book? You know, so maybe I'm not implementing it correctly or it's just too many things to try and—

I: Too many initiatives?

MCT3:   Yeah. That would be my biggest barriers we keep getting more things and it's like where do you want us to use this, there's only so much time in the day. Why don't we focus on things that work and stay with us so that there's a structure? And so I just backed off and said I'm [inaudible 00:22:30] you know what works, we have a structure and the kids do much, much better when they do that.

I: Ok. Would you say there's a teacher support gap, and if so, how is it affecting teachers' preparedness to implement the ELACCSS?

MCT3:   I think our support staff and our principal and you and—they're there, they want to give you the support but I think the same thing they're told, give them this too, give them that too, do this now. And I think that it affects—if you feel like someone's going to come in and see if you're

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using the pink workbook then you'll start thinking, well, I guess I'd better use it. Even though you haven't really been a hundred percent properly trained on it so how can you use it well? So I think it's not really with the support people there's not a gap there, it's just what do you really want everyone to use? And if you want us to use that pink workbook, give us a good training on it, trell us where it fits with our curriculum and then we'll go from there.

But then don't give me another green workbook a month later and say use that one too. And then if they have a walkthrough and we want to see you using the pink workbook, so like I said, I think there are the supports in place but we keep getting new things—

I: Too much coming.

MCT3: Too much coming. Can you provide me with an example of an implementation support that was particularly helpful in assisting you in implementing the ELACCSS?

I: I think that Grammar Gallery was more for ELD, wasn't it?

MCT3: Uh-huh. Or even thinking about collaboration time with your grade level.

I: I was thinking when we had—Alberto had made us a copy of the standards that were—somebody gave us a copy of the standards that were so much more concise and they were like all on one page.

MCT3: Oh, yeah.

I: Yeah.

MCT3: Yeah.

I: I made the copies for that.

MCT3: Yes, yes, it's so much better because then you didn't have to flip through and find, ok, where's that one, where's this one. That was a big help because they were all right there and I didn't have to like, oh, is it in that folder, is it over here? It's all right there is in one spot and I can keep it and kind of refer to it and it's there, and it's not pages and pages that you had to read a paragraph to find the standard. It was listed and it said what you needed to do and then you could—so that was one of the—

I: That was helpful?

MCT3: It tended to be helpful.

I: That's great. Is there anything else you would like me to know in regards to how implementation has been going for you or your preparedness in implementing?

MCT3: I think I'm prepared, with anything that you learn new you have to always have to refer back to things, you can't just say, ok, I got it now. And then, you know, I have to make a conscious effort not to keep trying everything that they throw at me until I'm ready to try it. Because then it changes my structure and then for me, I like structure so if it changes my structure it's not working. So it's almost like times that they should give us big things to look at has made me, ok, here's this, just before break, look at it and see if it's going to work with what you ought to be doing. Or, like I said, give

us a classroom application for it, don't just give me a book and say, this is what's in the book and here you go—

I: Now do it.

MCT3: Now do it. So it's time—

I: Processing time.

MCT3: Processing time, if we have a professional [inaudible 00:2:42] a classroom application specifically for it.

I: Or concrete example of how to do it really in the class, how does it look in the class, how does it look in terms of students learning—

MCT3: Yeah, because if you just give us something and they're telling us we'll find it, it's like, well, I can't keep finding stuff and then you give me stuff. So if I find something that is working for me and then you tell me, no, do this instead, it's like—

I: So what's the point of having you?

MCT3: Yeah. And go look for it and [inaudible 00:27:20] so we were looking. We find something they say, oh, no, we're going to do this instead. So the consistency needs to be there from wherever it's coming from because, you know, you guys are the messengers but it's coming from somewhere else too and then I think as teachers we're doing, you know, what we can. And in the same sense too I think we all—especially if you've been teaching a while we should make sure that we kind of stick within the guidelines of what we know works. And then by pulling in the Common Core through that.

I: Like you said, building up from what you know or what you feel comfortable doing as a teacher has worked for you and kind of modifying it now to these new standards.

MCT3: Even for teachers who were just coming in, because they were doing their student teaching, they got comfortable doing something, start with that comfort and then modified it to fit the standard. Instead of trying to go the other way around, give the standard and now you change everything you've done—

I: To address the standard.

MCT3: To address the standard. I think it should go out instead of, you know, just all in and then you're—because if you do it all in then you're like starting new every time they give you something new and can't really do that.

I: Yeah.

MCT3: Successfully.

I: Alright. Thank you.

MCT3: Ok.

Transcription of Veteran Teacher 1

Interviewer read script.

I: Ok. So we are going to begin with the first question. What are your thoughts on how implementation of the ELACCSS is going?

VT1:   It is not going, some of us are going and some of us are just stagnant. It's really hard when you work with people and teams and stuff and some of you want to do things and some of you don't want to do things and it's kind of hard to get a consensus. So as I'm leaving in a week after they implement ELA, of course ELA is ongoing all the time and I'm a stickler for English Language development. Especially the proper grammar usage, et cetera, how to speak, how to write, and that kind of stuff. But as far as it's going, it's not.

I: Ok.

VT1:   I know some of the classes are doing it they've fully [inaudible 00:50:00], I do it in my own class all day and I do my own thing.

I: When it comes to you retiring from the profession, did Common Core have an effect in your decision to--?

VT1:   Yes it did. A lot of it—Common Core is a great concept but it doesn't take in the whole child. It's kind of like—I was fifteen years in kinder, I can see what they're doing in kinder now to where I've been up and down the spectrum all the way through adults and college level and stuff. We're not preparing them, it seems like we're pushing them further and further into the academics, when mentally, physically, emotionally, little kids are not ready. Which is sad because how can you write about something if you haven't experienced the playing of something. Use your imagination, if you haven't had the role-playing of—like you do in kinder, you know, you have dress up and you pretend you were the queen or the king and you have tea parties but I don't see that happening anymore. Which is a shame because we're not treating the whole child as a child, it's like, ok, little robot get it going and move forward. Which is not the way it should be and the way I was trained as a teacher.

