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Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards

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ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

WILBURN-SIMMONS, ADRIENNE J.  B.S. UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI, 2002
                              M.ED. GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY, 2008

TEACHER PERCEPTION OF THE EFFICACY OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL
SUPPORT RECEIVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE
COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Committee Chair:  Dr. Barbara Hill

Dissertation dated May 2014

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how teachers perceive the instructional support provided by district and school level administrators in implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The independent variables were staff development, small group development, direct individual assistance, technology, teacher age, and teacher years of experience. The dependent variable was teacher perception of the efficacy of the instructional support received. The phenomenological approach was specifically chosen for this study to give a voice to teachers who, for the majority, are often left unheard in the policy making process. By focusing on the similarities of the participants’ experiences, the stories collected in this study will help school and district level leadership in identifying how they can best support teachers in implementing the Common Core standards.
The study took place in a metropolitan school district bolstering nearly 99,000 students. Schools were selected to participate using maximum variation sampling. This type of sampling ensures that findings reflect differences in perspective, which is ideal in qualitative study (Creswell, 2007). Schools were selected according to the following descriptors: Title I status, ethnicity of student population, English proficiency of student population, disabilities of student population, grade level of student population, and College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) Score of the school. The participants represented elementary, middle, and high school settings.

The data collected during this study were analyzed using the phenomenology research procedures of Moustakas (1994). The research resulted in a collection of significant statements that were clustered to define themes. The 11 themes were extracted from 28 teacher surveys, 5 teacher interviews, and 3 school-level administrator interviews. The findings of the study revealed that school level instructional support was perceived more favorable than district level instructional support in all areas: staff development, group development, and direct individual assistance. Small group development at both the district and school level was engaging, allowing teachers to discuss, plan, and create during the time spent together. Approximately half of the participants in the study indicated that they never received direct individual assistance from administrators neither at the district nor school level. Participants expressed positive perception regarding the technological training they received and the impact it had not only on their instruction, but their administrative skill as well.
TEACHER PERCEPTION OF THE EFFICACY OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT RECEIVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

ADRIENNE J. WILBURN-SIMMONS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 2014
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”  Jeremiah 29:11

The milestone I have embarked upon with the completion of this work is only possible as a result of love, support, and encouragement. I first give honor to God for the intellect and perseverance he has bestowed upon me. My parents, Archie and Dorris Wilburn, have truly set the bar as I embrace my role as servant leader. I am continually amazed by their demonstration of faithfulness.

The love of my life, Jamar Simmons, has developed in me a confidence beyond measure. Even when I doubted myself, he believed in me. With the birth of my daughter I am even more driven to achieve my dreams. I strive to be an example for her in setting goals and working relentlessly to accomplish them. Each of my sisters, along with numerous friends and family members, made this journey a more bearable one as they praised my efforts while lifting me in prayer.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my Clark Atlanta University support system. The last four years have been tough, but with my dissertation chair, Dr. Barbara Hill, committee members, Dr. Turner and Dr. Gregory, and endearing classmates, I was motivated to “dominate” and not grow weary. Thank you all for the instrumental role you have played in my life. I am forever grateful for the dedication you have exercised in equipping me for future endeavors.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

