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The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the role of six elementary teachers' knowledge and beliefs when implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for reading in their school context. The source(s) of any change(s) in teachers' knowledge and beliefs while learning about and implementing the CCSS was also investigated.

Six focal teachers were selected to participate in this study based on purposeful sampling at a Title I school in the southeastern United States. Data were collected about these teachers' knowledge and beliefs about reading through observations, interviews, and the Literacy Orientation Survey (Lenski, 1998) to craft case studies of each teacher. Three District and school leaders were also interviewed to provide additional perspectives on the context of this study.

A cross-case analysis highlighted several key findings. First, the teachers did not have solid knowledge of reading or the CCSS for reading. Second, their prior beliefs, including their beliefs about their students' abilities and motivation, informed their instructional decision-making. Third, although the teachers viewed themselves as constructivists, their traditional application of reading practices followed District and school expectations for instruction. Fourth, changes in teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices were attributed to those expectations. Finally, teachers in the study made

choices about how to implement the CCSS based on District and school expectations, their students, state assessments, and online resources.

This study yielded several recommendations related to implementing new instructional programs and structures for teaching reading when teachers are also expected to use standards-based instruction. Recommendations for district leaders include collaborating with teachers, administrators, and curriculum leaders to create a common vision, common vocabulary, and aligned goals for implementing new programs and standards. District leaders should also create a timeline for preparing and supporting school-based professionals implementing new programs and standards, allocating resources, and providing on-going professional development. School administrators must ensure that school visions and timelines are aligned with District expectations and support the needs of the school. School-based teachers, teacher leaders, curriculum coaches, and administrators need opportunities to collaborate in order to create a shared commitment to learning when implementing new programs and standards.

EXPECTATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS
AND NEW PROGRAMS FOR READING IN A TITLE I SCHOOL:
CASE STUDIES OF THE ROLE OF TEACHERS'
KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS

by

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To my husband, Trent, and my babies, Sanaa, Wade, and Jaeden
for continuous support, understanding, and love.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 created a wave of changes in policies, procedures, and instructional expectations that made it possible for 47 participating states to have the same standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts. Implementing these new standards forced teachers, schools, and systems to evaluate current and past knowledge for teaching reading with the goal of students mastering the 21st Century College and Career-Ready standards set forth in the CCSS.

The need for standards-based change was a result of the United States' desire to become globally competitive (Barton, 2009). In 2008, the National Governors Association (NGA) revealed gaps between the United States and other countries in reading and mathematics as well as between and within socioeconomic groups and racial groups within the United States. According to the NGA, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Achieve (www.achieve.org), the reading scores of fourth graders in the United States had become stagnant while other countries made substantial gains. Achieve, like the NGA and CCSSO, is focused on reform in education by raising academic standards, graduation requirements, and accountability standards that will lead to gains in the United States (www.achieve.org). This is important because gains in other countries are attributed to their reform movements (NGA, 2008). Concern about gaps and

the need for all students in the United States to be globally competitive in the 21st century led to a change in how we view educating the students of the United States, which in turn led to the research that was used to create the Common Core State Standards Through “international benchmarking” the United States sought to identify what top performing countries did to create their world-class education systems (NGA, 2008). Benchmarking, in this sense, required a willingness to make necessary changes in academic standards to allow the United States to perform at or above the level of the countries that were benchmarked (NGA, 2008). It was noted that there were wide variations in the quality of content standards, and alignment of instruction and assessments across the states, and yet states were sanctioned according to the same federal law (Barton, 2009). Benchmarking allowed Achieve, National Governors Association, and the Council of Chief State School Officers to help states set standards, including common standards (Barton, 2009). The creation of common standards not only created a common set of goals for students within the United States, common standards created the possibility of an assessment system that aligns with the standards. Though the curriculum may not be common across the states, the creation of common standards created a space for curriculum and instruction to be more aligned with both the standards and the assessment system.

In 2010, the CCSS was published and became the impetus for change in teacher education and professional development to ensure that teachers were equipped to implement the standards as intended by the researchers and writers of the standards. However, it was clear during the original presentation of the standards that curriculum leaders and developers in states and school systems should be the ones to determine how

instruction would be delivered and the materials that would be used to deliver the instruction. Then, in 2012, two lead writers of the CCSS published the Revised Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy (CCCCSS). This publication, among others, was created to help teachers, schools, and school systems with the selection of materials and instructional practices to support the implementation of the CCSS. Nevertheless, in the ensuing years there has been concern about how to implement the standards, and there were and still are concerns within schools about whether the standards will produce students who are college and career ready.

Although there are some teachers and principals who say they are confident about their knowledge for implementing the CCSS, they are less confident that the CCSS will improve student achievement (MetLife, 2013). Some teachers and principals are even less confident that the CCSS will actually prepare students for college or careers after high school (MetLife, 2013). Based on my understanding of the MetLife surveys and my experience as a literacy facilitator whose job it is to help teachers enact the CCSS, there are several assumptions that can be made. First, although teachers say they are confident in their knowledge of the standards and their ability to implement them, this confidence may be based on misinterpretations and misunderstandings of the intentions of the standards. Misinterpretations can cause implementing the standards in a way that does not remain true to the standards and fails to provide students with the rigor needed for success beyond high school. Second, although teachers may believe in the standards, they may not believe that the rigorous nature of the standards is beneficial for all students. In

this case, there may be students whose teachers believe are incapable of performing to the expectations of the standards. Third, mandates from leadership in schools and school systems about the implementation of the CCSS may conflict with instructional beliefs and knowledge about reading of some teachers. These conflicts may result in an unwillingness of some teachers to be open to change and meaningful conversations about the standards, even in situations where students have not benefited from prior instruction.

In addition, the context of a school community is related closely to the implementation of the CCSS, especially in Title I schools where teachers are seeking ways to close the achievement gaps between their students and students in more affluent schools. In fact, in my pilot study for this dissertation, I found that teachers in Title I schools face the challenge of navigating standards-based curriculum changes in environments where some may not believe the standards are appropriate for their population of students. Nevertheless, implementation of the CCSS has forced schools that have traditionally done poorly with reading proficiency, compared to other schools, to reevaluate how instruction is delivered to help the students meet the goal of being college and career ready. According to the standards, all students should be college and career ready by the end of the twelfth grade. Arguably, teachers' beliefs about how students in Title I schools learn impacts the delivery of the CCSS, and teacher knowledge and context also appear to be important factors in how the CCSS are implemented. However, there is limited empirical evidence available to evaluate this assumption.

Fives and Buehl (2012) believe that "beliefs are precursors to action" (p.481) and changes in beliefs are the key for effective change in teacher practices. Although the

CCSS do not endorse particular materials or methods that should be used for teaching, it is clear from my experience that changes in materials and methods are needed to reach the rigor and coherence required by the standards. It is also clear that if instruction and materials for instruction remain the same, the results and gaps will remain the same. Other countries have made extensive changes in their standards, and seemingly in their instruction, that have produced positive changes in student performance. The CCSS are an attempt to guide school systems in the United States to make the same type of changes seen in countries where socioeconomic status does not impact student learning (NGA, 2008). Therefore, asking teachers to evaluate their knowledge and beliefs as a way to identify starting points for professional growth and development is important to the successful implementation of the standards. However, little empirical research is available to help on this front.

Purpose

This was a study of the "lived" experiences of teachers implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) filtered through their knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of teachers' knowledge and beliefs when implementing the CCSS for reading within the context in which they taught. I was also interested in understanding how the CCSS reciprocally influenced teachers' knowledge and beliefs. Knowing that the CCSS were created to eliminate international and national gaps in literacy, I was seeking to understand how teachers viewed and implemented the CCSS for reading in a Title I setting. In sum, this

study focused on how the standards-based changes in a Title I school influenced teacher knowledge, beliefs, and implementation of reading instruction, and vice versa.

To achieve the purposes of this study, I used case study methodology to capture the detailed account of six teachers at a Title I school who were implementing the CCSS in reading. In-depth interviews and observations were undertaken to provide rich descriptions of the prior knowledge and beliefs of six teachers, how these teachers negotiated the standards, and the context in which they taught. Not only did this study reveal how the standards were filtered through the teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction, it also revealed how the standards shifted in teachers' knowledge and beliefs that then impacted their implementation of the standards.

Research Questions

The research questions were based on the following propositions that underlie this study. First, I wanted to know more about how teachers' understanding and use of the CCSS were filtered through their theoretical knowledge, beliefs, and the context in which they taught. Second, I wanted to reveal possible shifts or changes that occurred when teachers' beliefs and knowledge did not align with the expectations or mandates for implementing the CCSS. Third, I wanted to know if such shifts or changes, if experienced, led to changes in teacher knowledge and beliefs or in how the CCSS were implemented. The following research questions were the focus while gathering teachers' accounts about how they implemented the CCSS and how implementing the CCSS may have caused shifts in their practice, knowledge, and beliefs. The following questions guided this study:

- What do teachers reveal about their knowledge and beliefs about reading and how they implement the CCSS because of their knowledge and beliefs?
- What, if any, shifts or changes do teachers describe or report in their knowledge and beliefs about reading during their implementation of the CCSS?
- What do teachers say about why they implement the CCSS the way that they have chosen to implement the CCSS?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions provide an understanding of key terms related to my study. It is not intended that these definitions are all encompassing. Rather, I am providing the definitions of the key terms that supported my path, my lens, and my framework throughout my study.

Achievement Gap. According to Au (1998), the literacy achievement gap can be explained through a social constructivist perspective. The “gap” represents the lack of success of students with linguistic differences, cultural differences, and socio-economic differences as compared to students who have characteristics generally needed for reading success. “Students have difficulty learning in school because instruction does not follow their community’s cultural values and standards for behavior” (Au 1998, p. 302).

Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Created in 2010, the CCSS are a sequence of standards from K-12 that are intended to ensure that all students are college and career ready (CCSS, 2010). The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) collaborated on the creation of the internationally benchmarked standards to provide rigorous instruction in K-12 schools in

the United States (CCSS, 2010). They are considered high-quality academic standards that outline what students should know and be able to do in mathematics and English language arts at the end of each grade (CCSS, 2010).

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. The CCSS for ELA are grade-specific standards for reading, writing, listening, and speaking that students will need to be college and career ready in the 21st century. These literacy standards reach beyond the traditional ELA classroom into teaching literacy in the content areas including social studies, science, and the technical subjects. They represent the literacy skills that college and career ready students must master to read print and digital text closely and critically (CCSS, 2010). Although the standards for literacy and content areas are written as one set of standards for elementary, the standards are written in two sets (Literacy and History/Social Studies, Science & Technical Subjects) for 6th -12th grades.

Change. Change in this study was related to teachers modifying or refining their beliefs, knowledge, and instructional practices. Change can be caused by outside sources including school and system mandates, professional development, professional teacher training, or change in location. Change may also be the result of shifts in personal beliefs, theoretical and practical knowledge, and experiences with teaching children to read.

Context (classroom and school). Context was two-fold for this study. First, there was the context of the school or school system that has power over teachers' ability or inability to enact their own beliefs. Context, from this perspective, involved schools and school systems setting mandates that introduced or eliminated certain curriculum

materials, controlled instructional time and delivery, and valued specific theoretical understandings. Second, there was context within the school and classroom that impacted how the teacher communicated and provided instruction to students. This type of context was filtered through teachers' preconceived notions about the populations of students that the school served, and the teacher's professional knowledge base.

Filters. A teacher's professional knowledge base and theoretical beliefs about literacy instruction, including how both teachers and pre-service teachers approach learning to teach reading, filters which elements are used and will become a part of the teacher's classroom practice (Tillema, 1994). Individual understandings of reality are revealed through existing beliefs, which influence, screen, or filter how new information and experiences shape both what is learned from new information and how new information is used (Fives & Beuhl, 2012).

Implementation. Implementation is the purposeful application of a specific set of activities to put into practice a specified activity, program, or in this case a set of standards (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). For the purposes of this study, implementation was based on policy and contextual changes within schools and school systems. As a result, teachers made changes in how they implemented, created, and applied activities to meet the expectations of the adopted policies and requirements.

Mandates. Mandates bring with them the requirement to make changes in instructional materials and methods based upon what the leaders find most beneficial for the organization or the people serviced by the organization. Mandates are requirements placed upon teachers, but mandates often disregard a teacher's knowledge and beliefs.

Teacher Beliefs. Teacher beliefs serve as filters that allow teachers to interpret events and the relevance of content. Beliefs also serve as frames that define problems or tasks, and they are guides that affect teachers' immediate actions (Fives & Beuhl, 2012). They influence how teachers approach learning to teach and the knowledge that is constructed during the experience (Fives & Beuhl, 2008). Teacher beliefs for this study revealed both their implicit and explicit nature, stability over time, situated or generalized nature, relation to knowledge, and existence as individual propositions or larger systems (Fives & Beuhl, 2012). Another way of defining and describing teacher beliefs in this study was through teachers' theoretical orientations for reading including traditional, constructivist, or eclectic orientations (Lenski, 1998).

Teacher Knowledge. For the purpose of this study, teacher knowledge included knowledge about reading content and pedagogy that was valued and retained as a part of teachers' development of beliefs during undergraduate education and in-service professional development. It includes knowledge about the reading content, pedagogy, and pedagogical content knowledge. For this study, it also includes knowledge about reading instruction for students who attended Title I schools. Knowledge should not be confused with beliefs, although the two are closely connected (Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1995).

Summary

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were created with the goal of closing the academic performance gap between the United States and other countries. This study was designed to capture the lived experiences of teachers implementing the CCSS who

teach in Title I schools that have as their goal to close performance gaps. This study was designed to document how these teachers navigate their own knowledge and beliefs with the expectations placed upon them at school and district levels and what teachers thought about how to accomplish the goal of closing reading performance gaps while enacting a standards-based reading curriculum. This study also looked at possible changes in practices and beliefs related to changes in standards and curriculum based on mandates or expectations.

In chapter 2, I present the review of literature in teacher knowledge and beliefs, the history of reading knowledge, and the national and North Carolina history of the CCSS implementation. This review provided the background for this study and provided the starting point for interviews and observation, which were the plans for data collection described in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 describes the research methods, including the purpose and the process for the interviews, the observations and the Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS). Chapter 4 will begin with an overview of school and district initiatives to increase student achievement and to close achievement gaps in reading. The overview will also include data collected from district and school leaders that influenced how teachers learn, interpret, and implement required standards and practices. The majority of Chapter 4 will focus on the findings of the study, including my analysis and interpretation of the data collected from six teachers to answer my three research questions. Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the findings, assertions, recommendations, limitations, and future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Throughout history, there have been many reforms in education with the goal of ensuring that all students receive the education that is needed to become productive citizens. In this literature review, I present research that addresses teachers' theoretical knowledge, teacher beliefs, and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). I also address the history, political climate, and reform movements that influenced the knowledge base for teaching reading, and how knowledge is enacted in the classroom. This focus will help better understand how the CCSS has impacted teacher knowledge, beliefs, and instruction, which are key components of my research. My goal in this study was to understand how teachers' knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction and the CCSS were changed, or not, during the implementation of standards-based reforms and mandates.

As described in Chapter 1, the need for the adoption of the CCSS, was a result of the United States' desire to become globally competitive after years of lagging behind other countries in reading, math, and science. In 2008, the National Governors Association (NGA) revealed gaps between the United States and other countries, and gaps in reading and mathematics between socioeconomic groups and between racial groups within the United States (Barton, 2009; U.S. Department of Education). For example, according to the National Governors Association (NGA), Council of Chief

State School Officers (CCSSO), and Achieve (<http://achieve.org/history-achieve>), the reading scores of fourth graders in the United States were stagnant while other countries were making substantial gains. Even after previous standards-based changes and educational reforms, the gaps that led to the adoption of the CCSS remained consistent between the United States and other countries and between sub-groups within the United States, including socioeconomic and racial groups. The goal of ensuring that all students, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, language, or disability graduated from high school ready for college and careers, meant that standards needed to be raised for all students (United States Department of Education, 2010; Conley, 2014).

To reiterate, the purpose of this study was to examine the role of teachers' knowledge and beliefs when implementing the CCSS for reading. Knowing that the CCSS were created to eliminate international and national gaps, I was seeking to understand how teachers' beliefs and knowledge influenced how the standards were implemented with populations of students who traditionally score on the bottom half of the literacy achievement gap. I was also interested in understanding how implementing the CCSS may have created change in teachers' knowledge and beliefs. Therefore, this study focused on teacher knowledge and beliefs during standards-based change and the contextual factors that standards-based change had on teacher knowledge, beliefs, and implementation of reading instruction for students in Title I schools. I also focused on the context and influences that states, school systems, and schools had on how the implementation of the CCSS in reading instruction should take place (see Figure 1).

I created the conceptual framework (see Figure 1) for this study. This framework was designed to outline key elements of my study and areas of focus for the literature review. Followed by the explanation of the conceptual framework, a brief overview of the CCSS for reading is provided (see Figure 2) because they are foundational to this study. Next, a historical overview of teacher knowledge about reading and reading instruction from the 1800s to the adoption of the CCSS is provided. This historical overview focuses on legislation, policies, and trends in reading instruction that impacted the knowledge and beliefs of teachers and how reading instruction has been implemented throughout history. This history also includes research that was used to support various movements in reading instruction, and the reasoning behind the decisions that were made regarding reading instruction at various points in time. The remaining sections of this literature review focus on teacher knowledge and beliefs, including both general and specific beliefs about how reading should be taught. The beliefs section includes literacy beliefs related to various theoretical orientations and the types of research that have been used to capture teachers' theoretical orientations and teachers' beliefs.

The final section of this literature review returns to the key ideas in the conceptual framework and provides an in-depth view of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. This section includes how the CCSS came about, how the standards were intended to be implemented, the goals of the standards, teachers' beliefs related to the standards, and additional aspects in my conceptual framework including the role context and competing mandates that were revealed in the pilot study for this

dissertation. I concluded this literature review with a synthesis of recent research studies focused on the CCSS for reading to show how my research filled a gap in that research.

Conceptual Framework for this Study

I created a conceptual framework for this study (see Figure 1) based on key CCSS for reading and ideas supported by Achieve, NGA, CCSSO, and other materials for implementation of the CCSS for North Carolina. At the center of my conceptual framework for this study were the key elements of the Common Core State Standards, which included teachers' knowledge of the CCSS, pedagogy for teaching the CCSS, resources and materials for teaching the CCSS, and classroom environment for teaching the CCSS. Figure 1 also shows how these elements relate to one another and additional factors important to this study: teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs, the school and classroom context, and state and district mandates.

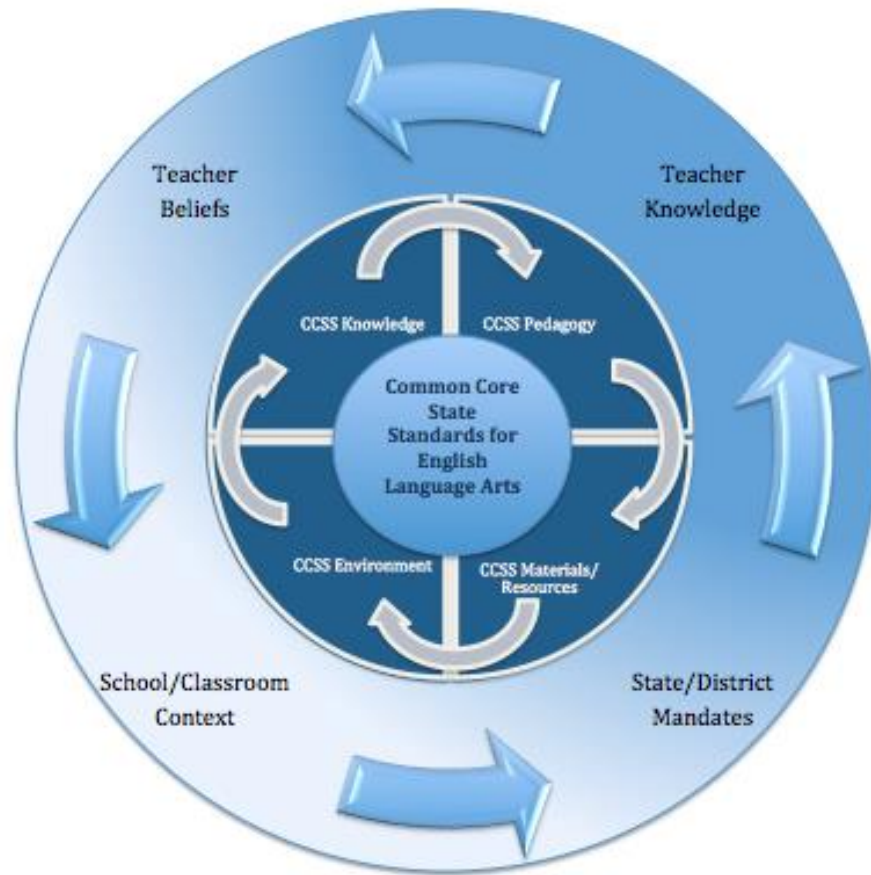


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: Common Core State Standards for Reading and the Role of Teacher Knowledge, Beliefs, Context, and Mandates

The inner layer of my conceptual framework identified four key areas from the CCSS including knowledge, pedagogy, classroom environment, and materials and resources. Because teachers implementing the CCSS must have background knowledge of the standards and the major shifts in instruction they required, this is represented in the center of Figure 1. Once that background was established, a circular motion begins to happen, as indicated by the pointed arrows in the center of Figure 1. These arrows indicate that CCSS knowledge, environment, pedagogy, and materials and resources,

once implemented, begin to support one another, showing the standards work together, and emphasizing that one component cannot stand or grow alone. Teachers, according to this diagram, must understand the importance of all these components when they make text selections, group their students, and hold instructional conversations.

The outer rim of the framework includes teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge, classroom and school context, and state and district mandates. Although none of these areas were discussed within the CCSS, these areas were important components of my study because they served as filters for how information about the CCSS is understood, accepted or not accepted, and implemented or not. These components were also important because in my pilot study of teachers teaching reading in Title I schools, school and classroom context influenced how interactions, conversations, and expectations allowed teachers to enact their beliefs and knowledge. In other words, I found that what teachers believe about the school and the support students have outside of school influenced instruction. State and district mandates for material selection and instruction also influenced how teachers were able to implement their knowledge about the CCSS in ways that they believed were best. The arrows on the outer rim are pointed in the opposite direction because not only do the components in the outer rim influence each other, they also interact with how the standards are implemented.

The CCSS asks teachers to challenge all students and to move all students towards being college and career ready by the end of the twelfth grade (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Although not specifically mentioned in the standards, if all students are able to reach the goals of the standards, even students who attend high-poverty

schools and students who are African American should benefit from the instruction provided through the CCSS. Since teachers are the “lynchpin” for student success (Reutzel, 2013), this study was designed to uncover how teachers that teach these populations of students understand and implement the CCSS. Therefore, this study sought to explore how the outer layer of the framework (Figure 1) – teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs, local and state mandates, and school and classroom context - influenced instruction for a group of teachers in Title I elementary schools in North Carolina. In the remaining sections of this literature review, I delve more deeply into the history and research related to each component of this conceptual framework.

Brief Introduction to the Historical Context of Standards

North Carolina adopted the CCSS in 2012 to ensure that all North Carolina graduates were prepared to be nationally and globally competitive (Pitre-Martin, 2012a). According to Pitre-Martin (2012a), the focus in North Carolina was to use the CCSS to help students think at a deeper level of conceptual understanding, to help them understand why the content of the standards are important, and to help students make the connection between math and literacy standards and other content areas. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction also made the decision to adopt the standards because students of color and students who are economically disadvantaged were not achieving at the same levels as other groups of students (Pitre-Martin, 2012b). Although there had been some gains in closing the achievement gap and improved student graduation rates, North Carolina wanted to make sure that all students were college and

career ready when they graduated by having students engaged in learning that kept them in school (Pitre-Martin, 2012b).

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) provided a model for developing national standards in 1989 based on recommendations of teachers and mathematics professionals (Barton, 2009). Although these were national standards, states made decisions about how to use the NCTM standards to create state standards. In 1992, the National Council on Education Standards and Tests made a recommendation to implement national content standards and assessments (Barton, 2009). During the Clinton administration in 1994, the council recommended national standards again, and like before, there was debate about how to implement national standards that were not federally controlled but allowed states flexibility in applying the standards (Barton, 2009). This controversy led to the development of the voluntary NAEP assessments for fourth grade reading and eighth grade math. In 1991, states were required to create cut-points for achievement tests as a part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (Barton, 2009). There were concerns about cut-points for state-created achievement assessments that measured student proficiency on the state standards that were far below that of the NAEP proficiency cut scores (Hunt, Rizzo, and White, 2008). Then, as a part of the 1994 amendment to the Secondary Education Act of 1965, states were required to create content standards and ways of measuring student achievement in the standards (Barton, 2009). However, differentiated state standards, ways of measuring the state standards, and how states used cut-points to determine standards proficiency made it difficult for

states to really assess how instruction and learning was happening in United States classrooms and did not create a way to compare states.

In 2006, the Fordham Foundation conducted a debate on national standards (Barton, 2009). In 2008 the former governor of North Carolina, Jim Hunt, was asked to take the lead in exploring the possibility of common state standards (Hunt et al., 2009). Conversations continued until the James B. Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy created the “Blueprint for Education Leadership” (Barton, 2009). It was understood that although the United States had excellent schools where some students benefitted from advanced and honors courses, and lived in communities that supported educational excellence, not all students were fortunate to have these experiences (Hunt et al., 2009). Hunt et al. (2009) concluded the “Blueprint for Education Leadership” stating that:

Standards are not the magic bullet that will transform education and ensure that all our students are prepared for the new economy. But standards help state and local leaders, teachers, schools of education, and textbook and test publishers align their efforts to improve the educational experience of all students. Without high, clear, and rigorous standards, efforts in P-12 education lack direction and goals (p. 7).

In 2010, the CCSS were released and within a short period of time over 40 states adopted them, including North Carolina in 2012. However, before going into more detail about what precipitated the writing of the CCSS, it is important to understand the content of the CCSS for reading, the foundation of this study.

Common Core State Standards for Reading

The CCSS for reading (see Figure 2) includes details of the reading standards and reveals the expectations of the standards. I created Figure 2 to show the key ideas in the CCSS for reading that were supported by research collected by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA). These key ideas were distributed to North Carolina teachers in the form of CCSS materials and training resources offered on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction website. Figure 2 also identified key topics and sub-topics based on reoccurring themes and ideas found in the Common Core resources and materials supported by Achieve, NGA, CCSSO, and materials for implementation of the CCSS for North Carolina. These themes highlighted the importance of teacher knowledge, the classroom environment, instructional resources and materials, and the pedagogy teachers used to teach reading as additional factors related to the role of teachers' knowledge and beliefs when implementing the CCSS for reading.

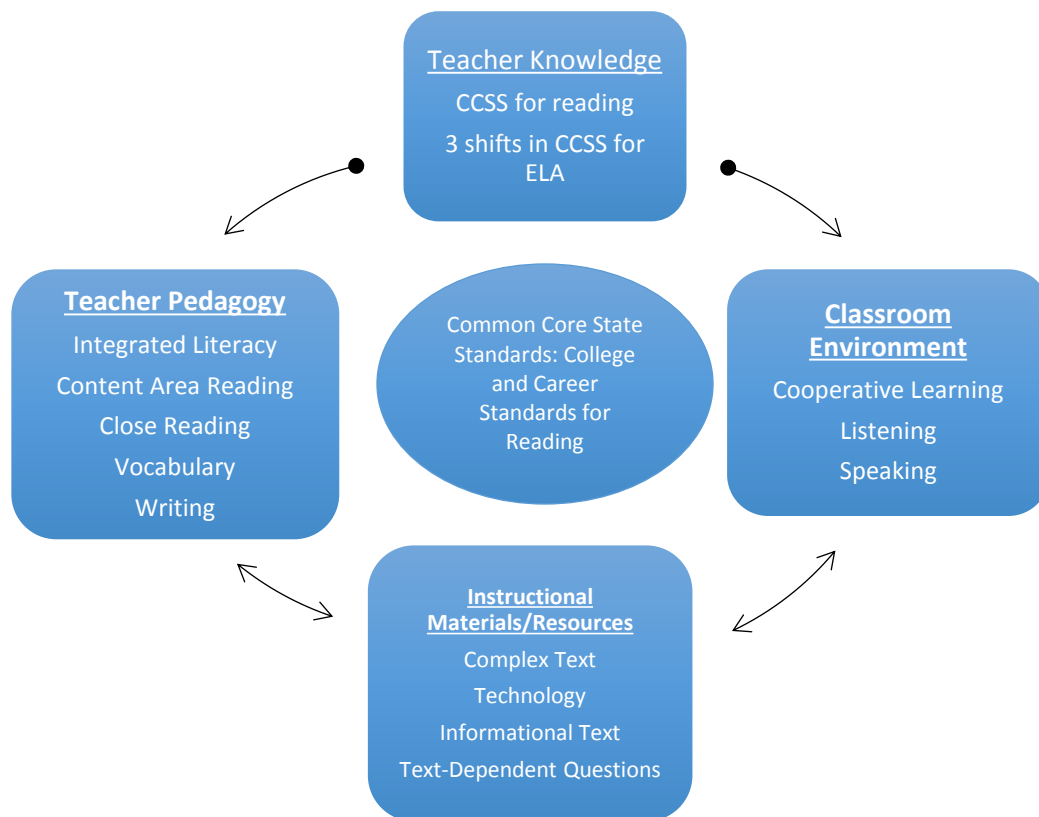


Figure 2. Common Core State Standards for Reading

Figure 2 is organized in a circular fashion with teacher knowledge placed at the top. This represents the importance of studying what teachers understand about the scope and expectations of the standards. Teacher knowledge is at the top because the knowledge and effectiveness of the literacy instruction and implementation of the CCSS ultimately is dependent upon what the teacher in the classroom knows and is able to do (CCSS, 2010; Reutzel, 2013).

The arrows in Figure 2 demonstrate the relationship between the key ideas in the CCSS. The arrows from teacher knowledge are one-way arrows to indicate that the teacher provides instruction through pedagogy enacted in the classroom environment

using selected instructional materials and resources. The arrows between the pedagogy, classroom environment, and materials and resources have arrows on both ends. These arrows demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between these areas. All of these areas are functioning every day in a CCSS classroom. One area is not more important than the other because all of these things must be in place to represent true implementation of the CCSS.

Teacher pedagogy is a major area in the CCSS that must be studied because teachers are still uncertain about the practices that best support implementation of the CCSS (Hipsher, 2014). Certain teaching practices should be implemented during daily reading instruction to help students meet the CCSS. Teacher pedagogy to support the CCSS includes integrated literacy, content area reading, close reading, vocabulary, and writing. Teacher pedagogy is based on teachers' knowledge about appropriate pedagogy for teaching reading and is also influenced by the classroom environment and the materials and resources that are available and are used.

Classroom environment is a major area in this figure because it helps us understand how components of learning in CCSS classrooms are managed. A big staple of the standards is that learning should happen in cooperative and collaborative classroom settings where speaking and listening are done in a safe space. Classroom environment also includes the organizational structures for whole group, small group, and one on one instruction. Not to be excluded from classroom environment are the types of interactions that occur between students and between adults and students in the room.

Finally, the selection of materials and resources is also important for implementing the CCSS, even though the CCSS do not stipulate what teachers should use for instruction or how they should provide instruction. However, it is clear that if the materials and resources do not match what the standards ask students to be able to do, then the materials will not help students acquire the standards needed to make them good readers. Materials and resources identified by the CCSS that should be a part of every classroom include: complex text, technology resources, informational text, and text dependent questions.

Additional, detailed information about the CCSS for reading are provided later in this literature review. However, before getting into more detail about the content of the CCSS, the historical context for what eventually led to the CCSS is important to understand.

Changes in Reading Instruction: From 1830 to the CCSS

Reading programs have been used in the United States since the development of the graded reader created by McGuffey in the 1830's to provide both content and methods for reading instruction (Dewitz, Jones & Leahy, 2009). During the 19th century, reading programs suggested that students articulate the substance of their reading or respond to comprehension questions after reading (Dewitz, et al., 2009). In the 1920's, basal reading programs provided teachers extension activities including writing activities, plays and drama, and even cross-curricular activities (Dewitz, et al., 2009). Although the importance of comprehension gained momentum during the 1920's, emphasis in instruction and research was focused on students' "eye movements" and word

recognition (Rayner, 1998). During this behaviorist period, researchers studied how the eyes moved across the page to read words, sentences, nonsense words, and word parts (Rayner, 1998). Comprehension, during this same period, emphasized vocabulary, word meaning, and skill-based reasoning. There was also a shift, during the 1920's, from oral reading expression with a focus on pauses, fixation, and reading rate to rapid silent reading.

In the 1930's and 1940's, reading instruction became skill-based and focused on finding main ideas, determining author's purpose, drawing conclusions, distinguishing fact from opinion, and comparing and contrasting what was read (Dewitz et al., 2009). During the 1940's, teachers used programs that offered systematic development of reading lessons based on progressively difficult skills and passages (Betts, 1946; Gray & Reese, 1957). Basal programs at this time provided teachers with lessons that included preparing students for the reading, supporting them during guided reading, emphasizing skills and drills, and extending learning with follow-up activities (Gray & Reese, 1957).

Reading Practices and Programs 1970's - 1990's

In the 1970's, skills instruction took center stage to accompany basal texts. The use of skills-based worksheets and criterion-referenced tests became a part of basal programs (Dewitz et al., 2009). Implemented as early as the 1940's, skills-based instruction, with an emphasis on isolated reading skills mastery was the focus of basal reading programs (Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008).

In the 1980's and 1990's whole language was the popular choice for reading instruction that emphasized the natural development of literacy competency (Pearson,

2004). Whole language advocates thought that skills were better taught in the act of reading and writing genuine text for authentic purposes, rather than taught directly and explicitly by teachers (Pearson, 2004).

Reading Practices and Programs 1990's - 2010's

During the 1990's, literature-based instruction, or the reading of authentic texts was promoted (Dewitz et al., 2009). Textbook publishers pushed materials for literature-based instruction and classroom libraries and boxed sets of thematically related text were marketed for use in classrooms (Pearson 2004).

In the 2000's, No Child Left Behind and the National Reading Panel Report (2002) caused a shift in the field of reading instruction back to skills-based forms of teaching reading. Reading First, a national reading initiative that was developed based on the results from the National Reading Panel Report, pushed for materials and instruction to be based on Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) and the Big Five. Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension were the cornerstones of reading instruction during this period (Dewitz et al., 2009). Schools were encouraged to use phonics-based reading programs that required teachers to apply instruction to fidelity as provided by the publisher and based on what SBRR determined was effective (NRP, 2000).

New basal readers, or phonics-based reading programs, were created to prevent any child from being left behind by meeting the reading needs of children most at risk for reading failure (Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008). The movement towards basal programs allowed local, state, and federal systems of education to have greater control

over what students should learn, and over what and how teachers should teach in public schools (Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008). In order to receive federal and state funding, some states, including North Carolina, required teachers to receive intensive professional development to learn to teach using prescriptive core reading programs. The Reading First Model was considered by some to be what was needed to close the achievement gap in reading between minority and majority groups of students (Maniates & Mahiri, 2011) based on socioeconomic and racial status.

Currently, strategy instruction that involves intentional control and deliberate direction of reading behavior (Afflerbach et al., 2008) is expected in many schools. According to Maniates and Mahiri (2011), although schools are in what some call the post-scripted curriculum era, scripted programs continue to be used because these programs are a way to normalize instruction for teaching reading in kindergarten through third grade. Accountability and assessment has also moved reading instruction towards scripted programs and instructional mandates (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Pease-Alvarez, Samway & Cifka-Herrera, 2010).

The Great Debate

The Great Debate is a key aspect in the timeline of reading instruction. Reading instruction for beginning readers is at the center of this debate. It includes how and when to begin instruction, what instructional materials to use for instruction, and how to organize the classroom for instruction (Chall, 1967). On one side of the debate there is a Code Emphasis perspective that sees speaking and reading as two different developmental paths (Lieberman, 1990). From this perspective, speech is a natural

process, and learning to read is a cognitive achievement that one must be explicitly taught (Liberman, 1990). On the other side of the debate, there is Whole Language that centers around the idea that children learn to speak and read as their language develops; therefore learning to read should be a natural process and be just as easy as learning to speak (Liberman, 1990).

It should be noted that The Great Debate, with all of its attention since the 1960's, actually only applies to beginning reading, and not to reading instruction after students have learned to decode text. According to Chall (1967), Code Emphasis is recommended as a beginning reading method because it focuses on teaching children to decode individual words in print. To work on decoding after students can recognize words in print is a waste of time (Chall, 1967). Although The Great Debate is not a hot topic for discussion today, arguably this debate provided the base for the current policies, mandates, and instruction that we see today. In fact, the most current movement in reading education today, the adoption of the CCSS, does include code-emphasis, or phonics, as seen in the Foundational Skills components of the CCSS. However, it also includes standards for teaching beginning readers how to comprehend text as found in the expectations of the CCSS Reading Information (RI) and Reading Literature (RL) standards beginning in kindergarten.

National Reading Panel

In 1997, the director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the Secretary of Education were charged with creating the National Reading Panel to survey the research on the effectiveness of instructional

approaches used to teach children to read (National Reading Panel, 2000). Based on the 2000 National Reading Panel (NRP) report, practices that should be included in beginning reading instruction included systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies. These practices, commonly known as the Big Five, are knowledge that teachers should acquire to help children learn to read proficiently and become “good readers.”

The National Research Council (1998) also identified three obstacles that could possibly prevent students from becoming proficient readers that align with the NRP report and its findings. These obstacles included: 1) difficulty in understanding and using the alphabetic principle; 2) failure to acquire and use comprehension strategies and skills; and 3) motivation (NRC, 1998). However, the NRP report and findings did not address the populations of students that NCLB legislation was created to help: minority and low socioeconomic students (Meyer, 2005). The NRP report also did not include studies that focused on how diverse and second-language learners best learned to read (Meyer, 2005).

However, based on the NRP findings, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) provided low-income schools with funding to support the Reading First initiative. The Reading First initiative was designed to ensure that the NRP findings were implemented in schools and that resources and materials aligned with the expectation of the findings. Later, research conducted on low-income students who received Reading First funding and those who did not receive Reading First funding, indicated that there was no difference found in the performance of the students, and the achievement gap remained the same (Arlington, 2012). Also, the increased amount of time for literacy instruction in

Title I schools was found not to impact student achievement growth in reading (Arlington, 2012). The goal of NCLB was to close achievement gaps that existed between groups of students from different socio-economic backgrounds, but there was little change ten years after this legislation (Arlington, 2012).

The Importance of Teacher Knowledge

Teachers' knowledge of the psychology of reading and knowledge of reading development are essential in overcoming the obstacles identified by the National Reading Panel Report (2000) and for ensuring student growth in reading (Piasta, Connor, Fishman & Morrison, 2009). Along with knowing how language develops, teachers must know that the development of reading begins with instruction that starts with an awareness of sounds, syllables, meaningful word parts, relationship of word meanings, and the structures of written text (Moats, 1999). Teachers who understand reading development understand that although comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading, comprehension cannot take place if students cannot decode. This makes the case of the importance for early teaching of linguistic awareness and phonics explicitly (Moats, 1999).

Reading teachers also should be aware of the language structures that support the reading development of students. Knowledge of phonetics, phonology, morphology, orthography, semantics, and syntax are areas of knowledge that every teacher must have in order to provide reading instruction (Snow, 2002). Teachers without a grasp of the language structure – phonography, morphology, orthography - will most likely be unable to provide students at the greatest risk of reading failure with the instruction that is needed to produce successful readers (Moats, 1996).

The findings of the National Reading Panel Report led to the Reading First movement, which had an influence on today's Common Core State Standards. The Foundational Skills in the CCSS focused on decoding skills found in phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency (CCSS, 2010). The Reading Information (RI) and Reading Literature (RL) standards focused on various aspects of reading growth that lead to understanding of vocabulary and comprehension (CCSS, 2010).

The Big Five

The Big Five are instructional areas of focus identified by research as beneficial for teaching children to read. The five instructional areas – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension - come directly from the National Reading Panel findings. Although they are major focus areas, the National Reading Panel findings include other instructional implications that influence how these instructional areas are implemented in the classroom. What follows is a brief review of the research supporting each of these foundational aspects of reading instruction.

Phonemic awareness. “Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words” (Ehri & Nunes, 2002, p.111). Studies show that students who have strong phonemic awareness are better readers than students who have low phonemic awareness (Ehri & Nunes, 2002). These students are better readers because they have a strong grasp of the alphabetic system and can apply the system when reading and writing words (Ehri & Nunes, 2002; NRP, 2000). When phonemic awareness instruction is linked to systematic decoding and spelling, the reading failure of students is significantly decreased (Moats, 1999).

Although McCutchen et al. (2002) found that there was little correlation between teacher beliefs and practices; there was a significant correlation between teachers' phonological knowledge and the activities that they selected. This finding supported the need for teachers to have strong knowledge in phonology. While proficiency in phonemic awareness was found to be the best predictor of student reading success (Moats, 1994), studies showed that teachers lacked the content knowledge necessary to best serve the phonological needs of the students (McCutchen et al., 2002). On average, teacher knowledge of language structure and phonology was relatively low (McCutchen et al., 2002; Moats, 2009). This was concerning because teachers with high knowledge of language and early literacy were able to produce student growth in word identification and reading because of the explicit and intentional instruction they provided (Piasta et al., 2009). In contrast, teachers with low knowledge of language and early literacy had a negative effect on student learning, even when the teacher provided the same amount or more time with instruction (Piasta et al., 2009).

Phonics. Phonics instruction focuses on helping beginning readers understand how letters are linked to phonemes to form letter-sound correspondences and eventually spelling patterns (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; NRP, 2000). The connection between phonemes and spellings helps students who do not apply alphabetic understandings when they are confronted with unfamiliar text (NRC, 1998). The recognition of letter-sound relationships and the ability to use them to make meaning of print depends on students' development of word recognition accuracy and reading fluency (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003;

NRC, 1998). Starting the process of reading depends on a student's ability to map letters and the spellings of words they represent (NRC, 1998).

Teachers must have sound knowledge of the content of reading including the symbol system and its relationship to meanings (Moats, 1999). Not only must teachers be knowledgeable about the speech sounds and symbol system, they should be reflective about their teaching of the content (Moats, 1999). For instance, it is important that instruction ensures that students not only know the sounds that letters symbolize, but also how to segment pronunciations into phonemes (Ehri, 1987). That is, after instruction students should be able to recognize that single letters, or graphemes make individual sounds in words and that other sounds are digraphs.

A meta-analysis conducted by the National Reading Panel (2000) determined that first grade students who were taught systematic phonics were able to decode, spell, and comprehend text. Older students were also able to demonstrate decoding and spelling with systematic instruction in phonics; however, these same students had difficulty in the area of comprehension (NRP, 2000). Therefore, teachers must know the importance of moving students from phonetic understandings of spelling to morphemic understandings, or understandings where students recognize spelling patterns automatically (Ehri, 1987; McCutchen et al., 2002) toward comprehension development. This supported the NRP (2000) report, which stated that focused and systematic instruction leads to the ultimate goal of reading, comprehension.