I: I see.

VT1:   So common core stinks out the door.

I: Ok. Please describe your current preparedness in implementing the ELACCSS. For example, knowledge of the standards, instructional practices, specifically how prepared are you in implementing the ELACCSS?

VT1:   Ok, I've gone over the Common Core Standards, what they need? To my knowledge, well I can read them. Do as much as I can instructional practices, I've had to differentiate a lot this, fifth grade, then year olds, I

have eleven. Three are beginning readers, eight that go out to System 44. All eleven do but eleven that are first grade, second grade. In my mind how is that happening, that's another disservice to these children. It used to be if you're not ready to go on, don't go on. To me it's a gift of time, I give my own son the gift of time in second grade. Now we're just pushing, pushing, pushing, nobody wants to do the paperwork anymore. How are your kids doing, oh, they're great, they can read. Well now they can't because what I see hindering now is the test online, they may be able to read it but they don't know how to comprehend things that should be basic.

And I, you know, being 32 years here I can ask, well who did you have last year et cetera, down the way. And I can pick which teachers did their job and which didn't, then I'll go, oh, say no more. Which is another disservice. As far as pushing kids way beyond, I think kids need to be exposed to things, concepts they may not get. And I go back to my previous years in kinder, I had a K1 class and I got my first graders through third grade math concepts. They may not have known it all but they understood it by the time they got to third grade is like, yeah I know it. And then my friend who was in his room, "Oh, my God, the kids that you had are just—I don't know what to do with them, they're bothering me to do this and do that." Because they keep saying, "Miss Montes taught us that." I said, "Why don't you go ahead and get a fourth grade book?" "Oh, that's too much trouble."

So people want to stay in their niche, they don't want to go above and beyond and we heard Mr. Jimenez say the other day at the staff meeting, you know, Kinder goes to level three [inaudible 00:04:34]. Well if you can go to level three give them the level eight, whatever you can push them to to expose them. It's called exposure. How can I learn more quilting methods if I'm always doing the same old thing?

I: I agree.

VT1:   I have to be exposed to something and go, ok, I can do that, and play with it and do it until I can get the handle on it. but if we don't expose these children to something more, it ain't happening, it's not happening.

I: Question number three; please describe the ways in which your preparedness has affected how you implement the ELACCSS?

VT1:   As a bilingual teacher, ELA was always one of the big things. I've taken all the classes at that the district has provided, I think I'm pretty well prepared for it. Not that I agree with everything, because we have so many programs they seem to be mismashed, you know, you do a lesson a day in Engage New York and that's supposed to help you but it's missing pieces. And then you do the Common Core green book and that's a lesson a day and it's missing things, and it's not a cohesive program where you can say, ok, today we're working on capitalization on everything, it goes with our reading, it goes into whatever different pieces there are. There

seems to be a lot of pieces in the pie that's not a cohesive really good program.

I: Have you found yourself having to go out there and look for resources on your own?

VT1:   Oh, I had a lot of resources. The last thirty two years I've collected a lot, now that they're with Miss Healy and Miss [inaudible 00:0:05] and Miss McCammon and all my—because they're looking for grammar, there's no grammar, there's no grammar, there's no this. So yes, I've spent a lot of money throughout the years getting a good program, that I thought was good, that I could use, it's cohesive and it's sort of—I guess you can call it piecemeal but I bring in things that have to be pulled in. Like in—

I: To fill in some of those gaps.

VT1:   There's a lot of gaps, lot of gaps. I understand now sixth grade is being asked to look at another program online, isn't that the coaches or isn't that HR's—

I: Oh, for ELB?

VT1:   Yes. Like hello? Another one?

I: More to add to the plate, right? Question four; you indicated that you're implementing the ELACCSS in your classroom at your school, can you tell me how that got started for you as a teacher here?

VT1:   Well, I've always been doing ELA, Common Core just came in so I'm looking at that. But as I said before, it's not going along with the Engage New York because we're really involved in that, it has a lot of different questions inferences and all that kind. I've stopped so where we're at now is capitalization, you know, punctuation which has to do with the writing of it but not what we're doing in Engage New York. It doesn't have anything to do with what we're doing in math, they had to do the performance test today. So I'm pulling stuff again to get them ready for the next wave of tests coming and I don't know who the teacher's going to be or how that teacher's going to function.

I: I see. In what ways have implementation, and this is question five, of ELACCSS affected you as a teacher?

VT1:   CCSS, I'm out the door with that one. You know, it seems—in the forty four years I've been in education everything, it was funny because a few years ago when we started Engage New York, they had the latis math, oh, my gosh, it's a new program, oh my. And I said, no it's not. I went back to my files, here's the book kids, see it was began in 1987. It's not new, somebody else put a new name on it, sell the program, that kind of stuff. Is it any better this time around? I don't think so. We need a program that focuses on the child and builds. And builds on the language structure, the speaking structure, which is interesting, Miss McCammon came in for a quick five minutes and I'm like, "How was your trip to CSUMB today?" She's like said, "Oh, my gosh," she said, "Their guide today was a senior at CSUMB, every other sentence was grammatically incorrect." She said I

live in the top floor of the dorms, no, she doesn't live in them she lives on them.

So if we've gotten that far into college, you're a senior, she said if I was out there in the business world I would not hire this girl. And that's what we're pushing everybody towards, is not having good grammar, not being able to speak well, write well. It's a disservice, I'm sorry. You know, I look back twenty years ago, well, thirty two years ago when I started here it was more cohesive, you'd start a certain kind of thing in kinder that we'd build on in first grade and then second grade, and you could really see the progression. Now it's just mishmash of like mash potatoes. You know, somebody likes to put in chives, somebody likes to put in sour cream, others like to put in garlic and that's the way I see education now. And that's why I'm getting out, I just don't agree with what's happening. I see such a disservice to our children.