*Waiting for Superman* (Weber, 2010) is a title in and of itself that elicits a sense of anticipation. A belief that someone is coming not only to save the day, but to save the state of education in the United States of America. However, this work, inspired by Davis Guggenheim’s documentary, makes the case that there is no superhero on the way. There is no immortal being with superpowers showing up to ensure a happy ending. Instead the education system is left in the hands of mere mortals—ordinary people comprised of varying backgrounds, beliefs, and socioeconomic statuses vying to redefine American schooling. Some committed to reform, no matter how drastic, necessary to propel even the most at-risk students to levels of proficiency. Director Guggenheim asserts that cynicism and hopelessness is widespread when it comes to public education. He emphasizes that people do not want to suffer the discomfort and pain upon realizing how serious the problem is, especially when they believe they cannot do anything about it (Weber, 2010). However, what these same individuals may fail to realize is that educational achievement influences a country’s economic growth (Hanushek, 2010, cited in Weber, 2010). If the United States is to be positioned as a global competitor, the academic achievement levels of America’s youth must be advanced.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) projects that by the year 2020 there will be at least 200 million 25-34 year-olds with higher
education degrees across all the OECD and G20 countries. Of the 200 million people with tertiary degrees, 40% of them will be from China and India. Juxtaposed to the United States and European Union countries, only about 25% of people with higher education degrees in OECD and G20 countries will originate from these regions (Garcia de Leon, Heckman, & Gonzalez, 2012). The U.S. growth rate in regards to population with a tertiary education is 1.4%, the lowest of the 34 countries monitored by the OECD. A college education is now a minimum requirement in filling many jobs. Americans falling behind in attaining a higher degree implies that they will be disadvantaged in becoming employed. While the United States’ gross domestic product per capita remains fairly high indicating a quality standard of living, this current reality appears to be threatened if measures are not taken to secure the future employability of citizens.

The year 2012 marked the implementation of a national set of academic standards. Of the 50 United States, 45 adopted the Common Core State Standards. This is how America is approaching the problem of its’ citizens employability level; through ensuring graduates are college and career ready as a result of a rigorous-standard driven curriculum. Like all new initiatives however, there are some gaps. One of these gaps is in the rollout of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). There is no standardized approach for states to follow in transitioning to a new set of standards. Individual states are differentiating their approach in supporting teachers as they implement the CCSS into classroom instruction. This study examined how teachers perceive the support provided by school and district level administrators.
In *Audacity of Hope*, President Obama (2006) shares his political stance on the issue of competitiveness in the global economy. He proclaims that our educational system must be revamped and our teaching corps replenished if we are to exert a competitive advantage. He charges that math and science instruction must be a priority. Furthermore, inner-city children must be granted equal opportunity in evading illiteracy. During a trip President Obama toured the headquarters of Google located in Silicon Valley, California. Although astounded by the technological innovations of the company, what stood out more-so for the President was the dire underrepresentation of blacks and Latinos employed by Google. In response to his inquiry regarding this observation his tour guide stated that finding American-born engineers, regardless of race, was difficult. As a result, many companies in Silicon Valley rely heavily on workforce from foreign countries. To address America’s flailing competitive edge in the global economy the Obama administration supports identifying reforms that have a significant impact on student achievement and directing governmental resources to adequately fund them. In 2009, the Race to the Top initiative emerged.

The Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative was presented to states as a competition in securing funding to support innovation, reform, and excellence in the K-12 educational setting. President Obama, alongside his Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, announced RTTT to the nation on July 24, 2009.

America will not succeed in the 21st century unless we do a far better job of educating our sons and daughters . . . And the race starts today. I am issuing a challenge to our nation’s governors and school boards, principals and teachers,
businesses and non-profits, parents and students: if you set and enforce rigorous and challenging standards and assessments; if you put outstanding teachers at the front of the classroom; if you turn around failing schools, your state can win a Race to the Top grant that will not only help students out compete workers around the world, but let them fulfill their God-given potential (para. 5, 11).

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, signed into legislation by President Obama, dedicated over $4 billion dollars to the RTTT fund. Educational reform areas identified in the grant are: (a) implementing college and career ready standards (now known as the Common Core State Standards) and assessments, (b) building data systems to improve upon instruction, (c) developing and supporting great teachers and leaders, and (d) improving persistently low-performing schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). States applying for the competitive funding earned points based on the selection criteria listed in Table 1.