As with phonemic awareness, the type of phonologic, morphologic, and orthographic knowledge teachers has impacts student learning. Studies of students with

reading disabilities have difficulties with spelling regardless of the type of systematic instruction that they received (NRP, 2000). So, systematic instruction alone does not guarantee reading developmental growth. Likewise, teacher degrees, certifications, and conference attendance does not guarantee students' reading growth and development because participation in these programs was found to have little effect on teacher knowledge about early reading (Carlisle, Correnti, Phelps, & Zeng, 2009). However, in an earlier study by McCutchen et al. (2002), there was a correlation between teacher reading content knowledge and teacher instructional practices for teaching sounds and letter-sound relationships. Therefore, the more knowledge that teachers had about phonology, morphology, and orthography, the better equipped they were for teaching phonics. Solid understanding of phonetic structures allowed for the fluency needed to begin focus on syntax and semantics.

Fluency. Fluency in reading is the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and expression (NRP, 2000). Fluency is the speed or automaticity of word recognition, accuracy in decoding, and appropriate use of stress, pitch, and phrasing, or prosody (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Fluency is measured by the reading rate, or words read per minute; word recognition, or number of words correctly identified in a passage; and oral reading comprehension, or the ability to respond to recall or literal questions (Dowhower, 1987). Other measures of fluency include aspects of reading that influence prosody – phrasing, or how words are grouped for pauses, and intonation (Dowhower, 1987).

Good readers not only read accurately, they recognized words automatically, therefore allowing for more focus on the meaning of the text (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003).

Multiple exposures to text allowed readers to focus less on the orthographical processing of text towards more focus on automaticity (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). According to Kuhn and Stahl (2003), prosody may play a role in the connection between fluency and comprehension. While reading at an appropriate rate and with accuracy, readers who demonstrated skill with prosody were able to apply intonation and timing in a way that contributed to the meaning of text (Kuhn and Stahl, 2003).

Reading fluency is an important factor in reading comprehension; however, the strategies most commonly used to impact student fluency, including guided oral reading and silent independent reading, have not been proven to be beneficial (NRP, 2000). Both guided oral reading and silent independent reading lack research to support the use of these techniques for increasing reading fluency (NRP, 2000). However, repeated readings have been found to be beneficial for transitional readers' rate, accuracy, oral comprehension, and prosody (Dowhower, 1987). Dowhower (1987) also found that repeated readings increased the number of words that students read correctly in a minute while using appropriate phrasing, which led to greater understanding or comprehension of text passages. In a meta-analysis of fluency research, Kuhn and Stahl (2003) found that with an increase or growth in fluency, there was also an increase in comprehension. Although instruction in fluency may lead to significant gains in word recognition and overall fluency, only moderate gains were made in comprehension of text (Snow, 2002).

There was a consensus in the research that it is not clear if the strategy of rereading for fluency development created growth, or if growth should be attributed to this instructional strategy or the amount of exposure to text required of students

(Dowhower, 1987; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Repeated and assisted reading instructional strategies may also have had positive effects on student fluency and comprehension because students were able to use more difficult text than they were able to read independently (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003).

The research on fluency tells us that fluency is a necessary component of reading comprehension growth (Snow, 2002). Research also tells us that although instructional strategies for fluency impact reading growth on the word level, they have little impact on comprehension growth (NRP, 2000). However, strategies for fluency that require multiple readings or wide readings of texts have been shown to increase comprehension growth (Snow, 2002). The problem with these strategies is that it is not clear if comprehension growth is due to the fluency instruction or the fact that the students read a large volume of text. Another area that impacts student comprehension of text is vocabulary.

Vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction, both direct and indirect, leads to gains in reading comprehension when embedded in rich literature (NRP, 2000). Vocabulary instruction that is most beneficial for impacting student learning should include methods that require students to explore the relationships between words and word structure, as well as the origin and meaning of words (Moats, 1999; NRP, 2000).

Vocabulary instruction that is intended to impact comprehension of text requires activities with vocabulary beyond the classroom (McKeown, Beck, Omanson, & Pople, 1985). Instruction that McKeown et al. (1985) characterized as extended and rich consisted of providing students with opportunities to explore different aspects of a word's

meaning, identify relationships between words, use words in various contexts, and promote the use of the words outside of vocabulary instruction for motivation. The purpose of the many exposures to vocabulary words was to help students gain a deep understanding of the words and varied uses of the words (McKeown et al., 1985).

More encounters with specific words, rather than fewer encounters with words, leads to greater vocabulary knowledge for applying word meaning quickly for conceptual understanding and comprehension (McKeown et al., 1985). However, it should be noted that even multiple exposures to vocabulary in traditional instructional settings does not affect comprehension (McKeown et al., 1985). Traditional instructional settings, as described by McKeown et al. (1985), included instructional activities that required students to make simple associations with the word by use of definitions or synonyms.

Vocabulary instruction is necessary for student growth in reading comprehension. Studying the structure of the words along with providing multiple experiences with new words increases the ability of the instruction to impact comprehension, the ultimate goal of reading. While comprehension is merely one component of the Big Five, it is reliant on the other four areas to begin developing students into readers who comprehend text.

Comprehension. Comprehension occurs when readers derive meaning from text through intentional problem solving and thinking processes (NRP, 2000). It is the “process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with language” (Snow, 2002, p.11). Snow (2002) described comprehension instruction as promoting students’ ability to learn from the text with knowledge of the reader, text, activity, and context in mind. Vocabulary development, fluency

development, comprehension strategies and instruction in critical literacy are key elements for comprehension growth and development (International Reading Association, 2007). However, the act of comprehending text is much more elaborate. Comprehension takes into account reader motivation, the text, the context, and the purpose for reading (IRA, 2007).

Comprehension is enhanced when instruction is focused on concept and vocabulary growth, as well as syntax and rhetorical structures of written language (NRC, 1998). Explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies that includes ample time for reading, writing, and discussion of the text provides the intentionality needed as described by the NRP (Duke & Pearson, 2000). Comprehension instruction consisting of independent reading and interactive reading in pairs or groups has proved to be beneficial for comprehension growth (NRC, 1998).

Strategy instruction that focuses on systematic and explicit instruction of the comprehension strategies that include summarizing, predicting, inferring, monitoring understanding, discussing author intent, and visualizing has been shown to improve comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Moats, 1999; NRC, 1998; NRP, 2000, Snow, 2002). Although several strategies have proven to improve reading comprehension when applied alone, these strategies worked best when multiple strategies were applied together (Duke & Pearson, 2002; NRP, 2000). Comprehension strategies identified by the National Reading Panel's (2000) review of reading research include: 1) comprehension

monitoring; 2) the use of cooperative learning; 3) graphic and semantic organizers; 4) question answering and question generation; 5) and focus on story structure and story summarization.

Related to comprehension, critical literacy instruction allows students to take a stance by judging the accuracy and validity of texts (IRA, 2007). The analysis of a variety of texts for multiple meaning and from multiple perspectives forces students to become critical readers (IRA, 2007). The integration of critical reading with discussion and writing in the context of content area instruction (IRA, 2007; Snow, 2002) is key to promoting comprehension growth and improvement. Writing enables students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of what has been read (Moats, 1999).

Although some reading programs that provide explicit and systematic instruction in the areas of phonemic awareness and phonics may show significant growth in those areas, this growth does not always transfer over to achievement gains in comprehension development (Moats, 1999; Tivnan & Hemphill, 2005). As with studies that attribute reading growth in beginning letter sounds and word recognition to the level of teacher knowledge, the same was found to be true for reading comprehension for students from kindergarten to third grade (Carlisle et al. 2009; Carlisle, Kelcey, Berebitsky, & Phelps, 2011). In sum, teacher knowledge about reading strategies is very important for student reading growth and is attributed to the activities and experiences that teachers provide to students (Carlisle et al., 2011).

Gains in comprehension are a complex puzzle that requires the appropriate placing of all of the components of reading in an order that reveals the next piece of the

puzzle to be laid. While the research is inconclusive about how all of the components individually contribute to reading comprehension growth, comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading and each of the components, if absent, has the power to impede reading growth. The NRP (2000) not only revealed the instructional content and practices that have proven for early reading success through phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, it also revealed content and practices needed for vocabulary and comprehension development. It is evident that the National Reading Panel report was the cornerstone of the development of the CCSS for English language arts. Though all of the early literacy components of the CCSS for English language arts are not topics of this study, they are valued and intentionally placed in the Foundational Skills portion of the CCSS, hence foundational to the conceptual framework for this study. In the next section, contemporary research regarding teachers' theoretical knowledge about reading will be discussed.

Research on Teacher Theoretical Knowledge

Research on teacher knowledge, including the kind of knowledge for teaching reading described above, provided insight into the knowledge that teachers have, how they acquired knowledge, and how knowledge changed based on changes in education. Research about teachers' theoretical knowledge has occurred both qualitatively and quantitatively, which will be highlighted in the next section of this literature review because it influenced the source of data used in this study.

Many qualitative research studies about teachers' theoretical knowledge have used multiple strategies for data collection and multiple strategies for analyzing the data

(Maniates, 2011; McCutchen et al., 2002; Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008; Piasta et al., 2009). Using a variety of qualitative data collection procedures allowed researchers to collect data on how teachers responded to or implemented mandated practices (Maniates, 2011; Pease-Alvarez et al., 2008), teacher knowledge of reading content and pedagogy (McCutchen, 2002; Moats, 1996), and the relationship between teacher knowledge and practices (Piasta, 2009).

In many qualitative studies of teacher knowledge there has been a reliance on interview data and observation data because together they provided “rich” data (McCutchen, 2002) needed to understand how teachers described their knowledge and how their knowledge played out during instructional periods and decision-making. As each researcher identified the data collection strategies, reference was made to how one piece of data impacted future data that would be collected (Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008). For instance, Pease-Alvarez and Samway (2008) stated, “In order to explore more fully themes raised in the first interview, we interviewed two teachers and the principal a second time...” (p.35). During interviews and observations, researchers typically recorded field notes, recorded interviews and observations in digital format, and also collected lesson plans and instructional materials.

If assessments or surveys accompanied the research on teachers’ theoretical beliefs, these data collection devices typically were completed at the onset of the study (McCutchen et al., 2002; Piasta et al., 2009). For example, Piasta et al. (2009) used an assessment instrument to gather teacher knowledge about language and print, including

phonology, orthography, and morphology. These assessments were followed up by observations and interviews (McCutchen et al., 2002; Piasta et al., 2009).

Quantitative studies of teacher knowledge about teaching reading most often included surveys and student assessments (Dowhower, 1987; Fives & Buehl, 2008; McKeown et al., 1985). Typically, these studies were aligned to the requirements for the research that was used by the National Reading Panel. The studies used pre and post assessments to demonstrate growth or change in student performance after instructional strategies were provided for students (Dowhower, 1987; McKeown et al., 1985). These quantitative studies made comparisons between control and experimental groups of students and classes (Dowhower, 1987; McKeown et al., 1985). The numbers produced through quantitative data analysis allowed the researchers to determine if instructional decisions were able to produce growth in particular reading areas, or not. Research topics in most quantitative studies, it should be noted, were narrowly focused on measuring things like the impact of vocabulary instruction (McKeown et al., 1985) and comprehension (Dowhower, 1987).

For this study, I measured teacher knowledge of reading using a combination of survey data, observation data, and interview data, bringing together the strengths identified in key studies of teacher knowledge of reading content and pedagogy. Although using a combination of these three types of data collection was not unique, my study focused on understanding teachers' knowledge as related to the CCSS. Collecting data in various ways allowed me to use rich data to create themes and categories while

coding the data, which was a strength of other qualitative studies about teacher knowledge (Maniates, 2011; McCutchen et al., 2002; Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008; Piasta et al., 2009).

Summary

Teachers' theoretical knowledge is the starting point for understanding teacher decisions and actions. Their core knowledge about reading content and instruction forms the base for future and ongoing knowledge and understanding. Throughout the history of reading, knowledge that is valued shifted based upon research results, and changes in politics, and data that compared international systems of education and students within the United States. In recent years, teacher knowledge has included strategies that research has proven to be most effective with students, especially students from traditionally marginalized groups. The knowledge that teachers should possess was measured by qualitative and quantitative research. Although quantitative research was favored during the adoption of NCLB and during and after the NRP report, there were qualitative studies used to assess teachers' theoretical knowledge and understandings (McCutchen et al., 2002; Maniates & Mahiri, 2011; Pease-Alvarez et al., 2010). Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative studies of teacher knowledge were multi-faceted and provided insight from teachers. By analyzing teachers' words and teachers' actions, assumptions made by the researcher could be confirmed or disconfirmed by teachers. I chose to use qualitative research in my exploration of teacher knowledge because of the depth the narratives provided to help in my understanding of how teachers taught based on the CCSS, filtered through their previous knowledge about how children learn to comprehend text.

In sum, teacher theoretical knowledge about literacy, teacher beliefs, and how teachers applied their theoretical beliefs and literacy knowledge affected teacher literacy practices (Davis, Konopak, & Readence, 1993). In the next section, I reached beyond teacher knowledge to review the literature on teacher beliefs. First, I explored beliefs in general and then focused on teacher beliefs about reading instruction and literacy.

Teacher Beliefs

“Beliefs are an individual’s understandings of the world and the way it works or should work” (Richardson, 1995). They are inferred from what people say, intend, and do (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs of pre-service and in-service teachers include what teachers believe about teaching, learning, and education (Fives & Buehl, 2008; Pajares, 1992). According to Fang (1996), teacher beliefs take many forms, including teacher’s expectations of student performance and teachers’ theories about how teaching and learning should take place in particular subject areas. Teachers’ theories, or personal epistemologies, perspectives, and orientations (Kagan, 1992) also impact how teaching and learning occurs in the classroom (Fang, 1996).

The murky waters of teacher beliefs are based on the idea that teachers may say they believe in one thing and what they actually do in the classroom may be different based on the educational environment, and other factors as well. Teacher beliefs serve as filters that screen new information (Fives & Buehl, 2008; Tillema, 1994). These filters determine which elements will be used and become a part of the teacher’s professional

knowledge base and how teachers and pre-service teachers approach learning to teach and the knowledge that is constructed through the process (Fives & Buehl, 2008; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1995; Tillema, 1994).

It should also be noted that teachers' theoretical beliefs are ever shifting. Theoretical beliefs and how knowledge about teaching reading is applied often appear to shift based on school context, classroom context, beliefs about learners, and also teachers' beliefs about their roles as teachers. Although there are many areas of teachers' beliefs, for this study I explored teacher beliefs about learners, teacher beliefs about the role of teachers, and teacher beliefs about literacy instruction. These areas help define how teachers' belief systems play out according to the students who are being taught, based on beliefs that teachers have about reading content and pedagogy needed for teaching reading effectively. Teacher beliefs about the role of teachers provides a glimpse into what teachers' view as their roles and responsibilities, which may possibly determine decisions that are made that match or do not match what actually takes place in the classroom. This section about teacher beliefs concludes with research on changing teachers' beliefs because with each new mandate or new curriculum, all teachers are challenged to make changes in their core beliefs in order to do so.

Traditional vs. Constructivist Beliefs

When researching pedagogical and theoretical beliefs about reading, many researchers use the framework of "traditional" vs. the "constructivist" approach to teaching and learning. Some teachers believe that sub-skills of reading must be learned before students can determine the meaning of text, also known as "skills/word approach."

This approach is also referred to as the traditional, or structuralist approach. On the other hand, teachers who use authentic literature help students construct meaning, by means of whole-language or constructivist approaches. (Fang, 1996).

Although it may appear that teachers would have a specific theoretical orientation for teaching reading, this is not the case. Not all teachers, according to McCutchen, et al., (2002), gravitate to one particular theoretical orientation. Teachers may receive trainings that provide them with specific ways to teach students based on student needs, but teachers do not necessarily have a distinct theoretical orientation (McCutchen, et al., 2002). More about the research into traditional versus constructivist orientations to the teaching of reading is provided next because I wanted to understand and be able to report on the general orientations of the teachers in this study.

Traditional decoding approach. Rupley & Logan (1985) found that there is a correlation between teachers who hold content-centered reading beliefs and teachers who use decoding-oriented instruction that focus on letters and letter sounds. Teachers with a decoding-oriented theory of reading believe that the acquisition of language is pyramid in shape with the base being sound and symbol relationships (Harste & Burke, 1977; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). The middle of the pyramid moves to word-level understandings, and the top being the meaning of the text. These teachers know that meaning is important, but they do not see meaning as a primary factor in the language process (Harste & Burke, 1977). This bottom-up approach to teaching reading is focused on word-level instruction with an emphasis on letter and sound correspondence (Poulson, 2001). Students in decoding classrooms spend time copying letters, words, and

sentences, as well as completing worksheets (Sacks & Mergendoller, 1997) and working with controlled vocabulary texts (Richardson et al., 1991).

Traditional skills approach. Another traditional form of reading beliefs is a skills orientation. The skills orientation, according to Harste and Burke (1977), refers to the idea that there are four discrete reading skills: vocabulary, comprehension, decoding, and grammar. Within this model, there is a shared belief that reading success is attributed to the learning of words and vocabulary before reading (Harste & Burke, 1977). This whole-word or sight word approach also teaches students skills for breaking down and building up words for word meaning based on affixes, suffixes, compound words, and the use of context clues (Poulson, 2001).

Constructivist approach. Through the social constructivist lens, literacy learning and the construction of meaning occur socially (Hiebert & Raphael, 1996). Constructivists stress the social nature of learning and encourage varied strategies that are often compared to student-centered whole language practices (Heibert & Raphael, 1996). Student-centered beliefs, according to Rupley and Logan (1985), are when teachers focus on the whole language approach by engaging students in the whole text. At the core of the whole language reading theory is meaning and reading for the purpose of comprehending text (Harste & Burke, 1977). Emphasis is placed on deriving meaning from quality literature and eventually focusing on the language of words and word parts when the need is revealed (Poulson, 2001). According to this top-down theory, the systems of language (meaning, syntax, and grapheme/phoneme understanding) are dependent on one another. Reading, from the whole language perspective, is viewed as a

social event between the text and the reader that requires readers to gain a better understanding of text by relating ideas to existing knowledge (Richardson et al., 1991). While constructivism is not whole language, both include social interactions that lead to understanding.

In constructivist classrooms, students are encouraged to make sense of the world around them by bringing new experiences and prior knowledge together (Lenski et al., 1998). To make sense, students are encouraged to “think, discuss, demonstrate, and evaluate rather than acquiesce to a curriculum in which the teacher is the dispenser of knowledge” (Lenski et al., 1998, p.2). There are ten principles of constructivist literacy instruction identified by Lenski et al. (1998). These principles include: 1) The teacher views literacy as a meaning-making process; 2) The teacher facilitates child-centered instruction; 3) The teacher creates an environment conducive to developing literacy skills; 4) The teacher provides effective instruction in strategic reading practices; 5) The teacher facilitates student writing; 6) The teacher employs flexible grouping; 7) The teacher provides instruction through a thematic approach that integrates subject matter across the curriculum; 8) The teacher employs meaningful assessment; 9) The teacher encourages parental involvement; 10) The teacher engages in ongoing reflection. In constructivist classrooms, it is the goal to have student-centered and meaningful tasks that allow them to make connections between and among subjects and topics. It is expected that teachers reflect on practices and activities to make adjustments in teaching to facilitate student learning with engaging tasks from a constructivist approach.

Beliefs about Learners

Beliefs that teachers have about learners, the classroom context, and experience of working with various learners provide the base for teachers' instructional decision-making (Snider & Roehl, 2007). Assumptions about students and about how students learn also influence how teachers approach interactions with students, what tasks are provided for students, and how instruction is carried out (Calderhead, 1996; Hoffman & Kugle, 1982; Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld, 2008). Investigating teacher beliefs is incomplete if the complex variables that impact beliefs and actions of teachers in the classroom are not explored, including beliefs teachers have about students.

Although it is commonly believed that most teachers do not have high expectations for lower achieving students, there are teachers who believe that teaching higher-order thinking is just as appropriate for lower-achieving students as it is for higher-achieving students (Zohar, Degani, & Vaaknin, 2001). Teachers who push higher-order thinking, produce students who are able to demonstrate reading growth (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003). "Combining positive attitudes and high expectations with interpersonal interactions such as (a) insisting students work harder, (b) acknowledging students' efforts, and (c) exerting extra effort toward assisting students, prepares students for success" (Love & Kruger, 2005, p.87) describes what teachers with high expectations believe.

Other teachers believe that the failure students experience in school is because the students do not try hard enough and do not pay attention (Roehrig, Turner, Grove, Schneider & Liu, 2009; Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld, 2008). Teachers with this perspective

see it as the responsibility of the student for failing to learn and view non-academic traits of students as the reason these students fail to accomplish academic goals (Jordan, Lindsay, & Stanovich, 1997; Roehrig et al., 2009; Snider & Roehl, 2007). Continuing with the deficit model of thinking, Zohar et al. (2001) found that teachers tend to avoid providing children who do not meet academic goals with high-level questioning.

It is important to study what teachers believe and how their beliefs influence their classroom practices when teaching reading. It is also important to explore beliefs about students, school and class context, school, mandates, and standards because these beliefs help shape how teachers' theoretical beliefs are filtered or altered. In my study, the focus was on teacher knowledge and beliefs in Title I schools. Although I was not measuring student outcomes because of teacher beliefs, I observed and was aware of beliefs that teachers may have about the students they teach. My understanding that beliefs about students and the context in which students are taught do play a role in how instructional practices misalign or align to stated beliefs about reading instruction. Another aspect of teacher beliefs that offers another layer of possible filters is the beliefs teachers have about their role as teachers.

Beliefs about the Role of Teachers

Teaching perspectives, according to Goodman (1988), include taking into account how classroom situations are experienced, how the situations are interpreted based on prior experiences, beliefs, and assumptions, and then how these interpretations effect the behavior of the teacher. Teachers' perspectives, or "guided images" (Goodman, 1988), are based on previous experiences that teachers had as students in the K-12 setting, in

teacher preparation programs, and the expectations that teachers have of themselves as teachers. These images also describe teachers' knowledge (Calderhead and Robson, 1991) and reflect the teaching strategies that are implemented in the classroom (Goodman, 1988).

Teachers have beliefs about the nature and purposes of teaching (Calderhead, 1996) that includes transmitting knowledge or guiding students' learning. Some believe that teachers are interventionists who are responsible for providing instruction that will most benefit the students (Jordan et al., 1997). Others believe that the role of the teacher is to teach students to develop social relationships and classroom community (Calderhead, 1996). While teachers begin the profession with beliefs about their roles, their initial beliefs may shift because of experiences while in the profession (Hollingsworth, 1989).

Teaching practices are influenced also by the beliefs that teachers hold about learning and teaching (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991; Westwood, Knight, & Redden, 1997). Teacher beliefs about the nature of the reading process and personal beliefs about how children develop literacy skills determine instructional methods and materials that are selected (Westwood et al., 1997). Some research shows that there is consistency in the alignment of beliefs and practices; however, the rate of consistency differs across domains of beliefs, content areas, and teachers' abilities (Poulson, Avramidis, Fox, Medwell, Wray, 2001; Roehrig et al., 2009). Other research finds that there is inconsistency between what teachers say they believe and their actual practices (Deford, 1985; Levin, He & Allen, 2013).

In my study, I aligned what teachers shared in interviews and what I observed during observations to beliefs the teachers shared about their role as teachers of reading in a Title I school. Their beliefs about their role as teachers intertwined with their contextual beliefs, which included their beliefs about students and the context in which they taught. These beliefs also impacted how teachers enacted their theoretical beliefs. Theoretical beliefs, as well as all other beliefs are ever shifting in how they are enacted in the classroom as teacher beliefs about their roles change. This is especially true in times of curriculum changes at the state and national levels when teachers are challenged to evaluate their roles from givers of knowledge to becoming the guide on the side and only guiding students to and through their self-directed learning experiences (Ford & Opitz, 2011). Another challenge for teachers is to reflect on what they believe the roles of teachers are based on the content that they are teaching. The next section will discuss research on teachers' theoretical beliefs of teachers in the area of literacy.

Teachers' Literacy Beliefs

Lenski, Wham, and Griffey (1998), identified three reading belief orientations that describe teachers' literacy beliefs. Each of the orientations – traditional, eclectic, and constructivist - has a set of characteristics, although some teachers may believe in two or more characteristics at one time.

A traditional orientation to reading is based on the idea that children develop literacy abilities by mastering discrete skills (Lenski et al., 1998). Teaching discrete skills usually requires resources that are sequential and progressively become more complex (Lenski et al., 1998). In classrooms led by traditionally-oriented teachers, students often

read aloud and are expected to do so without error, and students complete activities based on phonics (Lenski et al., 1998). Traditionally, these students are expected to work independently and quietly (Lenski et al., 1998).

Teachers with an eclectic orientation combine both traditional and constructivist orientations. For instance, the teacher may use books during reading instruction, but the instruction is still skill driven. Although the eclectic literacy teacher has writing activities, the teacher typically structures the activities and the students complete the work independently (Lenski et al., 1998). Teachers with this orientation appear to have conflicting beliefs and views as evidenced in how instruction is carried out.

Teachers with the constructivist orientation believe that students make sense of the world by bringing new experiences together with prior experiences (Lenski et al., 1998). Students are encouraged to think, discuss, demonstrate, and evaluate to develop strategies for problem solving and approaching new tasks (Lenski et al., 1998).

Teachers' theoretical orientations guide reading teaching practices (Deford, 1985; Johnson, 1992). Based on positivist perspectives, professional knowledge is viewed as a set of law-like generalizations that can be identified through classroom research and applied by practitioners. However, to make sense of classroom situations and learning in the classroom, studying teachers' professional knowledge without also studying teachers' beliefs is not enough (Calderhead, 1996). Understanding and improving teacher cognition requires the analysis of teachers' epistemic beliefs about teaching knowledge (Fives & Buehl, 2008) and teaching pedagogy. Beliefs about knowledge and pedagogy have been the cornerstone of reading debates for decades.

Changes in Teacher Beliefs and Practices

During professional development, beliefs may lead teachers to question the value and validity of the information that is presented, especially when the content supports or fails to support their views on teaching and learning (Fives & Buehl, 2008). Teacher beliefs are not stagnant. “As teachers mature and change, new beliefs evolve and replace former or conflicting beliefs” (Olson & Singer, 1994, p.99). For example, in the Richardson et al. (1991) study, a teacher’s beliefs did not relate to her practices because the teacher was in the process of changing beliefs and practices. At the time of the study, change in her beliefs came before she had the skills or knowledge to implement changes in instruction that matched her new beliefs.

While investigating teacher knowledge, beliefs and practices, McCutchen et al. (2002) found that there was no significant correlation between teacher beliefs and teacher practice. The knowledge that teachers had about the teaching of reading did not correlate with their implementation of comprehension skills (McCutchen et al., 2002). This may be explained by the understanding that the implementation of practices without solid knowledge of the supporting theory leads to the inability to change. “The provision of practices without theory may lead to misimplementation or no implementation at all...” (Richardson, 1991, p. 579). Also, school system and state mandates have an impact on teacher beliefs and may create misalignments between teacher beliefs and instructional practices (Davis et al., 1993).

These contradictions in the research on the connection between beliefs and practices are important to note because in this study I looked at ways in which teachers’

knowledge and beliefs about the CCSS influenced their practice. However, it may be that I saw no change in practice, or I saw a reciprocal relationship between how teachers' knowledge and beliefs influences or is influenced by the new expectations of the CCSS.

Types of Research on Teacher Beliefs

In this section, I describe how my research has been informed by other research on teacher beliefs, especially as it guided how I collected data about teacher beliefs for my study.

Research on teacher beliefs seems to be couched in the desire to somehow find ways to change beliefs in order to change instructional practices (e.g., Hollingsworth, 1989; Levin et al., 2013; Richardson, 1991; Roehrig, 2009). Most research on teacher beliefs is qualitative and requires combinations of data sources, similar to research on teacher knowledge. Research on teacher beliefs typically includes interviews, observations, and sometimes survey data. Studies of beliefs most often include using interview and observation data to identify alignments between teachers' stated beliefs and teacher practices (e.g., Hollingsworth, 1989; Levin et al., 2013; Richardson, 1991; Roehrig, 2009). In the Richardson (1991) study, initial interviews served to create the initial coding categories. Observations helped the researcher discover what teachers say and do during instruction to shine a light on teachers' theoretical understandings (Richardson, 1991). Both the Levin et al. (2013) and the Roehrig (2009) studies used observations in a similar way to focus on how actual practices were aligned or misaligned with teachers' stated beliefs gathered from responses to interview questions. The Hollingsworth (1989) study used interviews to determine change or evolution of teacher

understandings. Zohar (2001) used interview data to determine the beliefs that teachers hold about lower achieving students. One of the key aspects of my research was to discover how teacher knowledge and beliefs changed, or not, based on the implementation of the CCSS; therefore, both interviews and observations provided data for my study.

Interview and observation data are typically the main sources of qualitative data for studies on teacher beliefs; however, other sources of data can add to the depth of the study of beliefs. For instance, Hollingsworth (1989) also used teacher journals to gather information about teacher change. Teachers in the Hollingsworth (1989) study recorded changes in how they thought about reading instruction, classroom management, and learning from text. Although using teachers' reflective data to compare with teachers' stated beliefs is important, this did not align with what I was seeking to answer in my study. Therefore, I did collecting reflections, resources, or materials. However, I did pay close attention to the classroom materials that were used and the tasks that students were asked to complete during my observations. I also took field notes on the materials and tasks related to the CCSS.

Reading Professional Development

"The classroom teacher is the lynchpin of success for the implementation of the ELA Standards!" (Reutzel, 2013). Successful implementation of the CCSS should ensure that students are college and career ready by the end of high school is based upon the knowledge and effectiveness of the teacher and the teachers' literacy instruction (Conley, 2014; Reutzel, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Teaching the CCSS has and

will continue to require professional development because it requires a shift in what teachers have learned about reading in the past and what is expected of them now. Professional development is also needed for content-area teachers who primarily focused on their content areas in the past and are now required to teach reading, writing, listening, and speaking in their content area.

In professional development situations, researchers and professional development leaders are seen as the “more knowledgeable other” to teachers (Hilden & Pressley, 2007, 53). Teachers are often critical of reading professional development because they feel that the sessions do not address their needs as teachers and they are conducted without the input of the teachers (Pease-Alvarez et al., 2010). Teachers favor professional development that addresses their specific needs and circumstances of their classrooms (Pease-Alvarez, 2010). Teachers have also expressed that professional development provides too much information, requiring teachers to piece things together, not allowing them to follow through with consistency (Hilden & Pressley, 2007).

Once teachers begin to feel comfortable with the learned information in professional development, the feelings of being overwhelmed remain as they begin the process of trying to balance and coordinate the many components of their literacy instruction learning (Hilden & Pressley, 2007). These revelations led the researchers in the Hilden and Pressley (2007) study to conclude that it was important to keep teachers from feeling overwhelmed. Teacher beliefs about and attitudes towards reading instruction and professional development also interfere with making progress towards the goals of professional development (Hilden & Pressley, 2007). It is common to have

teachers who are reluctant about trying new instructional approaches because there is a belief that things that are shared in professional development are things that they already know about being successful with the teaching of reading (Hilden & Pressley, 2007).

Although teachers are aware that participation in professional development is expected and necessary, they are skeptical about prolonged implementation of programs (Hilden & Pressley, 2007). After all, year after year, school districts try different programs, without staying with any particular program for a prolonged period of time (Hilden & Pressley, 2007). Not only is their concern about the sustainability of programs, there is the concern that the stories of teachers who tried the programs sometimes contradict what other professional developers say work (Hilden & Pressley, 2007). According to Pease-Alvarez et al. (2010), professional development for teachers should be provided in their workplace and should allow for collaboration with colleagues and other stakeholders to decide on policies that will meet the responsive needs of the students that they serve (Pease-Alvarez et al., 2010).

Although the focus of my study was not on professional development provided to teachers implementing the CCSS, it revealed information for how teachers' knowledge and beliefs were altered with the implementation of the standards based on the kinds and amount of support teachers were provided.

Common Core State Standards

In a previous section of this literature review, I provided a brief history of reading instruction, and some of the research about teachers' reading knowledge and their beliefs. In this section I will discuss the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English

language arts. The review of the literature in this area is important because my research focused on the knowledge and beliefs that teachers have about the CCSS. In this study I wanted to know how teachers implemented the CCSS in Title I schools and how teachers navigated teaching the standards based on their knowledge and beliefs. This was important because the CCSS are being used in over 40 states to guide reading instruction, reading content, and reading materials. For this study, a deep understanding of the development and expectations of the CCSS was important because teachers implementing the standards must learn and understand the standards in order to deliver instruction. However, it must be remembered that teachers are being asked to implement these standards according to state and district mandates. Therefore, it is also important to keep in mind that the adoption of the CCSS was not an ordinary standards change that gradually moved teachers into learning and implementing the CCSS standards based on state expectations. Instead, this was a quick adoption and quick implementation of standards that required and continues to require shifts in how we view teaching children to read.

The Common Core State Standards for reading have a stronger emphasis on higher-level comprehension skills than previous standards (CCSS, 2010). Unlike the No Child Left Behind movement and the National Reading Panel's recommendations, the CCSS emphasizes close reading, critical reading, and powerful writing (Hiebert & Pearson, 2013). The following review of literature for the Common Core State Standards for Reading begins with an expanded history of the standards, including why the standards were established and how they were established. This history will be followed

by cornerstones of my research including the intentions for instruction of the standards, teachers' knowledge and pedagogy surrounding the standards, and the classroom environment that supports CCSS teaching and learning, which are aspects of the conceptual framework for this study. Finally, I review recent studies about teacher knowledge and beliefs while implementing the CCSS because knowledge and beliefs are major aspect of my research as well.

History of the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects were designed to help ensure that all students in the United States are college and career ready in the area of literacy by the end of high school (CCSS, 2010). Forty-five states in the United States originally adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (AccountabilityWorks, 2010; Conley, 2014) and North Carolina began implementing the standards during the fall of 2012. These high-quality education standards were developed based on input from research and input from state departments of education, assessment developers, professional organizations, educators, parents, and students (CCSS, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). According to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA), the standards are research and evidence based, aligned with college and career expectations, they are rigorous, and based on international benchmarks (CCSS, 2010). The goal was to create standards that would be fewer in number, clearer in describing outcomes, and set higher goals for all students (Student Achievement Partners, 2013). The standards define the

end-of-year expectations for each grade and cumulatively lead to students meeting college and career readiness goals by the end of high school (CCSS, 2010). More specifically, at the conclusion of the 12th grade, without prompting, students should have a strong command for English and a vast usable vocabulary (CCSS, 2010). Also, students will have become self-motivated and self-directed seekers of knowledge from multiple sources (CCSS, 2010).

The move to the adoption of the CCSS was not an argument about the phonics or whole language approach to reading. It was a national standards movement for English language arts designed to provide a clear and consistent framework to insure that all students receive ad high quality education, regardless of their background or status (Neuman, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The standards were designed to prepare students for college and career level reading, writing, and communicating. They exemplified a national movement based on standards and focused solely on content of instruction, or what students should know and be able to do (Schmidt & Burroughs, 2013), regardless of pedagogy.

The following review of the CCSS begins with the policy and research that led to the adoption and implementation of the CCSS. Then, key components of the CCSS – teacher knowledge, pedagogy, classroom environment, and materials and resources are shared. It should be noted that while the CCSS provide the standards for what students should know and be able to do, they are not standards that identify how and by what means the standards should be taught (CCSS, 2010). Therefore, the classroom environment, materials and resources are not specifically defined in the standards.

However, these things are still relevant, so they will be addressed in this review. Finally, in this review the expected outcomes of student reading growth and development because of the implementation of the CCSS will be shared because they will be used to guide analysis of the interview and observation data collected during this study.

As mentioned earlier, the years leading to the implementation of the CCSS were filled with various reforms, policies, and initiatives based on what research at the time identified to be the best instruction for the reading development of students (e.g., No Child Left Behind, National Reading Panel, Reading First). Reform, changes in policy, and the introduction of new initiatives have always been based on the comparison between two or more groups of students. Reading reforms, based on empirical research, were implemented in hopes of closing the achievement gap between students in the K-12 United States educational system (Tatum, 2013). However, none of the previous reforms, including the “reading wars,” No Child Left Behind, National Reading Panel, or Reading First helped to close that gap, particularly for African American students (Tatum, 2013).

Beginning in the 1980’s and continuing today, curriculum and policy changes created major differences and shifts in reading instruction in the United States. In the 1980’s and 1990’s whole language was the popular choice for reading instruction. It was thought that skills were better taught in the act of reading and writing genuine text for authentic purposes than taught directly and explicitly by teachers (Pearson, 2004). The “reading wars” between whole language and phonics created a threatening environment that forced some to begin losing confidence in public education (Shanahan, 2006).

Although the achievement gap between Americans and the rest of the world previously lead to policies, the concern for the literacy and achievement gap became more pronounced in the 2000's.

Since the enactment of No Child Left Behind (2000), the National Reading Panel, consisting of teachers, scientists, administrators, and teacher educators, identified five (aka the Big 5) priorities for reading instruction including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, which were described earlier in this chapter. However, the panel only used research from experimental studies that they deemed to be “potentially viable” (Pearson, 2004, p. 228). Excluded from the panel's report were qualitative studies of major components of whole language, including the relationship between reading and writing, and the role of texts in reading acquisition that could be captured with the use of qualitative research (Pearson, 2004). The Big 5 was based on research studies conducted on instructional practices implemented by teachers in their own classrooms under normal conditions (Shanahan, 2006). Among the research findings was support for teaching seven comprehension strategies – question asking, monitoring, summarization, question answering, story mapping, graphic organizers, and cooperative grouping (Shanahan, 2006). Two other strategies – prior knowledge and mental imagery were also found successful for helping students grow in reading comprehension. It was also found that strategies were most helpful when multiple strategies were taught together using the gradual release of responsibility model (NRP, 2000). During this time, there was also a growing emphasis on increasing the amount of expository and explanatory text that students read (Shanahan, 2006).

Comprehension with all its possibilities and intricacies was given the same weight as the other four components in the Big 5 (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012). Expanding the emphasis of comprehension was seen as a great need in the creation of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subject (CCSS, 2010). The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have a stronger emphasis on higher-level comprehension skills than previous reform movements. For example, readers, according to the CCSS standards, are asked to integrate information from several texts, and to explain the relationships between ideas and author's craft. These standards require highly academic reading that requires pouring over the language, structure, and internal meanings of text (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012). One aspect of the CCSS is that students learn from text instruction while reading real text for the purposes of meeting the standards, instead of practicing isolated skills and strategies with meaningless text to later practice or apply independently (Cunningham, 2013).

In response to the achievement gap between the United States and other countries, implementing the CCSS has had an influence on teacher knowledge, teacher pedagogy, classroom environment and instructional materials and resources (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The CCSS are meant to be a way to ensure that all graduates of the United States are college and career ready (CCSS, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2010) and have the opportunity for challenging learning (Schmidt & Burroughs, 2013;

U.S. Department of Education, 2010). In order to ensure that students have this opportunity, it is important that teachers know the intent of the standards as created by the writers of the standards.

Knowledge Expectations in the Common Core State Standards

In addition to the importance of comprehension in the English language arts CCSS, as described above, other aspects of what teachers need to know to teach the English language arts are emphasized in the CCSS. There is an emphasis on ensuring that reading and writing are given an equal focus (Calkins et al., 2012). There is also a focus on students reaching proficiency and independence through experience with increasingly complex texts and tasks (Calkins et al., 2012; Marzano et al., 2013). Further, it is the intention of the CCSS that students discuss books, and if during the discussions they veer off to discuss experiences of their own, they need to be taken back to the text to truly participate in common core meanings (Calkins et al., 2012), or “close reading”.

Students are expected to read complex texts closely and use critical reading to comb through multiple sources of information, both print and digital, to build knowledge, experience, and worldviews in the content areas (CCSS, 2010). These things are important because it is expected that students who are college and career ready in English language arts are able to: 1) demonstrate independence, 2) build strong content knowledge, 3) comprehend and critique or question, 4) use evidence to support reasoning, 5) be attuned to audience and purpose, 6) use media and technology to enhance language use, and 7) understand the perspectives of others (Calkins et al., 2012). It is expected that students are able to use technology literacy to gather information,

conduct research, to answer questions or solve problems, and to produce their own media productions to demonstrate their knowledge (CCSS, 2010).

Another emphasis of the CCSS is to cultivate students who are critical citizens who question the views and ideals of others in a civil and democratic way (Calkins et al., 2012). According to the CCSS, students demonstrate their ability to reason, deliberate, make decisions based on evidence, and to act as responsible citizens (CCSS, 2010). To do this, “It is no longer okay to provide the vast majority of America’s children with a fill-in the blank, answer-the-questions, read-the-paragraph curriculum that equips them to take their place on the assembly line” (Calkins et al., 2012, p. 9). Rather, the intent is that all students have the right to be provided with a thinking curriculum with writing workshops, reading clubs, debates, and think-tanks (Calkins et al., 2012). Students, according to the CCSS, should express their thinking verbally and in writing to summarize, synthesize, and analyze, and they need teachers to guide them every step of the way (Calkins et al., 2012).

Cross-curricular literacy teaching is also expected with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Not only are English Language Arts (ELA) teachers expected to teach literacy skills, teachers of science, social studies, math, and technical areas are expected to teach their content through the ELA Standards. Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) must be taught to question author’s bias, argue a claim, to synthesize information across texts, just like students without them (Calkins et al., 2012). Although scaffolds may be needed “...every learner has access to the thinking curriculum at the heart of common core” (Calkins et al., 2012, p.12). In sum, the heart of

the Common Core State Standards is that all students must have the opportunity to learn and meet the same high standards if they are to access the knowledge and skills necessary in their post-high school lives (Calkins et al., 2012).

Along with understanding the intentions and expectations of the CCSS for English language arts, teachers must have knowledge of both the Big 5 and the actual standards that make up the CCSS. More specifically, teachers teaching comprehension need a strong knowledge base about comprehension and the CCSS for reading informational and literary text. In the next section, I share important knowledge in the CCSS that benefits teacher instruction in reading. This section includes the three key shifts in English language arts and literacy and the college and career anchor standards that should be the foundation of all Common Core instruction.

Teacher Knowledge for Common Core State Standards

The introduction of the Common Core State Standards was the impetus for needed shifts in thinking about what students should know to be college and career ready and how educators would go about getting students there (CCSS, 2010). Shifts in thinking must stretch beyond the language arts classrooms, because the English language arts standards should also be applied in the content areas. Therefore, the knowledge that is needed to appropriately teach the CCSS for reading should be the knowledge of teachers in all subject areas. The College and Career Anchor standards, the specific grade level standards, the key shifts in ELA and literacy standards and how the standards and shifts relate to and support one another are important content knowledge for teachers.

College and career ready anchor standards for reading. The college and career anchor standards for reading identify what students should be able to do at the end of high school to enter college or workforce training ready to succeed (CCSS, 2010). These standards were developed differently than traditional standards that generally begin with kindergarten expectations and work up through high school. The college and career anchor standards were developed after first identifying what students need to be able to do when they begin college or training programs (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). These anchor standards identify what 12th graders should know and be able to do before graduation. Once the 12th grade standards were set, standards developers worked backwards until kindergarten standards were developed (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). The verbs in the anchor standards provide specific expectations for demonstrating comprehension, or what students should be able to do, which are the same for all grades. However, the verbs in the grade level standards vary and are only examples of what students should be able to do at the different grade levels based on the anchor standards, and they should be interpreted only related to the anchor standards (Valencia & Wixson, 2013).

The anchor standards for reading are organized into four categories – key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, and range of reading and level of text complexity. While the anchor standards are developed for kindergarten through twelfth grades, each of the ten anchor standards has grade specific standards as well. More specifically, the grade-level specific standards branch off into literary standards and informational standards. The broader anchor standards should be

referenced to ensure full understanding of the grade level standards (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). The first three categories – key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas - focus on comprehension and the fourth category, range of reading and level of text complexity, focuses entirely on text complexity (Valencia & Wixson, 2013).