I: Ok.

VT1: I see potential in my little guys even my little lost one who came up six months in reading, I told him today, I said, "Wow, it pays to really work." He had a bad attitude last year, I had him in first and second, I know how to push him, how far to push and he rises. He rises to expectations where I don't see that. And it was interesting, it's like I was talking to another teacher yesterday and it was like, I know who you're talking about, yeah there's no mother, yeah and then, you know. So we all have the same complaint, we see it in each other but nobody ever talks about it. You know what, Miss Fernandez, I think we need to really work together and how did you do that? We keep hearing how everybody goes to Tre La Vista, everybody has these kids writing and reading and this and that, but they come back and nobody tells us how it was done.

I: It seems like it's just a lot of unknowns and how to do it, like how would it actually look in the classroom in action? Other than hearing about it but it's different when you actually see it.

VT1: And why are they sending board members, principals who are really not in the classroom like we are in the trenches, and three years ago when they wanted some money to take kids to DC and experience leadership conferences, oh, no, no, no. But yet they spend $23,000 to spend 13 people to Tre La Vista, did we ever hear about that? Our boss went, did we ever hear anything? They have a great program, well yaay, I have a great recipe for cookies. But if I don't give it to you how are you going to make it? So I want to see the recipe, a; this is what we're using, b; here's what we're doing for writing. I want step by step so I can get my kids there. I know what they need and I'm going to push them, but it's not happening.

I: Very well.

VT1: Frustration.

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I: Yes. Question six; has your instructional practice changed given your preparedness to implement the ELACCSS, if so, in what ways?

VT1:   Yes, my practice has changed. I now follow the book, a lesson a day. How can a child who is three, four years behind the grade level reading keep up with me when they're not prepared? They don't have the basics to be able to decode and here they are telling them, well you know, this is the way this is done, this is done, ok, tomorrow let's talk about something else. So it's definitely changed my ways a lot, I don't believe that everybody learns something in one lesson. You have to hear a word 250 times before it gets into your brain chip so how can I do one lesson a day, Engage New York, math, language arts, CCS, the Common Core little green book that we got. It's just—five more days, five more days [laughing]. So yes, it's my preparedness, I was ready to implement, I thought we had a great program and obviously, several different programs that don't match. I'm sorry, they just don't.

I: And thinking about reconstructing or changing your teaching practice as a result of the ELACCSS implementation preparedness, what factors influence that change? For example, implementation context, personal teaching experiences or perspectives, personal knowledge on the ELACCSS, professional development, level of experience, capacity, will, ability, motivation, other.

VT1:   Well, let me start with personal teaching experiences; 44 years in the trenches, I've seen it all. It's the pendulum, you know, it goes from one way to the other, back to the middle for a few years, it doesn't work let's swing back, go backwards, then forwards. You know, let's just find something that works and keep it there. Personal knowledge; I've seen it in action. I've seen what works in the past, you know, we had effective first teaching. We had a good program back then where you interviewed children, they learned how to ask questions, how to answer questions, things like that. How to take a story, what they call, you know, chopping it down or whatever kinds of stuff. Now it's like, let's read it, we're on to the next one tomorrow. It drives me nuts.

Professional development; we went to one, it was ELA and the person from the district office says, "Write down what you think why we should teach grammar." Oh, my gosh, I thought [laugh], really. Why we need to teach grammar? Well, gee. My response was, "We need to teach grammar because my children, which I hope will go on, need to be able to compete globally, they need to be able to speak, read and write. And if you don't have that, I'm sorry." You know, the 'wrong' file is next to you, one or two mistakes and your resume, you letter of application, it's going to go in there and they're not even going to bother.

I: [Inaudible 00:15:24] it's a reality of life.

VT1:   It is a reality of life. Level of experience; as I said, 44 years in education, 32 here at this. My motivation is, you know, as I tell my students I'm

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going to get you going, now I'm going to kick you in the [inaudible 00:15:40] when I come back. I'm willing to change to do whatever the district wants but I don't see it going ahead in helping our children, I see us going back. My father used to say, "Who better to, you know, screw with you than your own kind," and I see that in our district. You know, we have a new super, this is oh, you know, we're all capable of doing something this, this and this, but I just see him implementing this umbrella of things that don't work. It's like, let's close that umbrella, find out what really works and let's do it. If Tre La Vista is leaps and bounds, send two, three teachers from every school down there, don't send the principals, don't send the board members. Have I ever seen a board member that came back and said, "Miss Montes, it was great down there," after the week. No, they just partied and hang out, you know. Spent $23,000 of the district. So after that last ELA, you know, why teach grammar, I thought, well, this was the deciding factor.

I: Question eight; the next set of questions are in regards to implementation support. What supports were in place to implement the ELACCSS such as professional endowment, coaching, collaboration time or any other?

VT1:   Professional development, as I said, we've had two or three of those. We had writing, we have a ELA, we had some CCSS which [inaudible 00:17:16] the same thing. Coaching, we used to have coaches that come in here and say, you know what, here's a great lesson. Come in and watch me teach a lesson, say, you know what, maybe you could grow on this kind of stuff, maybe here the children need to be pushed on. Collaboration time, we have GLT but most of the time we have an agenda. It's not like we can sit and do anything. Because we know what we do, I mean, between the four of us we probably have close to a hundred years of experience [laugh]. We're close to it. We don't have time to release it and say, ok, what are you doing that works?

I: I see.