In preparing to apply for this historic grant opportunity, 48 states were prompted to adopt common standards for grades K-12 (The Washington Post Company, 2010). Gewertz (2012) asserts that there have been unsustainable attempts at creating a shared set of educational expectations since the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report warned of American mediocrity in academia. However, a set of common standards has finally come to fruition through the collaborative efforts of the National Governors Association Center (NGA Center) for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) with funding provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and others (Anderson, 2010).
Table 1

_Race to the Top Selection Criteria_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Success Factors</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards and Assessments</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Systems to Support Instruction</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Teachers and Leaders</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning Around the Lowest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving Schools</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Selection Criteria</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on Science, Technology,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>500</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The NGA Center in partnership with the CCSSO initiated and led efforts in the development of the Common Core State Standards. The standards were drafted by teachers, educational administrators, and experts from across the nation in working to provide consistent academic benchmarks for students irrespective of where they live. The CCSS define what students should know and be able to do within their kindergarten through twelfth grade education experience if they are to be college and career ready upon graduation. They act as a roadmap for educators and parents in helping children to succeed in school. As of November 2012, 45 states and 3 territories have adopted the CCSS (NGA Center and CCSO, 2012).
The goal of the NGA Center and the CCSSO in developing common standards is to ensure students consistently receive a quality education no matter what state they live in. While the standards specify the knowledge and skills that must be taught in schools, the initiative does not dictate how teachers are to teach the standards. For some classroom educators, this is a relief, allowing for creativity and flexibility. Coming off the heels of No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) and the national Reading First initiative, the CCSS initiative appears to take on less of a one-size-fits all approach to literacy and more of a differentiate instruction to meet the needs of your students approach. However, many other educators do not feel adequately equipped to implement the CCSS in their classrooms.

Numerous studies have found that a teacher’s instructional range increases only when the principal provides support that is precociously designed (Berube, 2004; Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Gimbel, 2003; Halfacre & Halfacre, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1992; Zimmerman, 2006). Gimbel (2011) stresses that when principals assume the position of staff developers; they play an integral role in sustaining school improvement. Staff development is one of the five tasks of supervision identified by Glickman (1985) that directly impact instructional practices. The other four tasks are action research, direct assistance, group development, and curriculum development. Pajak’s (1989) research found that practitioners ranked staff development (professional growth) the second most important indicator in defining supervision. Other tasks defining supervision include direct assistance, group development, curriculum development, action research, communication, planning and change (collaborative work), observation and
conferencing, problem solving and decision making, motivating and organizing, research and program evaluation, personal development, and community relations (Glickman, 1985; Pajak, 1989). Blasé and Blasé (2004) share the following research on instructional supervision:

Short [1995] concludes that the *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*—the primary source of published scholarly work in supervision in North America—has featured a dearth of research on supervision. Several authors have made the case for more research into the effects of supervision on teacher behavior, how supervision relates to teaching, supervisor characteristics, and conditions necessary for effective supervision. (p. 9)

This study contributes to the contemporary literature on instructional supervision. The research uncovered supportive practices that assist teachers in managing curricular change resulting from the Race to the Top reform.

**Statement of the Problem**

Mandated changes don't fit into the local environment without thoughtful consideration… The political reach into our schools is one that is not changing. So we must do our best to make the changes fit our local environment . . . A challenge for leaders now, more than ever, is to carry the weight of the mandate while working with faculty to create the best implementation for each school while remembering the children. (Berkowicz & Myers, 2013, para. 7-8).

The Common Core State Standards are now collaboratively utilized by 45 states and 3 territories. While the majority of the National Education Association’s three
million members support adopting the CCSS, many of them do not feel they are properly trained to implement the standards. Approximately two-thirds of the association’s members reported participating in Common Core training, but only about 25% believed the training was helpful (Bidwell, 2013). There is no standardized approach in training teachers as they implement the new set of standards. Local districts must design their own professional development to meet the needs of their teachers.

In the metropolitan Atlanta school district studied, administrators were providing various types of instructional support to teachers in implementing the CCSS. Staff development, small group development such as grade level meetings, and direct individual assistance were some of the supportive provisions extended. Due to the nonstandardized approach in providing instructional support across schools, teachers were experiencing varying levels of self-efficacy in implementing the CCSS. This research investigated the perceptions of teachers, regarding the most effective type of instructional support provided by school and county level administrators.