Key ideas and details. The first three anchor standards ask students to identify and understand relationships between main points and supporting details (Halladay & Duke, 2013). After sharing what text says both explicitly and inferentially, students are asked to cite specific evidence to support conclusions drawn from the text after reading closely (CCSS, 2010). The identification of central ideas and themes supported by key details and ideas is expected by the second anchor standard (CCSS, 2010). According to the third anchor standard, students should analyze how and why characters or individuals, events, and ideas develop throughout the text and how each of these things interacts with each other to influence the outcome of the text (CCSS, 2010).

Craft and structure. The three anchor standards for craft and structure focus on understanding unfamiliar words, using text features, and inferring author's purpose (Halladay & Duke, 2013). This includes “interpreting” word and phrase choice and how the meaning of the words and phrases are structured within the text (CCSS, 2010). Students are asked to “analyze” how word choices shape the meaning or tone of the text. Not only are students asked to analyze the words, they are asked to “analyze” the structures used in the text (CCSS, 2010). This analysis requires students to determine how sentences and paragraphs relate to each other and the overall purpose of the text

(Halladay & Duke, 2013). Finally, the craft and structure sections of the anchor standards asks students to “assess” how point of view or text purpose shapes the content of the text.

Integration of knowledge and ideas. The three anchor standards for integration of knowledge and ideas require students to read multiple accounts (Halladay & Duke, 2013) of an event knowing that each account will add to the deep understanding of the topic and the world (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). Integration of knowledge and ideas starts with the seventh anchor standard that uses the verbs “integrate” and “evaluate” to describe what students should be able to do with various media formats (CCSS, 2010). Students are asked to “delineate” and “evaluate” arguments as well as make claims based on evidence from text (CCSS, 2010) and determine the relevancy and sufficiency of text (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). As students “analyze” how two or more texts on the same topic or theme compare, contrast, or support knowledge, they are also evaluating the approaches that authors use to convey their messages (CCSS, 2010).

Range of reading and level of text complexity. The tenth standard is the only standard that does not address comprehension (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). This standard focuses solely on engaging students with complex text and setting challenging, but attainable, goals for students (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013).

Text complexity is measured by three factors. It is first measured qualitatively. Qualitative ways to measure text complexity includes the levels of meaning in text, text structure, language clarity, and the knowledge demands within the text (CCSS, 2010). These measures all rank from low-level components to advanced levels. For instance, a lower level piece of text may only have one level of meaning, while another text may

have three. Quantitative measures include the number of words and sentences in text and the length of the words (CCSS, 2010). Word length is important because longer words are associated with longer and more difficult text (CCSS, 2010). The final measure used to determine text complexity considers the reader and the task. Consideration of the reader includes the reader's motivation, knowledge and experiences that could possibly lead to understanding the text and being able to complete a task. Within the CCSS, students read increasingly complex texts with growing independence as they move through the grades to become career and college ready by the 12th grade (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012).

Summary. The four categories of the college and career anchor standards sets the bar for what is expected in the implementation of the CCSS. The categories and the standards that fall under these categories outline the “big ideas” and the key components of the knowledge base that teachers should possess. The grade level standards are not mentioned in depth because although they provide instructional guidance for each grade, over interpretation of grade level standards could cause the “big ideas” of the anchor standards to be lost (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). Therefore, it should be understood that analysis and application of the standards should begin and end with deep understanding of the college and career anchor standards and the categories that support them. Other aspects that enhance teacher knowledge include three key shifts in ELA and literacy that will be described in the next section.

Key shifts in ELA and literacy. Three key shifts were created to support successful implementation of the standards by ensuring that learning expectations for

students are clearer, deeper, and more rigorous (CCSS, 2010; Conley, 2014). When the standards were developed, it was decided that the terms complexity, evidence, and knowledge would be used to describe the shifts in curriculum and instruction for the ELA CCSS (Valencia et al., 2013). It is expected that instruction require students to build knowledge using complex text and use solid evidence from complex text to support ideas and claims (Valencia et al., 2013). Shift #1 requires students to read complex text, shift #2 requires students to read closely, and shift #3 requires students to integrate the literacy skills.

Shift #1 to reading complex text. Shift #1 asks that students have regular practice with complex text and academic language. This aligns with the tenth anchor standard, “Read and comprehend complex literary and informational text independently and proficiently” (CCSS, 2010, p. 60). This shift moves away from the traditional way of assigning students’ texts based on instructional and independent levels towards allowing students to grapple with grade level and more challenging text to stretch their capabilities (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). In order to close the gap that currently exists between college and high school texts, students need regular practice with complex text that contains rich vocabulary and academic language (Student Achievement Partners, 2015). It is expected that the level of complexity grows from elementary throughout high school (Student Achievement Partners, 2015). Teachers need to know how to determine the complexity that is appropriate based on the students in the classroom and monitor students’ engagement, stamina, and success to ensure that learning is taking place (Cunningham, 2013).

Shift #2 to close reading. Shift #2 asks students to read, write, and speak based on evidence from both information and literary text. This shift to close reading is supported by the first nine anchor standards and requires students to read independently and closely for deep understanding of the text (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). The first anchor standard asks students to, “read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text” (CCSS, 2010, p.60). Another anchor that stands out for this shift is the eighth anchor standard. It reads, “Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence” (CCSS, 2010, p.60). This second shift moves teachers away from comprehension instruction that has students relate the text to themselves or share their personal views on a topic (Student Achievement Partners, 2015). Instead, students are expected to pay close attention to what they read and to support what they say or write by providing evidence (Student Achievement Partners, 2015). The ability to locate and cite evidence is characteristic of strong readers and writers (Student Achievement Partners, 2015). Students are asked to use evidence in the text to analyze, defend claims, and answer questions that requires close attention to the text (Conley, 2014). In all grades and in all content areas, the second shift asks for students to ground all responses in evidence from text; therefore, text dependent questions require students to use the text to respond.

Shift #3 to integrated reading, including reading informational text. Shift #3 asks students to build knowledge through content-rich nonfiction. In the past, reading in

the content areas did not always include the intentional teaching of language arts skills (Pearson, 2013). Content and language arts instruction were seen as two separate entities. The CCSS are about the acquisition of new knowledge in the content areas, including the sciences, social sciences, and humanities (Pearson, 2013). Acquiring knowledge from content texts or resources enhances the use of literacy and language skills (Pearson, 2013). It is expected that the responsibility of teaching and measuring student growth in literacy is shared by the both the reading teachers and content area teachers (Pearson, 2013).

Nonfiction reading builds essential background knowledge (Student Achievement Partners, 2015). It is expected that students in the elementary grades read fifty percent literary and fifty percent informational text, a shift from the traditionally heavy reading of literary text (Halladay & Duke, 2013; Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). This shift also includes the reading of a wide range of nonfiction sources including textbooks, speeches, journal articles, experimental results, and primary source documents (Student Achievement Partners, 2015). It also includes having students convey the meaning of text by use of graphs, diagrams, and glossaries (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). As students read a variety of texts on a topic, their knowledge and understanding of the topic is being expanded. Not only is there growth in the understanding the topic, students become better at reading and able to learn independently and efficiently by reading nonfiction texts (Student Achievement Partners, 2015).

Summary

The ultimate goal is to have teachers who are able to understand and implement the “big ideas” of the standards while meeting the specific needs of the students (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). Knowledge of the college and career anchor standards and their categories is the foundation of implementing the CCSS. Although knowing the grade-level standards is important, they should only be used as guides and other careful interpretations of the grade-level standards should be based on the anchor standards (Valencia & Wixson, 2013). Three key shifts support the anchor standards. The use of complex text to closely read integrated text provides a vision for how pedagogy for teaching the standards can possibly look.

In my study, I used knowledge of the college and career anchor standards, the categories of these standards, and the key shifts to guide my observations and interviews. That is, I looked and listened for how these elements of the CCSS are understood and enacted by the participants in my study. I was aware that there is overlap of knowledge within and throughout the standards and key shifts. Therefore, I paid attention to how teachers implicitly or explicitly used key verbs from the standards to align instruction materials, tasks, and discussions with the CCSS to elicit information about teacher knowledge and understanding of reading and the CCSS. I used this information to understand the pedagogical strategies of the teachers, how they aligned with teacher self-reported beliefs, and how they did or did not support the intentions or expectations of the CCSS.

Teacher Pedagogy for Common Core State Standards

In addition to shifts in knowledge about literacy that teachers need to understand in the CCSS, they also need to shift the kinds of pedagogy they use to teach these standards. “A language arts curriculum congruent with the Common Core State Standards must contain the practices and materials that will ultimately lead to developing every student’s capacity to read and comprehend complex text independently and proficiently” (Liben & Liben, n.d.). In the following section I used anchor standards to describe how they applied to pedagogical knowledge and practice. Key pedagogical practices for implementing the CCSS include: 1) close reading; 2) integrated literacy; 3) content area literacy; 4) vocabulary instruction; and 5) writing. Each of these key practices is discussed in reference to their pedagogical contribution to the implementation of the CCSS. Lastly, pedagogical decisions that include classroom configuration, materials, and resources are shared in reference to supporting the CCSS.

Close reading pedagogy. Close reading as pedagogy requires teachers to provide students with opportunities to read independently and attentively for deep understanding and supporting interpretations with evidence from the text (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). The first anchor standard reads, “Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from text” (CCSSO, 2010, p.10). During close reading, teachers ask students to analyze themes and topics using text evidence from multiple sources, including pictures and illustrations (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). Students are also asked to synthesize information from multiple documents about the

same content. Scaffolded interactions between teachers and students, along with appropriate prompting allows even the earliest readers to provide evidence based on the text (Strickland, 2013).

To support students doing close reading, teachers can provide graphic organizers to help students identify main topics, provide supporting details, and make connections among ideas (Halladay & Duke, 2013). For students who are unable to read or have difficulty reading, teachers can conduct read-alouds and guide students through discussions about main points and connections among ideas while requiring students to support responses with textual cues (Halladay & Duke, 2013).

Integrated literacy pedagogy. Pedagogy for integrated literacy requires teachers to plan with all four language arts areas in mind. Teachers need to insure that listening, speaking, reading, and writing are being taught together within and across the curriculum (Strickland, 2013). After students read or listen to text, students are given the opportunity to respond to the text in writing or through speaking with an emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving in collaborative settings (Strickland, 2013). The fifth anchor standard reads, “Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole” (CCSSO, 2010, p.10). Teachers who seek to practice the fifth anchor standard lead students through discussions during which students discuss things such as how specific sentences connect with the outcome of the story. While reading text, teachers provide students the opportunity to explain in groups, orally and in written form, their thoughts and observations (Strickland, 2013) about authors’ intent and

practices (Halladay & Davis, 2013). In sum, students should be engaged in sophisticated critiques of text and text features (Halladay & Davis, 2013) that require the use of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Content area reading. Teachers are expected to use pedagogy appropriate for teaching CCSS in all content areas. In other words, teachers expect that students learn the content in subjects like social studies and science by using the CCSS for reading. The teacher uses the CCSS for reading to help students understand and use informational and practical texts to build content knowledge. Anchor standard seven asks students to “Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words” (CCSS, 2010, p.10). Teachers in the content areas expect students to read and write for authentic purposes by making connections between multiple texts, text and graphics, and between parts of the same text (Halladay & Davis, 2013). Teachers should give equal focus to how students obtain the content by reading and listening and then how the students express their understandings through speaking and writing (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). Finally, when teachers provide content area instruction, there should be an emphasis on vocabulary. In the next section, I describe vocabulary pedagogy for CCSS.

Vocabulary pedagogy. The fourth anchor standard reads, “Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning and tone.” For teachers, vocabulary is a key component of the CCSS for reading and requires students to learn both morphological word families and distinctions in and between

unique words (Hiebert, 2013). When the National Reading Panel first emphasized the importance of vocabulary, it was viewed as a way to increase the amount of vocabulary that students could use to read and write (Shanahan, 2006). Teachers, under this framework, focused on indirect and direct vocabulary instruction that stretched beyond copying definitions. Indirect instruction included wide reading, teacher read alouds, and independent reading (Shanahan, 2006). Teachers introduced less than 100 purposefully selected words per year by engaging students in formulating several kinds of definitions, explanations, and understanding the relationships among words (Shanahan, 2006). Graphic organizers and semantic maps were used as tools for categorizing words and organizing vocabulary (Shanahan, 2006).

With the adoption of the CCSS, teachers are still expected to provide students the opportunity to use graphic organizers and semantic maps as tools for vocabulary development (Halladay & Duke, 2013). Students are still held accountable for independent reading of text. However, now teachers expect students to develop independence and automaticity in reading core vocabulary (Hiebert & Pearson, 2013). Teachers using the CCSS framework allow students to engage in and practice strategies for determining the meaning of unique vocabulary (Hiebert & Pearson, 2013). Matching the National Reading Panel (2000) guidelines, teachers are still expected to provide opportunities for wide and deep reading to enhance vocabulary learning and comprehension growth (Hiebert & Pearson, 2013).

Writing pedagogy. It should first be noted that the CCSS has a set of writing standards that are separate from the reading standards. It is expected that the standards for

reading and writing will be used together for reading and content area instruction. However, for this study my focus was on the reading informational and literacy standards. Nevertheless, I briefly reviewed writing pedagogy in this section because I understand the importance of writing and that reading in the Common Core cannot be done without all of the components of the integrated framework. So in this section, I discuss specific areas of writing pedagogy that support the reading standards.

The first anchor standard reads, “Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from text” (CCSSO, 2010, p.10). According to this reading standard, teachers expect that students write about what they learn from text (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). Teachers ask students to write their conclusions about paragraphs, passages, and text. Teachers use writing as formative assessment by having students cite specific evidence from stories that support their inferences. Therefore, writing in the Common Core classroom is used to allow students to share what they have learned and to share their views and understandings (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). Teachers expect students to synthesize information in writing during and after reading and they expect students to use text to support their synthesis (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). In my study, writing was noted during observations and any writing tasks were coded as supporting, or not, reading comprehension.

Collaborative and Cooperative Learning

The acquisition of literacy is more than the individual growth of students’ ability to read; it encompasses the idea of literacy learning happening in particular contexts, in

particular ways, and for particular purposes (Purdy, 2008). Social constructivist research on literacy includes consideration of cognitive and strategic dimensions of literacy as well as the motivational and emotional dimensions of literacy (Au, 1998). It allows for the inclusion of cultural values and the understanding of the motivational and emotional needs of the students. This perspective was important for my study because the study was conducted in a Title I school and I wanted to know if and how teachers in these schools used cooperative learning experiences while teaching the CCSS.

Before the adoption of the CCSS, there was an emphasis on using guided reading for comprehension instruction. A typical guided reading format allows students to read independently and have discussions with each other and with the teacher to extend and refine comprehension (Avalos, Plascencia, Chavez, & Rascon, 2007; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Guiding reading is less about the teacher transmitting information and more about teachers coaching students and guiding instruction that encourages students to share the responsibility of learning with the teacher (Ford & Opitz, 2011). The more students talk about what they understand and listen to others' interpretations, the more they learn about the process and purpose of reading (Ford & Opitz, 2011). "Active student involvement is key as the children talk about the story, ask questions, and build their expectations of the text" (Avalos et al., 2007, p. 318). Additionally, students in guided reading read, write, speak and listen in a social environment by engaging in conversations to construct meaning before, during, and after reading (Avalos et al., 2007; Fisher, 2008).

From a social constructivist viewpoint, learners construct meaning in collaborative settings (Garcia et al., 2011) that require reading, writing, talking, listening,

viewing, and representing (Avalos et al., 2007; Haydey et al., 2010). Cooperative groupings and meaningful talk is beneficial for all learners, including the traditionally marginalized English language learners (Chaaya & Ghosn, 2010; Purdy, 2008) and at-risk learners (Chaaya & Ghosn, 2010). Collaborative talk is both a personal and social aspect of learning that is shaped by the students in the educational setting (Purdy, 2008). Beyond talk, children learn best in an environment of social collaboration with people who are more literate, including the teacher or other students (Walters et al., 2010). In the area of reading, active student involvement is key as the children talk about stories, ask questions, and build higher levels of understandings of the text (Avalos et al., 2007; Fisher, 2008; Hulan, 2010). Teachers who promote cooperative learning and discussion enable the cognitive growth of their students and the students feel an ownership of their learning and the learning of others in their group (Hulan, 2010).

In a traditional sense of conversation in small group settings, the teacher takes control of asking questions with predetermined answers and does most of the talking (Fisher 2008; Skidmore et al., 2003). Within cooperative groupings, students should also display their ability to approach and use text independently. Independently, students should be able to discern key points, request clarification, and ask relevant questions (CCSS, 2010). Though students may discern information independently, it is expected that the students take their independent learning into group settings to expand their own understandings and contribute to the understandings of others.

Though there are separate speaking and listening standards, it is expected that instruction throughout the day in Common Core classrooms is infused with speaking and

listening opportunities. Students, according to the CCSS (2010), should work together, express ideas, listen to the ideas of others, and integrate information from oral, visual, and various media sources to evaluate what they hear. Teachers are responsible for providing the materials and varied resources to support dialogue and interactions in cooperative and collaborative settings.

Materials and Resources

Materials and resources help teachers implement the CCSS so that students are college and career ready. Although material and resource selection is vital to successful implementation, the CCSS allow teachers, administrators, curriculum developers, and states to decide on how the standards can be met (CCSS, 2010). The CCSS do not endorse particular strategies, materials, or resources. Teachers, schools, districts, and states have freedom to determine the tools used for meeting the standards in the classroom (CCSS, 2010). In my study, I observed the materials and resources that were used to teach the CCSS. Next, I describe the kinds of materials and resources that I expected to see being used for teaching comprehension based on my experience as a reading coach and curriculum facilitator in several Title I schools. Also, I interviewed teachers, the school curriculum leader, the principal, and a district curriculum to determine what materials and resources are available for teaching the CCSS.

Complex text as a resource. The tenth anchor standard, “read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently” (CCSS, 2010, p. 10), indicates the type of texts students should read. When choosing complex text, teachers choose texts that include multiple or subtle themes with unfamiliar settings,

topics, or events (Student Achievement Partners, 2015). They should select text with uncommon vocabulary because this is a critical component of comprehension growth (Student Achievement Partners, 2015). Teachers also select complex text with dense information provided by longer paragraphs and complex sentences that do not review or summarize key ideas for the students (Student Achievement Partners, 2015).

Despite the uneasiness of teachers and schools about providing students with text that reaches beyond their students' instructional level, and although not yet proven, the CCSS assumes that more difficult text will challenge more students to read harder text (Cunningham, 2013). With this in mind, teachers should guide students to select books that will challenge their capabilities (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). To do this, teachers will evaluate text complexity for each student using qualitative and quantitative features, as well as considering the student as a reader and the task (CCSS, 2010). Selecting complex text for reading aloud also helps level the playing field between students with well-developed vocabulary and wide experiences and students who need vocabulary development (Liben & Liben, n.d.). It is important to note that teachers must base final selections of text on the needs of the students.

To select complex text, teachers must be aware of the text's ability to allow students to compare and contrast illustrations, characters, themes, and genre. According to Neuman and Gambrell (2013), teachers should consider text sets that focus on particular themes and concepts. The text should have similar topics and be narrowly focused on key ideas of study; however, genre, structure, and format should vary

(Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). Teachers should require students to move from depending on the teacher toward reading complex text independently (Hiebert & Pearson, 2013).

Informational text as a resource. In elementary grades, CCSS requires a 50/50 balance between informational and literary text (Halladay & Duke, 2013; Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). The density of the information in informational text and the challenging vocabulary requires teachers to make decisions about how much of the text and which sections of the text student would be expected to close read (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). Teachers planning reading instruction are aware that although literature and informational text have two different sets of standards, the standards are parallel. The parallel nature of the standards allows for teachers to teach across standards and genre (Halladay & Duke, 2013) within same or similar themes. Teachers should ensure that all readers, even the readers who have difficulty with reading should be expected to read and respond to informational text. Students having difficulty can benefit from content instruction that includes scaffolded comprehension of the content text.

Teachers know the importance of using informational text including, but not limited to, biographies and autobiographies, forms, and following directions (CCSS, 2010). When teachers select informational texts, they make sure that the text contains content-specific words, or technical words that includes nouns that represent categories of objects or things (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). Teachers also ensure that content area informational text supports their deliberate teaching of text features like graphs, scales, diagrams, and glossaries (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013).

Text-dependent questions as a resource. Text-dependent questions are questions that cannot be answered without successfully reading the text (Cunningham, 2013). Nine out of the ten anchor standards (standards 1-9) require students to apply text dependent analysis to demonstrate comprehension proficiency (Cunningham, 2013). Teachers in the Common Core classroom should select or create text dependent questions and tasks that require thinking, discussing, and writing (Cunningham, 2013).

Thinking about being dependent on text to respond to questions and to complete tasks is different from traditional ways of questioning and providing tasks. Comprehension instruction, first influenced by National Reading Panel report, included reader-response tasks (Cunningham, 2013). This common practice asked students to respond to questions or prompts after reading a selection, including emotional reactions, open discussions, and creative ways to share information about characters (Cunningham, 2013). Another traditional comprehension task for students, after the NRP report, was standardized reading comprehension test questions (Cunningham, 2013). These standardized tests include passages that simulate standardized testing situations followed by questions. Neither traditional comprehension activity is text based and neither led to students performing significantly better in the area of comprehension (Cunningham, 2013), so the CCSS emphasize the use of text-dependent questions during reading instruction.

Technology as a resource. Preparing students to be college and career ready also means preparing students who are ready for a 21st century technological society (CCSS, 2010). An emphasis of the CCSS is to have students think critically about content found

in all types of media and technology (Strickland, 2013). Teacher should provide opportunities for students to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information that solves real life problems (CCSS, 2010). Varied types of technology-based informational texts should be combined when reading for a specific purpose or goal (Strickland, 2013). The inclusion of technology should be used to support inquiry within studies and to provide meaningful experiences with multiple sources of information (Strickland, 2013).

Rather than being treated as a separate area of study, technology, media, and research skills and understandings should be embedded throughout the teaching of all the standards rather than being treated as separate areas of study (CCSS, 2010). Therefore, teachers should develop readers by using both print and online resources. The CCSS for reading requires students to know how to search, read, evaluate, and use information acquired through technology (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). Knowing that students have experiences outside of school that require them to use technology resources appropriately and gain knowledge from these resources, teachers must be deliberate in teaching the CCSS for reading using these kinds of resources (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013).

Summary

The pedagogical practices that support the implementation of the CCSS come alive in the verbs and other content identified in both the anchor standards and the key shifts for ELA. The verbs, as mentioned above add depth to the concepts that the students should learn while interacting with text. It is not expected that any component of the standards operates alone; it is expected that teachers will use their knowledge of the

standards and the three shifts together to develop instructional plans that best meet the needs of students. Assignments and tasks should align with the “big ideas” that come out of the standards, not single standards, isolated skills, or simple strategies.

Appropriate selection of materials and resources is important for ensuring that the CCSS are taught as intended. Although there is some similarity in suggested materials and resources based on the findings from the National Reading Panel report, there are some differences in how the materials are used to support in-depth interaction with the text in the CCSS. Materials should be based on the understanding that reading multiple forms of complex text to learn is the ultimate goal of the CCSS. Materials that allow for deep reading also include the use of technology and other resources that ask students to record their understandings of text dependent questions by using graphic organizers and various forms of writing.

In my experience, thinking about the knowledge and pedagogy needed to properly implement the CCSS can be overwhelming for teachers. Since the adoption of the CCSS, researchers have scurried to uncover the experiences of teachers, parents, and administrators implementing the CCSS. The rush to study the CCSS is based on the natural curiosity to garner support for or against the standards, how the standards were introduced to the educational community, and how the educational community has implemented the standards. In the next section, I review the research literature on the CCSS for reading that has emerged in recent years. Specific attention in this review was placed on reading research methods, theoretical frameworks, and how the implementation of the standards interacted with teacher’s knowledge and beliefs about reading.

Research on CCSS Literacy

Given that the CCSS were proposed in 2010, my search for studies focused on the implementation of the CCSS revealed that dissertations were more readily available than peer-reviewed articles. I also determined that qualitative research was most favored. All of the qualitative studies incorporated multiple data collection strategies including interviews and observations (Barret-Mynes, 2013; Coglaiti, 2014; Davis, 2014; Hines, 2015; Hipster, 2014; Simmons, 2014; Stosich, 2013; Wilborn, 2014), surveys (Cheng, 2012; Simmons, 2014; Wilborn, 2014), focus groups (Hipster, 2014), journals (Hipster, 2014), and document collection (Barret-Mynes, 2013). Every qualitative study included semi-structured interviews. The interviews provided a glimpse into the specific thoughts and feelings of the teachers implementing the CCSS.

Much of the data collected in these qualitative studies was seeking to capture teachers' perceptions, beliefs, or attitudes towards implementing the CCSS and the context in which the standards were implemented (Barret-Mynes, 2013; Cheng, 2012; Coglaiti, 2014; Davis, 2014; Hines, 2015; Hipster, 2014; Simmons, 2014; Stosich, 2013; Wilborn, 2014). There was one study that was quantitative (Adams-Budde, 2014). It used survey data to reveal teachers' feelings about implementing the CCSS for reading and how they were prepared to implement the standards (Adams-Budde, 2014). In the following sections, I share the findings of these studies. I also share how these studies related to my study and what my study offers that is not provided in these studies for CCSS for reading.

Knowledge and beliefs. Teachers believed that implementation of the CCSS for reading would require vast changes in practice (Adams-Budde, 2014). Teachers in the Adams-Budde (2014) study understood that instruction with the CCSS in mind would include discussions, text evidence, setting a purpose for reading literary and informational text, reading text multiple times, and reading challenging text. In another study, the utilization of graphic organizers, diagrams, short written responses, and the use of rubrics were also viewed as important for implementing the CCSS (Barrett-Mynes, 2013). In other studies, teachers felt that they did not have enough information about the standards when implementation started (Cheng, 2012; Hines, 2015).

In reference to the CCSS meeting the needs of all students, there are teachers who believe that the CCSS need flexibility for students who have different and diverse needs (Hines, 2015). Specifically, students who are academically gifted, English language learners, and students who are in the special education program should be provided standards based upon their needs, and the CCSS do not offer suggestions for meeting the needs of these students (Hines, 2015). There were other teachers who appreciated the rigor of the CCSS, but believed that the initial implementation of the standards in all grades created gaps that leave some students at a disadvantage (Cogliati, 2014).

While teachers understood general changes that would be required for implementation of the CCSS (Hines, 2015), teachers in the Adams-Budde (2014) study shared that they were aware of the changes required for reading and writing, but did not expect changes in science and social studies. This contradicts what I found to be a major component of the standards, reading in the content areas to gain knowledge. This is one

of the reasons why I observed instruction in the content areas as well as reading lessons. I wanted to know if and how teachers extended the CCSS for reading throughout their daily instruction, even in the content areas.

Instruction and assessment. Assessments and instruction were another concern for teachers using the CCSS. While teachers were able to share their understandings of the ultimate goals of the standards requiring higher order thinking in assessments (Barrett-Mynes, 2013), teachers were concerned that some students were not up for the task. For instance, some of the teachers in the Cheng (2012) study felt that because students have different backgrounds, it could not be expected that all students meet the expectations of the standards and to do so would be harmful to the students. Other studies revealed that some teachers did not feel that the standards were developmentally appropriate and left gaps between what students needed to know from one grade to the next (Coglaiti, 2014).

New testing systems that accompanied the new standards created anxiety among teachers. Teachers were concerned that not only would too much time be focused on assessments, but they were concerned that teachers would be assessed based on their students' performance (Cheng, 2012). Along with being held accountable for how students performed, teachers shared their frustrations that they did not know the format of assessments so that they could prepare their students (Hipsher, 2014). However, formative assessments that use pre and post data provided teachers information about which standards to focus on with the students (Davis, 2014).

Preparation and professional development. Several other themes emerged from the studies about the CCSS and how the CCSS were implemented and received by teachers. For instance, there was a common belief that the standards were implemented too quickly, which inhibited the successful implementation of the reading standards as they were intended (Cheng, 2012; Coglaiti, 2014; Davis, 2014; Hines, 2015; Hipster, 2014; Simmons, 2014; Stosich, 2013). Another theme that emerged was based on the frustration that teachers did not have enough time to study and learn the standards to implement the changes (Cheng, 2012; Coglaiti, 2014; Hines, 2015). In one study, teachers participated in the “train the trainer” model and these teachers expressed concern that the people who were teaching them were no different than they were in their knowledge of the standards (Stosich, 2015). Even the trainers in the Stosich (2015) study felt uncomfortable delivering professional development without knowing how what they were supposed to share related to the CCSS. One key element of professional development that stood out was the fact that teachers did not feel that states and districts were of one accord about what teachers should know and be able to do (Coglaiti, 2014; Hipsher, 2014). Teachers in the Simmons (2014) study expressed that the goals of implementation from the district and state were not made explicit and that all teachers needed was training with practical application directly related to students (Hipsher, 2014). However, the support that teachers received on the school level was much more beneficial than what the district offered because there was not follow-up provided by the district (Simmons, 2013)

Materials and resources. One commonality in all of the recent studies about the implementation of the CCSS was that teachers were aware that changes in instruction and resources would be needed to properly implement the standards. Teachers indicated awareness that resources needed to be more rigorous and challenging (Coglaiti, 2014; Hipsher, 2014). Another common characteristic was the reliance teachers had on the resources, pacing guides, and curriculum created by the district. Teachers in several studies played little or no part in developing their own curricula; rather, they implemented the CCSS based on the materials that were presented to them by the district (Adams-Budde, 2014; Davis, 2014).

Marginalized groups. Concerns about students who were traditionally marginalized also surfaced during my review of recent CCSS literature for reading. Along with not feeling like the grade-level standards were appropriate for all students, some teachers expressed that the “new” ways of teaching that accompanied the standards would be too challenging for the students (Hipsher, 2014). There were teachers in the Hipsher (2014) study concerned that because Title I schools had more funding they were able to benefit from more material and professional resources to prepare for the implementation of the CCSS. In this same study, teachers at Title I schools reported that they felt ready to implement the standards appropriately, while teachers not in Title I schools did not feel prepared (Hispher, 2014).

Summary

Recent research on the CCSS for reading focused mainly on teachers’ beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes. These studies used qualitative data – interviews and

observations - to understand how teachers made sense of implementing the CCSS. Key focus areas of implementing the CCSS included teacher knowledge and beliefs, instruction and assessment, professional development, and materials and resources. Each of these key areas overlapped and became a part of the intricate process of understanding the impact of implementing the CCSS with teachers who already had their own sets of knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction.

My study confirmed or challenged some of the recent findings identified above. Reading through these studies helped me to find a gap in the research that my study addressed. That is, none of these recent studies specifically addressed how teachers' knowledge and beliefs helped with their implementation of the CCSS, or how their beliefs and knowledge were changed because of the adoption of the CCSS. We know that teachers' knowledge changed in the studies from above, but what we did not know was if their new knowledge was actually implemented in their classrooms. This required observations, which my study includes. Lastly, my study explored additional factors that teachers take into consideration when implementing the standards in Title I schools. Although one of the studies shared that teachers in Title I schools felt comfortable with the standards (Hipsher, 2014), we did not know if this was based on the knowledge base of the teachers, or if it was out of compliance. Therefore, my study focused on shifts or changes in beliefs and knowledge, and how this matched, or not, with the actual implementation of the CCSS in their classrooms.

In Chapter 3, I describe in detail the research methodology, data collection, and data analysis methods used in this study. I also describe the participants and their school and district context as well as my own positionality as the researcher.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative case study methodology can be used to investigate a contemporary social phenomenon in a real world context (Lichtman, 2013; Yin, 2014). Qualitative data allows researchers to look deeply into a few cases, rather than looking on the surface (Lichtman, 2013). In-depth descriptions and analysis of cases, or bounded systems (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009) based on using qualitative research methods can be used to describe, interpret, and understand the lived experiences of participants (Lichtman, 2013). Case studies are particularistic (Merriam, 2009) and are focused on studying a specific case with particular characteristics (Yin, 2014). Thick descriptions of each case provide literal descriptions of incidents, including variables that are needed to provide a clear picture of the phenomenon revealed by the cases (Merriam, 2009).

In this study, I used qualitative case study methods to explore cases that described the “essence” of implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) filtered through teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction. I conducted lengthy interviews designed to elicit teachers’ beliefs and experiences (Creswell, 2003; Lodico et al., 2010; McCaslin & Scott, 2003; Manen, 1997). I asked elementary grade reading teachers to reveal their knowledge and their beliefs about implementing the CCSS through honest and detailed accounts (Lodico et al., 2010) and by having them complete

the Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS), and respond to open-ended, in-depth questions (Creswell, 2003; Lodico et al., 2010; Seidman, 2006). Finally, I observed the teachers in their classrooms.

The cases in this study shed light on the experiences of teachers implementing the CCSS in reading through their own knowledge and beliefs and filtered through other contextual variables. These cases are important because research tells us that well-prepared teachers have stronger influences on students' success than poverty, language, or minority status (Darling-Hammond, 2000), and because teachers contribute to student learning more than any other factors including class size, school size, and after-school programs (Rivkin, Hashek, & Kain, 2005). Case study methodology was chosen for this study because it allowed me to investigate the particular phenomenon of implementing the CCSS in a Title I school. Each case was different, but some cases had similar characteristics. I analyzed the cases by triangulating the three data sources to find the essence of each case. "An essence is simply the core meaning of an individual's experience of any given phenomenon that makes it what it is" (Ehrich, 2003, p.46).

The Literacy Orientation Survey (Lenski, Wham & Griffey, 1998) is not a qualitative data collection tool; however, it helped me triangulate the qualitative interview and observation data about the participants' knowledge and beliefs related to implementing the CCSS during whole group and small group instruction of reading and content area instruction. Triangulating data from three sources - surveys, interviews, and observations - brought rigor to the study (Lichtman, 2013). Multiple sources for data collection reduced the risk of systematic biases and allowed me to get a more secure

understanding of how teachers experience implementing the CCSS filtered through their knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction (Maxwell, 2005).

Research Questions

This was a study of the "lived" experiences of teachers implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) filtered through their knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction and the context in which teachers teach. The following research questions focused on teachers' thoughts and feelings about the CCSS while enacting their knowledge and beliefs about reading within various contexts that influenced the implementation of the CCSS. The following questions guided this study:

- What do teachers reveal about their knowledge and beliefs about reading and how they implement the CCSS because of their knowledge and beliefs?
- What, if any, shifts or changes do teachers describe or report in their knowledge and beliefs about reading during their implementation of the CCSS?
- What do teachers say about why they implement the CCSS the way that they have chosen to implement the CCSS?

Research Setting

The research setting for this study was Fairmont Elementary, a Title I school in the southeast. The Title I designation was important for this study because I wanted to know how the CCSS are implemented in schools that traditionally have students who failed to perform on grade level based on state assessments. This was the population of interest because traditionally, students enrolled in high-poverty schools score significantly below those enrolled in low-poverty schools. For instance, in 2009, 45

percent of fourth graders from high-poverty schools performed at or above basic, and only 14 percent performed at or above proficient on the NAEP reading assessment (Aud, Hussar, Planty, & Snyder, 2010). This was compared to 83 percent of students at low-poverty schools who scored at or above basic and 50 percent who scored at or above proficient on the same assessment (Aud et al., 2010). High-poverty schools are identified as having 75 percent or more students receiving free or reduced-price lunch (Kena, Musu-Gillette, & Robinson, 2015). Higher percentages of African American students attended high poverty schools than White students (Kena et al., 2015). According to *The Condition of Education 2015*, after adopting and implementing the CCSS, there has been little difference in the size of the gap between African American and White students in reading (Kena et al., 2015). These statistics, however, failed to reveal how the implementation of the CCSS impacted teaching and learning at schools where students are high poverty and where the majority of students are non-White.

Research on the teaching and implementation of the CCSS in a Title I school was important because the standards were developed with the goal of making all students career ready and globally competitive (CCSS, 2010). At the time that the standards were written, no distinction was made about which students should benefit from the standards. With this in mind, my study focused on how teachers perceived their preparation for implementing the standards with children who traditionally scored below proficient on reading measures – high poverty and non-White students. In other words, it was my hope that better understanding the knowledge, beliefs and practices of teachers at a Title I

school could shed light on how students in a high poverty and ethnic minority school are being prepared for college and career readiness.

Choosing Fairmont Elementary

Fairmont Elementary is an urban school in a small district located within a forty-five-minute drive of three major cities in North Carolina. Fairmont Elementary was selected from the twenty elementary schools in the district because it was a Title I school that served third, fourth, and fifth grade students. Although all of the schools in the district were Title I, this school had among the highest population of minority students who were also economically disadvantaged. During the year this study was conducted, Fairmont Elementary had approximately 512 students and averaged 20 students per class.

I had an opportunity to meet with the Assistant Superintendent to describe the study and the research methods, research questions, and criteria for site selection. The Assistant Superintendent suggested Fairmont based on my criteria. I shared with her that the school should have a principal and curriculum leader who had been at the school for at least 2 years during the implementation of the CCSS and teachers in third, fourth, and fifth grades who taught the CCSS for at least a year. Before I initiated a conversation with the principal, the Assistant Superintendent spoke to him to gain his permission for me to conduct my study in his school.

In North Carolina, Ready End of Grade (Ready EOG) assessment data is reported by two designations – 1) college and career ready and 2) grade level proficient. Students scoring a level four or five on the Ready EOG are considered college and career ready and students scoring at least a level three are considered grade-level proficient. The

subgroup breakdown for Fairmont students who were grade-level proficient during the 2014-2015 school year included 18.5% black students, 39.5% white students, 41.2% Hispanic students, and 25.5% economically disadvantaged students (Table 3.1). During the 2014-2015 school year, 23.5% of students at Fairmont were considered college and career ready and 29.9% were considered grade-level proficient. Of the college and career ready students, 13 % were Black students, 33.7% were White students, 29.4% were Hispanic students, and 19.3% economically disadvantaged students (see Table 3.2).

It should be noted that grade level proficiency expectations changed during the last five years. In 2010-2012, grade level proficiency was based on a 4-level scale and was determined by the percentage of students who scored a Level 3 or 4 for on the EOG (see Table 3.1). The assessment at that time was based on the previous North Carolina Standard Course of Study that was created by North Carolina. Change in standards within the North Carolina Standard Course of Study was not new. With each change in standards, there was a change in the assessments that measured understanding of the standards. The same was true when the CCSS were adopted and became the new North Carolina Standard Course of Study. North Carolina adopted the CCSS, which provided more rigorous standards than previous standards, to ensure that students were nationally competitive and prepared for entering college and careers. During the 2012-2013 school year, the first year of North Carolina's Ready End of Grade test, scores were based on the same 4-level scale as previous years (Table 3.1). The last two years, 2013-2015, were based on a 5-level scale and grade level proficiency was determined by the percentage of students who scored a Level 3, 4, or 5 on the NC Ready EOG.

Table 3.1. Fairmont End of Grade Test Data: Percent of Students Grade Level Proficient

Year	All Students	Black	White	Hispanic	Economically Disadvantaged
*2010-2011	60.4%	53.4%	65.6%	72.7%	56.9%
*2011-2012	53.9%	42.7%	67.9%	56%	50%
^2012-2013	21.7%	10.7%	33.3%	21.9%	18.8%
2013-2014	33.3%	23.3%	43.8%	37.5%	28.4%
2014-2015	29.9%	18.5%	39.5%	41.2%	25.5%

* Data represents North Carolina EOG data from before implementation of the CCSS and Level 3 and 4 represent grade level proficiency.

^ Data represents North Carolina Ready EOG data during implementation of the CCSS and Levels 3 and 4 represent grade level proficiency.

Table 3.2. Fairmont End of Grade Test Data: Percent of Students College and Career Ready

Year	All Students	Black	White	Hispanic	Economically Disadvantaged
2013-2014	22.4%	13.3%	31.3%	31.3%	20.5%
2014-2015	23.5%	13%	33.7%	29.4%	19.3%

Analysis of NC EOG and NC Ready EOG data revealed consistent gaps between Fairmont Elementary and the district, with Fairmont being on the lower side of the gap. The disparity between the assessment scores for the last five years were consistent with the exception of the Hispanic subgroup compared to the White subgroup. Performance of Black students and economically disadvantaged students remained significantly and consistently below that of all students, White Students, and Hispanic students.

Participants

The sampling procedure to select participants in this study included the purposeful selection of six 3-5th grade teachers (Table 3.3) at Fairmont Elementary. Typically, purposeful sampling is used when particular settings, people, and activities are deliberately selected (Maxwell, 2005), which was the case in this study. Teachers in grades 3-5 were selected for this study because of their focus on teaching the CCSS for reading information and reading literature for text comprehension. Teachers who taught part-time English language arts, taught guided reading or social studies and science content area reading were also considered as candidates for the study because all of these areas required students to make sense of text or content through reading.

Table 3.3. Participant Overview

Teacher	Years at School	Years as a Teacher	Ethnicity	Gender	Position	Grade
Marsh	N/A	21	Caucasian	Female	District Lead Teacher	K-5
Caldwell	3	N/A	Caucasian	Male	Principal	K-5
Charles	11	37	Caucasian	Female	Coach	K-5
McRae	2	2	African American	Female	Teacher	3 rd
Monroe	9	9	Caucasian	Female	Teacher	3 rd
Hamilton	2	4	African American	Female	Teacher	4 th
Emerald	9	9	African American	Female	Teacher	4 th
Denver	4	22	Caucasian	Female	Teacher	4 th
Senter	4	8	Caucasian	Female	Teacher	5 th

The teachers in this study were purposefully selected also based on their years of teaching experience. All teachers in the study taught the CCSS for reading at least one year. At least one-year of experience was determined to ensure that the teachers had an adjustment period with learning and implementing the standards before participating in this study. It was also assumed that these teachers had the opportunity to reflect on how their knowledge and beliefs had been impacted by implementing the standards.

Teachers were also selected to participate in the study based on principal recommendation of teachers who demonstrated the ability to help children grow or to help children reach reading proficiency. Growth and proficiency were based on data supplied and interpreted solely by the school's principal. The selected teachers were all highly qualified teachers based on their being fully licensed to teach in the field of elementary education. Though it was not the requirement of this study that teachers have three years of experience, the number of years of their experience was considered during data analysis. Although the teachers may have had the same expectations placed upon them regarding the implementation of the CCSS, their interpretations of the standards, along with differences in their knowledge and beliefs was assumed to reveal differences among them.

The selected teachers provided insight into how their knowledge and beliefs interacted with the implementation of the CCSS through in-depth interviews, observations, and on the Literacy Orientation Survey. These teachers shared their experience of shifts and changes in their knowledge and beliefs based on preparation for and implementation of the CCSS. They also described contextual influences that

impacted their implementation of the standards and reflected on their knowledge and beliefs. Ultimately, purposeful selection increased the heterogeneity of the selected teachers such that comparisons revealed possible reasons for differences between individual teachers (Maxwell, 2005).

Other participants in this study included school and district leaders. The district lead teacher, the school's principal, and the school's literacy design coach provided the vision and goals of literacy instruction at the school during interviews with each of them. They also provided me a frame of reference for what teachers should know, be able to do, and were expected to do with reading instruction and learning in this district and at Fairmont Elementary. The information from the school and district leaders was not used for case development; however, it was used in the revelation of assertions and implications in chapter 5.