VT1:   I want to have one of those days, maybe go visit somebody else, but not just in classroom go around and go, wow, look at all those pre-made posters. Look at all that writing, how did that child get an A in writing? I want to know how they got there, what did the teacher do? Not just walk through pend ten minutes and look at something. I want to sit down with Miss Fernandez at lunch and say, "Ok, Miss Fernandez, I see that two thirds of your students got a four in their writing, how did you do that? How did you get them to that point? Help me. This is what I'm doing, am I on the right track, am I deviating from that?" You know, say to me, "Well, that, that, this is what you really need to do," that's what I want to see and it's not happening.

I: That's true, I agree.

VT1:   It is not happening.

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I: You indicated that you face challenges or barriers in implementing the ELACCSS, what types of supports could address these challenges and or barriers? And then now we just talked about, you know, having that time to really know the kind of action steps, how do I get the kids to do X, Y and Z?

VT1:   Exactly. And we don't have that. We go in there, we don't get to put the agenda in even on that one Tuesday when we're supposed to be able to do stuff, supposed to be our planning time, our stuff to get the, she just goes, no, you've got a meeting, you've got to do this, because we have to do this because we forgot to do it. Hello, boss, you know, you have a timeline and we have a timeline and we are supposed to have time on our own to implement that on Wednesdays, things like that. Everybody else is busy doing things. You know, you're trying to tutor in the morning, tutor after school to get your little guys going. But, I don't know, there's a lot of barriers.

Challenges, I think if the district really wants this to get ahead we need to have support, and not just having somebody from the [inaudible 00:19:47] asking me why do I need to teach grammar. Gee, that ought to be like wow, slap in the face. That's what I thought when I heard that, I thought, "Really? You're getting a hundred plus thousand a year to ask me why I should teach grammar? Wow." And then what she was doing was the GPR [inaudible 00:20:14].

I: [Inaudible 00:20:14].

VT1:   Wait a minute, didn't we do that like 15 years ago and that worked? My students asked me today what some word meant, I said, really, you don't understand what that means? He said no, multiple meaning words, they have no clue. The aquarium, oh, my gosh, the turtle died because they thought they went to the aquarium in Monterey and not—

I: Not the [inaudible 00:20:42].

VT1:   And out of my students I asked who knows what an aquarium is? Thirty-four said Monterey. I said, no, no, no, it's something like a fish bowl. One student knew, out of thirty-four. That's a shame. I had an aquarium, I had a bird, I had a turtle, you name it, kinder. So we knew about those things.

I: Like you said, exposing them to these things—

VT1:   Exposure is the biggest thing. I don't see finger painting, I don't see puzzles, I don't see the little play house. How can I ask a student to this, ok, we have to write an imaginative paper, there's one that comes up in fifth grade. You know, you find the key, what does the key belong to, where did you find it? They have no clue, they know what a key is, where'd you find it? They have no imagination and that goes back to also the technology, which I don't believe my son ever had it, only for writing a report and that was it. You want to look at nature? Look out the door, go outside and there it is twelve hundred acres [laugh]. So I find that

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really hard because I was trained in a different way, when I was coming through college it was hands on. As part of our training we had to spend time in a classroom, one semester, you had to go in and you had to learn finger plays and songs. You had to be able to read books with expression, but also be a story teller.

You know, now that I'm moving out I found all of my puppets, so I'm keeping them because my next career is going to be probably Mother Goose at some library. Doing something or going in, which is funny because my brother who taught fifth grade retired two years ago and he has a Wednesday gig with kinder kids. And they love him because he's still a big kid and you go in and have fun with Mr. Paul. Because they don't have that in a regular setting so he goes in there he's like, ok, let's act out whatever it is, be funny with the book and the faces and the voices. Kids don't see that. They see it on TV but it's like, really? The kids are smarter than the parents and they all look, you know, 12 going on 30 [laugh]. So between technology and TV and the push to get everybody to college, which we know is not going to be a true fact of life because some of them are just not cut out.

We have cut out programs in the high schools, used to be you want to be an auto mechanic, ok you go into here, you wanted to be a secretary, you go into here, you go into here. Now it's like, everybody I going to go to college, well, that's not a fact of life. Because for some, they can't afford it, they don't have the grades because they just didn't get it because they missed out on it. And you as a mother now I find that they have to do that at home. And the other fact is that our parents are so busy, you know, I see them in the fields in the morning when I come to work and when I leave they're still there, they're coming in, they're tired. You know, they're not stay at home moms like my mom and dad went out to work. Now they both have to work and who's there?

I: Yeah, who's there for the kids?

VT1:   I see that—where's your homework? Well I lost it. Or you call the parent they said, they had homework? Ask anybody, for the last 32 years, Miss Montes gives it even in the break. So, yeah, it's just a challenge.

I: Question ten; is there a teacher support gap, in your opinion? If so, how has it affecting teachers' preparedness to implement the ELACCSS?

VT1:   Teacher support gap? Yes! We have a coach, I see the coach, not that I want to speak ill of our coach but I see her making posters, going online—same thing that I do for my students. To me, a coach is there to coach me. How do I get better? Come into my classroom, observe me, help me out. Don't sit in your little office doing things, that's not, to me, is a coach. And I was just talking to another teacher from one of our schools, so I say, Chavez quit, why? Brand new teacher asked the coach for help, the coach said, yeah, I'm busy but I'll get to you next week. A month later. So he said, I'm sorry, I have no help—

I: So she don't have the support she needed.

VT1:   Exactly, so she got a great job teaching high school math.

I: I see.