The district studied operates 135 public schools with over 98,700 students being served. Approximately 88% of the students are non-white. Nearly three quarters of the student population qualify for free and reduced price lunch indicating that the majority of the schools in the district receive Title I funding. See Table 2 for a more detailed description of the district inclusive of achievement data taken from the district’s website.
Table 2

*Description of the District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the District</th>
<th>Number or Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Schools</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>98,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Languages Spoken by Students</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Population Identified as Non-White</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Population Receiving Free or Reduced Price Lunch</td>
<td>71.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students Proficient on the 2011 English Language Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia High School Graduation Test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students Proficient on the 2011 Math Georgia High School Graduation Test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students Proficient on the 2011 Reading/English Language Arts Criterion Reference Competency Test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>70%</td>
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Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the District</th>
<th>Number or Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of Students Proficient on the 2011 Math Criterion

Reference Competency Test

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barbara Kapinus, a former senior policy analyst at the National Education Association who assisted in shaping the standards posits that educators are not accustomed to implementing the type of instruction necessitated by the CCSS (Gewertz, 2012). Not all teachers in the metropolitan Atlanta school district were clear regarding what they should teach and how they were to teach it. While training was offered before the school year began on what the new standards were going to be, there was limited training provided on how to instruct using the new standards. Some novice teachers appeared to be in disarray as many lacked innovative teaching ability, a requirement now that the scripted approaches prescribed by No Child Left Behind 10 years ago have fallen by the wayside (Gewertz, 2012). When the District offered curriculum training in October 2012, school had already been in session for three months and it was not mandatory for all teachers to attend. According to participants of the Unpublished
Qualitative Study Teacher Questionnaire administered by Simmons (see Appendix A), some teachers in the county studied felt as though training and support were not timely. Teachers expressed feelings of incompetency and being ill-equipped to implement the new Common Core State Standards into their instruction.

In his book *Reforming Education*, Levin (2001, cited in Preedy, Glatter, & Wise, 2003), analyzes a variety of reforms, identifying stricter curriculum guidelines as one. He studies the political origins of reform, the implementation processes supportive of reform, and the results of reform for communities, schools, and students. Levin asserts the following in his work,

> The word ‘reform’ often has a positive normative character, implying something desirable…However, when “changes examined are driven primarily by the political apparatus of government rather than by educators or bureaucrats, and justified on the basis of the need for a very substantial break from current practice…then outcomes are likely to be shaped by the resistance [of policy] as well as the intentions. (p. 33)

To circumvent this "resistance" requires strong leadership—leadership that can facilitate ease during periods of transition. Teachers look to their administrators for guidance and support on how to navigate reform within the organization.

A number of writers (e.g. Senge, 1990) have argued that in the face of increasingly complex environments, organizations must be oriented to learning as a way of coping with change . . . What has gone before and how people think
about their present situation shape what is either desirable or possible at any given point in a jurisdiction. (Preedy et al., 2003, p. 40)

In the context of this study, it was the expectation that principals, assistant principals, and additional leadership personnel such as teacher leaders and central office administrators were active in helping teachers to manage changes to the academic standards. This study examined how teachers perceive instructional support in implementing the CCSS. The results from this study have the ability to contribute findings that will minimize the number of teachers experiencing inadequate instructional supervision by equipping administrators in providing effective types of support.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers perceive the instructional support provided by administrators in implementation of the CCSS. The phenomenological approach was chosen specifically for this study to give a voice to teachers who, for the majority, are often left unheard in the policy making process. There are approximately 13,000 teachers in the metropolitan Atlanta school district studied. However, for purposes of this research, the study included only four schools. The teachers in these four schools had a story to tell. This study served to empower the teachers participating in the study, as they were finally provided a time and space to vocalize their experiences in hopes of positively impacting instructional support practices. By focusing on the similarities of the participants’ experiences, the stories collected in this study will help school and district level leadership in identifying how they can best support teachers in implementing the new CCSS.
Research Questions

RQ1: What is the goal of administrators in preparing teachers to implement the Common Core Standards?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive staff development provided by district level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?