Data Collection Procedures

Survey

The Literacy Orientation Survey (Lenski et al., 1998) was given to each teacher participant at the beginning of the study. It was provided to the teachers before the initial interview and was collected before or during the initial interview. The LOS was selected to assess teachers' beliefs about literacy learning and classroom literacy practices. The LOS (Appendix A) is a 30-item self-reporting Likert scale survey completed individually by teachers. The survey asked teachers to read a statement, such as "Students should be treated as individual learners rather than as a group" and choose between the numbers 1-5, where 1 represents "strongly agree" and 5 represents "strongly disagree". Some items

required teachers to choose between 1-5 where 1 represents “never” and 5 represent “always”. The LOS data revealed teachers’ literacy orientations, which the authors of the survey have described as either traditional, eclectic, or constructivist.

I used LOS data to determine individual teacher’s orientation to reading instruction as either traditional, eclectic, or constructivist. The data were used to document each participant’s orientation to literacy instruction as well as to generate additional probing interview questions. These data were also used to determine alignments and misalignments with the CCSS as expressed in teacher interviews or seen during teacher observations. Data from the LOS were not analyzed quantitatively because the sample was too small to make assumptions about the teachers at the school as a group. Rather, LOS data were used to describe each individual teacher’s orientation to reading instruction and for the purposes of data triangulation.

Traditional oriented teachers, according to the authors of the LOS (Lenski et al., 1998), use traditional reading methods. These teachers teach through the use of direct instruction often recommended in basal reading programs. Traditional-oriented teachers view students as blank slates and believe that it is the responsibility of the teacher to provide everything that the student needs to know (Lenski et al., 1998). Eclectic-oriented teachers use a combination of traditional and constructivist reading practices. Often times, these teachers use conflicting methods during instruction because they are not sure which way may work best for their students (Lenski et al., 1998). Eclectic-oriented teachers are not always clear about what their students need in order to move forward or grow in reading. Constructivist-oriented teachers are focused on teaching with integration

of subjects in mind (Lenski et al., 1998). Therefore, their more holistic view about how reading should be taught forces them to integrate ideas and link those ideas to the prior knowledge of students. Integration and linking used by more constructivist-oriented teachers allows students to construct meaning. It should be noted that the most well aligned orientation since the adoption of the CCSS is the constructivist orientation because of its integration qualities and the implementation of the standards in all content areas.

Interviews

I collected data using semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The strength of standardized open-ended interviews is that all respondents were asked the same questions, which allowed for comparability and a reduction of interviewer effects (Patton, 2002). Therefore, I used interview protocols (see Appendices C and D) that included standard, open-ended questions to facilitate organization and for structuring the analysis of data (Patton, 2002). However, the questions were not asked verbatim, or in the same order, and were not exactly the same for all teachers because of the conversational style of interviewing (Yin, 2014) called for in a semi-structured protocol. The procedures for the interview process and the purposes for each question are provided in the appendices.

The purpose of the 30 to 60 minute interviews was to elicit information about how each teacher's knowledge and pedagogy, materials and resources, and contextual factors related to their CCSS instruction. It was important that I asked questions in an unbiased way and that I was sensitive to "why" questions that are not in the flow of a natural conversation and could cause the teachers to become defensive (Yin, 2014). According to

Yin, defensiveness can cause reflexivity, or changing actions when being observed.

Ultimately, reflexivity can alter the validity of the interview.

I received consent from the teachers to record the interviews with my computer. Recording the interviews allowed me to listen attentively to each teacher's responses without focusing on note taking during the entire conversation (Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2014;).

The prolonged, in-depth interviews that I conducted took place over one or more hours, and during more than one sitting (Yin, 2014). There were two planned interviews, one before a set of classroom observations and one after the observations of the participants teaching reading. The interviews before the observations provided me data about the teachers' interpretations, insights, explanations and meanings (Yin, 2014) of implementing the CCSS. The interviews after the observations were designed to encourage teachers to connect and clarify their self-reported knowledge and beliefs to ways that they implemented instruction during their observed practices.

Interview before observations. During the first interview, I asked the teachers to share as much as possible about themselves as teachers of reading beginning with their first year of teaching up to the present. I also asked the teachers to talk about their experience of preparing to implement and implementing the CCSS. Based on the responses of the teachers, I decided to further my inquiry beyond the already developed questions by probing the teachers with follow-up questions (Merriam, 2009). The probing questions (see Table 3.4) allowed me to seek clarity and more information (Merriam, 2009).

Table 3.4. Probing Questions

Interview	Probing Questions
Interview #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you evolved as a reading teacher? • What training and/or support have you had that has helped you develop as a reading teacher? • How do assessments play a part in your teaching the CCSS?
Interview #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked questions to clarify alignment or misalignment of survey data, interview data, and observation data. • Asked teachers to clarify comments and actions in the data that I had collected.

The first interview provided insight about all of the research questions and provided me a lens for understanding what I might see or might not see during the observation periods. The questions for the first interview, according to Merriam (2009), were “ideal position questions”. These types of questions allowed the teachers to describe their knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction. During the interview, teachers revealed positive and negative perspectives (Merriam, 2009) about implementing the CCSS for reading. Interviewing teachers using an open-ended format also yielded descriptive data and stories about the phenomenon of teaching reading in a time of standards-based instruction (Merriam, 2009). I also used data collected from the LOS to guide probing questions. The LOS and the initial interview prepared me for observing the teachers with a framework of their orientation towards reading and their self-reported knowledge and beliefs about reading.

Interview after observations. The second interview, or the follow-up interview, took place after the classroom and grade-level planning observations. The purpose of this interview was to ask follow-up questions from the LOS, the previous interview, and the

observations. Although there were specific open-ended questions planned for this interview, I also asked questions that developed out of their responses on the LOS survey, the first interview, and observations.

This follow-up interview allowed for data triangulation with the LOS data, the initial interview, and the observational data. Also, the second interview allowed for member checking to clarify my interpretations of the observation data. I was able to talk to the teachers about their practices and beliefs in the first interview; then, I was able to observe their practices and beliefs with the CCSS in action. The second interview also increased validity because the questions were based on data collected from three prior sources of data.

Observations

Observations in case studies are systematic research tools that take place in the setting of the phenomenon being studied to answer research questions (Merriam, 2009). They serve as first-hand accounts, as opposed to second-hand accounts like interviews (Merriam, 2009). I observed an English language arts class, a science or social studies class, and a grade level planning session. During the on-site observations, I used a semi-structured (Creswell, 2014) observation protocol (see Appendix E). This protocol, based on CCSS principles and understandings, guided the semi-structured observations. My observation protocol included gathering data on the physical setting, participants, activities and interactions, and conversations (Merriam, 2009). Based on the research questions and conceptual framework, my observation protocol also focused on three areas

of interest for the study – teacher practices, teacher resources and materials, and classroom environment.

Teacher practices. Observations, with a focus on teacher practices, included what teachers said and did. Focus on teacher practices was observed during English language arts, content area reading, vocabulary instruction, and writing instruction. Special attention was paid to how teachers provided instruction in key areas of the CCSS, including close reading, vocabulary, and note taking. Notes documenting what teachers said were key to providing thick descriptions. Notes on what teachers said and how teachers said it, as well as direct quotes, were used to triangulate observation data with the LOS and interviews.

Notes were also taken to document what teachers did. Not only did I focus on what teachers did and said during English language arts, I observed what teachers did and said in social studies and science to identify teacher knowledge and beliefs about teaching content area literacy, as is expected by the CCSS. Teachers' actions during content-area instruction helped identify teachers' practices that indicated their knowledge and beliefs about teaching reading in the content areas.

Teacher resources and materials. Observations included the resources and materials that teachers used to implement instruction. During my observations, I noticed the resources and materials that were used, how the materials and resources were used, and how they aligned with expected CCSS practices. My notes included key areas of the CCSS, including use of complex text, technology, informational text, and text-dependent questions during close reading opportunities.

Classroom environment. Observations of the classroom environment helped me better understand each teacher's beliefs and knowledge about environments that promoted reading growth. I noted how each teacher grouped students for instruction, desk arrangements, the presence or absence and use of small group workstations, and how the environment promoted collaboration among the students. Another aspect of the classroom environment that I noted was how students were speaking and listening during instruction.

Teacher planning sessions. Lastly, I observed grade level planning sessions to listen in on how the teachers discussed the standards and made instructional decisions. Indicators of their knowledge and beliefs were also revealed during these collaborative settings. Being a witness during their sharing allowed me to take analytic notes that helped triangulate data with classroom observations and interview data.

Observation of teachers during English language arts, content area instruction, and during grade level meetings provided data that when combined with other data, created a picture of teachers' knowledge and beliefs. Focus of the observations on teacher practices, resources and materials, and classroom environment through a CCSS lens let me see how the teachers in this study, assigned at a Title I school, created learning environments. During the second interview, I asked the teachers questions to clarify what I observed during their planning meetings. Teachers had the opportunity to answer the questions and explain conversations that needed clarity. These follow-up conversations allowed me to identify matches and mismatches in what they said about their knowledge

and beliefs and what they did with their knowledge and beliefs (Merriam, 2009). The process of member checking supported this.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is the segmenting or taking apart of data and putting it back together (Creswell, 2013). The process of data analysis for my study began with reviewing the research questions and ensuring that I knew the problem of the study (Merriam, 2009). I was aware that I would be searching for patterns, insights, and concepts that seemed promising for answering the research questions (Yin, 2014). My process of analysis was what Merriam (2009) identified as “simultaneous data collection and analysis.”

Simultaneous data collection and analysis allowed me to make connections and develop themes throughout the data collection process (Merriam, 2009). To develop codes and themes, I used an analytic strategy of making a matrix of categories and placing evidence within the categories (Yin, 2014) while analyzing survey, interview, and observation data.

Analysis of Survey Data

Survey data was analyzed using the “Interpreting Your LOS Score” sheet (Appendix B). The data indicated the literacy orientation of each teacher by classifying them as traditional, eclectic, or constructivist. The surveys for each teacher were analyzed individually. The individual analysis consisted of completing an analytic matrix that began with describing each teacher and their knowledge and beliefs. This matrix consisted of understandings based on the research questions, conceptual framework, and the CCSS. The LOS data also were used to prepare for interviews and observations.

However, the analytic matrix did not remain static; it was fluid and morphed throughout the data collection process as I learned more about each teacher based on interviews and observations. As the matrix morphed, it aided in the analysis of teachers' knowledge and beliefs.

Analysis of Interview Data

The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed for exploration of teachers' self-reported knowledge, beliefs, and meanings of implementing instruction through the CCSS for English language arts. Based on the interview protocols and the transcripts, several types of analysis took place (see Appendix C and D for interview questions). The analytic strategies that I used for interviews included writing memos, and categorizing and connecting data within my analytic matrix (Maxwell, 2005). The memos helped keep track of my thinking throughout the analysis process (Maxwell, 2005) and occurred during and after every interview (Creswell, 2014). Writing memos while interviewing and after interviewing allowed me to record my thoughts, connections, and insights to help with coding and making connections between survey and observation data.

Analysis of Observation Data

Observation data were analyzed both during and after the observation. That is, the observation protocol consisted of specific "look-fors" for whole group, small group, and content area instruction. The analytic matrix for on-site data collection allowed me to immediately categorize observations into pre-established categories that centered around the research questions, the conceptual framework, and areas of emphasis in the CCSS. I

also used analytic notes, outside of the matrix, to create new categories that emerged during observations. All matrices and analytic notes collected during observations became electronic documents for management and organizational purposes.

After each observation, I reviewed the pre-developed matrix (see Appendix E) and analytic notes that may have identified new categories. I analyzed signs of teacher knowledge and beliefs, evidence of the CCSS, materials and resources, and interactions. Throughout this process, my focus was on each separate case, meaning that I reviewed each individual case before attempting to analyze all the data collected. This ensured that data from cases were not intertwined in my mind.

Case Study Analysis

Within-case analysis requires the deep understanding of the case, then the examination of the functioning and activities of the case (Stake, 2006). After interviews and observations, I delved into each case individually to get a deep understanding of the case, without consideration to other cases. I used my analytical notes, matrixes, and protocols to create thick descriptions about each of the teachers in reference to the research questions. My goal was to, as stated by Stake (2006), "...generate a picture of the case and then produce a portrayal of the case for others to see."

I started by writing a vignette, or a bird's eye view of each teacher's classroom. I shared the organizational structures and management of the classroom in these vignettes. After the vignette, I described the professional background of each teacher and other information that helped to "show", not just tell, about whom the teachers were and how they fit in the world of education.

Then, as mentioned earlier, I used matrices, notes, and protocols to create themes that corresponded with the research questions. I focused on one research question at a time to ensure that as I studied the notes and matrices that I was responding to the research question in a way that best represented the case honestly and fairly. It was important for me to describe the cases and the activities within each cases (Stake, 2006) to ensure that readers would be able to visualize the cases in action in the classroom and “see” specific characteristics of the case related to each research questions. I used quotes from the interviews and examples of activities and practices from the observations to create pictures of the cases that responded to the research questions. In sum, the information collected from each source of data was used to create thick descriptions of teacher experiences with implementing the CCSS.

Stake (2006) stated, “If data are critical to a main assertion, there is much need to triangulate.” Therefore, throughout the case analyses, I made every effort to support my interpretations and findings with evidence that went beyond one quotation by using data triangulation (Stake, 2006). That is, I triangulated data from the survey, interviews, and observations to connect statements and events within the context of the study (Maxwell, 2005). In other words, I reviewed all analytic notes to determine intersections of data collected from all data sources to solidify themes that were previously created and to create new themes.

I divided the text from transcripts into small units before matching them with previously decided on themes (Creswell & Clark, 2011). My analytic notes helped me generate categories of information during the initial phases of data analysis (Creswell,

2003). Codes and categorization were developed from what was revealed in the analysis of the transcripts to allow the voices of the participants to dictate the unveiling of the data. This process allowed me to evaluate if additional themes should be developed or if previously developed themes should be merged. I used the exact words of the participants to represent how they related to a particular theme (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). I did not use computer-assisted data analysis software to code data. Instead I color-coded excerpts of the dialogue as I read through the transcripts. The color-coded dialogue was then copied and pasted from the transcripts into charts based on how they were similar and how they fit into possible categories that were initially created during the interview phase of the study.

As I progressed through each case, a picture of each case was developed that created understanding of how each teacher interacted with the reading content, the CCSS, and the environment in which they taught. Though my focus at that point of the analysis was on one case at a time, the single cases became more meaningful in terms of the others (Stake, 2006). Although at that point I was not seeking to be comparative (Stake, 2006) and was focused on a single case at a time, knowing about other cases created some insight and depth into individual cases as I progressed through my analysis of all six cases.

Cross-Case Analysis

After I finished analyzing each case, I began the cross-case analysis. I moved from studying the situational issues and patterns within each case towards analyzing all of the cases to reveal how the cases were bound (Stake, 2006). The cross-case analysis

allowed me to look at the “Quintain”, or phenomenon of the bound cases experiencing the implementation of the CCSS within the same context with the goal of revealing similarities or differences (Stake, 2006). In other words, while each case provided me an understanding of each teacher’s unique beliefs and experience about teaching reading in a Title I school during in an era of standards-based instruction, the cross-case analysis allowed me to deepen my understanding of any patterns and themes that emerged and to show any similarities or differences among the six cases within the bounded system, or what Stake (2006) has called the “Quintain.” In this way, my understanding of each theme or pattern that emerged in individual case analysis was enriched by looking at evidence about that theme from all six cases.

During the cross-case analysis, I started creating a matrix based upon the research questions with the names of the teachers across the top. Identifying the research questions on the matrix allowed me to indicate the primary information about the Quintain that I was seeking (Stake, 2006). Next, I pulled the themes from all of the cases and placed them underneath the appropriate research question within the matrix. After the participants’ names, research questions, and themes were inserted in the matrix, I began the actual cross-case analysis.

To start filling in the matrix, I began with the first theme under the first research question. I read through the sections of the cases that revealed evidences of the theme. In some cases, there was more than one piece of evidence that revealed the theme. Focusing on one theme at a time, I was able to consider how each case contributed to the development of each theme (Stake, 2006). By identifying evidence from the cases, I was

able to determine if previously identified themes could be merged or if a theme needed to be reworded or revised. The relevance of the themes also revealed themselves and I was able to eliminate themes that did not prove to be relevant or important for answering the attached research question for the Quintain, or for all cases. Once one theme was explored for having evidence from each one of the cases, I moved to the next theme and followed the same process.

After the matrix was complete, I went back to the first theme to examine the cases collectively and to identify patterns among the cases. Not only did I pay attention to how the cases were alike, I also took time to identify how any differences explained the theme within the context of the study. Based on the Quintain, the claims from each theme were used to create a narrative that painted a picture for each particular theme. My goal for the narratives was to respond to the theme in as many ways as the cases revealed as significant (Stake, 2006). For instance, in some themes, all six cases revealed the same or similar response to the theme. In some instances, while the same theme had a response that was only relevant for two cases, the responses of the two cases were strong enough to add significance to the findings.

The process of cross-case analysis, including the completion of the matrix and writing the narrative, uncovered the patterns among the cases. The process allowed me to identify the commonalities; but, it also allowed me to consider the differences to offer greater understanding of findings of the cases. The process of cross-case analysis also created the space for me to develop assertions and to consider factors that influenced the findings.

Researcher Positionality

At the root of it, telling stories is a meaning-making process that allows the storyteller to “select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness” (Seidman, 2006, p.7). I was aware that as the teachers in my study were sharing their stories, they selected experiences from their consciousness based on how they not only made meaning of the topic being studied, but also of who I am as a researcher interested in teachers implementing the CCSS. The teachers knew that I am a curriculum facilitator and pursuing my doctorate, and I presumed that their knowledge of my role influenced their responses on the LOS, interviews, and observations. I am well aware that my position, as an education professional not only influenced how the teachers viewed me; it also influenced how I viewed them and their actions.

Furthermore, as the researcher who also trains teachers to implement the CCSS throughout the curriculum, I have my own understandings of the CCSS and my own interpretation about how the CCSS should be implemented. I am also a reading specialist and my constructivist ideology for teaching reading filters how I believe reading should be taught and how I have created my understandings of what the CCSS should look like in action.

In addition, all of my teaching experience has been in Title I elementary schools. This experience has given me insight on what successful teachers do to produce students who grow in reading and obtain grade level proficiency with students who traditionally fail in reading. So, my conceptions of what “good” reading teachers do to support the needs of the most at-risk readers and how these teachers understand and implement

standards, have helped solidify my constructivist perspectives and my belief that all students can benefit from literacy teachers who also have this perspective.

While it is impossible to eliminate my theories, beliefs, and perceptual lenses (Maxwell, 2014), I am aware of my subjectivity and I made every effort to check my biases and keep data collection and analysis methods valid. First, I used interviews and observations to allow the teachers to tell and show how they implement the Common Core State Standards in their own way. Teachers were given a follow-up interview to verify and clarify my early interpretations of their data. They also reviewed interview transcripts and read the final cases I wrote based on the data I collected from them. Their verification helped to insure that I was representing their knowledge, beliefs, and understandings of the CCSS in my words but also in their voices.

Validity

Qualitative research is holistic, multidimensional, and ever changing (Merriam, 2009). Validity in qualitative research is not single or fixed; it is about a phenomenon that is relative to the ever-changing relationships, circumstances, and people participating in the study (Merriam, 2009). In this study, I was not seeking an ultimate truth (Maxwell, 2013). However, I was seeking validity and trustworthiness by creating credibility in my descriptions, conclusions, explanations, and interpretations of the data from this study (Maxwell, 2013).

I was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; therefore, it was my responsibility to reduce any threats to validity. To do this, I used multiple data sources, member checks, thick descriptions, and direct quotes. These strategies provided rigor as I

holistically uncovered the complexity of teachers' experience of implementing the CCSS (Merriam, 2009).

Multiple Data Sources

Multiple sources of data were used to increase the rigor of this study. Data were collected from the LOS survey, interviews, and observations. Collecting data from multiple data sources required intensive involvement and data triangulation, two additional strategies that increase validity. Observing the participants on multiple occasions and in different settings provided intensive involvement needed for me to check and confirm my observations (Maxwell, 2013). Interviews were conducted at two separate points during the research process. In other words, intensive involvement helped reduce or confirm my assumptions through repeat interviews and observations (Maxwell, 2013) and provided data necessary for triangulation. Not only did I use triangulation by using multiple sources for data collection, I used the data to confirm findings (Merriam, 2009) and themes (Creswell, 2014) that emerged during the study (Merriam, 2009) through member checking and undertaking a rigorous process of data analysis.

Member Checks

Member checks reduce the risk of misinterpreting the meanings of what participants say, do, and their perspectives (Maxwell, 2013). I shared the initial interview transcripts with the teachers and the school and district leaders to ensure that the participants answered the questions the way they intended to answer the questions. When I presented them with the transcripts, I asked them to review them and to let me know if they did not answer a question completely or in the way that they wanted represented, or

if they wanted to add information or clarify anything. Then, after I completed the final draft of each teacher's case, I shared the cases with the teachers. The cases included my interpretations of their data and my sharing allowed me to get feedback from them on my findings (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). The participants were asked to read over their cases and determine if there were things they wanted to add or clarify. Their feedback helped me refine my interpretations and better understand their perspectives (Merriam, 2009).

Thick Descriptions

According to Merriam (2009), thick descriptions are complete details and descriptions of the participants, the setting, and the phenomenon. My thick descriptions included detailed descriptions of my findings, the evidence that supported the findings, and specific quotes from the participants (Merriam, 2009). Detailed note taking during observations and interviews included words spoken, actions taken, room arrangement, and instructional materials so that I could provide thick, rich descriptions in each case.

Direct Quotes

Direct quotes are the specific words that were used by the participants during interviews or observations. These quotes were important for increasing validity because they served as evidence for themes, patterns, and interpretations of the data (Maxwell, 2013). I used direct quotes, or explicit accounts of the participant's perspectives (Maxwell, 2013) to justify the identification of patterns and themes within and across the cases. With the specific words of the participants, I captured the essence of their experience of implementing the CCSS as filtered through their knowledge and beliefs.

Generalizability

Case studies are limited in their ability to describe a phenomenon in a way that can predict future behavior (Merriam, 2009). My study was conducted with teachers who teach in third through fifth grade in one Title I elementary school. My interpretation of the experiences and understandings of these teachers was a limitation that cannot be generalized to predict future behavior or be generalized to the experiences of other teachers who teach third through fifth grade in other Title I schools. Although my findings cannot be generalized, they expand the field because they add to our understanding of the phenomenon of implementing the CCSS, which may support the improvement of future practices in implementing standards-based reading instruction (Merriam, 2009).

Researcher as Primary Instrument

The researcher in case studies is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). Being the primary instrument in my study, I had to be aware that conducting case study research took time. Time is a limitation because it takes a lot of it for a study to be rigorous. For this study, I was the only researcher as I conducted two interviews with each teacher and one with each of three instructional leaders in the school, and the only one to observe all six teachers in whole and small group instruction, content area instruction, and during grade level meetings. Collecting data in this many settings meant that I had a considerable amount of data to analyze. Though having a lot of data was a strength that adds rigor to the study, it was also a limitation because it required a lot of time and a lot of interpreting.

A single researcher as the primary instrument is also a limitation because this researcher is also the only data analyzer. In addition, I am also a novice researcher learning to do case study research independently. As the only data collector, the researcher is observing and recording information that responds to the research questions according to his or her own viewpoint. The data that is analyzed, synthesized, and reported is according to the one researcher's own instincts (Merriam, 2009). To address these validity threats, I used multiple data sources, member checking, thick descriptions, and direct quotes of the participants.

Summary

A case study is an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in real-world context (Yin, 2014). The strength of case study research is that multiple sources of evidence can be collected to allow the data to be triangulated (Yin, 2014). Developing an understanding of case study methodology helped me with the development of data collection and data analysis methods as steps for implementing my study in a rigorous way.

The first step was to develop research questions. The research questions were important because they determined what data was collected, how it was collected, and how it was organized and analyzed (Yin, 2014). The second step was to decide on the research setting and participants. The setting was key in my study because I wanted to know specifically about the implementation of the CCSS in Title I schools. The participants, or cases for the study were teachers with at least one year's experience teaching the CCSS and who taught third, fourth, and fifth grade at Title I schools.

I decided to use a survey, interviews, and observations as data sources. Survey data provided the self-reported literacy orientation of the teachers. The first interview provided me with an understanding of teachers' knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction and the CCSS. Observation data were collected during whole group, small group, content area instruction, and grade level team meetings. The observation data provided information about how teachers' knowledge and beliefs were enacted while implementing the CCSS. Both interviews and observations used protocols to insure that the data collected related directly to the research questions.

During data analysis, I planned to keep validity in mind. I began the data analysis procedures by creating analytic matrices to simultaneously collect and analyze data. Information from transcribed recordings and analytic memos from interviews and observations were used to add information to the analytic matrices that were based on characteristics of the CCSS. The analytic notes and the categories in the matrices helped me to develop codes and themes that responded to the research questions. Both within case and cross-case analyses were undertaken following the recommendations of key scholars in the field of case study research methodology (Merriam, 2009 Stake, 200; Yin, 2014).

My positionality as a curriculum leader in a Title I school was a validity threat. My awareness of this threat and other threats to validity in qualitative research helped to secure a rigorous study. Therefore, I used several methods to insure that threats to validity were minimized. To minimize these threats, I used multiple data sources, member checks, thick descriptions, and direct quotes.

Case study methodology was the best choice for this study because it allowed me to investigate the contemporary phenomenon of teachers implementing the CCSS in Title I schools. I was aware that each case would be different, but that each case would provide an in-depth description of the contemporary phenomenon of implementing the CCSS (Yin, 2014). The goal was that thick descriptions, developed from the triangulation of multiple sources of data would provide a view of the experiences of these teachers. In chapter 4, I share the analysis of data that were collected to address the research questions of this study. Each case will be presented individually to allow each participant's voice, knowledge, beliefs, and interpretations of implementing the CCSS to be amplified. Their specific words, phrases, and actions are used to represent their voices. Then a cross-case analysis is presented.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter I will share information about the initiatives that had been adopted by the District and by the school to increase achievement for all students, while closing achievement gaps between subgroups of children. Then, I will provide an overview of the staff, including data from the Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS). Following LOS data, I will share data collected from each participant in the study, including the District curriculum leader, the school curriculum leader, the principal, and the six teachers who participated in the study. Finally, I will present the themes and trends that were revealed during a cross-case analysis. It should be noted that all names for this study are pseudonyms.

Fairmont Elementary

Fairmont Elementary (pseudonym) is an urban school located within a 45-minute drive of three large metropolitan areas in a southeastern state. During the time of this study, there were 530 students enrolled at Fairmont in pre-Kindergarten through 5th grades. Forty percent of students enrolled in Fairmont identified as African-American, 40% identified as Caucasian, and 20% identified as Hispanic or other. Over 90% of students qualified for free or reduced priced lunch. According to the state's Department of Public Instruction website, for the 2015 school year, 86.6% of Fairmont students were

classified as “economically disadvantaged,” 14% were classified as “students with disabilities,” and 5% were classified as “limited English proficient.”

The state’s school report card provides three different measures of school performance. First, each school is provided a proficiency score that indicates the percentage of students who are grade-level proficient in grades 3rd through 5th. On this measure, there were 30% of the students at Fairmont proficient in reading in 2014-2015. Second, each school is provided a rating that indicates school growth. The growth standards are provided in categories. The lowest category is “does not meet” the growth standard. The middle category is “met” the growth. The highest growth category is “exceeded” the growth. Fairmont demonstrated that they “met” the growth standard during the 2014-2015 school year. Finally, the third measure, which is assigned to each school based on 80% performance and 20% academic growth, is a grade of A, B, C, D, or F. In the area of End of Grade Reading, Fairmont scored an “F” on the report card. Forty-two percent of all students at Fairmont scored on Level 1 of the four performance levels on the End of Grade reading assessment, 29% scored on Level 2, 6% on Level 3, and 22% on Level 4.

According to the school’s report card and based on state standards, 100% of the teachers were considered highly qualified. Two teachers were National Board Certified teachers and 39% of the 36 classroom teachers had advanced degrees. The experience of teachers was evenly spread between teachers in three categories: “0-3 years of teaching

experience,” “4-10 years of teaching experience,” and “10+ years of teaching experience.” Each classroom averaged between 19 and 21 students in 3rd through 5th grades.

Mr. Caldwell, the principal, reported the average income of families at the school was approximately \$12,000 a year. He also shared that the “crime rate here is high, the parental support is very low, and we have a very transient population.” Mr. Caldwell also thought it worthy to share that there are 120 more boys than girls enrolled at the school. Presumably, he mentioned this because he also stated that the students who traditionally had behavior issues and were subjected to more discipline reports were the African-American boys. To support the African-American boys, Mr. Caldwell hired three African-American teacher assistants. He also acknowledged that his staff needed more training on how to reach the African-American boys who did not have male figures at home.

According to the state’s Department of Public Instruction school report card for Fairmont, the Hispanic subgroup outperformed the African-American subgroup and was close to outperforming the Caucasian subgroup in state testing. Mr. Caldwell found this data interesting. He shared that many of the white students at Fairmont lived in poverty and had “survival tactics” and behaviors that lead to them being identified as having misbehaviors. In reference to the achievement gap, Mr. Caldwell stated that “There is a huge gap right there and disparity with our white students compared to white students, Hispanic to Hispanic and African-American to African-American” when his students

were compared to students at other schools. In other words, he was concerned that the students at his school, no matter what racial or ethnic background, were scoring well below like groups in other schools.

All teachers at Fairmont Elementary participated in professional development that addressed both District and school curriculum efforts to support implementation of the CCSS. The District adopted a new literacy framework in 2014. This framework, according to the District elementary lead teacher, Ms. Marsh, focused on the CCSS across grades to maintain focus on growing all learners by taking students from where they were. On the school level, and supported by the District, staff had been trained in an instructional model called “Blended Learning” that used station rotations during all curriculum content areas. Blended Learning’s station rotation model provided each student an opportunity to receive daily small group instruction and is described in more detail below. These school and District initiatives were developed to create learning environments that supported at least 60% of students to be proficient on school, District, and state assessments like Discovery Education, Reading 3D, and the state’s End-of-Grade test.

School and District Initiatives

Literacy Framework

In 2014, the school District implemented its 2014-2017 Strategic Plan. The major focus areas included reading and literacy, and engaging work and instruction. It was the District’s goal for 90% of all students to read on or above grade level and 100% of students achieving or exceeding a year’s worth of growth each academic year. The

engaging work and instruction focus area included the implementation of Connected Learning, Collaboration, Relevancy, and Personalization (CCRP) to increase rigor and engagement. CCRP included Professional Learning Communities, Problem-Based Learning, and Digital Conversion. According to the District website, teachers were implementing guided reading with an emphasis on rigor, differentiation, and personalized instruction that fit within the District's Literacy Framework.

The school system developed its Literacy Framework to ensure that every child would benefit from an effective literacy program that required students to learn specific literacy skills, and participate in purposeful learning experiences through prescriptive instruction. The Literacy Framework was based on what reading research has identified as best practices. The vision statement for the Literacy Framework focused on immersing students in engaging activities in a literacy rich environment that provided opportunities for students to obtain the knowledge and skills in balanced literacy to become proficient readers who could effectively communicate and think critically so that they were ready for careers in the 21st century. During the development of their most recent School Improvement Plans, schools were required to include the Literacy Framework. Implementing the Literacy Framework included: weekly professional development sessions, Professional Learning Communities, data analysis sessions, at least 90-minute literacy blocks, daily guided reading, common formative and summative assessments, personalized literacy learning throughout the content areas, and balanced literacy. The District maintains online resources to support teachers with teaching the literacy standards.

Balanced literacy, a key element of the Literacy Framework, required all teachers to implement opportunities for shared reading, interactive read aloud, independent reading, and guided reading every day. Along with information on implementing Balanced Literacy, the District provided information about the National Reading Panel's 5 components of reading and what the District called Blended Learning.

Blended Learning

In order to understand the findings presented in this study, understanding the instructional focus of Fairview Elementary was necessary. Each of the participants in the study described the expectations of Blended Learning for implementing reading instruction. Mr. Caldwell described Fairmont's Blended Learning style as the Station-Rotation Model. In this model, the students rotated to different stations every 30 minutes during the 90-minute to 120-minute uninterrupted language arts block. The stations included a teacher-guided station, a technology station, plus shared and independent stations.

According to Fairmont's Blended Learning manual, Blended Learning was defined as the purposeful design of instruction to combine face-to-face teaching, technology-assisted instruction and collaboration to promote student ownership and to enhance each student's learning style and interest for deeper learning. The routines and classroom culture for Blended Learning were set at the beginning of the school year. Blended Learning required personalized and mastery-based instruction grounded in high expectations. During the teacher-guided station, teachers provided face-to-face guided reading instruction to meet the learning goals of four to six students during each rotation.

The shared stations allowed for collaborative practice that enhanced and extended rigorous learning goals established for groups of students. Examples included students working on group research projects, completing activities and assignments with technology, and students supporting one another to complete learning goals and objectives. Independent stations provided personalized learning through adaptive and digital content aligned to academic goals for individual students. Instruction in shared and independent stations provided time for skills review and project-based learning experiences. Finally, digital literacy occurred during the technology station. The technology station included the use of the District adopted nonfiction reading programs such as Achieve 3000, Discovery Education, and DreamBox. Technology and balanced literacy were infused in every station, even stations not designated as a “technology” station.

In Fairmont’s station rotation model of Blended Learning, teachers were expected to set attainable class goals for student performance on digital or online content. Although class goals were set, individual goals were also set based on individual student needs with Common Core standards or classroom-based objectives and to motivate individual students to practice the standards or objectives that were challenging. During the process of data analysis, teachers identified individuals or groups of students who were struggling with specific standards. At this point, the teacher or team of teachers made decisions on how to intervene during small group, individual, or whole group instruction.

Overview of Staff

Fairmont Elementary had approximately four teachers on each grade level. The participants in this study included six teachers from the third, fourth, and fifth grades at Fairmont Elementary. The teachers had been in the District at least five years and at Fairmont at least two years. They had taught the CCSS for reading at least two years at Fairmont under the direction of the same administrative team and curriculum leaders.

The principal, Mr. Caldwell, the District lead teacher, Ms. Marsh, and the instructional design coach, Ms. Charles also participated in this study in order to provide background for the study. All of these leaders had been in their positions over three years and had been working in the District at least seven years. They had all worked in Title I settings for the majority of their professional careers as teachers and school leaders. They provided the school guidance in implementing the District's Literacy Framework and the school's Blended Learning model to teach the CCSS. Three African-American and three Caucasian teachers participated in this study; however, the District and school leaders were all Caucasian.

District and School Leaders

Ms. Marsh

Ms. Marsh was in her third year as the lead teacher for the District's elementary schools. She had worked for the District for 21 years as a teacher, curriculum coach, and currently as a lead teacher. She believed that children started learning to read at home before entering kindergarten by holding books and pencils, recognizing environmental print, and identifying their names. She viewed the foundation of reading readiness as

what happened while children were talking, singing, playing, and rhyming. According to Ms. Marsh, children in lower grades benefited from interactive and shared reading experiences, and experiences where teachers modeled think-alouds or what “good readers do.” She acknowledged that explicit phonics instruction was needed to teach decoding and that students learned, “What it means to be a reader” within a balanced literacy approach.

Ms. Marsh believed that guided reading was important for literacy and reading development. She stated “...magic happens at the table in guided reading...when the teacher is modeling all those strategies all the time.” Ms. Marsh believed that small group instruction provided during guided reading allowed teachers to facilitate instruction that met the needs and readiness of the students. Guided reading, according to Ms. Marsh was the teacher’s opportunity to implement balanced literacy practices by first modeling reading strategies and then working with students to interact with texts throughout the curriculum. While she believes it was important for students to practice applying reading strategies, the ultimate goal was for students to practice reading habits independently.

Common Core knowledge. When I asked Ms. Marsh how she expected reading instruction to look in classrooms implementing the CCSS, she referenced her ideas about how children learned to read. Ms. Marsh indicated that teachers implementing the CCSS conducted read-alouds using text above students’ independent reading levels to model “good reading behaviors” and to expose students to rich vocabulary. She said that she also believes students should have rich experiences with various levels of fiction and nonfiction text that required students to “go deeper with the text.” She also stated that

although the standards looked and read somewhat similar from one grade to another, teachers were responsible for ensuring that conversations about text were in-depth and aligned to standards at levels that benefited student learning.

District reading instruction expectations. When asked about the District’s expectation for reading instruction, Ms. Marsh explained there had been more of a focus on the Balanced Literacy Approach across the content areas than on the CCSS. In the eyes of the District, reading instruction was “not just a 90-minute block, but how we do it all day, every day in every content area.” She mentioned that last year’s key focus was on guided reading because “...instruction happens at the table and what students are doing in workstations.” The District expected literacy instructional design coaches to spend time working on the structure of guided reading, the purpose of guided reading, and how to choose texts on instructional levels of the students. In sum, the school District expected all schools to use the Literacy Framework to meet the standards-based needs of students.

CCSS expectations. Ms. Marsh talked about how when the standards were new, professional development focused on conversations about the standards and time was spent unpacking the standards. Focus in the District was on the language within the standards and the continuum of the standards from one grade to the next. Conversations and close attention to standards outside of an assigned grade level was something new with the adoption of the CCSS. This expectation of looking across the grade-level standards was now supported by the District Literacy Framework that was adopted in 2014. According to the Literacy Framework, Ms. Marsh stated that, “it is no longer okay to just focus on your grade specific standards, but we must look at it as a continuum

(progression) on which students' progress." She emphasized that teachers with students performing below grade level needed to look at standards from previous grades to meet the growth needs of the students.

Summary. As the lead teacher in the District, Ms. Marsh's view and interpretations of the expectations for reading instruction and the CCSS was important to this study because she made professional development decisions for schools and worked with principals, literacy design coaches, and teachers on instructional decision making and practices. She acknowledged the initial interest of the District was to create a space for learning the CCSS by deconstructing the standards and having in-depth conversations about how the standards should be implemented in the classroom. Most importantly and connected to the District Literacy Framework, she expressed the importance of understanding the continuum of the standards from one grade to another in identifying what students were able to do and where to begin instruction to help students. Though the standards offered the prerequisite understandings that students needed to have to accomplish grade level standards, Standard 10 asks for students to experience grade level text. Ms. Marsh did not speak as in-depth about the expectations of Standard 10, but she did mention that students needed exposure to grade level and above grade level text for vocabulary growth and opportunities for teachers to model reading behaviors.

Her views about the role of the teachers in providing rich experiences were consistent with what she identified as the District's goals for instruction. It was clear that she was passionate about ensuring that students are viewed as individuals who have specific and different needs. Within the expectation of the Literacy Framework and

Balanced Literacy, she shared that guided reading was expected every day for every student. The Fountas and Pinnell (2010) model, also used by the District, required that students practice reading behaviors using books on their specific reading level. While Ms. Marsh did not specifically describe how teachers were expected to use guided reading instruction to incorporate the CCSS, there was an expectation that teachers conduct guided reading based on the professional development that was provided.

Although the interview questions included the CCSS, it seemed that the emphasis on the standards to guide Ms. Marsh's thinking, or the thinking of the District, was not the motivation for District decisions for reading instruction. Instead, she described the importance of conversations and using reading, writing, listening, and speaking to learn content material. However, I was not sure if the standards drove her thinking or if her thinking was from previously learned "best practices". The only specific reference that she gave to the CCSS was the idea of the continuum of standards from one grade to the next. She never discussed the standards in detail or how the specific standards would look in a classroom setting or incorporated into the District's Literacy Framework.

As I interviewed and observed other leaders and teachers, I paid attention to commonalities and differences in beliefs and understandings of District expectations based on what I learned from Ms. Marsh, the lead teacher. Throughout the remainder of the chapter, I make connections and highlight similarities and differences that participants had about District expectations and the practices that occurred during observations.

Mr. Caldwell

Mr. Caldwell has been the Principal at Fairmont Elementary for three years starting with the second year of the state's implementation of the CCSS. Although he was not the principal during the initial year of CCSS implementation, he was in the District as an assistant principal for five years prior. During these five years, he participated in District efforts to prepare principals and teachers for the impending changes in curriculum and instruction because of the CCSS.

According to Mr. Caldwell, the goal for teachers at Fairmount Elementary and the other schools in the District was to teach the CCSS. However, under Mr. Caldwell's leadership, Fairmont Elementary's way of teaching the CCSS was through a method called "Blended Learning". Blended Learning, according to the school-adopted definition, was a formal education program in which a student learned: 1) partly through online learning with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace; 2) partly in a supervised "brick and mortar" location away from home; and 3) along with each student's learning path in a course or subject that was connected to provide an integrated learning experience.

The state's required School Improvement Plan, developed during Mr. Caldwell's time as principal, matched the District's expectations. The literacy goal in the School Improvement Plan for Fairview stated that all teachers must have a 90-minute uninterrupted literacy block that included the implementation of the Balanced Literacy Model of instruction. It requires teachers participate in grade-level specific professional development and collaborative planning sessions. The District resources provided online

for teachers included information about the Literacy Framework, Balanced Literacy, and the DuFours Model of Professional Learning Communities. The online resources also included information on beginning phonics, and Balanced Literacy.

The second goal in the School Improvement Plan was to provide engaging classrooms. To reach this goal, the teachers at Fairmont participated in weekly collaborative planning sessions, which was also a required component of the District plan. During collaborative planning sessions teachers supported each other in selecting and evaluating academic interventions and enrichment. Another focus of creating engaging classrooms was planning for and implementing problem-based learning experiences that were both rigorous and relevant.

On CCSS. Mr. Caldwell stated, "...I really like Common Core." He shared that his understanding of the CCSS was that the standards were deeper than previous standards. He saw the CCSS as a way of making students college and career ready, critical thinkers, and problem solvers. Mr. Caldwell did not see it as important to get involved in the "policy" or definition of the standards. He clarified by saying that as long as students were able to problem solve and think critically, they would be successful and would be college and career ready.

School and District expectations. Mr. Caldwell stated that he expects teachers at Fairmont to implement Blended Learning using the balanced literacy approach. When asked about the role of the CCSS within this model, he stated, "...when I think of Common Core, I just think of four things – one is career-ready, one is college-ready, and then you got problem-solvers and critical thinkers." He went on to say that if there was a

focus on the above four things, Fairmont would be successful. Mr. Caldwell also expected all teachers to use the station rotation model of Blended Learning where students were the center of focus and instruction for each of them was personalized. Small group instruction was also expected as a part of Blended Learning. Mr. Caldwell expected that guided stations allowed higher performing students to continue to progress, middle students could be pushed, and students who were performing below grade level could work independently because assignments were provided based on the needs of each student. Another major push for instruction and learning at Fairmont was the inclusion of technology. It was clearly important to Mr. Caldwell that instruction across the content areas be connected and that assignments be purposeful.

When asked how the CCSS looked in reading instruction at Fairmont, Mr. Caldwell shared that teachers plan according to the standards and that classroom visits revealed that teachers were applying the standards. When speaking about District expectations, Mr. Caldwell described how the literacy framework asks teachers to use the gradual release model – “I do, we do, you do.” He described the important role of the literacy design coach, Ms. Charles, and her role in differentiating professional development that supported the literacy framework in one-on-one sessions, grade level teams, and for the entire school.