VT1:   And that's what's going to happen to a lot of the new teachers, we're going to burn them out the first year and all that. We've got some talent coming in but if you don't have that support you're going to burn out the first second and you're going to say, you know what, it's not worth it. It is not worth it, I'm going to go find something else where I don't have to deal with 34 parents, 34 kids, the principal, you know, everybody else out here that's doing whatever that's doing. And the kids are being pulled to here and there and everywhere and it's just not working. So there's a lot of gaps. She should be in the classrooms helping, taking over my class so I can go and observe, maybe even if it's sixth grade, third grade, second grade, I don't care. How did you get these kids to get this writing done in second grade, why? My kids are in fifth and they must have missed out, what can I do to backtrack and help them? I don't see that at all.

I: Ok.

VT1:   Which is sad. I could be in my office.

I: Oh, yeah, right.

VT1:   I could be on the computer looking up stuff. Why are sixth grade teachers asked to look for another ELD program? Hello, we have Grammar Gallery, we have the green book, the Common Core Standard books and then we have another one that they have. Come on, do we really need all those piecemeal things? No, find me one good one that I can use, and let me go see how everybody else is doing it. Because obviously it ain't happening at Fremont [laughing].

I: Can you provide me with an example of an implementation support that was particularly helpful in assisting you in implementing the ELACCSS?

VT1:   Example of implementation support. Wow, support. I've been trained as a bilingual teacher, I've been here 32 years, 37 years ago we had that. I don't see as much implementation or support. Was some of it helpful? Well, let me see. TPR, did that 15 years ago, threw it out, do something else. Ok, here's the long neck and here's the fat elephant, I'm like, wow, 15 years later we're doing the same thing with a new name called Grammar Gallery? Other than that, it's just piecemeal.

I: Ok. Is there anything else you would like me to know in regards to your preparedness to implement?

VT1:   Well, as I said, I'm leaving in five days, so hopefully whoever's taking over has the implementation or has been to these classes. I'm not sure who it is or whether it's a sub. They tell me it's somebody full-time that's going to be coming in until the end of the year. And hopefully has some sort of background [laughing], instead of, help, I'm new, help me out. I know you're busy and you're going through college and school and you're a mom and you wear 10 different hats. But if you can just pop in and

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make sure they're on the right track. You know, if it wasn't for my health and the hubby's health I would stay but I just can't. And it's just frustrating me that what I see going on, I just go home and the hubby doesn't want to hear about it, my friends don't want to hear about it because they see the disservice also and most of them are high school teachers.

It's like, what are you guys doing down there, they're not ready, they're beginning reading and, you know, I keep pushing mine. And it's funny because one of the sisters that I have this year, she's in seventh, she came in the first of the year and she said, when Miss Montes tells you to read you better read, she said I didn't believe her. She said now I'm in seventh grade reading at second grade level. And I said, well thank you for being honest, I said, do you hear that people? Plus you don't get good programs, you don't get the Avid and the Leadership, you want to go back to the bonehead basic stuff again, kids, come on. Really pay attention. And now I'm yanking them along. I'm proud of—out of 34 only six didn't get anything this time.

I: Yeah? [Laugh].

VT1:   Which was wow, because even my System 44 came up and they read, yaay!

I: Yes, that's great.

VT1:   So, yeah, some of the got the trifecta. I say, wow, you got the trifecta, you got all three. Which is good so I'm hoping that the district will see something, bring in somebody—I don't care who it is from Tre La Vista, the most experienced teacher there. Bring in school by school and say, look, this is what we do, this is what we start them in kinder, this is how we build on, all the way through sixth grade. Whether it's one teacher from every grade or one that's experienced in everything, I don't care what it is but please bring somebody in. Well, you must see the disservices happening too.

I: Yes.

VT1:   And another thing too is too much Spanish. Hello, you live in good old US of A you need to be able to speak it well. You need to be able to function in two languages and if you can do it in both languages equally well, yaay, we've done our job.

I: Yes.

VT1:   But up until then and now, I don't see it happening.

I: Right.

VT1:   I'm sad, I'm so sad.

Transcription of Veteran Teacher 2

Interviewer read script.

I: Okay. Number one, what are your thoughts on how implementation of ELA CCSS is going?

VT2: In my particular class, I feel that I have a good handle on the ELA standards and I feel that I've been able to implement them effectively. There's some gaps obviously from what they didn't learn prior to my class, but I don't feel it's very difficult to tie them in at all, and in fact I like them quite a bit because if you use them the way they were intended. It's a very holistic way to teach as how I'm feeling anyway.

I: Question number two, please describe your current preparedness and implementing the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards for example knowledge of the standards instructional practices, specifically how prepared are you in implementing the ELA CCSS?

VT2: I feel that with each passing year I feel more and more confident that I'm hitting the standards exactly what they would like. I feel like I know the standards very well but I see my dilemma or where I feel a little weak is going deep, how do use them deep with the project based learning which is what I would like to eventually-- that would be my end goal is to use them that way. So to tie them into other subject in other words to go deeper. But as far as your basic standards I feel like I'm okay.

I: Okay very well. Please describe the way or ways in which your preparedness has affected how you implement the ELA CCSS?

VT2: Okay, so how I implement it. In the very beginning when I first learned of this shift again I knew what the intent was what the purpose was. Apparently our students were not prepared as they get older to follow basic directions for example on how to build something. They knew how to read but not exactly how to go further with. Again to go further with steps, following steps and if things don't go well what do you do next and that sort of thing and that we got from the university level. Plus people who-- employers, employers were saying this is what we need to be taught in primary school-- In our age group. And back then that was the intent of the Common Core or how I understood it. And then in addition to that again the intent was wow now we can use social studies to teach language art or science to teach language arts and go deep. So in the beginning I felt-- Okay I'm going to listen to all the training the basis, but it was never that deep. It was always just very separate things down out the standard itself.

I: Okay, very fragmented you'd say?

VT2: Very fragmented and kind of all over the place. And I understand that because I don't think people fully understood the standards themselves, but I think as time goes on our professional development days wherever they may be I think the presenters are understanding them more and more all the time. And I feel that it's improving. But again I still don't feel that I'm there solid with what I think the original intent was but I'm trying.