RQ3: How do teachers perceive staff development provided by school level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?

RQ4: How do teachers perceive small group development provided by district level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?

RQ5: How do teachers perceive small group development provided by school level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?

RQ6: How do teachers perceive direct assistance provided by district level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?

RQ7: How do teachers perceive direct assistance provided by school level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?

RQ8: What role does technology play in the preparation of teachers in implementing the Common Core State Standards?

RQ9: What effect do years of experience have on teacher perception of instructional support in implementing the Common Core State Standards?

RQ10: What effect does age have on teacher perception of instructional support in implementing the Common Core State Standards?
Significance of the Study

The widespread influence of the Common Core State Standards, not only in regards to the American education system, but the American economic and business industries as well, is relatively summed up as follows:

The Business Roundtable announced last month that its #1 priority is the full adoption and implementation of the Common Core standards. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is likewise making a full-court press to advance the Common Core. Major corporations have taken out full-page ads to insist that the Common Core must be adopted. Many leading figures in the Republican Party, like Jeb Bush, have led the charge for Common Core, as have entrepreneurs like Joel Klein. And the project has become a centerpiece for President Obama's Department of Education. (Cody, 2013, para. 2)

With politicians, educators, and the community at-large now focused on the connection between literacy and national affairs, the federal government has concerned itself with matters that were once left in the hands of state and local governance. The significance of this study stems from the unprecedented development and implementation of a nationwide set of common core educational standards in the United States of America. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 served as a stepping stone in standardizing American education with a focus on,

Increased accountability for States, school districts, and schools; greater choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low-performing schools; more flexibility for States and local educational agencies (LEAs) in the use of
federal education dollars; and a stronger emphasis on reading, especially for our

Under the presidency of Barack Obama, The NGA Center and CCSSO took the
standardization efforts of President George Bush’s cabinet a step further in working to
ensure all students receive a quality education. The result is a set of standards that 45
states and 3 territories are collaboratively utilizing to shape school curriculum.
Nevertheless, there is no standardized approach in training teachers and school
administrators in implementing the new curriculum fueled by the Common Core State
Standards. Local districts must design their own staff development training to meet the
needs of their teachers and administrators.

Accompanying the historical move toward a national curriculum is the
introduction of a new evaluation system for teachers included in the study. The County
in this research was selected as one of the 26 Race to the Top school districts in the state
of Georgia, and as such was awarded funding to implement the state’s RTTT plan
(Georgia Department of Education, 2012). Included in the plan is the Teacher Keys
Evaluation System (TKES) system. The system defines Teacher Effectiveness Measure
based on three components: (a) Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards, (b)
Surveys of Instructional Practice, and (c) Student Growth and Academic Achievement.
The overarching goal of this new system is to ensure consistency in the development of
teachers coupled with continuous growth.

Of significance to this study is how the TKES evaluation was used by
administrators: was TKES used solely as a tool to label teachers exemplary, proficient, in
need of development; or was TKES used as a means to cultivate teacher improvement efforts. “School-based administrative and professional leadership play essential roles in determining the meaning and value of teacher evaluation in schools, and how teacher evaluation can extend beyond its ritualistic traditions to improve teaching and learning” (Davis, 2002, p. 288). Administrative use of TKES to drive professional learning would be ideal as teachers are in need of support in teaching the CCSS.

This study provides ground-breaking insight on how administrators can effectively support implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Because the CCSS were just recently implemented within the last year, there is limited research on how teachers are being supported in the process. The findings of this study describe how school and district level administrators are supporting their teachers during curriculum reform. The work serves as a reference for researchers and practitioners in studying, planning, and executing instructional supervision techniques. According to Blasé and Blasé (2004), “There are no published comprehensive descriptions of how instructional supervision is actually practiced in schools and how teachers are affected by such supervision” (p. 4). Research conducted in this study, therefore, provides a much needed contribution to literature in the areas of educational leadership, instructional supervision, and instructional support.