Mr. Caldwell recalled how teachers were introduced to the CCSS before the official adoption of the standards. He described how teams of teachers participated in trainings and worked to create District grade level curriculum maps. He acknowledged that at this point, it was key that teachers make a conscious effort to make changes in how

content would be delivered. He went on to say that teachers were given the CCSS and it was understood that “these are your standards and these are the expectations.” From what he knew now about the standards, best practices, and research-based strategies, he said that he believes that Fairmont was on track. According to Mr. Caldwell, “We found out over time that balanced literacy and Blended Learning were the best current practices to implement the Common Core Standards” because they blended District and school initiatives.

Summary. Mr. Caldwell saw himself as an instructional leader who both expected and trusted the instructional design coach and the teachers to interpret and implement the CCSS and the school’s Blended Learning model in ways that would prepare students to be college and career ready, critical thinkers, and problem solvers. The School Improvement Plan, designed under his tenure, identified the desire of his school to successfully implement Blended Learning to meet the academic needs of students through Balanced Literacy and by using the District’s Literacy Framework and resources.

When asked about the CCSS, he acknowledged that the instructional design coach, Ms. Charles, was the person who best supported teachers in this area. He was open about each instructional leader having specific roles that supported their curriculum strengths, which likely explained why his responses about the CCSS were not detailed. However, his descriptions of the District and school frameworks provided a clear understanding of the literacy development vision he had for Fairmont and how he expected other instructional leaders to help bring the vision to fruition.

Throughout Mr. Caldwell's sharing of the school and District expectations for implementing reading instruction and the CCSS, his responses aligned with the goals of Fairview's School Improvement Plan. For instance, he talked about the role of professional development and conversations that are expected to support the implementation of literacy instruction. He also mentioned the importance of the elements of balanced literacy – listening, speaking, reading, and writing for implementing Blended Learning. Ms. Marsh also mentioned these elements as key for teaching the CCSS.

Ms. Charles

Ms. Charles was in her 37th year in the District and tenth year as a curriculum leader at Fairmont Elementary. She started as a literacy coach, then became a curriculum coach for literacy, math, and writing, and finally became the literacy design coach. Her classroom was the space for Professional Learning Community meetings. Around her room there were resources and posters that represented the content of conversations and professional development at Fairmont Elementary.

When asked about her beliefs about reading instruction, Ms. Charles acknowledged that all children have individual needs and that reading instruction for her was very intentional. Her reluctance about having a one-size fits all curriculum was evident when she stated, "It's not just because the pacing guide says I need to be here, or that the program, our system has adopted says we need to be here." She shared that she thought that exposure to literature was important and that "when you give the right book to the right kid, that's your best strategy for making readers." When she walks in classrooms, she expects to see, as she put it, "instruction geared toward individual

students, their interests, their needs, all kinds of needs.” Differentiation, according to Ms. Charles, should be used during shared reading experiences.

More specifically, Ms. Charles believed that comprehension and decoding belong together and should not be seen as separate ideas about what children need to know to become readers. She mentioned that comprehension should play a role in reading instruction from the very beginning, even when students were still learning letters and sounds, by asking children, “Do you know what the message is that the author is trying to share with you?” Although teaching children to focus on acronyms for memorizing procedures for processing text was a common reading practice, she did not believe that it was an important practice for teaching students to understand what they were reading.

On CCSS. The CCSS, according to Ms. Charles, required that reading instruction include communication and collaboration between teachers and students, and students with each other to work through complex ideas. “Making students responsible for their own learning and their thinking” was what Ms. Charles stated as being necessary when teaching students to think through ideas and to put ideas together. She also reiterated that the goal of reading with the CCSS was the same as her philosophy of teaching reading, comprehension was the ultimate goal. She stated that “fluency is not a big deal” for her. What was important was that students did what had to be done to understand the author’s message, even if it meant rereading a passage to comprehend the text. Implementing the CCSS also meant that students were reading more non-fiction text, and that writing about the meanings of text was important. She described the shift from reading comprehension

in the past and reading comprehension during the implementation of the CCSS. Ms.

Charles shared,

For example, when I came along and we had a test in reading, the book was closed. You didn't get to go back and look at the story again. You had to try to remember what you thought the teacher was going to ask you, so having that text and using multiple references for your thinking...

By this she meant that instruction during the time of the CCSS included formative assessments, a variation from the past when most assessments were summative.

School and District expectations. Ms. Charles began her discussion about school and District by saying, "We play the game of saying it really doesn't matter as long as kids are reading and they're successful, but scores still matter a lot, especially at a school like Fairmont where I feel like we have to work really hard to show modest gains." She also stated that the school and District had the same goal of developing students into lifelong learners who learned to understand the role that reading and comprehension played in their lives.

Ms. Charles described the District and school expectations of using the online nonfiction reading program, Achieve 3000. Fairmont had a daily routine of incorporating Achieve 3000 during independent station time and occasionally during guided reading instruction. This online reading program required students to answer multiple choice and constructed response questions while reading content-based articles. Students were given the same articles with the same content; however, the Lexiles of the articles could be adjusted to meet the specific needs of the students. Though Ms. Charles recognized that

Achieve 3000 did not fit the true definition of Blended Learning, it served the school's role in motivating children to read. Defending the use of the Achieve 3000 program, she stated that, "There's no research that says kids reading more is a bad thing, so we appreciate the data that we get." and "We appreciate that it's non-fiction." She also shared that the school and District also liked the written components of the Achieve 3000 program because it forced students to think about what they were writing and give reasons for their thinking when they responded to questions. Ms. Charles believed that Achieve 3000 "gives us a model for good instruction," though most teachers used the Fountas and Pinnell (2010) model for guided reading. School expectations for the implementation of Achieve 3000 included conversations about the articles, including judgments and evaluations, which Ms. Charles thought were important. However, Ms. Charles would have liked for the program to be used more in collaborative settings for teachers and for instruction in the content areas.

According to Ms. Charles, the vision for reading instruction at Fairmont resided in implementing the Station Rotation Model of Blended Learning. Within this model teachers maintained three stations, including: 1) teacher-directed 2) technology, and 3) independent. During the teacher-directed station, students participated in the Fountas and Pinnell-based (2010) guided reading, and teachers listened to the students read while taking anecdotal notes every day. Ms. Charles shared that this was important because teachers wanted to know where the students were in terms of reading before students left their station. Ms. Charles acknowledged, "I have never been trained in guided reading, and it is like a lot of other things in education, I had a different definition from what

Fountas and Pinnell had...” As a result, this variance in definitions required the school to work closely with the materials and the District’s vision for guided reading to decide on how it would look at Fairmont. Relatedly, Ms. Charles admitted that sometimes Reading Workshop practices, the previous reading model, crept into instruction, and at other times there was guided reading using reading strategies based on levels. Ms. Charles, therefore, assumed that when the new model of Blended Learning was introduced, teachers and teams of teachers who kept some of their previously held beliefs were allowed the space to continue them as they aligned practices within the new model of instruction.

To assist the teachers, Ms. Charles told me that the Blended Learning committee at Fairmont created a handbook to provide staff guidance on implementing the Blended Learning station rotation model. The teachers also received online training and visited each other’s classrooms. When the teachers visited other teachers’ classrooms, they focused on the procedures for rotating through stations and procedures for what happened during the stations. Ms. Charles also mentioned that a lot of “in-house” support had been needed.

When Ms. Charles spoke about the District’s Literacy Framework, she shared that it was put in place to ensure that daily reading instruction incorporated all areas of literacy, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking with fidelity. A key component of the literacy framework, guided reading, was the focus of District-wide professional development using Fountas and Pinnell’s (2010) guided reading framework. She supported this by focusing most PLC sessions during the 2014-2015 school year on guided reading. Ms. Charles used outlines provided by the lead teacher for the District,

Ms. Marsh, to ensure that the professional development sessions matched the expectations of the District. At Fairmont, Ms. Charles shared that she preferred the individual coaching model as opposed to giving the same professional development to every teacher. Therefore, professional development was backed up with coaching visits and feedback on instructional expectations for implementation.

CCSS expectations. According to Ms. Charles, there was variation in how teachers implemented guided reading and how teachers incorporated CCSS instruction during guided reading stations. Some teachers followed the specific guidelines identified in the Fountas and Pinnell (2010) literacy framework that identified what learners needed at each level. Though, this framework did not specifically align to the CCSS, Ms. Charles said that some teachers did incorporate the CCSS.

When asked about how teachers were prepared to implement the CCSS, Ms. Charles stated, “It’s pretty much left up to teachers to do their own research...” Some of the new teachers came with information about the standards from their colleges. Ms. Charles acknowledged that although others may respond differently, there had not been an intentional connection made between what students were able to do and its relation to the CCSS. She mentioned that she would like to see her elementary school “...truly plan for good reading instruction, use the data that we have, and have more time for professional development to learn.” She went on to say that it was important to get students interested in what they were reading because they would learn more. Though it was clear that the CCSS were important to her, it was also clear that the key purpose of reading instruction was for children to become interested in reading.

Teachers are provided a standards-based pacing guide; however, Ms. Charles stated, "...how they teach it and the order in which they teach it is up to the teachers." The pacing guide provided guidance about which of the Common Core standards to focus on in each quarter of the school year, but teachers had the autonomy to choose how to teach the standards. Ms. Charles worked on the team that created the 5th grade-pacing guide and she stated that one of their goals was to integrate the content areas as much as possible. She sounded disappointed by the fact that most of the schools in the District departmentalize, which made it harder to integrate across content areas. When she mentioned integration, I asked if integration was expected. She stated, "I think that's basically left up to the schools to decide."

Ms. Charles also mentioned that they had approximately 13 beginning teachers who did not receive training by the District on the CCSS as it was done for the entire District before the CCSS implementation. She stated that "It's pretty much left up to teachers to do their own research and we throw out information...I don't know that there's a lot of formal training on it." When asked more specifically if intentional connections between what students were able to do and how it related to standards was a focus, she said no.

Summary. Like Ms. Marsh and Mr. Caldwell, Ms. Charles had her own beliefs about how children learned to read and how the standards should impact teaching and learning. However, the way she described her perspectives, I perceived her to have a constructivist point of view. She did not see the standards as the starting point for what students should know to be readers; rather she saw their motivation to read as the starting

point. Ms. Charles also believed that it was important for students to discover and learn new ideas by connecting ideas that were explored across content areas. For instance, when she talked about departmentalization, where each teacher teaches one subject, she clearly disagreed with the concept of not being able to teach in a situation where learning is connected between content areas. Her more constructivist-oriented sentiments about how children learned to read and should be instructed also came across when she described the District and school expectations for reading and implementing the CCSS.

Ms. Marsh's understanding about the expectations of the District and the school were aligned. She discussed her role in ensuring that teachers were professionally developed in guided reading and were able to do so within the Blended Learning model while meeting the goals of the Literacy Framework. However, one expectation of the District, Achieve 3000, was an expectation that Ms. Marsh did not necessarily believe was best for teaching children to read. Nevertheless, she did see how it could be beneficial for students because it motivated them to read more. As she put it, "There's no research that says kids' reading more is a bad thing..." Her beliefs also aligned with District and school expectations for ensuring that all content areas were connected throughout instruction and that learning existed through balanced literacy.

It was clear to me that learning the CCSS standards and emphasizing the standards were not a priority for Ms. Charles at that point in time. She believed that they had a place in guiding instruction, but she ultimately believed that good reading instruction began with motivating children to read and supporting them through investigations of new knowledge across the content areas. She acknowledged that the 13

new teachers she currently worked with had not received CCSS professional development and it seemed that specific studying of the standards and the expectations of the standards had not occurred during her professional development sessions with teachers.

The District and school leaders in this study had an impact on how teachers described their knowledge and beliefs about reading and the CCSS, changed in their knowledge and beliefs, and why they made instructional decisions about implementing the CCSS. The leaders had their own perspectives and beliefs and these filtered down into the expectations that they had for the teachers that they professionally developed and worked with on a daily basis.

Participant LOS Data

The LOS survey data provided information about how teachers viewed themselves as literacy teachers and provided a reference point for the observations and interview with teachers. The LOS survey data (Table 4.1) indicated that most teachers in the study had a self-reported overall traditional orientation based on both their beliefs about literacy learning and classroom literacy practices. The traditional belief scores were strong enough to give four out of the six teachers an overall traditional literacy orientation. Only one teacher, Ms. Denver, had a match between literacy beliefs and practices. All other teachers, according to the LOS survey, had traditional beliefs that did not match their beliefs about literacy practice. There was one teacher, Ms. Senter, who had a constructivist practice score; however, her traditional literacy beliefs indicated an

overall eclectic orientation. The connection between teacher LOS survey data, the interviews, and observation data is discussed in the description for each teacher.

Table 4.1. Participant LOS Survey Data

Teacher	Total Score	Teacher Type	Beliefs Score	Teacher Type	Practice Score	Teacher Type
McRae	106	Traditional	46	Traditional	60	Eclectic
Monroe	102	Traditional	48	Traditional	54	Eclectic
Emerald	107	Traditional	51	Traditional	56	Eclectic
Hamilton	108	Traditional	49	Traditional	59	Eclectic
Denver	115	Eclectic	57	Eclectic	58	Eclectic
Senter	114	Eclectic	51	Traditional	63	Constructivist

Participant Profiles

Ms. Denver

Walking into Ms. Denver's classroom, my attention was immediately drawn towards her color coordinated decorated classroom. Everything in her classroom matched her chosen color scheme and everything was well organized. The students used her posted organizational system to immediately respond when asked to go to their learning stations. In addition to the whimsical feel of her classroom, her students were excited about learning and sharing their knowledge within their learning stations. Students used anchor charts and other charts posted around the room that provided expectations and learning goals. The learning tasks in the stations focused on reading strategies, online reading programs, and word work. Students participated in Ms. Denver's teacher-led station for small group instruction at the kidney table in the middle of the classroom. To go along with her color scheme and exciting personality and tone,

Ms. Denver had little Ikea-like chairs for students to sit on. During my interview, I was so involved that I almost rocked right out of the chair. Her animated and energetic voice displayed her desire for her students to be interested in what they were learning. Ms. Denver made it clear to her higher achieving class that they should be doing well with independent activities. She was explicit with sharing the expectations for fourth grade Lexiles and also shared with the students the specific ways that online reading programs helped them to be better readers for future career success.

Ms. Denver was a fourth grade teacher and had been a public school teacher for 22 years. She started her career in 1985 but took 10 years off to raise her two boys. She had experience with teaching at a community college and she had worked as a pre-school director. During her 22 years as a public school teacher, she worked in three different school Districts and worked as a high school English teacher and a middle school language arts teacher before becoming an elementary teacher. She had been with this school system for thirteen years and she had been at Fairmont Elementary for nine years. She was certified to work with both exceptional children and academically gifted children. She had worked with both populations of students, exceptional children in middle school and academically gifted at Fairmont and on the middle school level. Currently, her classroom included all of the academically gifted children in Fairmont's fourth grade. During the initial interview, Ms. Denver talked about how during her first years of teaching a combination fourth and fifth grade, she did not have to teach children how to dig into the text because the students already knew how to read. She shared that she was not elementary trained so she had not received training on teaching phonics and

phonemes. However, her class was not all academically gifted and she acknowledged that it is a “learning curve” for her to work with students who needed help with sounding out words.

Ms. Denver’s varied experiences had shaped how she viewed the teaching of reading and how she implemented the CCSS. In a sense, teaching elementary school was her second profession because she was licensed and had experience in middle and high school before she became an elementary school teacher. Her knowledge about teaching reading in an elementary school setting was relatively new, especially working with struggling readers and students who needed help with reading skills that were below high-level comprehension. Though she had experience working with exceptional children, Ms. Denver’s comfort was working with students who were academically gifted because that was her area of training and practice. Ms. Denver said, “I believe I was born to be a teacher.” She shared that she believed some people are born to teach and teaching for them was innate.

Research question #1: Ms. Denver’s beliefs about reading. According to the LOS data, overall Ms. Denver was an eclectic teacher with both eclectic beliefs and practices (see Table 4. 2). In other words, Ms. Denver’s eclectic belief results indicated that she did not have completely traditional beliefs or completely constructivist beliefs and this was supported by interview data. For example, Ms. Denver shared her core beliefs about reading, which were more constructivist than traditional:

I don't know if that comes from my high school training, but I do believe that these children will not remember every character in every story that we've ever read. They will remember the ideas, the discussions, the connections they made as students and the little epiphanies they have that are on their level. I believe that. I believe that whether reading comes easily for you or whether it is difficult determines how much enjoyment you get out of it.

Ms. Denver also expressed that students would not want to read if reading required them to struggle. She said, "I want them confident that they can take on a task without being afraid." Her beliefs about reading, students being motivated to read, and confident in reading were evidence that she had constructivist beliefs. She also explained her dissatisfaction with state testing as it related to students who struggled by saying, "I'm sick of testing. I'm sick of what it's doing to children. I'm sick of them not being able to read and learn without having to worry about two hours one day in May."

In contrast, as Ms. Denver prepared her students for standardized assessments, she applied traditional practices. She shared,

We are working on building a set of skills and putting tools in the toolbox, so that in *that* two hours in May they're not frightened out of their mind. If it means that I'm teaching to the test, sometimes I am. I want them to be so confident and I want their year to be so hard that when they get to that [the test], it's just not a big deal.

Her beliefs about what prepared students to be successful readers, demonstrated by performance on state tests, leaned away from a constructivist perspective toward a more traditional perspective during her interview. This shift towards teaching to the test appeared to be based on state, District, and school expectation for testing results and mandates for the implementation of programs.

According to the LOS survey results, Ms. Denver also had eclectic practices. When she completed the practice items on the survey, her responses were not clearly traditional or constructivist. However, during her interviews she shared beliefs and examples of reading practices that were clearly more constructivist. For example, when she talked about the practices that she used when teaching high school English, she talked about her role in facilitating discussions and debates. It was her expectation for students to collaborate about understandings of text and to operate as a “responsive classroom.” Within her responsive classroom she said that students questioned each other, provided each other feedback, and supported one another in a constructivist classroom community of learners. During another interview, Ms. Denver talked about how she taught more thematically and used more concept-based instruction since the adoption of the CCSS. She shared that she used a lot of nonfiction text during reading to teach social studies and science concepts. She used online texts, videos, graphic organizers, and links to reading and research resources for students to have a variety of materials to learn the content. Ms. Denver shared that she had students share their learning through project-based assignments that were uploaded into online folders and scored using rubrics.

However, while talking about the program that she used to upload student activities and assignments, she shared that she sometimes uploaded “glorified worksheets.” Here she was referring to the taboo of using worksheets during instruction because worksheets did not require students to think deeply about the content they were learning.

So, while it was evident that her practices, as she described them, were more in line with constructivist practices, using “glorified worksheets” was an example of a more traditional practice that she used in her classroom – hence the eclectic nature of her practice.

Another traditional practice evident in her classroom was based on school expectations for guided reading. For instance, the school required every student to receive guided reading on their level. Ms. Denver shared that it was difficult grouping students because she had such a wide variation in student reading levels. Her response to how to address the problem was,

You kind of have to shoot toward the middle of that group. I don’t ever like for a student to read below their level, but I’m okay with them struggling just a bit above their level as long as it is supported.

The constructivist practice of productive struggle was what she allowed for the students below the middle of her guided reading groups. However, providing all students the same level or type of text solely because they were in the same group was a traditional practice. Thus, Ms. Denver’s beliefs and practices were eclectic, as revealed in the LOS and also in my interviews with and observations of her teaching.

Another belief about Ms. Denver’s students as readers emerged during the interviews. She had different beliefs about what children needed to learn and how children should learn based on who the students were. Teaching vocabulary in context was a core belief that she had for students who were identified as academically gifted and

students who were not. For example, when describing her practices of vocabulary in context, she first spoke about how she instructed her academically gifted students,

They [the students] would make a list of words that they found in their reading that they were unfamiliar with and students would be responsible enough to want to work with those words. They would add words to the word wall on their own. When I was teaching AIG, that's how I did vocabulary.

However, when Ms. Denver talked about vocabulary instruction for her other students, who were not academically gifted, she stated,

But these groups are not that self-motivated, so if I had time to do vocabulary instruction, I probably would pull the words out of science, out of social studies, out of a shared text that we were all reading, and we would try to incorporate them.

Ms. Denver was clear that students learning vocabulary was not about students writing down “lists of definitions, and they didn’t know what they wrote down.” Instead, she believed that vocabulary instruction also included requiring students to use the text to understand the words in context. However, her pulling the words out for the students to learn and feeling the need to provide her less-skilled group of students something different than full exploration and discovery made the vocabulary activity a traditional practice. Ultimately, it should be noted that Ms. Denver was concerned that vocabulary was important, but because of the station rotation model, there was little time to incorporate vocabulary instruction effectively. She shared,

For reading, I don’t feel like we are hitting it [vocabulary] like we used to because we don’t have time. With this rotation model, you have 30 minutes at the guided

reading table. You can work with those words on one or two days, but not like I used to.

Ms. Denver also went on to say that teaching vocabulary in isolation or using programs to teach vocabulary did not help students remember words. However, she never explicitly described what she would do with vocabulary instruction if she had the time.

Overall, interview data indicated that Ms. Denver had both traditional and constructivist beliefs and practices. This aligned with the LOS data that categorized her as eclectic, wavering between traditional and constructivist characteristics. It appeared to me that the wavering was attributed to disequilibrium related to first working with high school students in English class, then working with students who were academically gifted, and now working with students who have greater needs with reading. Other influences contributing to her apparent disequilibrium in selecting and applying practices eclectically may have been the expectations for state testing and expectations for implementing District and school initiatives.

Research question #1: Ms. Denver's knowledge about reading. Ms. Denver's knowledge about reading ranged from high school to elementary and from high achieving students to low achieving students. Throughout the interview, she talked about her knowledge base starting with high school English. She acknowledged that she did not have knowledge of phonics or phonemic awareness because she was not elementary trained. Since she had been working in elementary, however, the knowledge she had gained came from reading articles or books, and watching videos. When she became an elementary school teacher, she realized that before teaching fourth grade, "There wasn't a

teaching of reading as much as it was a teaching of literature.” This distinction reflected her hesitance about her support for and knowledge about teaching students how to read as opposed to teaching students how to interpret what they read. She also connected her knowledge about word learning and vocabulary teaching to the Greek and Latin roots words that she used with high school students.

Nevertheless, throughout the interviews, Ms. Denver shared key terms that aligned with the National Reading Panel’s (2000) five components of reading. She mentioned phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies several times. Ms. Denver also talked about teaching informational text with a focus on vocabulary instruction and writing. According to Ms. Denver, “I still do a lot of vocabulary instruction in social studies and science because the understanding of vocabulary is the understanding of that subject matter.”

She described that her knowledge of reading practices that she implemented when she taught literature included speaking, interpreting important details, creating and applying knowledge, and reading to learn about pivotal periods in time. While working in the elementary setting, her knowledge had grown to include teaching text features and helping children understand how to use headings, captions, pictures, and maps to learn in an integrated curriculum setting. Ms. Denver also knew that writing was an important part of teaching informational text, but she acknowledged that she did not require students to write enough. While focusing on all of these things, Ms. Denver mentioned, “At the same time we are thinking about our standards.” She acknowledged that through using the standards came certain instructional choices and decisions.

Ms. Denver talked about knowing other key elements of reading instruction, including reading books above the children's reading level during read alouds, reading books on the children's levels during guided reading, and that it was important for students to love the books they were reading because they would make connections with the text. She stated specifically that read alouds were opportunities for teachers to select something "that maybe they couldn't read on their own, but I know they would enjoy it because I know they will like the discussion." She also knew that guided reading instruction was the opportunity for teachers to have students participate in close reading using shorter passages.

In sum, Ms. Denver shared her knowledge of all of the components identified by the National Reading Panel (2000) and of key terms from the CCSS (2010). However, she acknowledged that while her knowledge of discussing and interpreting literature was vast, she was still learning strategies for teaching pre-reading and early reading skills. Her knowledge seemed to be based on training she received as a high school English teacher and most recently some research she had conducted about early readers.

Research question #1: How Ms. Denver implemented the CCSS. "The other way that I get in the complex text is that I make sure my read aloud is well above everybody's reading level." Her definition of complex text was "...things [texts] that have lots of different words that you might not recognize or that you might not have seen before. It's also about a subject matter that you have not heard before." Relatedly, however, Ms. Denver was somewhat bothered by the notion that students must struggle with text, a tenant of the CCSS. According to her, "I think that if you have to struggle

with the content and the text, sometimes that's just too much." Therefore, she had settled on providing students complex text during read alouds. This was how Ms. Denver explained the reason that she approached complex text the way that she did, "So in my read aloud, I'll try to make sure that it is something that maybe they couldn't read on their own, but I know they would enjoy because they will like the discussion."

When Ms. Denver was asked about close reading, she stated, "I had not used that before this year very much. It is one of those things that I see is all the rage in a lot of blogs that I follow, but I haven't really used it." Ms. Denver went on to say that she was starting to use close reading and that she had her students read shorter passages that allowed for first, second, and third reads. It appeared that the knowledge that she had about close reading was not based on District or school expectations, but was initiated on her own learning and reading. It also appeared that she did not have thorough knowledge of the process of close reading because beyond identifying it as being shorter passages read multiple times, she did not provide more detail. This may have been attributed to her implementing close reading for the first time this year without formal support with the implementation.

Ms. Denver also shared that she had to teach her students to argue points clearly, to use cause and effect effectively, and to apply problem and solution when understanding texts that they encountered. She believed that implementing the CCSS included students "digging into the idea in the piece." Ms. Denver wanted to get to the essence of reading and the fact that she believed teaching the CCSS was not about the

specific things children picked up from text, rather it was about the overall theme or key idea that students took away and were able to apply later.

In Ms. Denver's classroom, there was evidence of the CCSS in her practices. For example, students were responsible for identifying the main idea and details in passages, reflecting Reading Information Standard 4.2. This standard reads, "Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details and summarize the text." Students were also asked to compare and contrast Christmas in two different countries, which fit with Reading Information Standard 4.6. This standard reads, "Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic and describe the differences in focus and the information provided." Student groups were responsible for reading excerpts of texts and writing down two things about their country. This task may be viewed as constructivist because students were using two texts to write about their understandings of a topic; however, the materials and support that the students were provided matched more traditional practices because the teacher provided text that was not complex and the students were supported in finding responses and aided in what to write.

During the science lesson I observed, Mrs. Denver provided instructions for creating circuits and working with conductors. It was the responsibility of the students to determine the difference between conductors and insulators by conducting the experiments. Collaboration and exploration during this science lesson created an environment for students to construct their own understandings of the science information, and embedded reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in the lesson.

Before the students accessed the materials online and from within the classroom, Ms. Denver announced, “I am not going to tell you what to do” indicating that science exploration was the responsibility of the students. This lesson was a clear example of constructivism in action in her classroom.

It was evident to me that Ms. Denver saw herself as a constructivist teacher. She also saw the role of the CCSS for creating an environment in the classroom that aligned to her constructivist practices that she described during the interviews. In addition, she acknowledged that there were growing pains for veteran teachers. However, she held a different view for teachers who were just starting the profession. For example, she shared,

I think the youngest teachers were our biggest strength in Common Core, because they did not have that pile of stuff that they had to do. They were fresh and they were new, and they were digging into those standards and they had nothing. I think they did it better, I really do, and I think it was easier for them because they knew it was coming. They had been talking about it all throughout their college tenures and so it was easier for them, but for those people who wanted to pull those blue mimeograph things out of their filing cabinet, they did not teach the standards. They taught what they’d always taught.

In this quote, Ms. Denver implied that implementing the CCSS was frustrating for her during the initial adoption because she believed it to be different than what she was previously doing. However, she realized that implementation of the CCSS was not too different from what she was doing before the CCSS. This apparently led to her account of her beliefs and knowledge leaning towards constructivist views; however, her actual practices included both traditional and constructivist practices.

In sum, Ms. Denver is knowledgeable about many reading practices and the CCSS, but she sometimes seemed reluctant to use her knowledge in constructivist ways because of what she thought some of her students were able to do, what was expected of her by her school and District, and what she knew about teaching students who were not academically gifted in reading.

Research question #2. Ms. Denver shared her reading journey and the many shifts she had made in her understanding of what it means to teach reading from teaching high school English to her current position as a fourth grade teacher. As mentioned previously, during the interview, Ms. Denver shared that implementing the CCSS was not different from what she did before during her reading instruction. She described how people who observed her teaching told her that she was doing great things in her classroom. In response, Ms. Denver said that she would think to herself, “I thought everybody did that.” At one point in the interview, Ms. Denver described her frustration of learning the CCSS after just learning the previous standard course of study. She said,

That first year, it was hard to plan because I felt like, I didn’t want to throw out everything I’ve ever done. But, I had to find out what of it I could keep and what of it didn’t apply anymore.

A shift, or change that Ms. Denver acknowledged making since the adoption of the CCSS was that she taught more thematically now. She gave the example of using the reading “cause and effect” strategy during the study of the civil rights or the revolutionary war when studying historical perspectives. It should be noted that this shift also aligned with the school-wide expectation that teachers teach in an integrated fashion.

When she stated, “I like the Common Core. I don’t like all the junk that came with it” Ms. Denver meant that she likes the CCSS because the expectations for implementing the standards match what she believes about reading instruction. She mentioned how she believes in Socratic seminar and it matches the expectations for the delivery of the CCSS. She stated, “Once I realized that the Common Core was my niche anyway, then it was like, ‘Oh well, I’ve been doing this all along’.”

Though Ms. Denver may feel like she has not changed, as she expressed in the interviews, I believe that she did think about reading instruction differently and she considered additional ways of improving her reading instruction. For example, one practice that she implemented after the adoption of the CCSS was using shorter passages and requiring students to experience text through first, second, and third reads.

Other changes in her practices and beliefs after the implementation of the CCSS occurred because of the change in students that she was assigned to teach. Ms. Denver began to see the smaller components that accounted for reading during the implementation of the CCSS. For instance, before the implementation of the standards, she viewed reading more holistically, without taking notice of the small components that made a reader. She described having her students’ complete projects and writing to teach reading before being assigned groups of students who needed instruction in how to read. A change in her class make-up, from students who did not need a lot of support to read to students who needed a lot of support in learning to read, came at the same time that she had to learn the CCSS for the first time. She shared, “We did lots of projects and lots of writing. But in terms of really teaching the reading and how to dig in to a skill, that was

not present at all because it didn't need to be. I wasn't in a regular classroom. I didn't have children who struggled with comprehension." However, with the adoption of the CCSS, she also taught a "regular" classroom with students at all levels of reading abilities. In a reflection of reading instruction with both adoptions, Ms. Denver stated, "Although I may have half my kids that do not struggle with comprehension...there are groups that come to my table that need help with sounding out a word." She acknowledged that teaching reading was difficult and that she was untrained. Her reflection was not specifically speaking of teaching the CCSS, but of teaching reading, and in this case through the CCSS.

While it seemed that Ms. Denver had not shifted her knowledge or beliefs since she had learned the CCSS, in reality she probably had. For example, she talked about how the implementation of the CCSS was not different from what she did in the past; yet, she described specific decisions she made and practices she implemented because of the implementation of the CCSS. Evidence of other shifts was also found in how she described her feelings during the implementation process. In one example, Ms. Denver stated, "I remember feeling frustrated the first year because I had just gotten my feet wet with the Standard Course of Study for elementary school." She also talked about the two-day training sessions at the beginning of the school year and the "unpacking" of the CCSS documents. Ms. Denver also shared how she researched the standards and ways of implementing the standards independently, which led to changes in her using new-to-her pre-reading practices, which I observed.

To summarize, although Ms. Denver said she believed she did not have to change with the adoption of the standards, she did. She shifted in how she researched information for implementing the standards. She shifted in how she selected and implemented materials and resources. She also shifted her practices to include close reading and the use of complex text, and she shifted how she emphasized two key areas of reading – writing and vocabulary. Ms. Denver also realized that the information and resources that she had in the past would not work with the implementation of the standards. Again, she shared, “I didn’t want to throw out everything I’d ever done, but I had to find out what of it I could use and what of it didn’t apply anymore.” Based on the interviews and observations, it was evident to me that Ms. Denver understood the expectations of the standards and the shifts that she needed to make to meet the standards.

Research question #3. Interview and observation data indicated that Ms. Denver implemented the CCSS based on students being ready for assessments, student abilities, school and District expectations, as well as her own knowledge and beliefs. Although each one of these areas contributed to why Ms. Denver implemented the standards the way she did, it appears that attention to using her own knowledge and beliefs about reading and the CCSS came after the fear of students not succeeding subsided, especially for students who were reading below grade level expectations. In other words, Ms. Denver was trying to implement the CCSS, but she also used other reading practices that she believed would help her students succeed on required, high-stakes assessments.

Knowing that students would be tested and that she was still strengthening her ability to teach students who lacked comprehension skills pushed her to implement the

standards using traditional practices. Evidence for this claim was based on an example mentioned earlier that she allowed students who were gifted to select words that were important to know to understand the text, but she selected the words for the students who were not gifted. However, I believe this was not because she did not believe the students were capable; it was more of the fear of losing time with instruction and her wanting the students to do well. I base this on the fact that she mentioned in the interview that time was limited and that there was little time for vocabulary instruction within the Blended Learning model that she was required to implement. In sum, it was these kinds of expectations from the school and District that influenced how she implemented the CCSS. For example, the District required the implementation of their literacy framework that included phonics, fluency, and comprehension. The school required implementation of balanced literacy consisting of shared reading, read aloud, reading conferences, self-selected reading, and guided reading on the students' levels every day. Blended Learning was also a requirement of the school. Ms. Denver shared, "It [Blended Learning] has made a huge difference. We are far beyond where we have ever been before because it has been targeted instruction."

When I observed both reading and science lessons, the students were in the Blended Learning station rotation model and Ms. Denver met with every small group during each observation. Evidence of the CCSS in action was present. However, they were not based on specific CCSS expectations determined by the District or school, and Ms. Denver did not describe any specific expectations for the implementation of the CCSS outside of the structures and classroom arrangements for providing instruction

demanding by the Blended Learning model. However, there were content or pedagogy expectations based on the CCSS.

In summation, Ms. Denver implemented the CCSS through the literacy frameworks set by the District and the school. She implemented the standards based on who her students were and what they needed to navigate the state reading examination successfully. It should be noted that Ms. Denver conducted her own online searches for materials and ideas for teaching the CCSS.

Ms. Emerald

Ms. Emerald's classroom was full of students willing to share and willing to help peers. Their bubbly personalities contrasted with Ms. Emerald's calm and soft-spoken personality. The difference in her personality and the many personalities of her students, however, created a space for students to feel open to share and participate in the classroom environment. Her classroom was organized in a way that allowed for her to conduct small group instruction at her kidney table while small groups of students completed tasks together. The boards and other displays in the classroom included classroom schedules, statements of goals for the day, and information about station-rotations. Ms. Emerald had two teacher assistants during reading instruction. One was an African-American male who was hired to increase the number of African-American males at the school and he monitored and interacted with students completing station tasks. Station tasks included the use of technology to conduct research, to read nonfiction text, and to focus on spelling words. Students in the stations knew how to access the required resources for station work and were able to complete the tasks without help

from Ms. Emerald. It was also evident that the students would be able to complete the assignments even if the teacher assistants were not present. At Ms. Emerald's station, students were able to pull up and use the online resources, developed by Ms. Emerald, without guidance and without losing instructional time. During her teacher-directed station time, Ms. Emerald focused on comprehension but she also took the time to help students decode text and to remember to track their reading.

Ms. Emerald was a fourth grade teacher in her ninth year of teaching. She had been at Fairmont Elementary for her entire career. Like Ms. Denver, during the summer before the adoption of the CCSS, Ms. Emerald was selected for a team of teachers to create a pacing guide for the District implementation of the CCSS. During this effort Ms. Emerald collaborated with other teachers across the District, and had the opportunity to create lessons based on the CCSS. However, she emphasized that this took a lot of research.

During the interview, Ms. Emerald also shared that the students who were classified as academically gifted were in a different fourth grade classroom than hers. She shared this information to clarify how her selections for instruction were different from her colleagues because the needs of her students were different and she valued experiences that were beneficial for the students in her class.

Research question #1: Ms. Emerald's beliefs about reading. According to LOS data, Ms. Emerald was a traditional teacher overall, with self-reported traditional beliefs and eclectic practices (see Table 4.1). Interview and observation data supported that she had traditional beliefs and practices. Interview and observation data also supported that

Ms. Emerald was aware of constructivist practices and she sometimes attempted to implement the practices in her classroom. While she was aware of constructivist practices and seemed to desire to practice them, it appeared to me that she struggled with implementing constructivist strategies within the expectations of the school and District.

When asked about her beliefs about reading, Ms. Emerald stated it was important for her to work with small groups and to get children interested in reading. Ms. Emerald also said she believed it was important for teachers to meet students where they were and she believed that “meeting them where they are helps them appreciate reading more and have a love for reading.” She elaborated on this belief when saying, “Once they actually like it [reading], they’ll get better at it. They will want to read, which will help improve their reading and their self-esteem when it comes to reading.” Ms. Emerald also shared that she knew her students were a little further behind the teacher’s students who were in the academically gifted program. She believed that her students needed something different and said, “We may teach the same concept, but the way we teach it will be different. The way I teach my kids, the concept will be based on their learning level.”

Though being open to various forms of instruction and learning is a constructivist mindset, Ms. Emerald’s belief that her students needed something based on their “learning level” was indicative of a more traditional mindset. However, Ms. Emerald did not actually use the idea of their “learning level” to prevent students from experiencing constructivist practices. I say this because although she was not assigned any academically gifted students, I do not know for sure if her assignments for academically gifted students would actually be different from what she provided her students who were

not academically gifted. Nevertheless, she made it a point to justify her beliefs by describing the learning levels of students.

Results from the LOS data also indicated that Ms. Emerald had eclectic practices, which means she did not have either dominant traditional or dominant constructivist practices. However, observation data aligned with LOS data indicating that Ms. Emerald used more traditional practices. For example, during my reading observation, I noted that she asked students to read aloud while she focused on how students pronounced words. When a student read words incorrectly, she provided clues to help the student figure out the mispronounced words. For instance, a student was stumped on the word “stretching” and the student was asked to reread the word, pronounce the ending of the word, and asked, “When you see ‘str’, what does it say?” I considered this a traditional practice because the focus of the lesson for that day was on comprehension of the text, but most of the lesson was devoted to the correct pronunciation of the words in the text. I also noted that Ms. Emerald provided each student the opportunity to read aloud without taking any notes about their fluency or comprehension.

Though many of the conversations at her guided reading station took on a traditional stance, Ms. Emerald did ask students to make sense of and talk about the text, which was a more constructivist practice. For instance, she asked students to share the main idea of particular paragraphs within a larger text. It should be noted, however, that I recognized that once she asked students questions that would move them towards constructing their own meaning, she then provided a large amount of support, which was indicative of a more traditional stance. In sum, when students were trying to determine

the main idea of a particular paragraph, Ms. Emerald offered answers and an overwhelming amount of support that did not allow the students to uncover meanings for themselves. Also, while in their independent stations, students completed traditional tasks that included fill in the blank spelling sheets, spelling words printed on flash cards, crossword puzzles, and pyramid spelling. All of these activities were considered to be traditional rather than constructivist forms of teaching spelling.

I also observed conflicting practices during the science observation. Constructivist practices during the science observation included having students work in collaborative groups to problem solve science problems, students reading instructions and completing activities based on the instructions, and students making scientific discoveries as they worked through the scientific tasks. The students were visibly excited about making discoveries and yelled words and phrases like, “Yay!”; “It picked up the thread!” and “Oh! Yay, we made it!” Just like reading instruction, students were expected to work through the station rotation model during science, including a teacher station.

Observations of science also revealed other evidences of traditional practices. For example, while students worked their way through the tasks at each station, Ms. Emerald occasionally left her teacher-directed station to support learning in the other stations. During her visits, she supported students by reading and explaining the instructions for the students. She also told some groups what would happen with the materials and what discoveries they could expect. Her support seemed to be guided by her desire to ensure that all students were successful in acquiring the desired learning, but the result was more teacher directed (traditional) and less discovery oriented (constructivist).

Ms. Emerald's teacher station was also the computer station. The activity in her station required the students to log onto the school webpage and link to a game that required them to make a circuit through trial and error. The students talked about how difficult the game was, but did not discuss any specific strategies or discoveries about circuits that they made during the exploration. Without this kind of discussion, I coded this activity as a traditional way of using an online game for learning. However, this activity may have carried on to another day with a discussion about the discoveries because I only observed on the initial day that the students used the online program.

Additional evidence that Ms. Emerald attempted to offer students activities and assignments from a constructivist framework was seen in the research station. Students were assigned to research winter holidays around the world. Ms. Emerald provided the students a packet of information to help them complete this on-going research project. Other constructivist practices that she talked about during the interviews included having children answer and ask questions, infer and make personal connections with text, and using text that students were interested in reading. Though these constructivist activities were present during my observations, how they were carried out was somewhat traditional. In sum, a difference in expectation and execution may be why the LOS data classified her practices as eclectic. However, the gap between expectation and execution may also be attributed to school and District requirements for using Blended Learning and the District's Literacy Framework, which emphasized direct instruction during balanced literacy over constructivism.

Research question #1: Ms. Emerald's knowledge about reading. When asked to talk about her knowledge about reading instruction, Ms. Emerald was somewhat hesitant. She talked about working with her students on reading skills, including main idea, comprehension, making inferences, asking questions, and making connections, for example, after listing the areas that she identified as reading skills, she made sure to emphasize that although she focused on teaching students all of the reading skills, the skills were not taught at one time because reading skills happened throughout the year.

Activities that Ms. Emerald selected for station work included spelling word activities for the word work station, using reading packet and graphic organizers for the research station, plus silent reading, and Achieve 3000. The word work activities were activities from online spelling resources and spelling books. The research station included reading passages about winter holidays around the world, using world maps, and having graphic organizers for students to record their data. Students also implemented the Achieve 3000 program, but I was unable to identify during my observation any specific expectations of the students when completing the tasks. Each student completed different components of the Achieve 3000 program, but none of the students completed all components.

In sum, Ms. Emerald's knowledge of reading was only revealed through snippets of information that she provided during interviews and my observations of what she implemented during instruction. She only mentioned a few key terms that applied to reading and she offered little elaboration about what the terms meant in general or in reference to her classroom.

Research question #1: How Ms. Emerald implemented the CCSS. Ms.

Emerald had been teaching at Fairmont the entire nine years of her teaching career. When asked to share about herself as a teacher of reading, she shared that her evolution as a teacher began with using the basal and direct instruction. She reflected on the days when the basal companies prepared everything for teachers. Her first preparation for implementing the CCSS came from online searches and her participation on the District curriculum map writing team.

Ms. Emerald said she believed that implementing the CCSS varied from classroom to classroom. She stated, “I don’t think there’s a one size fits all as to what a teacher should be doing. What she should be doing should be based on the needs of her classroom.” As mentioned earlier, she gave an example of another grade-level teammate who had all of the academically gifted students and how that class was further ahead than her own students. She reiterated that what happened in the two classrooms was different because the students and their needs were different. It was not clear to me if she expected her students to attend to Common Core Anchor Standard Ten that reads, “By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.” She did mention how it was expected that students learn the same concepts, but she did not mention that students would all be expected to read varied text at the 4-5 text complexity level.

During our conversation about the CCSS, I asked specifically how implementation of the CCSS would look in a reading classroom. Ms. Emerald mentioned

that it would vary based on the groups of students and that she would expect to see personalization. She described characteristics of Blended Learning at Fairmont and other District expectations as well. She emphasized that because the school was now implementing Blended Learning, she would expect to see stations based on the needs of the students. Then she mentioned that the District was one-to-one (with regard to using technology) and that all students were assigned an iPad; therefore, it would be expected that technology be a part of the implementation of the standards. Ms. Emerald also stated that

The Common Core would look like students answering higher level thinking questions. The students would read various types of text, including non-fiction and the fiction, and integrate reading into different subjects. There would be lots of non-fiction with the Common Core because Common Core has a focus on the non-fiction information.