I: Very well. Question number four. You indicated that you're implementing the ELA CCSS in your classroom at your school. Can you tell me how that got started?

VT2: Yeah we had a training within the district, and we had a training with the county I believe. First with the actual showing us what the standards look like, and in fact even before that training we had a coach here who printed those out for us had access knew was on the ball with all that just said here, this is what you will-- This is what I believe, should expect and so forth. So we got a peek at them ahead of time. And then the idea was to tie in the standard the next year. I'm jumping ahead now. The tie and the standards to the language arts curriculum that we had, we spend a lot of time trying to figure out how we can get this new common course standard in our old language arts to mesh them mesh together. So it's been a lot of time doing that. But as a result of that we've got a good look at the standard the CCSS standards.

I: Okay thank you. In what way has the implementation of ELA CCSS has affected you as a teacher?

VT2: Let's see as a teacher. I'm going to say not very much I think. I mean it may you reflect on yourself I suppose am I-- Let's see, because at first it was indeed more difficult because the children hadn't been exposed to that-- and the curriculum. Once we got the engaged in your curriculum I'm speaking of now a little further down the CCSS road it was difficult, very difficult. And so for me as a teacher it wasn't a pleasant experience because in fifth grade the first unit is on. Human Rights, and is as complete is the articles. And it's all legalese language and here got second language learners being exposed to legalese language. Why. If we would have chosen maybe three or four and use the close reading sort of experience where you underline what you don't know. Look that up annotations on the site a skill that they'll use for the rest of their lives. But not if you have to do that for the whole thing it's too much for them. So, I found that very difficult to incorporate extremely and I did give it a go but I was losing my students, and I was losing time teaching them how to read. I was losing time and you're told this is what you have to do and then you see that they're not learning how to read. And so that was difficult. Did I? I think I went off on a tangent.

I: No it's fine.

VT2: Okay and how it has affected me right? So yeah, so how it affected me was that at least that unit. I was very disappointed with the materials. So being experienced I said, I can't do this to my students and I pulled in things that worked that were standard base that were awesome, because there are some really wonderful materials out there to accomplish the goals.

I: Thank you. Question number 6; has your practice changed given your preparedness to implement the ELA CCSS? If so in what ways, your instructional practice has that changed?

VT2: My instructional practice has not changed really in all the years of teaching no matter what's happened, because my practices have always been, number one you connect with the student, emotionally. Number two you figure out where they are second, and third, what is it that can help them totally get on the train and want to learn while they're with me. Whatever that may be, and it's different every year it's not a pat formula. The learning that happens in this class in language arts has really not changed that much over the years. It really hasn't. They know more vocabulary probably that they haven't been exposed to. But other than that, the reading, the writing, yeah.

I: And thinking about reconstructing or changing your teaching practice as a result of your ELA CCSS implementation preparedness. What factors influence that change? For example implementation context, personal teaching experiences or perspectives, personal college on the ELA CCSS, professional development, level of experience capacity or will, ability, motivation either.

VT2: I think that's sort of what I said on that last question. To change my practice, wouldn't be so much change in a practice as trying to find materials that are exciting that meet that high level of expectations. And I've been able to find a few things that are very effective. I like using Scholastic News for example and then it turns out-- Finally now this woman that's the expert also has given the okay. She says splices means okay. I mean it's wonderful because it motivates the students. Scholastic News is a trusted company for years they know what they're doing, and they have these one supplemental materials and the children love them. You can modify the curriculum to the level of all your children. You can. It's simple, at least for me it is. And so the motivation is there. The ability is there. The scaffolding is there. The vocabulary the high-- So that's there for them as well so no one feels like they are a failure in other words.

I: Thank. And then the next set of questions is in regards to implementation's supports. So, what supports were in place to implement the ELA CCSS such as professional development, coaching, collaborator time, or any other?

VT2: When we first got the CCSS we had as I mentioned before there was lots of opportunities to attend professional development, and there were professional development opportunities where we'd meet together by grade level across the district

even. To again try to line these standards to the old curriculum this is before we had the engage New York. This was before we had-- There was an individual in our district that's all she did. Not a coach. That's all she did I can't remember her title because that position is no longer there. And she was very helpful. Say hey, look this works, this works, this works. Pacing guide all of that. We had a coach on our campus **[inaudible 00:12:09]** very knowledgeable coach and would give us lots of information as well was always open to come in and present a lesson. Teach us how to do something that was giving us difficulty.

I: Yeah, see it in action.

VT2: I felt we had a lot of support. I do I felt we had a lot of support.

I: And you feel that as its missing now, has gone away?

VT2: I think this is what I thinks' happened. This was in the beginning so people kind of thought this is what's going to happen. And then as we've been given this test and we see what's on the test we as professionals we can see what's on the test for. The things it's changed. We have what is expected so-- Okay, I guess what I see now is happening. There's just too much in a way. There's so much that we're not focused on anything. Some of us whereas we have these wonderful GLT days, Is it okay to say that?

I: Yeah.