**Summary**

The Race to the Top initiative is having a significant impact on teachers across the country. Despite the long standing history of common curriculum in countries such as Japan where educational governance and power is practiced at the center level (Preedy et
al., 2012), 2012 marks the first attempt at implementing a national set of academic standards in U.S. history. The present emphasis on America’s global competitive advantage regarding academic achievement has resulted in a national curriculum, the Common Core State Standards. The standards were adopted by 45 states and 3 territories. The innovative curriculum specifies what students should know and be able to do. However, no standardized approach exists on how to train and support teachers in implementing the new curriculum. While the Common Core State Standards being implemented across the country are the same, the instructional support provided by district and school level administrators is not. Teachers are receiving varied levels of support from administrators in terms of type and quality. With the rollout of a new curriculum founded on CCSS, teachers are relying on their administrators to adequately support them in making sense of the new standards in order to provide rigorous instruction, ensuring student achievement.

This study granted educators a voice. The select teachers included in the research had a platform to share as it relates to instructional support practices evident in their reality. The varied, lived experiences of teachers receiving support from administrators in implementing the CCSS were collected and analyzed to make meaning. Their stories now contribute to the literature on instructional supervision. Ultimately, the research exists to support administrators in cultivating teacher improvement to enhance academic achievement.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

The school district in the study has adopted a new set of educational standards, the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. The literature review begins with a focus on the new standards and the role of educational leaders in facilitating instructional change. Leaders are expected to guide followers in adapting to change. One of the twenty-one responsibilities of school leaders as identified by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) is being a change agent which entails willingness to lead change initiatives despite uncertain outcomes. Fullan (2001) proclaims that change agents do not “live more peacefully, but . . . they can handle more uncertainty—and conflict—and are better at working through complex issues in ways that energize rather than deplete the commitment to the organizational members” (p.15).

The review continues on to examine educational leaders as instructional supervisors. Instructional supervision is a task undertaken by leadership to ensure teaching and learning. Supervisors can provide many forms of support including staff development, small group development, and direct individual assistance. The literature defines these different forms of instructional support and furthermore vets the influence of technology, age, and years of experience on teacher implementation of the new standards with consideration of teacher perception.
The Common Core Georgia Performance Standards

Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue served as the National Governors Association co-chairman in leading the initiative that resulted in the national set of CCSS. In 2010, Georgia was one of the first states to formally adopt the new standards to be named the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). The CCGPS were heavily influenced by the previous Georgia Performance Standards that were adopted in 2004. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute conducted independent research that reported 75% alignment of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) with the new common standards (Rickman, 2013). The report identified strengths inherit within the GPS and furthermore highlighted areas in English language arts and math where the CCSS added value, or enhanced, the standards already being implemented in Georgia. According to Rickman, of the students who graduated under the previous Georgia standards, nearly half of them required remediation in college which costs the state more than $22 million a year. Additionally, only about 20% of them will graduate from college.

Rickman, director of policy and research for the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, further emphasizes that by 2020 Georgia is predicted to have increased in the number of jobs by 1.5 million. However, only nearly 42% of Georgia’s adult population currently meets the predicted requirements of the new jobs with approximately 60% requiring education beyond high school. The current skill level of Georgia’s workforce does not meet the economic growth plan of the state. The CCGPS have therefore been adopted to support Georgia’s economic vision.
The Role of Leaders in Facilitating Instructional Change

In their article *Essential Leadership Elements in Implementing Common Core State Standards*, Eilers and D’Amico (2012) assert that,

Unlike some past initiatives that dictated curriculum, assessment instruments, and pacing of instruction, these standards do not dictate how teachers must teach. The development and implementation of curriculum to meet these goals is left to individual states, districts, schools, and specifically the school leaders. (p. 46)

School leaders, who Eilers and D’Amico define as principals, instructional facilitators, coaches, and lead teachers, are challenged with moving teachers along an unchartered path in implementing the CCSS into their instruction. To be effective, Eilers and D’Amico suggests that leaders do the following: establish a clear purpose, align faculty and staff, set priorities, engage in professional discourse, encourage risk taking, and provide specific feedback.