According to Ms. Emerald, students would also be expected to make connections with texts. She also said that although most of her standards instruction took place in small group settings, she had students review standards in independent stations and through online resources. Ms. Emerald shared, “I’ll try to find as much practice as I can online for them...especially with our programs like Achieve 3000 and other online methods I can find to help keep them engaged.” In sum, Ms. Emerald shared how she implemented the CCSS but did not provide much detail about the connection between the standards and the activities she selected, except to infer that the materials she used addressed the CCSS.

During my time in Ms. Emerald's classroom, I observed some activities that aligned with the CCSS. For instance, students were asked to make inferences, draw conclusions, make models based on instructions, draw models, and explain what happened during experiments and why. Students were attending to Reading Information standard 4.3 that reads, "Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text." Students were not explaining solely based on the information in the directions and text; they were also explaining based on the models that they created. However, I don't believe it was her intention to address this particular standard or the other reading standards that were present in the lesson because her feedback and conversations did not focus on the reading standards. Instead, I believe she was focused on her goals of making the experiences enjoyable and engaging as can be, as can be seen in the following quote:

I try to make activities that they will want to do instead of just something I found. I put a little bit more thought into things they will be interesting in and that I think they will find engaging and entertaining.

In sum, Ms. Emerald was aware of some of the components of the CCSS for reading. According to her, she planned instruction with the standards in mind. She believed that the standards should be implemented based on who the students were and what they were ready to experience during instruction. While she realized that all students were expected to accomplish the same standards within the grade, she modified what she did for her students to meet their needs. However, throughout the interviews and

observations, her knowledge of the standards was not detailed or explicit and I was unable to determine how deep her knowledge of the CCSS actually was. Nevertheless, I was able to determine that when she implemented the CCSS, she did so within the expectations of her school's Blended Learning framework using the station-rotation model.

Research question #2. When asked about how her views about teaching reading may have changed, Ms. Emerald shared,

Before, it was just what [assignments and activities] you did, what they [students] gave you, and it was one size fits all. Now, I realize the benefit of actually meeting them where they are, and how meeting them where they are helps them appreciate reading more and have a love for reading. Now, I see the purpose for the personalization when it comes to reading.

Though she acknowledged that shifts have occurred during her teaching of reading, she did not specifically state that the changes were because of the adoption or implementation of the CCSS. Instead, it appeared that shifts or changes in her beliefs and knowledge about reading instruction were based on District or school shifts in what should be happening in reading classrooms. For example, Ms. Emerald talked about her shift from whole group direct instruction using a basal to using novel studies with small groups of students. She talked about how there was a shift with how she taught novels as well. Initially, her novels were done in small groups and all of the groups read the same novel.

I started with one novel for the whole class, and I eventually would have leveled novels. Now we're moving into the – it's still leveled, but its more Blended Learning, incorporating the one-to-one technology we have. Its more needs based, based on what the students need and their level.

As mentioned previously, to prepare for the implementation of the CCSS, Ms. Emerald did her own online research. She stated, “I would research to see what other people had already put out there, the different methods that they would use to teach it [CCSS]”. She also mentioned that the District provided training during the school year and during the summer, and teams of teachers worked together to create curriculum maps. She, like others at her school, was a part of the team that developed pacing guides and packets of resources for classroom teachers to use to teach the standards. All of these things affected changes in how she taught reading.

When asked how she implemented the standards within her classroom now, she began by explaining that she used centers and rotations. She shared that she implemented the standards through small group instruction and reviewed them in independent stations. Ms. Emerald also shared that she provided students practice as much as possible using programs like Achieve 3000 and other programs to keep the students engaged. It was clear that she struggled with offering specific areas of CCSS within her descriptions of these structures; however, she shared that the standards identified what students should know and that it was important that students used technology in the process of learning the standards.

Mentioned in both the first and second interviews, Ms. Emerald discussed that since the adoption of the CCSS, she now provided her students with higher-level thinking questions. She also provided students with personalized lessons that were relevant to them and their real-world experiences. When specifically asked about the changes that she had made with activities that she provided her students, she talked about providing

students with more engaging activities, as mentioned before. She also mentioned that she tried to use more nonfiction text and text that related to the content materials that they are studying in the classroom. She shared,

I do try to relate it [texts] back to the standards for our content area reading. I do try to make it more relevant to what we are doing to make those connections. I also try to pull in some of the content into reading.

In sum, Ms. Emerald shared that she had made shifts in her knowledge and beliefs because of the implementation of the CCSS. These shifts seemed to have been derived from self-exploration of the standards, first by participation on the District pacing guide writing session and then by her desire to research the information for herself. Ms. Emerald also used her team and District materials as resources. She stated, "...I'm Googling and finding stuff on the Internet and we [grade level team] bounce ideas off of each other. Then of course we will have our pacing guide and curriculum maps that the District put together for us." However, even though Ms. Emerald used the resources, provided by the school and District, it appeared that deep knowledge of the standards and ways of interpreting and implementing the standards were not a part of the conversations at the school level or at the District level.

Research question #3. When asked about District expectations, Ms. Emerald first shared that there was an expectation that all teachers used guided reading and that 60 percent of students were proficient. She said that the District also expected small group instruction based on ability, individualized lessons, engaged students, and that students were engaged in real world experiences. She also said that school expectations aligned to

District expectations, including implementation of Blended Learning with stations that incorporated Achieve 3000, word work, and technology.

Interview and observation data showed that Ms. Emerald implemented every District and school expectation throughout the school day. Each of these expectations were a part of her responses about the implementation of the CCSS as well. For instance, Ms. Emerald shared, “They [the District] would expect to see the integration of those standards. They would expect to see you teaching standards to the student’s level and building upon it so they can get a deeper understanding of it.”

During my observation, I saw students working on spelling lists and completing reading passages with some variation in how the students carried out the tasks. For instance, for spelling students had a choice board and were permitted to select the spelling activities that they wanted to complete. Students were working in small groups completing the reading passages that were related to holidays around the world. Other students were engaged in reading passages and answering questions on their level through the online Achieve 3000 program. Finally, students at the teacher station were focused on identifying the main idea and details of a passage, which is Reading Information standard 4.2. Ms. Emerald met all of the expectations by the District and school for teaching the CCSS during my observations.

Although she taught the CCSS according to District and school expectations, it should be noted that Ms. Emerald communicated her understanding of the standards and taught the standards without great depth. Nevertheless, it appeared that the infusion of the standards that I observed during my visit was beyond what was expected of her by the

District or school. Instead it appeared that the standards that I observed being taught were based on her research and understanding of the implementation of the standards that she acquired independently.

Ms. Hamilton

Ms. Hamilton's classroom was lively. Her students moved about the classroom quickly and efficiently to get to their stations, demonstrating that procedures and routines were expected. The students at the stations knew exactly what to do as evidenced by her not having to remind any student how to begin a task and how to stay focused on the task. Though the students were in stations with others, the students completed research, word work, and online reading assignments independently, unless they were working with a teacher assistant. Students retrieved their assignments through iPad apps that Ms. Hamilton previously uploaded. During her reading block, there were two teacher assistants in the room working with students on applying reading test-taking strategies with short articles. Unlike many teachers who used their kidney table to lead the teacher lead instruction, Ms. Hamilton taught her small group station while standing up in the middle of the classroom. Her voice was strong, but it did not disturb students working in stations away from her. Ms. Hamilton used the interactive white board to guide her instruction and changed the volume of her voice to match her need for attention from the students in her group. When students struggled to answer her questions, she scaffolded them by providing hints until their answers were correct. Around Ms. Hamilton's room were leveled readers for science and social studies that students were expected to use during content area instruction. There were also anchor charts throughout the room with

expectations for academic performance and specific strategies for how to work through passages for greater understanding.

Ms. Hamilton started her teaching career in a neighboring county. She had been a fourth grade teacher for four years and had been at Fairmont two years. Ms. Hamilton shared that her first year of teaching was a great success because of the support that she received from the lead teacher at the school. Ms. Hamilton also shared that during her first teaching experience there were seven children who were academically gifted and two children with exceptional needs in her classroom. She explained that she had support as a beginning teacher to meet the needs of all the students. At Fairmont, her class was slightly different because she had no students who are academically gifted. However, she did have two teacher assistants and an exceptional children's teacher participate in her station rotation during the reading instruction block. These teacher assistants worked with the students in their small group by reading small passages and responding to questions using the classroom test-taking strategies for reading. This strategy required students to box key words, read the passage, underline important things, and number the paragraphs before selecting a correct response from a multiple choice selection.

During the interviews, Ms. Hamilton went into great detail about the District and school programs and about the expectations of various programs. The details always included how she implemented the programs in her classroom to meet the specific needs of her students, as described above. She also stated, "I'm accountable for their learning." She went on to say, "...you can talk at a student, talk at a student, talk at a student, but if you don't hold them accountable... you really don't really know what they know." When

I observed her grade level meeting, Ms. Hamilton was vocal and willing to share ideas with her teammates.

Research question #1: Ms. Hamilton's beliefs about reading. The LOS results (see Table 4.1) indicated that Ms. Hamilton was an overall traditional teacher with traditional beliefs and eclectic practices. Observation and interview data supported this finding. The interview data also showed that Ms. Hamilton had constructivist views about her own beliefs and practices, and observations supported Ms. Hamilton's reports of constructivist activities that she implemented in traditional ways.

Ms. Hamilton shared that she believed that connecting all activities to literacy was important. She specifically noted that connecting math and literacy or reading and writing was supported in her former county. She stated, "I believe it is important to connect all of those things [math, reading and writing] at the same time even though it [instruction] was literacy." Because making connections between reading and writing were important to Ms. Hamilton, one way she ensured that her students received connections between reading, writing, and math was through the Achieve 3000 program. She also appreciated the program because it connected to science. "It's not just reading... You might have a science article that connects math and everything you are teaching", which was how Ms. Hamilton described the benefits of the program. It should be noted that making connections between subjects and learning was viewed as a constructivist practice; however, often the connections among subjects were implemented in her classroom through traditional practices. Although interviews and observations for this study did not

indicate that meaningful connections were always made between reading and other areas of the curriculum, more meaningful connections may have been made at other times.

The results of the LOS survey indicated that Ms. Hamilton had self-reported eclectic practices, which meant that her responses on the survey did not reflect solely traditional or solely constructivist practices. One traditional practice that she described that she did for her students was the test taking strategy described above. This traditional strategy asked students to read the comprehension questions first, box key words, read the story, number the paragraphs, underline the key details, and select the best answer. Also during the interview, Ms. Hamilton mentioned how she was preparing students for assessments that required constructed responses. It was evident that she wanted her students to approach reading as a tool to learn about the world around them and to be able to communicate and support understandings derived from the text. However, preparing students for assessments in traditional ways conflicted with reading being a tool for learning and writing being a tool for communicating understanding. As another example, Ms. Hamilton mentioned that she wanted students to provide constructive responses, and yet she talked about and I observed her requiring students to use sentence starters in their responses.

During interviews, Ms. Hamilton described what appeared to be traditional practices incorporated into the Blended Learning stations. For instance, she shared that students played context clue games and used sentence starters to respond to text. The required sentence starters were to ensure that students provided specific evidence and support. Students used phrases like “According to” followed by a page or chapter number

to defend their responses. This practice was a traditional practice that Ms. Hamilton may have used as a scaffold for students to discuss text from a constructivist stance at a later time, but what I observed was scripted and teacher directed. She also described her guided reading station as being “teacher-directed”. Ms. Hamilton described what she meant by “teacher-directed” by saying that it was, “The small group instruction where I actually teach them the lesson and the skill and then we do guided reading together.”

When Ms. Hamilton talked about conferencing with students about their written responses to text, she also described traditional practices that focused on the grammar, specifically capitalization, as opposed to the content or message of how students made sense of what they had read. These conferences also did not focus on developing any particular CCSS in reading or writing for fourth grade. As she continued to talk about teaching writing in response to reading, she talked about teaching students the traditional “step-by-step” process in producing written responses to text. She shared, “I always encourage my students to start out with a sentence starter... Students need to understand that the information that comes out of their mouth needs to come from the text.” This push for ensuring that students could write to express understanding seemed to be based on the fact that students were assessed using Reading 3D, which asks students to demonstrate both oral and written comprehension. She explained, “Students have to answer oral questions and then the same way their mouth proves that they understood the story, now their pencil has to prove it.”

Ms. Hamilton also shared practices using technology that aligned with a constructivist viewpoint, but were implemented traditionally when observed. For

example, the school District required all teachers to use the online program, Discovery Education. Ms. Hamilton talked in depth how she was trained to use the program and how she used the program in her classroom to facilitate learning. When speaking about Discovery Education, she talked about how she used the digital boards in the program to upload articles, activities, and links for her students to explore concepts. She shared that the program allowed students to learn and express their understanding of the content through digital media presentation, reports, and short messages. The program, according to Ms. Hamilton provided teachers data on how students were progressing through the standards. Though she shared that she used the digital boards and uploads articles for students to read, she never revealed a full picture of how she used the program to help students develop constructivist mindsets about the information she wanted them to know and learn. Rather, she used these materials as content that she could track and evaluate.

Observation data also indicated that Ms. Hamilton had traditional beliefs and practices. For instance, when the students were completing science experiments, they were told that the groups would work through the exploration collaboratively and that the instructions would not be read to them. However, the instructions were read to the students, the answers to the follow-up questions were provided for them, and the students were prompted and guided until they were able to answer the questions correctly. In addition, during their reading stations students were working on Achieve 3000, word work, and research. In the research station, students were provided all of the research materials, including the passages needed to complete the assignment, so they did not do any research on their own. From the materials provided, students were asked to complete

specific graphic organizers each day. In the word works stations, students worked with a teacher assistant who called out the words for students to spell. Students not working with the assistant were given 21 content related spelling words and asked to complete activities from a spelling choice board to prepare for the spelling test at the end of the week. Ms. Hamilton shared that she believed vocabulary instruction through spelling prepared students for End of Grade testing. Other students used the test taking strategy to answer questions to passages at another station, as described above.

Throughout my observations and interviews, I gathered that Ms. Hamilton wanted to believe in and use constructivist practices. However, her belief in what was necessary to prepare students for testing were traditional practices, and preparing students for end of grade testing was also important to Ms. Hamilton. At this point in her career, it did not appear that she believed that the constructivist knowledge and practices that she believed in could prepare students for the fourth grade reading demands. This aligned with her traditional teacher identification by the LOS survey and the fact that she was classified as having eclectic practices. In sum, Ms. Hamilton was still negotiating how to implement constructivist practices for her students that would help them be successful on state measures of learning.

Research question #1: Ms. Hamilton's knowledge about reading. When Ms. Hamilton talked about reading strategies, she talked about strategies that helped students get through a reading passage for assessment purposes, as mentioned earlier. Her reading strategies included activities like prereading the questions, or highlighting or boxing key words. Ms. Hamilton shared that during their independent stations, her students focused

on elements of reading including story elements, character analysis, inferences, and context clues.

She also talked about how technology enhanced reading instruction within the Blended Learning structure used in her classroom. She shared that she used the District adopted program Achieve 3000 to integrate reading strategies and technology. Through this online program, students were required to take notes, generate questions, summarize, and determine the main idea of each paragraph as they read assigned articles. As I walked around during observations, all students attended to each of the requirements of the program as directed by Ms. Hamilton, which was slightly different than I saw in other classrooms during my observations. In other classes, students did not complete all of the listed components and the students did not work independently to complete the tasks as they did in Ms. Hamilton's classroom. Therefore, Ms. Hamilton was clearly implementing all of the reading strategies available in the Achieve 3000 program.

During our post-observation interview, Ms. Hamilton discussed one of the lessons that I observed. In doing so she used key terms in the field of reading – inference, summarize, paraphrase, visualize, making conclusions, and text structure. She described how the students would attend to these key areas of reading by writing and speaking about what they read. Ms. Hamilton also talked about how students were expected to have reading connected throughout the curriculum. She said, "Using vocabulary and language from ELA always carries over to your content because without practicing words like observation and prediction, they wouldn't really understand what the scientific method meant if you don't actually go over the vocabulary." This told me that Ms.

Hamilton knew that reading and reading strategies influenced not only learning to read text effectively, they also helped students acquire content knowledge. Her use of many key terms associated with reading in her descriptions demonstrated her awareness of the characteristics of readers and their behaviors. Nevertheless, it was evident that her knowledge and beliefs were grounded in traditional frameworks of teaching because her knowledge and beliefs translated into the traditional practices that I observed in her classroom.

Ms. Hamilton was also aware of resources that enhanced reading instruction. She spoke about using graphic organizers, interactive notebooks, task cards, games, videos, technology integration, including digital boards and applications, and texts that aligned to the content standards. She described these resources briefly, except for the Discovery Education technology resource. Regarding this resource, she shared that

Discovery Education is wonderful because you have videos and digital boards on there. It actually has lessons that can be used. So, I try to use the items [provided in the program] that we use in our county that will give me data as a teacher that I could use to drive my instruction.

Interviews also provided data to demonstrate that Ms. Hamilton was aware of the key components of reading and reading instruction. However, I was not able to determine the depth of her knowledge because when she used the key terms, she did not describe the application of any of these key terms. Furthermore, some of the key ideas of reading that she discussed during the interviews were observed being used in the classroom in traditional ways. So, while Ms. Hamilton knew what should be implemented in a reading

classroom, she was still growing in how to apply them in constructivist ways that would enhance deep learning.

Research question #1: How Ms. Hamilton implemented the CCSS. According to Ms. Hamilton, instruction in classrooms implementing the CCSS included the components of balanced literacy. From her perspective, balanced literacy instruction could be administered in whole or small groups, and should be based on the specific skills that students needed. Ms. Hamilton shared that students in common core classrooms should move from one station to another, work independently and in groups, and work with technology, which actually described the Blended Learning model used in her school. Although, Ms. Hamilton specifically noted, “Reading, no matter if you are still using paper and pencil or technology, should still have the components of balanced literacy.”

When Ms. Hamilton was asked about the use of complex text, or anchor standard ten, she stated,

Right now, a lot of text that we look at is not complex. It doesn't get complex for fourth grade until you start really getting into poetry. They might not understand the meaning of author's purpose on certain things and when you start talking about figurative language and literal language, you have to basically teach that prior knowledge.

Her description of complex text demonstrated a lack of depth in understanding this aspect of the CCSS and how the CCSS should be implemented in her classroom. It appeared that she did not understand that complex text varied based on quantitative and qualitative characteristics and the reader. Her response also demonstrated that she had not

been trained to determine complexity of text and how to use it to enhance the learning of all of her students.

On the topic of close reading, Ms. Hamilton shared that she used her passage test-taking strategy. As mentioned earlier, students use this strategy to annotate the text by boxing and underlining key words to help them with understanding the text. Ms. Hamilton believed in preparing students for test taking situations and seemed to view teaching the CCSS as preparing students to take assessments.

Nevertheless, it was evident during observations that Ms. Hamilton was aware of some of the expectations of the CCSS. For example, she used key phrases like reference your answer, support your answer, and use the text. She also had students finding the main idea and details, using graphic organizers to demonstrate sequence of events, and using pictures and text together to make and support inferences. However, it was not evident through interviews and observations that these connections to the CCSS were related to traditional understandings of past standards and expectations of reading instruction, or if they were related to a deep understanding of the CCSS.

Research question #2. When she started her teaching career in a different county, Ms. Hamilton explained that she was responsible for implementing the CCSS using her District's adopted lesson plan called, Learning Focus. She was also responsible for creating Learning Focus content-specific bulletin boards that showcased learning goals and essential questions for specific topics of study that were also in her lesson plans. Ms. Hamilton was also responsible for implementing her former District's format for guided reading, including grouping students according to data supplied by the online Discovery

Education program. Since her move to Fairmont, she had made shifts in grouping and the implementation of standards based on the expectations of this District and school.

When Blended Learning was first introduced, Ms. Hamilton was comfortable with working with small groups of students for guided reading. Referring to the mandate for using station rotations her first response was, “This is something that I do not know if I want to do.” She was skeptical about starting something new and different, and she went on to say, “I have to read this manual and it is 60 pages long.” However, after learning about Blended Learning and how to implement it, she stated, “Once I got into it, it was amazing how when you teach your students in a smaller group, how much more you can do and how much more they understand.” Although she taught small groups in guided reading before, she realized that small groups instruction within the Blended Learning framework was beneficial for all students. The process also pushed her towards learning the benefits of technology in the classroom. She learned how to use the technology to meet the CCSS needs of students. The technology resources provided allowed her to select questions that aligned to the standards for her students to complete during station times.

When Ms. Hamilton began teaching in her previous District, she described working with fourth grade students who read on the first grade level. It was evident that she believed that these students had different needs than students reading at or above grade level. Ms. Hamilton shared, “I had to go back to doing things like chunking and segmenting words. It took me about a day or two just to get through three pages because my students were stumbling over words.” While most guided reading formats provide

time for phonics and fluency practice, guided reading is also about comprehension and addressing the CCSS for reading. Ms. Hamilton focused on traditional practices during guided reading then, and maintained similar traditional practices at Fairmont.

Initially at Fairmont, Ms. Hamilton moved from teaching guided reading to using whole group instruction. In a reflection about whole group instruction, she stated, “With reading, I know last year we did a lot of whole group teaching with reading. What I will say about whole group reading, you never know who gets it and who doesn’t get it.” Ms. Hamilton went on to share that whole group instruction worked in the past for her when she had a lot of academically gifted students.

Fairmont adopted Blended Learning during her second year, and she shifted towards teaching the standards during her teacher-directed station and using station rotations to meet the needs of her students in a small group format. She said, “Small group instruction has really saved my classroom, like flipping my classroom, sending them [students] videos, and me recording the lesson and sending it to their Schoology account where they can view it any time has helped me.” She shared that the small group instruction had allowed her to teach a lesson to six students and then work with even smaller groups if needed. It also allowed her to customize what she uploaded in programs like Schoology, Discovery Education, and Achieve 3000.

Throughout Ms. Hamilton’s description of what she knew about the CCSS and how it looked when it was implemented in the classroom, there were incomplete descriptions. It should be noted that during her entire teaching career, the CCSS had been in place; therefore, any shifts that Ms. Hamilton had made are not based on her

knowledge of previous standards. Instead, Ms. Hamilton's shifts were based on her learning more about the expectations of the standards throughout her four years of teaching them and her two years of working at Fairmont. Knowing this, her knowledge and beliefs did not shift because of the adoption of the CCSS. Furthermore, because attention to increased teacher knowledge of the CCSS was not the focus of the District or school during her two years at Fairmont, Ms. Hamilton was able to maintain her prior knowledge and beliefs about the CCSS and reading. It is also understood that the District and the school were in the beginning stages of creating new frameworks for instructional practices, such as Blended Learning, and in the near future might shift towards promoting a deeper understanding of the CCSS and how the standards could or should be implemented within their Blended Learning framework.

Research question #3. The practices that Ms. Hamilton used to implement the CCSS were mainly due to District and school expectations and requirements. Her implementation of the standards also took into consideration the abilities of her students, the expectations of state testing, and the resources that she had collected through online searches. Interviews and observation data suggested that each of these influences created a space where Ms. Hamilton was compelled to use traditional practices despite her desire to create a space for learning based on constructivist principles.

When asked about the expectations of her District for reading instruction and the implementation of the CCSS, Ms. Hamilton shared that her District expected teachers to use technology and specific programs like Achieve 3000 and Discovery Education. She believed in programs like Achieve 3000 because of the program's ability to connect

reading to the content areas, which was also an expectation of the District. She shared, “That’s what they [students] do in Achieve 3000. They [the texts in Achieve 3000] connect, not just the subject that students are doing, but they connect with all subjects.” This indicated that even though Ms. Hamilton held true to the beliefs that she gained from her previous school system, she was creating a space for her beliefs within the structure of her current District and school expectations.

The District also expected teachers to provide engaging experiences that emphasized rigor in collaborative sessions. According to Ms. Hamilton, it was expected that teachers worked deep into concepts or skills, and not focus on teaching a lot without depth. Ms. Hamilton emphasized that depth is important to the District by stating, “Sometimes giving students a whole bunch is not what they need. They maybe just need more practice on that skill.”

Ms. Hamilton also mentioned that the District expected guided reading to take place, but she did not share a structure or format for doing that beyond her teacher-directed station. In her previous District, she suggested that there was a particular format for guided reading and she had to shift when she came to Fairmont. Finally, she stated, “The District expects you to follow the Common Core.” She went on to explain that though they expected you to teach the CCSS, when they came into your classroom to observe they were focused on making sure students were engaged in rigorous activities and working in collaborative settings.

Finally, Ms. Hamilton’s school expected teachers to implement the station rotation model of Blended Learning. Within the Blended Learning framework, Ms.

Hamilton explained, “The school expects that teachers are using the resources provided by the District and school.” She shared, “At my school, they want to make sure that we are actually using resources such as Discovery Education.” When I asked her specifically what the expectations of teaching the Common Core Standards, she stated,

It’s really kind of hard to answer that question because at my school, like I mentioned earlier, this school has shifted their way of thinking. We are Blended Learning. It means giving the student the opportunity to learn whatever you are trying to teach them at their pace.

She sounded as if there was a choice, either implement the CCSS or implement Blended Learning. Her response shed light on the idea that the focus in this school was currently on using the framework of Blended Learning to teach the CCSS.

In sum, District and school expectations contributed to how Ms. Hamilton implemented the CCSS. However, interview data suggested that there are other influences that contributed to why she implemented the CCSS and the ways that she chose to implement them. In addition, several times during my interviews with Ms. Hamilton she made reference to state testing, and she stated that she provided her students numerous opportunities to work with text from a traditional standpoint of reading by using test-taking strategies throughout the school day. She intentionally taught the standards through these strategies to ensure that her students were prepared for state testing. Ms. Hamilton also mentioned implementing standards based on her students’ ability to read or their reading levels. She shared, “I look at the ability level of my students.” She went on to say, “I want to make sure the things that I give the students are

not above their level or below their level. So, I make sure it's age-level appropriate and culturally good for those students." While she considered the levels of her students, she also considered the cultural make-up of the students and what might be relevant to them.

After describing all of the technology that she implemented in her classroom, Ms. Hamilton shared the down side of being trained in so many things. She stated,

Like I always tell people, you can go through a million workshops, but as a teacher, you must have time to implement it. You can't implement 95 things in one school year. So, I love having workshops but at the same time, I do not like not having the time to implement everything that I am learning.

This statement indicated to me that Ms. Hamilton had the desire to understand, change, and implement new practices and standards, she just needed the guidance and the time to do so. In other words, her openness to try new and different things was evidenced by her implementing all District and school initiative and her willingness to discover additional things to support student learning on her own.

To summarize, Ms. Hamilton's previous position in a different school District greatly influenced her reading and CCSS knowledge, beliefs, and practices. However, she had adopted the frameworks of this District and school as her own. Although she was reluctant during her initial introduction to Blended Learning, she did what was necessary to learn the school and District expectations and she implemented the Blended Learning framework to fidelity. However, it appeared that too little guidance for selecting and implementing materials and resources had pushed her to use online resources to guide what she used to teach the CCSS and how she taught the CCSS. In her efforts to ensure

that students were ready for state testing, Internet resources like Teachers Pay Teachers and understanding of her students “abilities” had led her to implement traditional practices instead of the constructivist practices that she envisioned herself implementing.

Ms. McRae

Each day in Ms. McRae’s third grade classroom, the students assembled in front of the interactive white board to share the happenings in their personal lives. As the students shared their accomplishments and even sorrows, the other students offered supporting words and claps of encouragement. After the initial assembly of students at the start of the school day, there was little chance that Ms. McRae’s classroom would participate in whole group instruction or discussions. During reading, math, and science instruction, students were in student-monitored cooperative groups completing content tasks through collaboration and technology. Paper and electronic sheets that students completed in their cooperative groups required them to remember and understand key content. Students were asked to describe, define, explain, and summarize key understandings. As the students worked together to complete tasks, it was clear that one student in each group was the leader and was responsible for ensuring that everyone remained on task. The intricate system of classroom management highlighted the emphasis of the role of students as valuable pieces of their own learning and an environment that was safe for students to share their knowledge. While the students were managing their groups, Ms. McRae led small group instruction at her kidney table. As each group came to her kidney table, she asked them to open the documents, stored in a program on the iPads and students immediately responded to her energetic voice. Behind

her kidney table, she had a white board that had student names, student goals, and the focus of the day's lessons. Within her small groups, students were asked to discuss things with their neighbor, to change positions at the table (for movement), and to support their responses with evidence from the text. When students struggled, Ms. McRae offered questions that led children to the answers that she was seeking. It was clear that students knew her expectations and routines were in place to help students with success in her classroom.

Ms. McRae was a second year full-time teacher and in her second year at Fairmont Elementary in third grade. Before becoming fully licensed, Ms. McRae served thirteen years in a different Title I school in the same District as a tutor and a teacher assistant. During her time as a teacher assistant and tutor, Ms. McRae received the same professional development for new District initiatives that teachers received at her school.

Ms. McRae stood out immediately as a vocal leader during her grade level meeting. She was upbeat and willing to share information about herself, and she offered ideas and suggestions. Within her own classroom, it was evident that Ms. McRae valued building a classroom community that allowed for collaborative experiences and exploration of different cultures. Ms. McRae shared that it was important to her that students learn from one another and that she did not want to be viewed as the one that held all of the knowledge in her classroom. Interviews and observations indicated that she was dedicated to carrying out school and District expectations, yet willing to professionally challenge the structures by making her own decisions about what her students needed.

As mentioned above, Ms. McRae had been at Fairmont during her two years of full-time teaching experience. Before teaching, she served as a tutor and teacher assistant in the same school system and developed her knowledge and beliefs about reading during this time. She also had the opportunity to learn about the CCSS along with teachers in her school even though she was not a classroom teacher during the time. However, McRae attributed her knowledge base for interpreting and implementing the CCSS to her online college education courses while she was working on her teaching degree.

Research question #1: Ms. McRae's beliefs about reading. The LOS results (see Table 4.1) indicated that Ms. McRae had traditional teaching beliefs and eclectic practices. Observation and interview data also indicated that she had traditional beliefs as well as traditional practices. During my observations, she used traditional teaching practices that included online spelling programs, uploaded worksheets, and reading passages with multiple choice items that did not require students to create, evaluate, or apply learning with the expectation for students to construct their own meanings of the content. Her selection of activities demonstrated her traditional beliefs and practices because she had the flexibility to choose activities and was not constrained because of school and District mandates for using specific activities. She was only expected to implement activities that met standards within the Blended Learning station rotation model.

Although there was evidence that Ms. McRae held mainly traditional beliefs as indicated by her LOS results, she talked about what she believed students needed to read from a constructivist viewpoint, and some of the practices she selected represented

constructivist qualities. For instance, during interviews, Ms. McRae stressed that learning to read began with children's love of reading. She stated, "First of all, personally I think we need to develop a passion in them to make them want to read." Ms. McRae went on to say, "It's important for them to desire to read and want to pick up a book." To get students motivated, she said she believed that it was important for her to start out reading books aloud to the students, making "I wonder" statements about books and asking students leading questions about books. Ms. McRae said, "...that's what I try to do. I try to hook the kids..." However, during the same interview, she stressed the importance of picking books that were on students "level", which was a more traditional practice. It appeared, however, after several observations, that students were permitted to select their own reading materials during independent reading time, while during instructional stations the materials she used were leveled.

Ms. McRae's LOS survey results indicated that she had eclectic practices, meaning that her responses to the practice statements were mixed between traditional and constructivist views. Interview and observation data supported this finding. During the second interview I asked Ms. McRae how she addressed the comprehension needs of the students who spent the entire small group instruction period working on word work. She shared that she tried to provide comprehension instruction to the small group two to three times a week, and stated, "I mainly focus with them on the actual reading [decoding words] because if they can't read it, there's no way they're going to understand it." She went on to say, "I heavily focus on their actual phonics and figuring out words because, according to TRC, they're not even testable." The TRC (Text Reading Comprehension)

reference referred to the statewide comprehension assessment used at her school. Once students miss a certain number of grade-level words on this assessment, the assessment stops because according to the program the students cannot read enough words to comprehend the text. Her statement indicated that she had students who were unable to be assessed on grade level because they were unable to pronounce or decode enough words in a grade-level text. Another example of a traditional practice observed was when Ms. McRae had students select a main idea for a 4-6 sentence passage using a multiple-choice format, as opposed to generating open-ended responses to meaningfully connected text during her small group instruction.

However, in contrast to traditional practices, Ms. McRae mentioned terms and phrases that demonstrated she strived to use some constructivist practices in her classroom when she said things like: *connected to the writing, the kids working with one another, and having conversations*. Other constructivist practices, such as writing letters to armed service heroes and students managing their own groups, also had traditional practices embedded in them. For instance, during group work, students worked together but did not collaborate on responses to the traditional tasks. The students merely shared the responses. In sum, Ms. McRae's eclectic practices score on the LOS survey were consistent with interview and observation data, while her belief scores on the LOS were traditional but seemed to be more eclectic during interviews.

Research question #1: Ms. McRae's knowledge about reading. When asked what should be seen in reading instruction, Ms. McRae responded by sharing constructivist reading instructional practices. She acknowledged that her knowledge

about reading had changed with new and different initiatives introduced to her. However, she did state that the new programs and strategies came along and the emphasis of the programs might be good for some students, but not for others. Ms. McRae shared that she knew that motivation and interest played a part in children learning to read. She knew that it was important to find the specific needs of the students and it was important to "...match them [students] up with the right book based on their interest..." Ms. McRae believed that teaching students to make connections between content areas and between reading and themselves was important. However, Ms. McRae did not go into great detail about her general knowledge about reading or reading instruction. In the next section about knowledge of the CCSS for reading, she offered more elaboration about her beliefs and knowledge in reference to the standards.

Research question #1: How Ms. McRae implemented the CCSS. When Ms. McRae was asked about the Common Core, there was some hesitance. It was clear that she had heard of the Common Core State Standards, and it was also clear that she distinguished the implementation of the CCSS from previous standards implementation. She was able to tell me the implementation should be "literacy-heavy," When she provided clarity, she said, "What I mean is sometimes we give kids busy work that's disconnected. Not this [CCSS], that's the opposite of what I'm looking for." As she went on to describe her interpretation of the CCSS, as they were implemented in classrooms, she talked about vocabulary and instruction being connected. She went on describing a classroom implementing the CCSS as

Interaction, the kids working with one another, having conversations, thinking with one another. Because, you know, that's getting it to those higher order thinking skills, having conversations, asking questions, lots of questioning; not from me necessarily, but from each other hopefully if we're doing things right.

At times during the interview, it seemed as if Ms. McRae was describing CCSS practices without actual support of the standards themselves. For instance, she talked about the online spelling program, "Spelling City", but not necessarily from a standards perspective. The Reading Literature, standard 4 for third grade states, "Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language." In contrast, her description acknowledged that the selection of words could not be random or disconnected from what they were doing, but she did not demonstrate that she truly understood what students should be able to do with vocabulary words and phrases by the end of third grade. While she used key terms and ideas that represented the CCSS, her usages and descriptions did not fully match the expectations of the standards.

Evidence of how CCSS was implemented in her classroom were present during my observations. However, there were differences between what she perceived to be CCSS practices, how she described the practices, and how the practices occurred during instructional times. Here is one example. In the three student led stations, the students were completing assignments in cooperative groups and they were discussing and sharing responses. The tasks that students were completing, however, did not match specific standards expectations. One example was how the Spelling City example mentioned earlier was used for vocabulary instruction. Students were asked to complete five

activities to do with the words and when they finished they were asked to play a spelling game in the program. These activities were all decontextualized, hence not representative of standard 4 for third grade.

The CCSS were present when students completed Discovery Education activities and assessments. The activities in the program did not provide explicit standards-based instruction, but the program did provide the teacher with data about how students were performing on certain standards. Ms. McRae used these data to help plan instruction for her Blended Learning stations. She explained, “When I go to my drill-down or my interactive view, then I can see exactly where the whole class missed the mark.” She also explained that sometimes it’s not what the students were unable to do, it’s what instruction failed to do for the students. She stated that reviewing the standards-based data was, “Not just what’s going on with them [students], but what’s going on with your instruction.” It appeared, therefore, that Ms. McRae had the desire to implement constructivist practices that aligned with the CCSS, but in practice she struggled with implementing constructivist activities. Although she used standards-based data, she struggled with reading and common core content knowledge that likely contributed to how she selected and carried out reading instruction.

In sum, Ms. McRae’s beliefs and practices contained elements of both traditional and constructivist understandings of reading instruction. Furthermore, Ms. McRae’s limited knowledge of the CCSS appeared to contribute to her eclectic beliefs and practices regarding reading instruction. As a result, while she appeared to want to be

more constructivist in her teaching, many of her actual practices were traditional and reinforced by the kinds of programs, assessments, and structures she was required to use.

Research question #2. Ms. McRae acknowledged that she had shifts in her knowledge and beliefs about reading before and during the implementation of the CCSS. Most of the shifts were as a result of District and school expectations for instruction. She shared how she shifted during her first years by explaining, "...initially, wherever the ebb was, that's where I flowed because I just didn't know any better." Although now she "knows better," she was still willing to go with the "ebb" and this was confirmed by her implementation of the school's required Blended Learning structure for reading instruction. However, within the school's system of implementation of Blended Learning for teaching the CCSS, she still used her freedom to take into consideration her own knowledge and beliefs about how different children learned when making instructional decisions. Ms. McRae shared that over time, "I kind of realized what's working for which kid, because everything doesn't fit." She went on to say,

Yes, it is still decoding, but not for every kid. Yes, it is vocabulary, but not for every kid. And so what you learned to do and what I learned to do was to make sure that I can identify which program or which situation for which kid, because if you try everything with every kid, you get a no all the way across the board.

This reflection about not implementing programs across the board indicated that she was comfortable acquiring new knowledge and refining her beliefs, but she was aware that there was not one way to meet the needs of students. This was one major shift in her knowledge and beliefs about teaching reading that occurred over time.

When asked about how she was prepared to teach the CCSS, Ms. McRae shared that as a teacher she had not received any training on teaching the CCSS. After thinking a little more, however, she recalled receiving training as a teacher assistant on the CCSS conducted by the curriculum coach at her previous school. During her time at the University of Phoenix online, she described that she was trained to work backwards from the big idea of the standards and break the expectations of the standards down into smaller steps. These smaller steps became the lessons and activities that helped students reach the ultimate goal. However, she stated that she received little guidance for understanding the standards beyond being told, "...these are the standards; this is how you can work your way backwards to achieve them."

When asked how she had evolved as a teacher since implementing the CCSS, she began by saying, "I don't know how well I do it because nobody really evaluates you on it. They evaluate you more on your delivery than they do if you actually are teaching the standards." Though she knew that she was not evaluated on teaching the standards, she still talked about how she incorporated the standards into instruction. Ms. McRae also shared her reflection about implementing the CCSS from a teacher's perspective who had some of the common core skills, "...if you think about it, most teachers that have been doing any kind of technology or any kind of rotations or any kind of independent and collaborative and teacher station..." In other words, while she acknowledged that the adoption of the CCSS had changed how teachers teach, she believed that many of the things that the CCSS required, teachers were doing before the adoption of the standards.

Another specific area of change in her professional growth was Ms. McRae's ability to infuse the learning styles of her students into her instruction. She believed it was important to plan and teach based on the needs and learning styles of the students. Ms. McRae shared that she applied the standards based on her students' learning styles. However, she did not share how learning styles addressed specific standards and how the activities that she chose in stations met the needs of both the standards and the students' learning styles. Ms. McRae was a second year teacher, so her changes and shifts were in the beginning stages and might be developing slowly because her training had not been aligned with her specific reading and CCSS professional development needs.

In reference to her knowledge and beliefs about implementing the CCSS during content area instruction, Ms. McRae mentioned that she had students pull evidence from content area text to support responses. She specifically noted the importance of cause and effect and the fact that students understood the concept much better when it was applied to science. Ms. McRae also shared that reading in the content areas included making predictions about the content in the text and focusing on content vocabulary.

When I observed a science lesson on landforms, students were acting out the definitions of the different landforms. For instance, they held their hands high and together for mountains, and wide and flat for the plains. This supported Ms. McRae's desire to incorporate the learning styles of her students into her lessons. I was interested in how students were initially taught the definitions and characteristics of the landforms. I wanted to know if students used the CCSS for reading as a means for obtaining the landforms content or if Ms. McRae simply gave the students the information in a note-

taking or rote format. So, during the post-observation interview, I asked Ms. McRae how children were taught the content initially, and she stated, "...I initially taught the lesson with the hand and arm movements." She said that providing students with this kinesthetic instruction benefited all students including the students who didn't speak English as a first language. Her response gave me insight into how she viewed the role of the Reading Information standards in the science content area. In sum, she did not use reading standards during the lesson that I observed and from her description, the reading standards were not used during the initial landforms lesson. This is not to say that other science lessons did not include the Reading Information standards; it simply meant that the standards are not incorporated daily when teaching other subjects.

Ms. McRae mentioned that she incorporated more writing into social studies than she did into science. The social studies topics were taught during language arts instruction in Ms. McRae's class. The inclusion of reading standards and writing in the social studies content area seemed natural because there was not a specific time set aside for social studies. When I observed during the reading block, there was a station where the students were writing postcards to veterans. However, while literacy was used during social studies instruction, emphasis was not specifically placed on how the standards could be used to help with students learning the content. In sum, it appeared that social studies and science instruction was based on traditional values where the teacher held the knowledge and the students were explicitly taught what the teacher wanted them to know about the content.

To summarize, my understanding of any shifts and changes in Ms. McRae's knowledge were based on what she was able to tell me about how the CCSS may look in a reading classroom. However, based on my observations there was a lack of in-depth knowledge of the standards and how the standards could be used in the content areas to gain and share new information. While Ms. McRae understood that there had been a shift in how reading should be taught, she was not specific when sharing her knowledge about the CCSS. This would be expected because her knowledge of the CCSS was not clear and focused and she had not had any recent professional development focused on the CCSS; therefore, it was hard for her beliefs or practices to change very much.

Research question #3. Data indicated that Ms. McRae implemented the CCSS based on the expectations of the District and the school. The school expectations were to implement the station rotation model of Blended Learning. There was flexibility in implementing the program, as long as technology, collaboration, and a teacher led station was included. According to Ms. McRae, the District expected teachers to use technology, collaboration, and have instruction that was both connected and relevant. The District also expected teachers to implement Achieve 3000, Blended Learning, comprehension instruction, and opportunities for students to read independently. Ms. McRae acknowledged that it was the expectation that the CCSS were the content that was taught within the above expectations for instruction; however, there were no other specific expectations for how the CCSS should be implemented. She went on to share that there had been no specific training on implementing the CCSS. In reference to being prepared to teach the standards by the District or school, she said,

If you have a whole bunch of new teachers, you know, you need to make sure that they understand what the expectations are for common core. If they are like me and can't remember it, that's not good...

Although Ms. McRae felt this way about the CCSS, she made a conscious effort to implement the school and District expectations that were shared with her. It appeared that Ms. McRae believed that Achieve 3000 and Discovery Education had the CCSS embedded in them and that her simply using the programs ensured that her students were receiving the CCSS instruction that they needed. Instead of altering how her students used the programs to meet the standards, she used the data from these programs to identify the specific standards that she should focus on during small group instruction. These programs and instructional strategies were how the school and District decided to implement the CCSS, as opposed to having the teachers focus on unpacking and understanding the standards. In sum, Ms. McRae taught reading using the instructional programs and structures required by the school and District.