VT2: We have these wonderful GLT days and now we have these wonderful PD days. Okay the PD days were intended for we teachers to decide what we need. Does Fremont school need the same as Steinbeck school? No. Does 5th grade need the same as third grade in Fremont? No. So, I personally would love since fifth grade we're piloting this study island. Gratefully we had a little bit of time that one day but we really haven't had a lot of time to dig into that, and see we got set up that one day which took all day just to set up which is okay but it's such there's things on there I want to investigate more. So there's that. Now can anyone help us with that? No. What we need id time. Same with the GLT day, I feel personally and I don't mind who knows this really that it is a waste of time for us to go into another classroom and look at walls. I don't believe that is an indication the teacher to just have everything up that we know people want us to see. I would rather that very valuable time be used at evaluating our class. Okay, who needs what extra? What can I do to help this individual? And use that many wonderful materials I already have because we do have a lot of great materials. And I think we need more of that time just here. Now if you have a grade level or professionals who don't know how to use their time and you have to guide them through, I get that. But if we have a good feeling-- This is the goal. You say okay you have a GLT-- tomorrow is our GLT for example. And if I was told, you have four hours to plan what you want to get taken care of, and that's more valuable for me or fifth grade than somebody saying here's more papers for you to--- And then it turns out we already have those papers. I already

have that data. Those numbers are not going to change today, tomorrow. I know those numbers already. What good is that going to do me? I know them, okay. I'm already beyond those plus this is what I want to do about it. So if the world were a perfect world we would have more freedom to spend that time, and I think all of us would benefit from that. Also one thing that's missing now that we're used to have, oh and then I'm gutted because John interrupted my training I thought on that too. We used to meet fifth with six forth with third me not go in the room me and talk and say. Sixth grade would tell us this is what we really need you guys to do. This is not what engage says, not what whatever. This is boring, this is really not happening. Then we would do the same with four-

I: Fourth vertical.

VT2: Yes.

I: Articulation reaching grade levels.

VT2: Yes, and not five pages maybe four thing just four concentrate on these four basic things. And that was huge also. Yeah and getting back to going to another campus I suggested to Mr. Jimenez for Monday for the LD somebody was going to go to another school I said well. I know the principal from Los Padres right here. He's a wonderful man. Ask if whoever is going to go can talk to the teachers a little bit during the break if they don't mind recess. How do they like the program? Not see and without being judge this is lacking. That's what we need is just honesty. Ground our gallery. What a great program that is. Have we had enough time to investigate it? No. So there's a lot out there we just need time. Time, time, all of us need time. But wouldn't that be a great investment.

I: Really upholding teachers with the time that they need however they see their need is providing them with that time to address those needs.

VT2: Exactly. Rather just assume we don't have anything to do.

I: But again that's all you're going to focus on x, y and c but what good is that to you as a teacher or even as a grade level what are you getting out of that that's benefiting you?

VT2: Our staff meetings. In the old days always had room at the end open for discussion, things that were happening that we needed to discuss, there was time there was time. First great teachers great job we've got capitals where they're supposed to be letters, lower case and then whatever a complement. Also not just well can you guide or yeah. And now that we have a staff that lots of people are retiring we've had this-- No one has left Freemont for years, and now suddenly everyone's getting older. Not everyone I'm one of the last one probably now. Now there's this awesome young group right. Awesome. Everyone has this great attitude. They're awesome.

But we need to help them.

I: That's true.

VT2: And two of them that were in my class in fifth grade.

I: [chuckles] really.

VT2: Which is awesome, right? Nadia and Juan Carlos used to call him Huan. I so think of little Juan Carlos and he's giving his biography presentation. He was so nervous and there he is.

I: Oh my goodness.

VT2: So yeah I know but anyway. High standards.

I: Question number nine, in regards to challenges and our barriers in implementing the ELA CCSS. What types of supports do you believe could address these challenges or barriers?

VT2: Okay, the only challenges that I have are the feeling not so much anymore but in the past of being forced to use a curriculum that is ineffective. That's it, and I didn't want to be supported on a curriculum that wasn't helping my children to read. And then also being one of the veteran teachers and being a teacher that many other teachers come to just vent and ask for advice the younger primary and saying can we do any? And I'm like you just started you have to just do it. You can't. I know it doesn't work. I don't want them to leave the profession. But they see instinctively this isn't teaching them how to read. That was it. But I think we've gone over that. I think we've realized.

I: At least it appears that there's somewhat of a better understanding there.

VT2: I think so.

I: What we've been asking or demanding for teachers to use is not working. So now let's look at the standards. That's kind of like it peddles and goes back and forth.

VT2: But it's common sense, third grade perfect example the engage New York. The books that the supplement the program are all about war victims. Do all students need that? Our students need books that talk about hope, and not hope because you've surpassed something that is awful hope because there's good in the world too. I want to save the whale I want-- there's good in the world and I couldn't believe it. So my hometown for example they chose not to use those books. So when my nephew was in third grade-- There's, we are not going to use those books, and I think we need to think

about our students a little bit more that's all. [foreign] Anyway but I think as you say I think we're beyond that. We need to focus on what's right and if we do we'll do well. One thing that's helpful is these ICAs that we're administering third, fourth, fifth, and sixth if we use them as re-teaching also and say okay this is what was expected. This is what you did. Now let's see why okay. Maybe even print out some of the questions after the fact of course and go over it. I haven't done that but I don't know if there's time but yeah something like that so they get the specific reason why. Having said that and having scored fourth grade there is a math question in fourth grade that is incorrect. It is not presented in the way that a student would answer. Clearly and the rubric doesn't match it but we had to score it according to the rubric. And it's been mentioned so I'm not sure if they threw that one out or not. So there's that with the S back the famous S back, there's that with the S back being scored by people on Craigslist. There's all these other factors computer factors that are can-- we use the old cart last year so they kept dying. So then they keep losing this stuff and whatever. So we know what our kids have learned throughout the years so we have to feel good about ourselves and that they've progressed no matter what.

I: Yes, I agree. Do you believe there's a teacher's support gap? If so how is it affecting teacher's preparedness to implement the ELA CCSS?

VT2: I don't think so. Not at our school campus. I think our teachers here get support if they wanted. I think. It's not so on some other campuses from what I understand. But I think so and I think it comes within too among ourselves. We're not going to let-- I can only speak of intermediate grades because then I heard something that happened that was terrible in primary. So I can't speak for the entire campus but I know any new teacher that at our grade level or fourth or sixth or even a neighbor third grade they need any help we're willing to help them. I think there's enough expertise.