Ms. Monroe

Entering Ms. Monroe's classroom, there was an immediate sense of calm. Her room was quiet, as was her tone when she was speaking with children and when providing instructions or guidance. The room was simply decorated with items that were functional for student rotations and expectations. Student desks were clustered in a way that allowed for collaborative work and at the entrance of the room there was a kidney table for small group instruction. Students knew when and how to rotate when the timer on the board sounded with musical tunes. Ms. Monroe waited quietly at her kidney table

for groups assigned to her station. Students in her group were quiet, but willingly participated. All of the materials for the day were prepared, students knew exactly how to respond to the “Sparkle” spelling game that warmed up the small group teacher-guided station, and students were able to quickly access materials stored electronically on their iPads. All of the independent stations incorporated online nonfiction and fiction readings and activities that allowed students to demonstrate an understanding of the text through technology. Activities included writing paragraphs about online books, vocabulary and spelling practice activities, and responding to comprehension questions. There was a constant chatter in the room as the students worked on tasks individually, and comfortably discussed their responses with others to make adjustments in their thinking.

Ms. Monroe was in her tenth year of teaching at Fairmont. Ms. Monroe’s college preparation was in New York. While she has taught every subject in second, third, and fourth grades, during the study she was teaching third grade. Ms. Monroe was at Fairmont during the introduction and implementation of the CCSS. Her core beliefs and knowledge about reading were formed during the years prior to the adoption of the CCSS, and her entire teaching experience had been at Fairmont.

After admitting that she knew little about teaching reading when she first started her career, Ms. Monroe shared that attending graduate school for reading helped her better understand how to teach reading. It was important to her that her students enjoy reading. She told her students “...if you enjoy it, you’re going to want to be a better reader.” It was also important to Ms. Monroe that students read books that they wanted to read, without many stipulations.

Ms. Monroe collaborated with her colleagues during grade level meetings and professional learning experiences. Although she was soft spoken in her classroom, she was vocal in meetings and was open to sharing and discussing ideas that supported learning for all third grade students.

During interviews, I noticed that Ms. Monroe was very reflective about her practice. She openly shared what she did, what she wanted to improve, and why she was having difficulty implementing strategies that she knew would help her students. For instance, she said, “What I would really like to do is have students choose more...” in reference to children choosing station work. Observations and interviews revealed that she was focused on following school expectations for instruction and intentionally planned lessons based on the CCSS.

Ms. Monroe admitted that when she started teaching that she did not know how to teach. She relied on the basal text to tell her what questions to ask and what to do on each of the five days of instruction for each story. She acknowledged that her knowledge about how to teach reading was weak when she first became a teacher. However, Ms. Monroe was asked to participate in the District writing of curriculum maps before the implementation of the CCSS and she believed that this opportunity began her understanding of what the standards were and how they should be implemented. Ms. Monroe also participated on a team of teachers responsible for writing the District pacing guide for the initial implementation of the CCSS.

Research question #1: Ms. Monroe’s beliefs about reading. The Literacy Orientation Survey results (see Table 4.1) indicated that Ms. Monroe had traditional

teaching beliefs and eclectic practices, but overall she was a traditional teacher according to the survey. During the language arts observation, I noticed that Ms. Monroe's small teacher-led group had activities that were aligned with the traditional framework. For instance, students had a spelling test and students read printed stories from an online program and completed the accompanying comprehension questions. However, throughout each interview, Ms. Monroe described activities and practices she used in her classroom from a constructivist frame of reference. For instance, she talked about how every year of her teaching had been different and she made adjustments in her instruction based on the differences in the students in the class. Ms. Monroe shared,

...like one year, they were really chatty, so we did a lot of debates. They [the students] were very good about creating arguments to support their opinions and so we did a lot of debates in class. One year the class was very dramatic, so we did a lot of different reader's theater and dramas and plays. I think last year had a very musical group, so we did a lot of different music.

Not only did Ms. Monroe share some of the practices that demonstrated her constructivist viewpoint, she also shared her philosophical belief about learning to read from a constructivist viewpoint. Ms. Monroe's stated that children must enjoy reading; she told her students, "...if you enjoy it, you're going to want to be a better reader." She went on to explain,

So when they get to read, especially in different kinds of reading, I don't put a lot of parameters on you have to read this book or you have to read this kind of book. Read what you want to read.

When she talked about her expectation for homework, she stated,

...read a newspaper, read a magazine, read whatever you want to read as long as it's something you are wanting to read. Just for enjoyment factor. I mean, they still respond to it and let me know what they read about...

Based on her interviews and my observation it seemed that Ms. Monroe might be a traditional teacher who was working her way towards using more constructivist practices. She understood and could explain constructivist practices; however, during my observations more traditional practices were implemented.

The differences between how Ms. Monroe explained her actions and what actually took place in her classroom aligned with the LOS results indicating that she had eclectic practices. Her responses on the survey varied between traditional and constructivist practices. It should also be understood that some of the traditional practices that I saw were practices that were expected by the school, although she was still trying to navigate how she applied her more constructivist beliefs within the expected system for instruction. For instance, to teach fluency and to get children interested in reading, Ms. Monroe talked about how modeling read-alouds were important. She said, "We try to do read-alouds every day and...I'll do the little voices of the characters... The students love that." However, during my language arts observation, students were responding to text through multiple-choice questions. I realized that the activity might have been a review lesson to teach test taking strategies, so traditional lessons might not be standard in her classroom. However, when in groups away from Ms. Monroe, students were completing more traditional activities such as answering questions at the end of a story,

completing electronic worksheets, and completing spelling tasks. These tasks did not match student interest and excitement about reading that she described during the interviews.

During the second interview, Ms. Monroe shared that she had the students read a story a week, a traditional practice. She shared, "...Fridays we pull together [skills of the week] and see how much you [students] understood to answer questions." This practice replicated the traditional basal lessons that review key vocabulary and introduce key concepts before reading and at the end of the week tests students' ability to answer the questions about the text that was read the entire week. When I asked her to share what she believed should take place in a reading classroom, her response contrasted with previous practices that she shared during interviews and what I saw during observations. For instance, she used terms and phrases like: *children engaged in literacy activities, students engaged in reading and writing and speaking and listening and word work, different types of text (poetry, dramas, fiction, and nonfiction), open-ended questions, and research.*

Overall, Ms. Monroe's identification as a traditional teacher with traditional beliefs on the LOS survey was consistent with interview and observation data. More importantly, observation and interview data supported the survey data that identified her as having eclectic practices. Though her beliefs and practices were traditional, she was able to identify and explain constructivist practices and demonstrated a desire to implement more of these practices in her classroom.

Research question #1: Ms. Monroe's knowledge about reading. After completing graduate school, Ms. Monroe said that her knowledge about reading solidified. She shared that she still believed it was important that students enjoyed reading, read a variety of text, and that teachers modeled fluency through read alouds. However, Ms. Monroe now implemented her reading through the school's Blended Learning model of stations. She stated that her primary focus in the teacher guided reading station was comprehension because that was where students struggled. Though she did not explicitly state that she had students focus on a specific passage for a scheduled length of time, like what was traditionally found in basal texts, it appeared as if that was her structure. She described a typical way of preparing for guided reading, "Early in the week we'll talk about vocabulary in there, their background knowledge to get them warmed up and ready for the story, and throughout we do different skills based on the standards for the story."

Ms. Monroe used many key terms to describe what she knew about reading, including: how characters change from the beginning to the end, sequence of events, main parts of the story (beginning, middle, and end), focus on skills, and using leveled text. She also talked about the Big 5 (NRP, 2010) – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. During interviews, Ms. Monroe also shared that students should have experience with graphic organizers, text dependent questions, open-ended questions, and with partner and group conversations. When she talked about what she did with reading in her classroom, she emphasized that she tried to stay away from

giving students worksheets. Her knowledge about reading practices, as she described them, seemed encompassing of current research and trends in the field.

Research question #1: How Ms. Monroe implemented the CCSS. Ms. Monroe immediately began talking about Blended Learning when she was asked about implementing the CCSS during reading instruction. She said that the “...Blended Learning model that we’ve implemented this year is still ingrained in my brain and I can’t imagine reading looking any differently than that.” Although she stated that imagining anything different was difficult, she was able to elaborate on how implementation of the CCSS would look. However, it seemed as if her description of CCSS implementation was also how she viewed Blended Learning and other District expectations, not necessarily ideas or concepts specific to the CCSS. For instance, after I reiterated during the interview that we were focusing on the CCSS for reading, she said, “...it should be a range of whole group and small group and partner work and independent work.” This description did not speak directly to the CCSS; however, it spoke to the grouping strategies for Blended Learning and what I observed during her teaching language arts and social studies lessons. Through a Blended Learning lens, she went on to share that her expectation of the CCSS includes, “...children are engaged in literacy activities...As long as students are engaged in reading and writing and speaking and listening and word work in some form or fashion...”

At first it seemed difficult for Ms. Monroe to separate what she knew and believed about the CCSS and what she had learned and was expected to do with District and school initiatives. For instance, there was a push for teachers to incorporate balanced

literacy, and she named listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The District had also had a recent push on teachers focusing on phonemic awareness and phonics and she mentioned word work, but not necessarily from the framework of the foundational skills portion of the CCSS.

During the first interview, Ms. Monroe shared that she began planning for implementation of the CCSS with a standard in mind, with the understanding that “inter-mixing” the standards was common. She went on to share that she took the plans created during the grade level planning time and made them her own. Ms. Monroe explained, “I start with the standard. So, if the standard is asking me certain questions, I build my lesson around the standard in mind.” She further explained that she modeled how to ask questions from the standards’ perspectives and then she used the standard and matching questions in her station rotations for students to practice the standards. During her teacher station, she explained, “They are back here with me and I’m using the text with them to help them answer questions from the texts.”

Ms. Monroe spoke more in-depth about Reading Literature Standard 3 that asks students to describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events. She gave an example of having students write to respond to how characters changed during the story by interacting with the text, including circling connecting words and drawing before and after pictures. The examples that she provided about how she planned for and implemented the CCSS for reading aligned with constructivist practices.

In summary, there was evidence of both traditional and constructivist beliefs and practices in Ms. Monroe's understanding and implementation of reading instruction. Ms. Monroe had knowledge of research-based reading practices and the CCSS. It appeared that it was a goal of hers to implement her knowledge in constructivist ways; however, she seemed constrained from learning more about how to successfully implement her knowledge in constructivist ways because of District and school expectations and structures, including the requirements of the District's Blended Learning model for structuring the literacy block.

Research question #2. Ms. Monroe described her transformation as a teacher of reading as follows:

I think the way I teach reading has changed dramatically. When I first started, I didn't know how to teach and I would rely mostly on the Basal, the teacher edition reading book to kind of show me what questions to ask and what to do in day one, day two, day three, and day four. I really was not relying a lot on data. I did not really have groups; I don't think at all my first couple of years.

At the beginning of her teaching career, Ms. Monroe taught reading to the whole class. She shared her experience of shifting from being in control of student learning by stating, "I was the director and they were listening". In reference to vocabulary, Ms. Monroe described a shift of focus in reading instruction from vocabulary during comprehension, to now focusing on phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. She also shared that one of her most recent shifts was in the area of balanced literacy including writing, speaking, and listening during reading instruction, which were practices that aligned with the CCSS.

When asked about any change as a reading teacher because of the CCSS, she attributed change in her knowledge to obtaining her master's degree in reading during the time of the initial introduction to the CCSS. Ms. Monroe shared that most of her knowledge about implementing the standards came from her own efforts. She stated,

But a lot of it has just been on my own time. Just really looking for myself, looking at the unpacking document the District has put out. Trying to really delve into the depths of what each standard has to say.

Although, she shared that she participated in the District-wide professional development for teacher leaders in the District, it was an opportunity for Ms. Monroe to work with other teachers on the development of the District pacing guides to help teachers implement the CCSS for reading that changed her knowledge and beliefs about reading instruction.

One shift that Ms. Monroe stated she made since the adoption of the CCSS was her understanding of how the standards lined up from grade to grade and increased in complexity from year to year. She shared, "Because you're not teaching the same thing every single year and the kids are actually improving because they're building what they've already got the year before." Another shift that Ms. Monroe said she made is the incorporation of more informational text within her instruction. Finally, Ms. Monroe talked about how she shifted away from using the basal text. She stated, "We don't teach the basal at all anymore." As opposed to using the basal, she described how she used the state unpacking standards document, the Fountas and Pinnell (2010) book about guided

reading, the website “Teachers Pay Teachers”, and websites and apps that she had searched to support her student’s development of a love of reading and specific skills like context clues.

Ms. Monroe also addressed teaching the CCSS for reading in the content areas. She identified this as a weak area and stated, “...we do incorporate them, but we have not had a lot of training in how to do that.” While she acknowledged that she had grown in incorporating informational text since the implementation of the CCSS, she shared that lack of implementing the reading standards was because of the lack of resources and that “there’s not a lot of literature in science or social studies.” Ms. Monroe noted that when students conducted research on holidays, she had students find main ideas or key details, but she emphasized, “I may not have that in the plans per se, but we’re always going back to using those standards.”

In sum, Ms. Monroe had made shifts in her knowledge and beliefs about reading and reading instruction since the adoption of the CCSS. She made shifts in the resources she used for instruction, how she delivered instruction, and how she organized groups of students. Through a transformation in her knowledge and beliefs as a reading teacher, Ms. Monroe had pushed herself away from using basal texts and had incorporated different types of literature into her lessons. She also used state, District, and school resources to help her navigate through the expectations of what students should know and be able to do, not just the CCSS. Ms. Monroe also used online resources identified to address specific standards to support her instruction. Currently, Ms. Monroe used small

group instruction, as prescribed by the school's Blended Learning format, to have students speak and write to express their understandings of text.

Research question #3. As mentioned earlier, Ms. Monroe had the opportunity to participate on a District-wide team of teachers to create pacing guides for the implementation of the CCSS. During the collaboration, she stated, "... we really looked at each standard to figure out what would be easier to teach at certain times of the year, which ones [standards] kind of correlate together a little bit more to kind of dovetail together." While speaking with Ms. Monroe about the experience, I was able to determine that no specific information was shared about how to understand or implement the standards beyond linking the standards together with the content area standards for units.

Ms. Monroe described feelings of being "overwhelmed" when she was given the challenge of creating units with a group of 8-10 people and then being given the task of being a lead presenter. She summed up the experience in this reflection:

I remember feeling very overwhelmed by it. I remember we started as a big group all the way together in that summer meeting and we're given this challenge of taking all those standards and dividing it up to four different quarters basically. And then once we separated the quarters, then we're just supposed to develop unit plans around them. And, it was a huge thing to try to do within, I think, in a matter of a week. I think it was about a week to try to get a whole year's work of curriculum lined up in unit plans.

After the week-long unit preparation with the new standards, Ms. Monroe "winded up" being a lead presenter and stated, "I'm a person who likes to be very prepared and I'm not [was not] that prepared for the common core." She went on to share that she looked

online for help with implementing the standards because "...we didn't have a lot of resources to implement [them] right away.

I asked Ms. Monroe how she felt about implementing the CCSS after her week of pacing guide work and creating the units. She stated, "I felt slightly better because I had something to start with." Ms. Monroe added that she had a plan, some resources, and some activities. "I use them [pacing guide] a lot and still use them a lot because I know they are there. I know we created them, so I know what they are all about."

However, a problem that Ms. Monroe witnessed during the initial implementation of the CCSS was,

...a lot of teachers were trying to still use the same textbooks and the same materials to teach the common core standards and it was vastly different. And a lot of teachers were struggling with that for quite a while.

While she had the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers about how the standards fit together and how the standards were addressed in the units, teachers outside of her work group did not benefit. Ms. Monroe said, "...it [pacing guides and units] was handed to every teacher at our beginning of the year training... But I don't even know if a lot of teachers use that in their planning, which is sad because it's already right there done for them." She went on to share, "So I think communication is a big issue." This indicated that Ms. Monroe did not believe that there were specific expectations for teachers to use the units. It also indicated that there was no systematic way that the standards, or the implementation of the standards, were shared with teachers. Perhaps it was expected that teachers take the guides and resources that were given to them and make sense of them

within their school buildings or as individuals. However, at the District level, Ms. Monroe only remembered being asked to have “I can” statements and “essential questions” that matched the standards written on the board when the standards were initially adopted. Since then, the expectation had dwindled to “I will” statements. She shared no other specific expectations in reference to the CCSS.

When asked about school expectations, Ms. Monroe shared that Blended Learning was the framework that was used to teach the CCSS. However, according to Ms. Monroe, the connection between the CCSS and Blended Learning had never been established explicitly. Teachers were also expected to incorporate online programs to implement and monitor student learning of the standards. Online programs, Achieve 3000 and Discovery Education, were expected components of station rotation time in the Blended Learning model. These programs contained components to help teachers identify the standards being assessed during the lessons.

In conclusion, Ms. Monroe was focused on implementing standards-based instruction. She used the documents and frameworks provided to her by the state, District, and school. Her participation on the District pacing guide team helped her develop knowledge and focus on implementing the standards. Although she acknowledged that District frameworks for instruction were in place, she said there were no solid expectations for how the standards fit into these frameworks or how the online programs (Achieve 3000 and Discovery Education) addressed the standards.

Ms. Senter

Ms. Senter was a model teacher in the school. She was often selected to participate in District and school initiatives. She was also selected as a teacher to be observed by other teachers within and outside of the school. Her leadership role not only impacted the adults at the school, it impacted the students in her classroom. Before entering her classroom, I noticed her creativity. Her door and the walls around the door were completely decorated for the season in a whimsical way. When I first walked into her classroom, a student greeted me by sharing the specific goals and expectations of every station in the classroom. The student also told me to ask if I had any other questions. Posted on the walls and hanging from the ceiling were anchor charts, student work, and reminders about how to be successful students. Along the back of the classroom there were science lab coats and goggles. Her teacher station had exercise balls as seats around a kidney table. Students at her station used their iPads to access the assigned reading passages. As students read and responded to text, Ms. Senter constantly referred to her own iPad to follow along and take notes about her students. At every other station, there was a different type of seating and table for students to collaborate and share. Station work included online reading programs that asked students to respond to multiple choice and open-ended questions, vocabulary puzzles, and students used their iPads to look up definitions. Throughout station time, Ms. Senter walked around to stations to offer guidance or redirection when needed. Her voice, never too far above a whisper, reiterates her high expectations.

Ms. Senter was in her eighth year of teaching. She taught four years in New York, and this was her fourth year at Fairmont. Ms. Senter taught reading and science in fifth grade and had done so for the last two years. As mentioned above, she was often selected to represent the school and District in a variety of ways, including being a part of the team of teachers selected to develop curriculum maps for the initial implementation of the CCSS. On her grade level, it was evident that she was the leader, not only because she was the grade level chair but also because she led the meeting and the conversation. While leading a discussion I observed she provided materials and ensured that the meeting was focused.

When asked to share information about herself as a teacher of reading, Ms. Senter reflected on the classrooms from her childhood and her memory of learning being fun. She shared that the classrooms in her childhood were hands-on and that she wanted to create similar experiences for her students. Ms. Senter also told me that it was important to first find out what her students were interested in, which varied from year to year, and find books and topics that interesting for her students. She also told me it was difficult to make reading interesting for students and it was important that she got to know her students to ensure that she was capturing their interest. While I observed her reading lesson, I noted that students were working in stations on Greek mythology, an area that she said that her students were really excited about.

Research question #1: Ms. Senter's beliefs about reading. According to LOS data (see Table 4.1), Ms. Senter was an overall eclectic teacher with traditional beliefs but constructivist practices. These mixed results indicated that she was still seeking the

best way to move forward with students and as a result may have had conflicting practices during instruction (Lenski et al., 1998). Interview and observation data supported the LOS results revealing Ms. Senter's conflicting beliefs and practices. Although inconsistency might exist between and within her beliefs and practices, Ms. Senter was reflective and willing to acknowledge that changes in her instruction might be needed.

While the LOS data indicated that Ms. Senter had traditional beliefs, her stated beliefs during the interviews indicated that she held both traditional and constructivist beliefs. It was also evident during my interviews with her that she preferred using constructivist approaches for teaching reading because examples of these approaches were shared at length during the interviews. For example, when Ms. Senter was asked about her beliefs about reading, she shared that "Reading is a lot about me trying to get to know them [students] to make it [reading] exciting for them." She talked about this being a goal even for students who were tough and had behavior problems. Ms. Senter stated, "I love seeing how excited they are, and finding books that relate to them". She also said that she believed it was important for students to relate the characters in the books to people in their lives at home and at school. While Ms. Senter believed that small group instruction was best for her, she acknowledged that, "it depends on the group of students you have and the school". In addition, Ms. Senter shared that she used data to create skill- and performance-based flexible small groups in order to differentiate instruction for all students. Other examples of Ms. Senter's constructivist beliefs that emerged from the interviews included integrating writing and reading activities across the curriculum units,

supplementing novel studies with nonfiction content-based articles, and using varied media, including videos, to implement reading standards.

During my observations, Ms. Senter revealed some traditional practices that contradicted the constructivist practice identification based on the LOS data. For instance, when she talked about vocabulary being more hands-on for her students, she described an activity that simply required the students to match meanings of vocabulary words. During my observation, the students were using an iPad to look up the definitions of the words to match the vocabulary with the meaning. This activity was a traditional practice because it was disconnected from text and allowed students to use a “dictionary” to determine the meaning of the unknown words rather than figure out the meaning in the context of the text. Also, in her classroom, she had traditional anchor charts to help children with reading and test-taking strategies. In the science content area, students were asked to complete electronic worksheets by completing fill in the blank exercises with vocabulary terms. During science, students also read a scientific passage and answered the questions at the end of the text. Both of these activities were considered traditional forms of reading instruction.

Observations also revealed some constructivist practices. For instance, during an observation of Ms. Senter’s teacher-led station, students were encouraged to take notes while they read silently. Ms. Senter interrupted their reading one at a time to engage with the students about the text to determine if the student was able to read smoothly, with attention to prosody, and if the student was able to provide examples that supported their understanding of the “theme” of the story. These more constructivist practices allowed

students to attend to the text in ways that best worked for them and they were able to struggle with the text as they sought understanding of the text. Other reading practices she used aligned to constructivist practices included asking students to compare and contrast without leading them toward a desired response, asking students to take on the character (reading with prosody), and asking students to continue reading with a focus on comparing the themes of two different texts. During the observations of her class, I noted that she had anchor charts that provided “text talk” stems for students to use to facilitate group conversations about text. However, it should be noted that because I never saw the students use the stems with or without the teacher, I was unable to determine if this possible constructivist practice was actually implemented in a constructivist manner or from a traditional perspective.

Both traditional and constructivist practices were revealed during science instruction. During small group science, the students were given electronic documents to fill in the blanks after being told to read the whole sentence before deciding what went in the blank. Although, completing fill in the blank activities, helping student through completing assignments, and asking students closed-ended questions were considered traditional practices, Ms. Senter combined the experiences with more constructivist practices. That is, she also asked students open-ended questions about the science reading and required students to support their responses to both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

In the other stations, students completed tasks that varied between traditional and constructivist. For example, students were responsible for answering questions that

accompanied an article or video – a traditional practice - but then, students were able to collaborate and have dialogue about their responses – a more constructivist practice. Students used a “test-taking” strategy that required them to read the questions before reading the actual text to better find answers – a traditional practice; and then, the students shared specific examples from the text that supported or defended their responses – a constructivist practice.

Research question #1: Ms. Senter’s knowledge about reading. During interviews and observations, I recognized that Ms. Senter was aware of what was considered to be best practices in reading. During the initial interview, she talked about implementing the National Reading Panel’s (2000) five components of reading by working with small groups on vowel patterns, fluency, and vocabulary. In the area of fluency instruction, Ms. Senter emphasized reading with expression while “taking on the characters” as they read. She also emphasized punctuation and how punctuation influences prosody. She shared that as she listened to the students read, she recorded anecdotal notes to determine the word work the students need. Although I did not see specific instruction with multisyllabic words, I did see that when students had difficulties with words while reading orally, Ms. Senter would say the word for students, seemingly to allow students to focus on comprehension, not decoding unknown words.

Ms. Senter also shared information about her comprehension knowledge, another component of the five components of reading. At times during observations, students were expected to focus on “theme”. The focus on theme was also a key talking point during the interviews when she provided examples of what students did with reading

during stations. Several times during the interview, Ms. Senter also talked about reading “skills” and how she used the skills that students needed to develop during groups for stations or during their work with her. When asked to explain what she meant by skills, she said, “This group is still struggling with main idea. They are my main idea group. And now we’re still learning some of the same topic, but when they’re with me we’re working on that specific skill.” During the teacher-directed station time, Ms. Senter had conversations with and directed students using reading terms and phrases like: *compare and contrast, theme, read silently, go back in the story, use context clues, reread to find, and use specifics from the text*. Not only did her use of these phrases demonstrate that Ms. Senter valued conversations during reading instruction, these phrases indicated to me that she knew about specific reading skills that she valued. Each of these phrases was also represented in CCSS for reading. Regrettably, it should be noted that although these terms were present in the standards, the lessons that I observed did not confirm either alignment or misalignment with the actual requirements of the standards.

Observations, however, revealed that Ms. Senter was knowledgeable about other components of reading. For instance, she collected formative data about student’s reading behaviors, she conducted interactive read-alouds, she provided students opportunities for students to read together and collaborate, and she gave students opportunities to read independently.

Research question #1: How Ms. Senter implemented the CCSS. Initially when I asked Ms. Senter about the CCSS, she was brief and only talked about the expectation for small group instruction. However, she also talked about how she infused the standards

into thematic studies, applying only standards that the students needed. For example, Ms. Senter stated,

So although our theme might be natural disasters, this group might be working on this standard while this one [group] is working on this standard, based on what they need. I feel like if the students have mastered something why make them do it again? Why not push them to what they need? So, I mean that would be my opinion is just really differentiating for what they need.

According to Ms. Senter, when teaching with the CCSS in mind, students should also have different text and differentiated vocabulary instruction.

As I observed reading and science lessons in Ms. Senter's classroom, I noticed an example of intentional inclusion of the CCSS and practices commonly associated with the CCSS within her learning stations. For instance, Ms. Senter had one small teacher-led group focusing on comparing and contrasting the theme of two different versions of the story "Pandora." The Reading Literature standard 5.9 asks students to compare and contrast stories in the same genre on their approaches to similar themes and topics. Evidences of Reading Literature standard 5.1 were also evident because students were asked to use the text to support their inferences. Although the students read both stories and determined a theme, on the day that I observed, there was no discussion about the comparisons or contrasts between the stories. However, I understood that the lesson was to occur over multiple days.

Interviews questions that focused on the CCSS seemed somewhat uncomfortable for Ms. Senter. Her responses were short and lacked detail, leading me to believe that her depth of knowledge of the content about the standards was minimal. During our

conversations, I brought up complex text and close reading. In reference to complex text, Ms. Senter first asked me what I meant by the term. Once I explained, she explained that with science, "...finding that right text for them" was important because giving students text that was too complex may prevent students from understanding the content. Her response led me to believe that she did not have a clear understanding of the meaning of complex text in the CCSS Reading Anchor standard 10 that asks students to "Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently."

Ms. Senter appeared to implement the CCSS based on her knowledge and beliefs about reading and reading instruction, rather than a deep understanding of the CCSS. In other words, her implementation of the standards, as she described it, aligned with her knowledge and beliefs about reading but not the CCSS. It was evident that she knew key terms associated with components of standards; however, there seemed to be a gap between how the key terms were supported by the other words in the standards. For instance, the key term "vocabulary" was used to describe an expectation for the CCSS. Yet, the term "vocabulary" was not used as it was used in Reading Literature standard 5.4 that states, "Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes."

In summation, Ms. Senter's LOS survey data indicated that she had traditional beliefs and constructivist practices. Interview and observation data indicated that she had both traditional and constructivist beliefs and practices. Ms. Senter's identification as an eclectic teacher aligned with data, which suggested that while she was striving to be a constructivist teacher, she was still growing in how to implement the CCSS in ways that

allowed students to have meaningful learning experience when using constructivist practices. However, it was evident that her practices were aligned with District and school expectations, which certainly had an impact on how she implemented instruction.

Research question #2: Ms. Senter told me that she started implementing the CCSS during her first year teaching fifth grade. She shared that she had learned the previous standards for kindergarten, the grade level she taught when she began her teaching career. As she reflected on the initial CCSS training, she recalled feeling overwhelmed because it was right before school started. Ms. Senter stated, “I don’t feel like I had a good grasp of it [CCSS] until after my first year teaching [the standards].” She became more comfortable with the standards while participating on the District curriculum mapping team because she was able to talk to teachers about the standards. One of the first shifts in her knowledge with the adoption of the CCSS came in the understanding that how to connect the content areas to reading. She shared,

I think one thing is I’ve tried to work on incorporating different subject areas together. My first year in Fairmont, I was trying to learn the content and teach straight science content. So now I’ve been trying to add the reading to it. So, working that main idea and context clues and things like that through reading. I’ve been doing a lot with non-fiction text as well.

One of the shifts in Ms. Senter’s beliefs that apparently coincided with the adoption of the CCSS was that she now believed that making reading exciting and selecting reading that matched the interests of the students were both important. She also shared that she had shifted from whole group instruction towards primarily small group instruction. Also,

during our conversation, an important belief emerged. Ms. Senter talked about the language of the standards being a challenge for the students at her school. She stated,

You know, we can talk to them about speaking properly and things like that, but – then they go home and they go back to the way they normally talk. Language is definitely a struggle for me as far as common core standards.

This statement indicated that she believed that the wording and intent of the standards might not be appropriate for all students. It also revealed her belief that the standards were more rigorous and not necessarily a set of standards that were always applicable to her students and their needs.

In sum, the majority of the shifts or changes in knowledge and beliefs that Ms. Senter experienced seemed to be due to adoptions of new instructional programs and the professional development provided by the District and school. It did not seem that her changes were due primarily because of the adoption of the CCSS or from what she learned about the CCSS during her first year of teaching it.

Research question #3: According to Ms. Senter, the District and school expected instruction to be carried out in small groups. It was also an expectation that teachers increase the rigor of reading instruction and provide reading instruction that was connected to the teaching of science, social studies, and math content. The goal of the District was to have 90% of students proficient in reading. She added, “Now, at a school like ours, as a school we have a goal of 60% because 90% right now is not [she stopped] not that we can’t do it, but we’re not there yet.” When I asked the first question about the CCSS, Ms. Senter immediately talked about the school-wide initiative called Blended

Learning. As mentioned earlier, Ms. Senter believed that it was important to provide small group instruction as a way to implement the Common Core. When I asked the school expectations for reading instruction, she responded, “Definitely the Blended Learning. I mean, they don’t want to see a whole group. If you’re doing a mini lesson, five, ten minutes max.” She also shared that she implemented the District initiative, Achieve 3000, which had informational text that was linked to the CCSS. In reference to other expectations of the school, she added, “We are also required to do a ten-minute read aloud every day as well, which the kids absolutely love that.”

In reference to the CCSS, she shared that it was expected that she stuck to teaching the standards assigned to each quarter. She also mentioned that the District lead teacher, Ms. Caldwell, and the school literacy design coach, Ms. Marsh, were flexible with how teachers implemented the CCSS if the students were making connections with what they were reading and if the students were learning. It was expected that teachers include the CCSS in lesson plans, which were checked by the administrators. However, how teachers received feedback about their lesson plans was not shared.

In sum, Ms. Senter was clearly implementing the expectations of the District and her school, according to what she shared about their expectations. However, it seemed as if she was not implementing the CCSS in any specific way or using specific practices based on a deep understanding of the CCSS. I believed this to be true because when asking about the CCSS and the expectations of the standards, she did not mention key elements of the standards and did not go into depth about any of them. Nevertheless, it was clear that she had adopted the expectations of the District as her beliefs and practices

for carrying out reading instruction, while making reading selections or resources and activities based on her own knowledge and beliefs about reading.

To reiterate, Ms. Senter chose to implement the CCSS and reading instruction the way that she did because of her students. Throughout the interviews, she shared that she made decisions based on her students' backgrounds, needs, and interests. In the area of science, one example she mentioned was her struggle with teaching about ecosystems because

They [students] do not have the background knowledge. They don't have the experience. They have never been to a beach. They don't know what salt water is. So with those virtual field trips and things that really help them build those experiences that they haven't had.

In conclusion, Ms. Senter implemented the CCSS based on District and school expectations. She had the flexibility to select materials and activities and implemented the CCSS based on her knowledge and beliefs about how reading should be taught.

Cross-Case Analysis

The multiple case analysis was organized by research questions. Each research question revealed several themes based on the analysis of the six cases. The findings of the multiple cases analysis are explained below.

Research Question #1: What Do Teachers Reveal about Their Knowledge and Beliefs about Reading and How They Implement the CCSS because of Their Knowledge and Beliefs?

Data from the multiple case analysis showed that teachers did not have solid knowledge about reading or the CCSS for reading. Data also indicated that prior beliefs, beliefs about students' skills and abilities, and beliefs about what motivated students influenced how they implemented the CCSS in their classrooms. Data revealed that beliefs aligned with District and school expectations. Finally, data showed that several teachers wanted to teach from a constructivist framework; however, they tended to have traditional practices, with evidences of eclectic practices.

Knowledge: Teachers have general knowledge of reading. Data from all of the teachers indicated general knowledge about reading and reading instruction. Four of the teachers specifically named the components found within the National Reading Panel Report (2000), including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. All teachers named specific terms and phrases associated with reading content and practices. However, only one teacher offered detail about the key ideas of reading. This teacher's knowledge seemed more encompassing of current research and trends in reading instruction than other teachers, possibly because of her enrollment in graduate reading courses.

Knowledge: Teachers have general knowledge of CCSS. All teachers in the study knew that differences in content and instruction took place with the adoption of the CCSS. Although all teachers knew that there were differences, none of the teachers

described in any detail the content of or appropriate ways for teaching the standards.

Three teachers shared that the implementation of the CCSS meant that teachers included varied text types and higher level thinking questions during instruction. Another two teachers shared that implementing the CCSS should consider who the students were, and what they needed. One teacher said that new teachers were best for implementing the CCSS because they were new and willing to study the standards.

Beliefs: Prior beliefs. According to LOS data five teachers were identified as having traditional beliefs in reading. The data indicated that the sixth teacher had eclectic beliefs, or beliefs that balanced between traditional and constructivist beliefs. Interview data suggested that all of the teachers' prior beliefs were shaped by the context in which they taught, which influenced their current beliefs about the implementation of the school and District instructional frameworks and the CCSS. Interview responses from each teacher revealed traditional ways of thinking about teaching reading, even for the teacher identified as having eclectic beliefs.

Beliefs: About students' skills and abilities. Beliefs about students' skills and abilities led to teachers' instructional decisions. Only one teacher did not mention students' skills or abilities in reference to instructional decision-making or CCSS implementation. Three teachers made reference to either having or not having academically gifted students and shared that students who were not academically gifted needed activities that were more traditional in nature and needed to be on "their level." Observation and interview data indicated that students who performed on or above grade level received more constructivist practices; while, students who performed below grade

level received more traditional practices. Though the teachers' beliefs about students' skills and abilities was not a specific focus of the study, there was an underlying belief that impacted decisions that teachers made about implementing the CCSS and the instructional frameworks for five of these teachers at this Title One school.

Beliefs: About what motivates students. Beliefs about what motivated students to become active participants in their learning to read was at the core of teacher practices. Five teachers believed that it was their responsibility to create a learning environment that helped children see themselves as readers. Words that the teachers used to describe feelings that they wanted students to have about reading included motivation, interest, enjoy, improve self-esteem, and confidence. Only one teacher did not talk about motivation or her responsibility in making students responsible for their own learning. This teacher placed the burden of the students learning to read on her own shoulders by saying it was her role to ensure that students were prepared for assessments.

Practices: Constructivists at heart. Interview data indicated that all teachers sought to use constructivist practices. All of the teachers used terms associated with constructivist practices to describe what they did in the reading classroom and while implementing the CCSS. Although they all used the terms associated with constructivist practices, the activities associated with the practices were actually implemented mostly through traditional practices witnessed during observations.

Practices: Eclectic practices. LOS data classified five teachers as having eclectic practices. One teacher was classified as having constructivist practices; however, interview and observation data indicated that traditional practices were discussed and

observed. Teachers having eclectic practices were supported by interview and observation data, which demonstrated the disequilibrium that teachers may have experienced practicing their constructivist beliefs without having the knowledge or confidence to do so for all students.

Practices: Teachers' beliefs aligned with District and school expectations. All teachers were committed to implementing the school's Blended Learning and District's literacy framework according to expectations. The teachers used the technological resources expected by the District and school as well. All teachers used the iPads to support reading instruction. They used programs like Achieve 3000 and Discovery Education, and the teachers understood the expectations for these programs. It should be noted that one of the teachers implemented the Achieve 3000 program more fully than the other teachers, requiring students to complete each component of the program. During interviews, it appeared as if the teachers' beliefs aligned with the expectations of the frameworks and programs suggested by the District and school. When asked about their practices, all of the teachers used the components of the frameworks in their responses.

Research Question #2: What, If Any, Shifts or Changes Do Teachers Describe or Report in Their Knowledge and Beliefs about Reading during Their Implementation of the CCSS?

The implementation of the CCSS itself caused little change in teachers' reading knowledge, beliefs, or practices. Instead, shifts and changes that occurred during their implementation of the standards appeared to be based on District and school frameworks for teaching reading.

Shifts in reading knowledge. Shifts in knowledge occurred for all teachers with the implementation of the CCSS. However, the shifts that teachers made at Fairmont appeared not to be directly based on the implementation of the CCSS. The shifts in knowledge that were revealed during interviews with the teachers were based on the literacy framework and Blended Learning. All of the teachers described one or more of the five components of reading instruction identified by the National Reading Panel (2000). Four teachers described aspects of balanced literacy during the interviews. Although it was understood that the teachers had the five components of reading and balanced literacy in their knowledge base prior to implementation of the CCSS, their knowledge shifted with how these practices would fit into the required instructional frameworks, especially into the Blended Learning structure. All teachers were aware that changes in knowledge had to occur and strategies for providing reading instruction should also change. However, interview and observation data indicated that teachers' knowledge of how to effectively implement the changes was lacking.

Shifts in reading beliefs. All teachers had some shifts in their beliefs to adopt and implement the District and school expectations. It appeared from interviews that the teachers were not micromanaged and did have some freedom in how to implement that District or school expectations. Therefore, it can be assumed that the teachers implemented the instructional frameworks because they had shifts or changes in their beliefs during their learning of the frameworks. It also appeared that all teachers valued constructivist beliefs, but it could not be determined if the teachers gained this desire before or during the implementation of the CCSS and the instructional frameworks.

Shifts in reading practices. All teachers made shifts in reading practices during the implementation of the CCSS. However, it appeared that the shifts in practices were due to their adoption of new District and school instructional frameworks in recent years. Two teachers shared that the practices expected by the CCSS aligned with practices that they had already been implementing. These same two teachers did share, like the other teachers, that practices that were implemented in the current year was due to the District's Literacy Framework and the school's Blended Learning model. All of the teachers talked about changing the way instruction for reading was delivered through their iPads and using online programs like Achieve 3000 and Discovery Education. Four teachers described shifts in reading practices to include the District expectations of connecting content to real world experiences through engaging activities. Again, shifts appeared not to have occurred because of the implementation of the CCSS, but rather the implementation of District and school frameworks for literacy instruction.

Research Question #3: What Do Teachers Say about Why They Implement the CCSS the Way that They Have Chosen to Implement the CCSS?

The cases revealed themes, or reasons why the teachers implemented the CCSS the way that they chose to implement them. Data revealed that teachers implemented the standards based on state assessments, District and school expectations, the context and the students, and what the teachers had learned about the standards during their own exploration.

State assessments. State assessments appeared to be one reason that teachers implemented the standards and the instructional frameworks the way they chose to

implement them. Four teachers described practices that they employed in their classrooms to prepare students for state testing. The practices that they described were traditional practices that contradicted some of the constructivist practices teachers shared that they wanted to implement.

District expectations. District expectations clearly impacted how teachers implemented the standards. Three of the teachers shared that they had participated on the District Common Core pacing guide writing team and that this opportunity gave them support with implementing the standards. All of the teachers shared the District expectation of implementing Achieve 3000 and using technology to implement the standards. All of the teachers also mentioned the District's expectation of implementing the components of Balanced Literacy through small group instruction. It was clear that all teachers assumed that the District adopted programs like Achieve 3000 and Discovery Education because they had the CCSS embedded. Therefore, it appeared that teachers believed that implementing these programs meant that the students were receiving the content needed to grasp the concepts within the CCSS for reading.

School expectations. The school adopted the station rotation model of Blended Learning. All of the teachers willingly adopted the beliefs and practices that were shared about the Blended Learning framework. When the teachers were asked about implementing the CCSS, all of the teachers described components of literacy instruction that also fell within the expectations of Blended Learning, so it was not evident if teachers were truly implementing the CCSS or the Blended Learning framework that catered to certain components of the standards. It was as if the teachers assumed that their

implementation of the Blended Learning framework also met the CCSS learning needs of the students.

The students. Knowledge of the students in the classrooms also impacted how the teachers implemented the CCSS. Four teachers shared that because their students read below grade level, then standards instruction needed to be different. In other words, they believed that gifted students could meet all the standards for their grade level, but the standards were appropriate for every student. Five teachers explained that their role in teaching the CCSS was for students to become interested and motivated readers. Hence, their role as facilitators of student learning was to provide standards-based instruction that fostered the love of reading. It should be noted that no teacher explicitly referenced the standards in any detail except to say that critical thinking, cooperative grouping, and connecting learning throughout the content areas was important when implementing the CCSS for students.

CCSS resources. All of the teachers shared that they used a variety of resources to help with learning and implementing the standards. As mentioned before, three of the teachers collected resources when they served on the District team for creating pacing guides aligned with the CCSS. Two teachers took college courses slightly before or during the implementation of the CCSS and were able to use the information learned in the courses to help them implement the standards. Five teachers shared that they used Internet searches to find activities and materials for teaching the standards. Two of these teachers used the online resource called Teachers Pay Teachers to get materials to support their standards teaching. Apparently, teachers used Internet searches to fill the

gap between the standards and the frameworks. While two teachers talked about discussing the meaning and implementation of the standards, all of the teachers indicated that specific conversations about how to implement the standards within the District and school frameworks had not yet been discussed.

Summary

This multiple case analysis revealed several themes based on the analysis of the six cases. The findings of the multiple cases analysis revealed that teachers had general, but not deep, knowledge of reading and the CCSS for reading. It was also found that prior beliefs about reading and reading instruction, beliefs about the students, their abilities, and beliefs about student motivation contributed to the teachers' instructional decision making. Findings revealed that the teachers desired to implement constructivist practices within the instructional frameworks provided through District and school expectations, but that in practice their instruction was mainly traditional. In sum, while the teachers implemented the expected instructional frameworks, they still struggled with selecting materials and instructional strategies that represented deep knowledge of reading practices and practices that aligned with the content of the CCSS.

Chapter 4 Summary

Six teachers from Fairmont Elementary participated in this study. All teachers completed the LOS survey and participated in two interviews and three observations. Through interviews about their reading knowledge, beliefs and practices, and observations of their knowledge, beliefs, and practices in action, I was able to get to know the teachers better. After the analysis of each case, I conducted a cross-case

analysis to reveal theme and key findings among the teachers. Factors like teacher preparation, teacher experiences, District and school expectations, and the context in which the teachers taught influenced teacher knowledge, beliefs, and practices. Findings suggested that the teachers had little preparation with implementing reading practices and the CCSS. The findings also suggested that teachers spent significant time developing the frameworks for literacy instruction. Finally, the findings revealed that the time that teachers spent learning the District and school instructional frameworks created shifts in their knowledge of setting up a structure for reading instruction, but did not create a shift in their knowledge and beliefs for knowing and implementing the CCSS for reading.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined six teachers' knowledge and beliefs when implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for reading considering the Title I context in which they taught. I also sought to understand how the CCSS influenced teachers' knowledge and beliefs. The CCSS were developed with hopes of eliminating the achievement gaps between the United States and other nations, as well as the gaps that exist between subgroups of students within the United States. Therefore, I wanted to know how teachers viewed and implemented the CCSS for reading in a Title I school, knowing that Title I schools traditionally score below non-Title I schools on state assessments. In sum, this study focused on how standards-based changes in a Title I school influenced teacher knowledge, beliefs, and implementation of the CCSS for reading, and vice versa.

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings, implications, and limitations of the study. First a review of the findings presented in Chapter 4 will include further interpretation, the themes, and my resulting assertions, as well as how my findings relate to previous research on standards-based instruction in reading. This discussion is organized based on the research questions. Implications for district leaders, school administrators, and school curriculum leaders will be shared next. Then, limitations and future research will be discussed.

Discussion of Findings

As I conducted the cross-case analysis, several themes (see Table 5.1) emerged related to the three research questions. First, it was revealed that teachers do not have solid knowledge in reading or the CCSS. Second, the findings also revealed that teachers' beliefs impacted how they implemented their practices for teaching the CCSS. Third, data analysis revealed that shifts in the reading knowledge, beliefs, and practices of these six teachers occurred due to the implementation of District and school initiatives, not because of the implementation of the CCSS. Finally, the data revealed that teachers met the literacy expectations of the District and school by using traditional practices driven by assessments, expectations, students' background, and the resources that were available in this context. Additional detail about each of these findings follows.

Table 5.1. Themes

Research Question	Themes
Research Question #1: What do teachers reveal about their knowledge and beliefs about reading and how they implement the CCSS because of their knowledge and beliefs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers have general reading and CCSS knowledge• Prior beliefs influence reading practices.• Beliefs about students' influence reading practices.• Teachers envision themselves as constructivists.• Teachers' practices align with district and school expectations.
Research Question #2: What, if any, shifts or changes do teachers describe or report in their knowledge and beliefs about reading during their implementation of the CCSS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• District and school expectations appeared to be a major influence on shifts in teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices.

Research Question #3: What do teachers say about why they implement the CCSS the way that they have chosen to implement the CCSS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State assessments took a role in how the CCSS were taught. • District and school expectations took a role in how the CCSS were taught. • The students took a role in how the CCSS were taught. • Online resources took a role in how the CCSS were taught.
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Teachers Do Not Have Solid Knowledge of Reading or CCSS

Research question #1 asked, “What do teachers reveal about their knowledge and beliefs about reading and how they implement the CCSS because of their knowledge and beliefs?” Data revealed that teachers did not have a solid grasp on reading or CCSS knowledge. Data also revealed that teachers’ prior beliefs and their beliefs about students influenced their reading practices. As the teachers described their understandings and practices, they revealed that they wanted to implement constructivist practices, but struggled with implementing them while meeting the instructional expectations of the school and district. Below is a more nuanced discussion of the major findings for research question #1.

Knowledge. Research tell us that teachers’ knowledge of the CCSS and literacy instruction is imperative in ensuring that they are effective in successfully implementing the CCSS for reading in a way that will prepare students to be college and career ready by the end of high school (Conley, 2014; Reutzel, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). For example, the CCSS for reading calls for teachers to provide students with instruction that emphasizes higher-level comprehension skills (CCSS, 2010), which includes close reading, critical reading, and powerful writing (Hiebert & Pearson, 2013).

Teachers teaching the CCSS for reading must know how to select academic reading that requires students to spend time working with the language, structure, internal meanings of complex text, and complex tasks (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012; Marzano, 2013). Finally, teachers should know the broad anchor standards that fall under the four categories – key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration and ideas, and range of reading and level of text complexity to fully understand the grade level standards (Valencia & Wixson, 2013).

The teachers in this study knew that there were differences in content and pedagogical expectations between the CCSS and previous standards. However, the teachers were unsure about how to apply reading practices to support students learning the CCSS for reading (Hipsher, 2014). Interview and observation data indicated that their uncertainty appeared to be due to their general and shallow knowledge of the CCSS and the components identified above, as well as of reading pedagogy.

Beliefs. Research has found that teachers believe that student failure is due to their not trying hard enough (Roehrig, Turner, Grove, Schneider & Liu, 2009; Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld, 2008). Teachers also believe that non-academic traits are the reason that students fail to meet academic goals (Jordan, Lindsay, & Stanovich, 1997; Roehrig et al., 2009; Snider & Roehl, 2007). These beliefs about students can impact how standards or instruction is provided in the classroom. While implementing the CCSS, believing that all students, even students with learning disabilities, must be expected to complete complex activities is seen as an important belief (Calkins et al., 2012). Not only do teachers' beliefs about students and the context in which they teach impact instructional decisions,

teachers' prior beliefs, experiences, and assumptions are reflected in the teaching strategies they use in the classroom (Goodman, 1988).

Data from this study suggested that the teachers had assumptions about what motivated students and about their students' abilities. These assumptions influenced the tasks and instruction that the teachers provided for all students (Calderhead, 1996; Hoffman & Kugle, 1982; Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld, 2008). The teachers in this study stated that all students were not expected to meet the same high standards for reading within the CCSS (Calkins, 2012). Data also suggested that teachers attributed student lack of reading performance, and their inability to provide students challenging curriculum, to their students' motivation (Jordan et al., 1997; Roehrig et al., 2009; Snider & Roehl, 2007). Therefore, teachers in this study made instructional decisions because of their students' abilities, and their own desire to motivate students. Teachers in this study also relied on their prior beliefs to implement instructional practices. Although there was an expectation for teachers to implement the District's instructional framework, which included key components of reading, there were no specific expectations for the activities they could use or how the programs provided to them should be implemented. As a result, teachers used their prior beliefs about reading pedagogy to decide on activities and instructional practices for implementing the District's instructional framework and the key components of reading.

Practices. Research also tells us that teachers' instructional practices are influenced by the beliefs they hold about learning and teaching (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991; Westwood, Knight, & Redden, 1997). Teachers' beliefs, more

specifically, their theoretical orientations towards reading, also guide their reading practices (Deford, 1985; Johnson, 1992). Although there is research that supports that at times there can be an alignment between teachers' beliefs and practices, there is also research that suggests that there can be a misalignment between what teachers report that they believe and their actual classroom practices (Deford, 1985; Levin, He & Allen, 2013). In reference to teachers trying new programs, it is customary for teachers to be skeptical about trying new practices and programs because teachers believe that they know how to be successful with teaching children to read without the professional development on new practices (Hilden & Pressley, 2007).

Teachers in the study shared their desire to be constructivist teachers by using constructivist practices. Though the teachers could describe constructivist reading practices that they wanted to implement, most of the practices described during interviews and observations were more traditional. In other words, the teachers in this study expressed wanting to be constructivists, but their beliefs and desires did not match their traditional practices. Although it is customary for teachers to be wary of new instructional programs and practices, the teachers in this study were not reluctant to try what the District and school were expecting of them during the time of this study. In fact, these teachers were more than willing to align their practices to the instructional frameworks based on District and School expectations.

Teachers Experienced Shifts in Knowledge, Beliefs, and Practices

Research question #2 asked, "What, if any, shifts or changes do teachers describe or report in their knowledge and beliefs about reading during their implementation of the

CCSS?” Data suggested that the changes teachers experienced were not necessarily because of the CCSS, but rather because of the implementation of district and school expectations for using instructional frameworks such as the station rotation form of Blended Learning. Below is more about this major finding for research question #2.

Reforms in education occur often in education to address the need of closing achievement gaps (Tatum, 2013). Research shows that teachers’ beliefs may cause them to make judgments about the value and validity of professional development (Fives & Buehl, 2008). Though teachers make judgments about trainings provided to them and use their beliefs filter which components of the trainings they will adopt, their beliefs can and do change naturally and over time. Research tells us that as a teacher’s knowledge grows, new beliefs evolve and old beliefs are replaced or altered (Olson & Singer, 1994).

In this study, teachers did not appear to reject knowledge that was provided to them during professional development. The teachers were open to gaining new and different knowledge and were willing to shift their practices to adjust based on new knowledge. Although I was investigating change that occurred because of the adoption and implementation of the CCSS, the changes that actually appeared in this study were because of the adoption of Blended Learning. Any shifts in the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of these teachers, therefore, appeared to be a result of District and School expectations in the area of organizing and managing the reading classroom through the use of Blended Learning.

Context Makes a Difference in Instructional Decisions

According to Snider and Roehl (2007), beliefs that teachers have about learners and the context in which they teach are the impetus for their instructional decision-making. Research has also shown that teachers are usually reluctant to implement new instructional approaches (Hilden & Pressley, 2007). Implementing new programs and standards in an educational environment seeking to hold teachers accountable for student learning and growth can be difficult for teachers.

Research question #3 asked, “What do teachers say about why they implement the CCSS the way that they have chosen to implement the CCSS?” Data revealed that state assessments, District and school expectations, students’ abilities and motivation, and online resources were contributing factors to teachers’ decision making about how to implement the CCSS. Below are the major findings for research question #3.

Teachers in this study did apply the CCSS based on the expectations they experienced in the context of their District and school. Data did not suggest that they questioned the need for the change in the instructional frameworks but rather seemed to appreciate that the frameworks offered their students an opportunity to be successful. The teachers allowed the District and school frameworks, adopted to increase student reading achievement, to influence how they implemented CCSS instruction. Preparing students for state assessments, along with knowing students’ behavior towards learning, and students’ learning abilities also influenced how teachers chose to implement CCSS instruction. Finally, data indicated that teachers did not gain their CCSS content knowledge and pedagogy from the District or school. The teachers appeared to have

relied on their own Internet searches for knowledge and pedagogy for teaching the CCSS. Online resources like Teachers Pay Teachers and Pinterest provided teachers information that helped them decide on how to implement CCSS instruction, as did the materials they were provide including Discovery Education and Achieve 3000. Although the focus of the study was on teachers' knowledge and beliefs, the study also found that leaders in the District and school had a vision for the CCSS to be implemented within the frameworks and using the adopted programs, but the leaders did not focus on how teachers actually implemented the CCSS within the frameworks or programs.

Assertions

Based on the cross-case analysis that yielded the above findings and themes, two assertions can be made: 1) the cases revealed that there was a strong focus on implementing Blended Learning in this context; and 2) the cases also revealed that there was limited focus on and preparation for teaching the CCSS for reading. In 2015, the school adopted Blended Learning because of concerns about students' overall performance on state assessments. State assessments revealed that students were not meeting state proficiency standards and the school wanted a systematic way to ensure that teachers were implementing instruction based on researched-based strategies. Fairmont Elementary also adopted a version of Blended Learning to address the fact that Fairmont had an achievement gap between subgroups of students within the school and between its entire population and other schools. As a result, there was a strong focus on and expectations for implementing Blended Learning and seemingly limited focus on and preparing for the implementation of the CCSS for reading by increasing professional

development about the content and pedagogy of the CCSS. More about these two assertions follows.

Strong Focus and Expectations for Blended Learning

At Fairmont Elementary, there is a strong focus on and the expectation of using Blended Learning to guide how teachers implement reading instruction. A committee of teachers and administrators read the book, *Blended* (2014) by Michael Horn and Heather Stacker to determine the model of Blended Learning the school would adopt to address the concerns. The committee decided on the Station Rotation Model of Blended Learning, created the school handbook, and provided professional development to ensure that all teachers throughout the school implemented the program based on the school decided expectations. Teachers implemented stations that included balanced literacy and the National Reading Panel's (2000) five components of reading. It appeared that during the first year of implementation, the focus for all teachers was on creating a classroom environment, and organizational and management procedures, not necessarily how the CCSS would be embedded within the stations.

As a result of an emphasis on the structures of Blended Learning, teachers appeared to have some misconceptions about the benefits of Blended Learning, about where to focus instruction, and about implementing practices that would address the CCSS learning needs of students. The three claims below support this assertion:

- ***Teachers seemed to believe that implementing Blended Learning and small group instruction would meet the learning needs of the students.***

Teachers believed the structure of Blended Learning created a space for

students to learn the CCSS and strategies to produce proficient readers. They also knew that implementing practices associated with Blended Learning, like stations that focused on the components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel (2000), would help the students become better readers. However, the teachers did not focus on identifying specific pathways to ensure that students gained knowledge of the standards. During interviews, teachers were asked about reading knowledge and practices for reading and about the CCSS. The teachers' responses mirrored specific components of Blended Learning. It was if teachers believed that implementing Blended Learning automatically meant that they were teaching the CCSS and that their students were receiving explicit standards instruction.

- ***Though teachers created stations based upon students' standards needs, emphasis was placed on identifying which technology programs or applications and the types of cooperative group work would be used in the stations.*** Interviews about tasks and activities in stations revealed mainly how students were using technology to complete assignments and how students were working together because cooperative groups allowed students to talk and share ideas. Though teacher implied that the stations addressed the CCSS for reading, teachers did not use terminology in ways that demonstrated that they knew which standards were being addressed. Emphasis was placed on having work for students to complete while at the

station, not necessarily the depth of the activity or task meant to address standards-based learning objectives set by the teacher.

- ***Teachers' knowledge of structures and routines for maintaining and organizing reading instruction grew; however, teachers' knowledge base about CCSS and practices that support implementation of the CCSS did not grow.*** All of the teachers had well-organized classrooms. Students were able to manage themselves and carry out procedures for ensuring that station work was complete and expectations for the stations were met. Teachers grew in understanding how to organize classrooms to operate without teacher intervention while releasing time for the teacher to focus solely on their teacher-led small group. However, teacher's knowledge about the CCSS did not grow along with their learning to implement Blended Learning. While the teachers used relevant key terms associated with reading and limited terms associated with the CCSS for reading, they were unable to speak in detail about the terms as related to practices that support them or why they benefitted the students' learning of reading standards.

Limited Focus and Preparation for Reading and CCSS

Interview and observation data revealed that at Fairmont Elementary there was limited focus and preparation for teaching reading and implementing the CCSS. Data also revealed that teachers had a weak understanding and cursory use of the CCSS to guide reading instruction. While teacher's knowledge base grew in the area of Blended

Learning, by the teachers own admission, teachers' knowledge base for understanding content and pedagogy for reading and the CCSS for reading remained stagnant. Focus of professional development, grade level meetings, and teacher support did not emphasize helping teachers connect the station rotation model of Blended Learning with the CCSS for reading. Five claims support the assertion that Fairmont Elementary had a limited focus on and preparation for reading and the CCSS for reading:

- ***District and school professional development did not support teachers in the development of a deep understanding of the CCSS for reading. Recent professional development has not been focused on preparing teachers with the practices to implement the CCSS.*** The teachers shared that although they talked about standards during meetings, very little emphasis had been placed on deep investigation of the standards. Even less focus had been placed on connecting the instructional frameworks, including Balanced Literacy, with content knowledge and pedagogy for teaching the CCSS.
- ***Outside of the initial training and having small groups of teachers create the initial pacing guide for implementing the standards, no other systematic training has occurred to increase knowledge of the CCSS.*** During the District-wide sessions for teachers to create the District pacing guides, teachers shared that information on understanding and implementing the CCSS was limited. In other words, most of the time included the teachers creating the pacing guide without specific guidance.

Teachers shared that there has been no systematic training for understanding or implementing the CCSS for reading beyond the initial year of implementation.

- ***Teachers are left to understand and implement the standards as individuals through Internet searches. In some cases, the teachers worked together as teams to share ideas, but there has been no systematic way of learning how the standards look in instruction or what resources or strategies can be used to best meet the needs of CCSS learning.*** The teachers shared that they used Internet resources such as Teachers Pay Teachers and Pinterest to search for ideas for implementing the standards. During grade level meeting or collaborative planning sessions, teachers discussed activities that they would use for teaching the different units, but specific conversations about how the activities addressed the CCSS for reading did not happen.
- ***Teachers do not truly understand how understanding the meaning and purpose of the standards influences individual students in their classrooms.*** The teachers believed that grade level standards were too difficult for most of their students. Therefore, teachers did not use the grade level standards from the CCSS. The teachers were also unsure how rigorous and constructivist practices are represented in the standards; therefore, teachers were unable to select activities that met the specific needs of their students.

- *Specific expectations for implementing the standards were not established by the District or school.* Though the District and school had expectations for the instructional frameworks provided, including the use of Blended Learning, there were no expectations set for how the standards would be addressed within the frameworks. Teachers had the freedom to choose their own interpretation of the standards and how the standards would be implemented.

Recommendations

The assertions described above lead me to a series of recommendations for various stakeholders involved in the literacy education of students: district leaders, school administrators, school-based curriculum coaches and lead teachers, and teacher educators. These recommendations are based mainly on what I learned from conducting this study, but also on my own experience as a literacy curriculum facilitator who has worked with teachers to implement the CCSS for the past several years.

District Leaders

District leaders play a key role in how new programs, curriculum, and standards are accepted and implemented in schools. Specifically, for implementing the CCSS, District leaders should be proactive when establishing programs and policies (Durand, Lawson, Wilcox, & Schiller, 2016). Effective District leaders provide clear and consistent communication to principals, teachers, and other professionals in the school settings with regard to the boundaries of the implementation of the CCSS (Durand et al., 2016). To support instruction, District leaders allot resources and curriculum materials

for implementing the CCSS, offer focused professional development on the CCSS, and provide the accompanying resources (Durand et al., 2016). They ensure that all stakeholders have common understandings and work with translating standards, acquiring materials to support the standards, and aligning new standards and practices with existing standards and practices during professional development (Lee, Leary, Sellars, & Recker, 2014). Professional development should be District wide and include outside of District training, but most importantly it should include job-embedded professional development (Bedard, & Mombourquette, 2015). It is also the responsibility of the District leaders to ensure that principals and teachers are comfortable learning and connecting old to new knowledge without feeling overwhelmed by needed changes (Hilden & Pressley, 2007). They also need to prevent teachers from experiencing the stress of having too much to implement too fast (Durand et al., 2016).

Recommendations for district leaders. In collaboration with teachers, administrators, and school leaders, create a common vision aligned with the goals for the CCSS that also identifies common vocabulary that will be used throughout the District (Durand et al., 2016).

- Encourage schools to maintain high-quality instruction aligned to the CCSS while emphasizing the key shifts of the standards (Durand et al., 2016).
- Create a reasonable timeline for preparing and supporting teachers for implementing new programs and new standards. Through discourse, teachers should discuss action steps and implementation procedures.

- Shift resources to align with the district's focus or vision and to provide on-going professional development for principals, teachers, and instructional coaches that provide in-depth understanding of the CCSS (Bedard & Momourquette, 2015; Durand et al., 2016).
- Provide multiple opportunities for collaboration between principals and District leaders, principals and instructional coaches, instructional coaches and teachers, and teachers with other teachers to discuss the CCSS and how to implement the standards (Durand et al., 2016).
- Survey District leaders, principals, and instructional coaches about their theoretical beliefs about reading and their beliefs about standards and programs. Knowing beliefs of all stakeholders can provide opportunities for open dialogue about instructional choices.
- Ensure that district policies and practices are in place that guarantee that teachers who teach reading have solid reading content and standards knowledge. Without teachers who have solid knowledge, most likely that achievement gaps between and among different groups of students will remain the same or grow wider.

School Administrators

Although schools have principals who are designated as the instructional leaders, successful schools have leadership teams and distributed leadership among the principal, curriculum support, and teachers (Hauge, Norenes, & Vedoy, 2014). Principals, who are the instructional leader, should create a space for distributed leadership that allows for a shared vision to implement new programs or curriculum standards (Mitchell, & Castle,

2005). It should be noted that some principals are hesitant about calling themselves instructional leaders because that implies that they are “curriculum experts” (Mitchell & Castle, 2005). Although they do not see themselves as experts, their role includes an understanding of the curriculum and providing teachers positive feedback, discussing teaching strategies, arranging mentoring support, modeling teaching and reflection, and providing materials and resources for teachers (Mitchell & Castell, 2005).

Recommendations for school administrators. With the staff, create a clear vision for implementing the standards and programs that align with the District’s vision and steps for attaining the vision. Materials and resources should match the goals of the vision and the steps towards the vision.

- Provide teachers, other administrators, and curriculum coaches or leaders time to collaborate about the standards, programs, and expectations for implementing the programs. This should include time to establish common vocabulary (Fisher & Frey, 2007; Durand et al., 2016)
- Design professional development to ensure that all teachers understand the core beliefs and values of the new standards and programs for their school (Fisher & Frey, 2007). Specifically, it is important to share how the standards are supported by the programs that teachers are required to implement.
- Focus on grade-level standards with the expectation that (a) the standards are for every child and (b) with the belief that every child should and can meet grade-level expectations (Fisher & Frey, 2007).

- Use observation data to support decisions for school-wide and differentiated professional development. Allow teachers to have input into their areas of growth.
- Provide opportunities during summative and formative evaluation periods for teachers to self-evaluate, allowing teachers to assess their own instruction, beliefs, and attitudes (Olson & Singer, 1994). Such reflection and open discussion with administrators may be an opening for refining, changing, or solidifying beliefs.
- Create a school environment where all teachers become reading specialists or experts in reading content and practices. It is important that the teachers become critical evaluators of the tools and materials that they use for instruction and not select activities and resources because they are cute or convenient. Teachers who become experts in the field of reading will better serve students who are the most at risk for academic failure.

School-Based Curriculum Coaches and Lead Teachers

School-based curriculum coaches or lead teachers take on many responsibilities. They conduct model lessons, co-teach with teachers, and participate in grade level and school curriculum meetings (Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnik, 2010). Coaches help establish a school community that values individual and collective growth in knowledge of new standards and practices (Gallucci, Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010).

Recommendations for school-based curriculum coaches and lead teachers.

- Attend collaborative sessions to support teachers in learning new standards and the practices that support an in-depth understanding of standards with the teachers.

- Coaches must make sense of new ideas about instruction prior to exploring them with teachers (Gallucci et al., 2010), and also make sense of how to teach the same standards to students on different performance levels.
- Survey teachers to determine their beliefs about reading, standards, and their students. Use survey responses to help clarify teacher beliefs and encourage teachers to reflect on what they do and why they do it because such discussions allow teachers to explicitly state what they know and what they do not know (Olson & Singer, 1994).
- Discuss selection and implementation of materials and resources that support the standards and student learning with all stakeholders.
- Support teachers by organizing opportunities for observations, peer-observations, and self-evaluations. These observations must include time for teachers to have dialogue about and reflect on expected changes in their knowledge and practices.

Teacher Educators

Teacher educators are responsible for identifying and shaping the knowledge and beliefs of future teachers about Reading. They are responsible for training pre-service teachers how to reflect on their beliefs and practices and how to make changes or adjustments in Reading instruction. Teacher education programs also can set the stage for pre-service teachers seeing beliefs and knowledge as generative, and always changing with new learning and experiences.

Recommendations for teacher educators.

- Pre-service teachers should reflect on their knowledge and beliefs about reading and reading practices. These reflections should happen throughout undergraduate experiences and courses should focus on helping pre-service teachers realize the natural process of redefining and reevaluating their beliefs and knowledge for teaching Reading.
- Pre-service teachers should have many opportunities to purposefully connect curriculum standards with instructional practices, frameworks, and programs. This will lead to lessons that focus less on the “activity” and more on what they want students to learn.
- Pre-service teachers should be provided opportunities to implement practices that teach grade level standards to children who perform on varied levels.

Limitations

Qualitative case study research is an in-depth analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). Conducting in-depth analysis of a bounded system can create what is viewed by some as limitations because of the limited generalizability of the study and the fact that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). The limitations in this study include: 1) small sample from one school; 2) focus on one school district and school implementing new literacy frameworks; 3) the selection of the teachers by the principal; 4) limited number of interviews and observations; and 5) my role as a novice researcher.

Sample Size

According to Siedman (2006), sufficient numbers of participants are reached when the numbers reflect the entire range of participants. This includes teachers over a range of years of experience, teachers of different ethnicities, teachers with various professional levels of education, and teachers in different grade levels. In my study, there were only six teachers, and they did not represent all of the variations that make up the school population. Therefore, some voices were not heard, and some experiences from different perspectives were not included in the cross-case analysis. In that sense, the number of participants in the study was a limitation.

One School District and One School

This study explored the knowledge and beliefs of teachers implementing the CCSS for reading at one school in one school district at one point in time. Conducting the same study at a different school in this District may result in completely different findings because of the school's implementation practices. This school adopted Blended Learning as their main instructional model for teaching, which may have altered their readiness to focus on the CCSS for reading. Another school may have selected a different framework to support District initiatives. Therefore, a limitation of this study is that it focused on one school within one District; therefore, generalizations about the District are not possible because of this. Another limitation is that the District's literacy framework and Blended Learning may not be required in another school district, so findings may not be generalized to another district that focuses on the CCSS a different way. In sum, the fact that this study took place at one school in one district is a limitation.

Sample Selection

Participants in this study were selected through a process of purposeful selection (Maxwell, 2005). I wanted teachers who had at least one-year of experience implementing the CCSS because I wanted them to have had an opportunity to learn, implement, and reflect on their implementation of CCSS. I also wanted the teachers who were considered to be strong with helping children reach reading proficiency goals. Therefore, I asked the principal to select teachers who met these criteria for the study. He selected teachers who were leaders in their grade level, leaders in the school, and some were also leaders in the district. This is a limitation because the knowledge and beliefs that these teachers had for implementing the CCSS may not be representative of the teacher population within the school or District. So, the sampling procedure is also a limitation of this study.

Limited Interviews and Observations

This study called for interviewing the teachers twice and observing the teachers three times – during reading instruction, science or social studies instruction, and during a grade level planning session. Although I was able to connect information from each of these data collection sources, an increased number of observations and interviews likely would have offered more perspectives about the context in which these teachers teach, the factors that influence their decision-making, and the practices that demonstrate their knowledge and beliefs. Limited interviews and observations are limitations in this study.

My Role as a Researcher

My role as a novice researcher is another limitation in this study. I have been a curriculum coordinator or coach for nine years. During my time as a curriculum coordinator I participated in the initial implementation of the CCSS in the District in which this study took place. Although I have not worked in the District for over 4 years, I am familiar with the initial expectations for implementing the standards. Therefore, my experience as a coordinator and my more recent experience with the CCSS likely filtered how I view and interpret information collected from the teachers in this study. To maintain the fidelity of the study and mitigate threats to validity, I collected multiple sources of data for triangulation and I used member checking. I sent the transcripts and case study analysis to each participant to ensure that I was representing them in a way that was true to who they are as teachers. I also provided thick descriptions of the teachers and the context of the teachers to allow readers to “see” the data as opposed to being told the data.

Future Research

Findings from this study suggest that future research is necessary in implementing new standards and programs simultaneously. Suggested research includes: 1) investigating the alignment between District and school initiatives and curriculum standards; 2) conducting multiple case studies in varied settings; 3) exploring ongoing professional development for being student-centered and standards focused; 4) investigating the content and pedagogical knowledge of school leaders; 5) conducting phenomenological research on the implementation of new standards and programs.

Alignment Between Initiatives and Standards

When I began this study, I wanted to understand the interaction between teachers' knowledge and beliefs about reading and the implementation of the CCSS. Findings from my study revealed that there was a misalignment or gap between implementing new initiatives and standards. Teachers in this study were focused on implementing the programs and framework expected by their school and District, and not necessarily the standards within the framework. Because this study revealed that a gap between new programs and the implementation of standards exists, further research may be needed to reveal why the gap exists and what in the implementation process may be missing.

Multiple Case Studies in Varied Settings

In this school district, all of the schools adopted the District instructional framework; however, individual schools were able to select programs or additional frameworks to enhance the District framework. This particular school selected Blended Learning, but all schools in the District did not. Also, in neighboring counties, different programs and instructional frameworks are used to guide instruction. An expansion of this study into other schools or districts would provide a clearer picture about how teachers are implementing the CCSS in combination with other programs or frameworks and how the implementation corresponds with their knowledge and beliefs.

On-going Professional Development: Student-Centered and Standards Focused

This study focused on a small period of time. I was able to observe several collaborative learning sessions, but did not have the opportunity to study the long-term professional development that introduced and supported the teachers with implementing

the instructional framework and the CCSS. I was unable to see how the instructional design coach supported the teachers and specifically how the teachers supported one another over a set of standards or over an entire unit to support student growth and learning. While these are limitations in this study, they suggest that a more in-depth, longer term study that includes teachers' professional learning opportunities over time is needed.

Content and Pedagogical Knowledge of School Leaders

During this study, I interviewed the District lead teacher, the principal, and the school-based instructional design coach. I noted in their overviews their beliefs and general knowledge of the CCSS and reading. However, because they make the decisions about implementing programs and frameworks, research about their knowledge and beliefs would be important to know. Also, since they are the ones in this District who decide on the adoption of programs, it would be interesting to learn more about their expectations for implementation of the CCSS within the programs they selected and for teachers' professional development. Studying the content and pedagogical knowledge of these leaders, then, would provide more information about decisions that are made at schools and in districts and how they affect teachers' beliefs and practices.

Phenomenological Research

This study investigated teacher's knowledge and beliefs while implementing the CCSS for reading. It allowed me a bird's eye view of the dynamics teachers were experiencing while trying to implement both the CCSS and new instructional frameworks within their knowledge base. A phenomenological study would allow the investigation of

the complex issue of implementing the CCSS through District and school instructional frameworks by examining the experience of the teachers and the meanings the teachers make of the experience (Seidman, 2006). Teachers in a phenomenological study would be provided the opportunity to explain their specific feelings and experiences without focusing mainly on the content knowledge and pedagogy that teachers may or may not possess. Although I have data in my case study about the knowledge, beliefs, practices, and a few of the feelings of the teachers, a phenomenological study would have allowed me to understand the experiences of the teachers through their eyes. This kind of insider perspective is important to help researchers better understand what the experiences of implementing new standards and programs means to teachers (Lodico, Spalding, and Voegtle, 2010), and it gives them a stronger voice in this process.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers' knowledge and beliefs influenced how they implemented the CCSS and how implementing the CCSS affected or changed teachers' knowledge and beliefs. Findings revealed that teachers' knowledge about reading and the CCSS was not strong. Instead, their prior beliefs and beliefs about students influenced their practices. Although teachers self-identified as constructivist, the teachers in this study used mainly traditional practices during instruction. Findings also revealed that while shifts and changes occurred in teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices, the changes did not occur because of implementing the CCSS, which would have aligned with the purpose of the study. Instead, changes that occurred were because of their efforts to implement new District and school frameworks. Teachers were willing

to make changes to what they did in the classroom and welcomed the new frameworks to help their children grow. However, the teachers did not have solid content or pedagogical knowledge to implement the new ways of teaching effectively. Finally, the study found that teachers implemented the CCSS the way that they did based on expectations for students to do well on the state assessments, beliefs teachers had about their students' abilities, school and District expectations, and based on the materials and support provided from online resources. Attending to the findings of this study may help District leaders, principals, and school-based curriculum leaders make decisions about how to implement new programs and standards, such as the CCSS, in a way that is most beneficial for content and pedagogical content knowledge for teachers.

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APPENDIX A

LITERACY ORIENTATION SURVEY (LOS)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Read the following statements, and circle the response that indicates your feelings or behaviors regarding literacy and literacy instruction.

1. The purpose of reading instruction is to teach children to recognize words and to pronounce the correctly.

strongly disagree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly agree

2. When students read text, I ask them questions such as “What does it mean?”

never 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 always

3. Reading and writing are unrelated processes.

strongly disagree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly agree

4. When planning instruction, I take into account the needs of children by including activities that meet their social, emotional, physical, and affective needs.

never 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 always

5. Students should be treated as individual learners rather than as a group.

strongly disagree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly agree

6. I schedule time every day for self-selected reading and writing experiences.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

7. Students should use “fix-up strategies” such as rereading when text meaning is unclear.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

8. Teachers should read aloud to students on a daily basis.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

9. I encourage my students to monitor their comprehension as they read.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

10. I use a variety of prereading strategies with my students.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

11. It is not necessary for students to write text on a daily basis.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

12. Students should be encouraged to sound out all unknown words.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

13. The purpose of reading is to understand print.

strongly disagree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly agree

14. I hold parent workshops or send home newsletters with ideas about how parents can help their children with school.

never 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 always

15. I organize my classroom so that my students have an opportunity to write in at least one subject every day.

never 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 always

16. I ask the parents of my students to share their time, knowledge, and expertise in my classroom.

never 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 always

17. Writers in my classroom generally move through the processes of prewriting, drafting, and revising.

never 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 always

18. In my class, I organize reading, writing, speaking, and listening around key concepts.

never 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 always

19. Reading instruction should always be delivered to the whole class at the same time.

strongly disagree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly agree

20. I teach using themes or integrated units.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

21. Grouping for reading instruction should always be based on ability.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

22. Subjects should be integrated across the curriculum.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

23. I use a variety of grouping patterns to teach reading such as skill groups,
interest groups, whole group, and individual instruction.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

24. Students need to write for a variety of purposes.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

25. I like to take advantage of opportunities to learn about teaching by attending
professional conferences and/or graduate classes and by reading professional
journals.

never
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
always

26. Parents' attitudes toward literacy affect my students' progress.

strongly
disagree
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
strongly
agree

27. The major purpose of reading assessment is to determine a student's placement in the basal reader.

strongly disagree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly agree

28. I assess my students' reading progress primarily by teacher-made and/or book tests.

never 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 always

29. Parental reading habits in the home affect their children's attitudes towards reading.

strongly disagree 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 strongly agree

30. At the end of the day, I reflect on the effectiveness of my instructional decisions.

never 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 always

APPENDIX B

INTERPRETING YOUR LOS SCORE

1. Plot your Total Score on the line.

90 95 100 105 110 115 120 **125** **130** **135** **140** **145**
Traditional teacher Eclectic teacher Constructivist teacher

2. If your score is in the 90-110 range, you are most likely a traditional teacher.
If your score is in the 110-125 range, you are most likely an eclectic teacher.
If your score is in the **125-145** range, you are most likely a constructivist teacher.

3. Plot your Beliefs Score on the line.

45 46 47 48 49 50 **51** 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 **61** 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 **69** 70 71 72

4. If your score is closest to 51, you have beliefs similar to a traditional teacher.
If your score is closest to 61, you have beliefs similar to an eclectic teacher.
If your score is closest to 69, you have beliefs similar to a constructivist teacher.

5. Plot your Practice Score.

45 46 47 48 49 50 **51** 52 53 54 55 **56** 57 58 59 60 61 62 **63** 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72

6. If your score is closest to 51, you have beliefs similar to a traditional teacher.
If your score is closest to 56, you have beliefs similar to an eclectic teacher.
If your score is closest to 63, you have beliefs similar to a constructivist teacher.

7. List your Beliefs Score _____. List your Practice Score _____.

8. If your Beliefs Score is higher than your Practice Score, you have not yet found a way to incorporate your constructivist beliefs in your classroom.

If your Practice Score is higher than your Beliefs Score, you need to think about why you make the instructional decisions that you do.

1. Plot your Total Score on the line.
2. If your score is in the 90-110 range, you are most likely a traditional teacher.
3. Plot your Beliefs Score on the line.
4. If your score is closest to 51, you have beliefs similar to a traditional teacher.
5. Plot your Practice Score.
6. If your score is closest to 51, you have beliefs similar to a traditional teacher.

7. List your Beliefs Score _____. List your Practice Score _____.
8. If your Beliefs Score is higher than your Practice Score, you have not yet found a way to incorporate your constructivist beliefs in your classroom.

If your Practice Score is higher than your Beliefs Score, you need to think about why you make the instructional decision you do.

Definitions of Teaching Practices

Traditional teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses traditional reading methods such as basal reading instruction• teaches using primarily direct instruction• thinks about students as being “blank slates”
Eclectic teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses some traditional and some constructivist reading methods• uses conflicting instructional methods• unsure about how students learn
Constructivist teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• has primarily an integrated curriculum• practices holistic instruction• views students as using prior knowledge to construct meaning

APPENDIX C

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Pre-observation Interview:

- Share as much as possible about yourself as a teacher of reading beginning with their first year of teaching.
- Talk about your view of teaching reading.
- Talk about how you were prepared to implement the Common Core State Standards.
- Talk about how you implement the Common Core State Standards
- What are some things you take into consideration when you are planning for teaching the Common Core State Standards?

Post-observation Interview:

- Given what you shared about your preparation for teaching reading and the Common Core State Standards, and what you shared about how you implement your understandings,
- Talk about how you have evolved as a reading teacher since the adoption of the Common Core State Standards
- Talk about changes that you have made in reading instruction since the adoption of the CCSS.
- Talk about changes in the content areas that have been made since the adoption of the CCSS for English language arts.
- Talk about how you teach the CCSS to meet the needs of your students.

APPENDIX D

PRINCIPAL/DISTRICT LEADER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview:

- Share the district/school vision for reading instruction.
- Talk about what the district/school has done to prepare teachers for this vision.
- Talk about how teachers were prepared to implement the Common Core State Standards.
- Talk about areas of reading instruction and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards that you would like to see changed. In what ways?

APPENDIX E

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Teacher Knowledge	Observation Notes
<p style="text-align: center;">Key Ideas and Details</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read closely • Cite specific evidence to support conclusions • Determine and analyze development of central ideas or themes • Summarize key ideas and details • Analyze how people, settings, and events develop and interact 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Craft and Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret words and phrases • Analyze word choice • Analyze text structure and how portions of text relates • Assess how point of view or purpose shapes content and text style 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate content from different media formats • Evaluate content from different media formats • Delineate between arguments and claims in text • Evaluate arguments and claims in text • Analyze how texts address similar themes or topics to build or compare knowledge 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read complex text independently and proficiently • Comprehend complex text independently and proficiently 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Classroom Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative learning • Listening • Speaking 	

Teacher Knowledge	Observation Notes
Teacher Pedagogy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated literacy • Content area reading • Close reading • Vocabulary • Writing 	
Instructional Materials and Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex text • Technology • Informational text • Text-dependent questions 	

Observation Data for Implementing Common Core State Standards

Whole Group/Small Group/Content Area Observation Type 1:

- Evidence of teacher knowledge and beliefs that align or misalign with CCSS
- Evidence of teacher practices that align with CCSS
- Evidence of Classroom Environment that supports CCSS
- Evidence of Materials and Resources that support CCSS

Whole Group/Small Group/Content Area Observation Type 2:

- Teacher-student interactions
- Student-student interactions
- Types of tasks
- Independent practice, scaffolded practice, guided practice

Observation data for Discussing Common Core State Standards and Instruction

Grade Level Planning Session Observation:

- Evidence of teacher knowledge and beliefs that align or misalign with CCSS
- Evidence of teacher practices that align with CCSS
- Evidence of Planning Environment that supports CCSS
- Evidence of Materials and Resources that support CCSS

APPENDIX F

RESEARCH DESIGN DIAGRAM: IMPLEMENTING COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

	Procedure	Product
1. Participant Selection:	Purposefully selecting 8 teachers (Grades 3-5)	6-8 Participants
2. Interview Protocol Development	Semi-structured open-ended Focused on the research questions	Interview Protocol
3. Data Collection	Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS) Teachers will take the survey prior to the first interview Data will be analyzed on the LOS Interpretation sheet.	Literacy Orientation Survey LOS Interpretation Sheet Analytic Memos of my thinking while analyzing data
	Individual in-depth face-to-face Interviews with 8 teachers Interviewer Notes/Audio tapes	Audio data (interview) Text data (interview transcripts and interviewer notes)
	Individual observations Observe the 8 teachers Observe a week of lessons Observe all areas of reading instruction, including content areas Observer Notes/Audio tapes	Observation data Audio data (observation) Transcripts and observer notes
3. Data Analysis	Analytic Memos Diagraming Case Study Database Theme development Thematic Analysis & Cross-Case Analysis	Memos about my thinking Diagrams and Graphic Organizers Similar and different themes and categories
4. Interpretation of Results	Interpretation and explanation of results	Discussion Implications Future Research

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW MATRIX: TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS THROUGH THE CCSS

Research Questions	Why do I need to know this?	What do I need to know?
RQ1: What do teachers reveal about their knowledge and beliefs about reading and how they implement the CCSS because of their knowledge and beliefs?	<p>To uncover how the teachers see themselves as teachers of reading. (RQ1, 2, & 3)</p> <p>To discover how the teachers were prepared to teach the Standards and how teachers may feel about their preparation. (RQ1, 2, & 3)</p>	<p>Interview(s) Before Observation: Share as much as possible about yourself as a teacher of reading beginning with your first year of teaching. (RQ1, 2, &3)</p> <p>Talk about your view of teaching reading. Talk about your view of teaching Common Core State Standards. (RQ3)</p>
RQ2: What, if any, shifts or changes do teachers describe or report in their knowledge and beliefs about reading during their implementation of the CCSS?	<p>To discover how teachers implement the Standards. (RQ1, 2, & 3)</p> <p>To discover how contextual factors influence teacher's implementation of the CCSS for reading. (RQ3)</p>	<p>Talk about how you were prepared to implement the Common Core State Standards. (RQ1, 2, &3)</p> <p>Interview(s) After Observation: Will be determined based on previous interviews and observations (RQ1, 2, &3)</p>
RQ3: What do teachers say about why they implement the CCSS the way that they have chosen to implement the CCSS?	<p>To triangulate data from first interview and observations. (RQ3)</p> <p>What are some things you take into consideration when you are planning for teaching the Common Core State Standards? (RQ3)</p>	<p>Talk about how you implement the Common Core State Standards throughout the instructional day. (RQ1&2)</p> <p>In what ways has your teaching of reading changed since the CCSS. (RQ2)</p> <p>Talk about how your students influence how you implement the CCSS. (RQ3)</p> <p>Talk about the influence that the school, district, and state has had on your implementation of the CCSS (RQ3)</p>

APPENDIX H

OBSERVATION MATRIX: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CCSS

	What do I need to know?	Why do I need to know this?
RQ1: What do teachers reveal about their knowledge and beliefs about reading and how they implement the CCSS because of their knowledge and beliefs?	Observation of Teacher Pedagogy (RQ1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Literacy • Content Area Reading • Close Reading • Vocabulary • Writing 	To uncover how the teachers see themselves as teachers of reading.
RQ2: What, if any, shifts or changes do teachers describe or report in their knowledge and beliefs about reading during their implementation of the CCSS?	Observation of Classroom Resources/Materials (RQ1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex Text • Technology • Informational Text • Text-Dependent Questions 	To discover how the teachers were prepared to teach the Standards and the reading program according to the teachers. To discover how the teacher implements the Standards and the reading program
RQ3: What do teachers say about why they implement the CCSS the way that they have chosen to implement the CCSS?	Observation of Classroom Context (RQ1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative Learning • Listening • Speaking 	To discover how the teacher creates an environment for implementing the standards.
	Observation of Professional Planning Meeting (RQ1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for whole group instruction • Planning for individual or small group instruction • Discussion of the standards and instructional implications 	To discover teacher knowledge and beliefs as related to reading instruction and the CCSS. To discover how teachers vary instruction for various groups of students