I: What about when it comes to support from administrators, the district, the county. Do you feel there's room for a growth there?

VT2: Let's see, well I have shared with you what I-- had a couple of concerns and I'll put it on there that I feel because I've been over 25 years on this campus that the vision is more of an intervention school. Rather than setting those high standards. I feel that for a variety of reasons because of system 44 everything has wiggle room. If you're teaching system 44 and you instinctively know hey these guys are doing really well. I need to give them a little bit more than you should. You what I mean? You got to-- I don't know. There's got to be-- And a computer program isn't the best teacher in the world. I'm saying this for fifth grade. Yes like there's some students that need that. So we have that getting back to administrators because I think I went off on a tangent I'm sorry about that.

I: That's okay.

VT2: That's getting back to the vision though. I approached our principal and he smiled and laughed when I suggested is that what we're doing. When I went to the district personnel they didn't give me a straight answer either. And so I feel that as a district we need to go back to not these children are going to be the top scores on the aspect but that we're going to have these top students period. Period, they're going to go to university and how are we going to get them there. We're going to get them reading, writing, solid in math, solid vocabulary, solid communication, solid; can that be evaluated on a test when once in a year? No. It isn't evaluated that way but something happens when you start telling kids that they believe it. Let's go let's-- We can do it. We can do it no matter what's going on out there who became president, any of that we can do it. The leadership doesn't see that and they're more interested in numbers then that's not going to happen. That's what I've see. We can't focus on the numbers so much we have to focus on our children. I really do. Yeah, make it to be a big deal.

I: Can you provide me with an example of an implementation support that was particularly helpful in assisting you in implementing the ELA CCSS?

VT2: Well in the beginning what I liked in the very beginning again, you were provided with the standards which was nice, and again we were provided with time. With other colleagues on other sites who might have had a little bit more experience of exposure to the standards. Hey we could use this we could use that. And there was a lot of sharing. I like that. That was a huge support. So no one really felt like here it is, it's dumped on you. You're all going to fail. You felt like okay here we go is something new but we can do it. And that was-

I: Kind of learning together.

VT2: Yes learning together. No put downs. No, we're going to do the best we can and I personally failed this test. Let's see how long it lasts. Is it really evaluating what the state wants? I don't know. I'm not 100 percent solidly convinced. You're doing two things; you're testing on a computer and knowledge. Not everyone does well on a computer.

I: Correct.

VT2: So I'm not sure we're getting the results anywhere statewide. It would be interesting to see. And I feel that because it's expensive for us to keep buying new computers every year, every year, every year, every year, for the entire state oh my goodness. I don't know. I don't know if it's worth it. When you have schools in Silicon Valley at the high school level whose parents invented these things insisting that their children not be attached to a device. You have that because they want this kind of stuff what I was-- The hands on, the real life stuff. Now we're using our little DILV use as a tool. Yes. And where did I tell my students I said see this is why I'm so excited we have computers because I used to have to print up realia. We could just look right there.

I: So using technology to support to enhance teaching not to replace?

VT2: No.

I: I know I should have **[inaudible 00:31:21]** conversation but sometimes that happens. We relate too much in technology that it takes away the essence of real learning and real teaching. So yeah.

VT2: My students use it as a tool with the exception of Study Island now I'm using that as a tool for me. So that goes along with this as well. So Study Island has the level of difficulty that these common core standards have on the computer including a constructed response. And the questions always change and so I feel like okay up until this year I taught my students to be ready for ELA on paper. But now they have to click and drag and highlight on the computer.

I: Yeah, they are getting exposed to that practice.

VT2: So I feel like I'm hoping that this would be a better year in that regard. I'm hoping. We will see what happens. We always in this profession we have to always be open to change.

I: Very well said.

VT2: Always open to the possibilities. You can't be stuck and this is the only way to do it, and this is the right way and I'm not going to do it any other way.

I: Is there anything else you would like me to know in regards to your preparedness and implementing the ELA CCSS?

VT2: I think I'm going to conclude I guess with each year there is more and more out there, and mentioning that I have to ask Mr. Jimenez about something. So one of the things that I noticed right away and I brought up at it was a county train-- The presenter that was there it was either county or district level is paired text where the children read three passages, compare, contrast which sentence from source one source two all of that right. And I asked-- It's okay if I mention names here?

I: Yeah. They will be changed.

VT2: I spoke to Ruth Miller because she has this time. I said, "This is what we need. Those have not been created, and then the questions that go along with that." And that takes a lot of time for me to do or anybody else and nothing ever got done. Well guess what. This year you can buy those out now there are books that have them there. And I shared that with Mr. Jimenez, he was supposed to order because I said is there any extra money. But he has my catalog so I was just going to buy one because-- I know you get so

busy. I mean you guys have 12 hour days. I get that or maybe more than that. But each year I feel there's more out there, and I feel that this common course standards are good themselves are good. How they evaluate it at the end of the year I'm not so sure that that's the way to go about it. It's almost as if you should have a project based learning, one project that includes everything, the math, the language, the writing, all of the above. And the children are scored on that. That's real that's authentic. And they could come in and take three or four hours to do. They can do the language art piece the first day then maybe the math piece the second day and they're building I don't know. But I would like to see--

I: Hands on application. [chuckles]

VT2: Real life. I talked to my son about that he's getting his-- He is in Oregon but he's gone beyond. Said, "Mom you know what though, when you're my age that's all that stuff's on a computer." I said, "That's okay at your age because you already know how to infer and deduct and so forth." But these are our children we still need to teach them that. They're still in that learning phase there's a time for that. But I'm not so sure that this is the right age.

I: I see.

VT2: I do. And computers in the classroom they need to learn how to read first.

I: Thank you so much.