In establishing a purpose, leaders must seek input from faculty and staff members early on if the standards are to be fully implemented. The result will include a shared sense of vision, mission, goals, and decision making as well as critical analysis of available resources to support efforts. As a result of open, honest, and routine communication, teachers demonstrate high levels of self-efficacy (Gimbel, 2003).

Aligning faculty and staff simply means that leaders identify each individual’s strengths and opportunities. Strengths should be orchestrated to make the vision a reality.

Professional development should be offered to address opportunities. Determining priorities is an essential step for school leaders in helping their teachers to manage the change in standards. Mendez-Morse (1992) charges leaders with the responsibility of
fostering both the climate and structure for change by figuring out the importance and sequence of the tasks involved in the change. This ensures reduction of anxiety and frustration. Facilitating professional discourse positions leaders to ask questions leading to critical analysis that ultimately generate action plans in supporting teachers fully implementing the CCSS. According to Seashore Louis and Wahlstrom (2011), principals play critical roles in stimulating conversations that lead to classroom practices associated with improvement in student learning. While some leaders expect collaboration to naturally occur as a result of putting competent and committed individuals together, that strategic effort is not enough (Thessin & Si Starr, 2011). The instrumental role of the school leader in professional discourse situates that not only must professional conversations become a part of the scheduled school day, but leaders must be present to facilitate the discussion. Trust among teachers and leadership creates an atmosphere where individuals are willing to take risks because they know they are supported. Because districts and schools have not been dictated on how to roll out the CCSS, a level of risk is expected in strategizing to ensure students are successful. Lastly, leaders must provide specific feedback to teachers. They must challenge teachers to question their practices, in light of the new curriculum, and adjust or refine if necessary.

**Instructional Support Provided by Effective Leaders:**

**Staff Development**

Research and resource allocations for the development of educational staff have experienced drastic increase across the nation. This follows a series of national academic reports released in the 1980s. According to Showers, Joyce, and Bennett (1987), before
1957, there were only about fifty studies conducted on school staff development. Now researchers are conducting several more studies times that number every year.

Additional evidence supporting the emphasis on professional development in the United States is the membership growth of The National Staff Development Council; it is recognized as one of the fastest-growing educational organizations in the country.

Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2010) contend the following in explaining why professional development is needed:

The essence of successful instruction and good schools comes from the thoughts and actions of the professionals in the schools. So, if one is to look for a place to improve the quality of education in a school, a sensible place to look is the continuous education of educators—that is, professional development. Virtually any experience that enlarges a teacher’s knowledge, appreciation, skills, and understandings of his or her work falls under the domain of professional development. (p. 335)

A solid body of literature exists, characterizing effective staff development (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1987; Orlich, 1989; Wood & Thompson, 1993; Guskey, 1994, 1997, 2003; Corcoran, 1995; Hawley & Valli, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 1996; Kennedy, 1998; Joyce, Calhoun, & Hopkins, 1999; Birman et al., 2000; Fullan, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Zech, Gause-Vega, & Bray, 2002; Bernauer, 2002; Harris, 2002). Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2010) report the successful characteristics found within the literature as: participant involvement; integration of school, individual, and group goals; long-range perspective in planning and development; coherence in coordination of activities; incorporation of research; administrative support; adherence to adult learning
principles; relevant and job-embedded focus on student achievement; collegiality and collaboration among teachers and leaders; active learning; focus on research related to change; follow-up and support in implementing professional learning in the classroom; continuous assessment and feedback; and ongoing development opportunities.

In her report on making professional learning systematic, Cogshall (2012) makes the claim that teachers need quality learning opportunities to meet the demands of college-and-career ready standards. Professional development, as is, does not offer such opportunities. The concept of “professional development” traditionally implies a fragmented experience, absent of teacher collaboration, lacking in job embedded applicability. “Professional learning” on the other hand is more coherent, relevant, and inclusive of differentiation. In juxtaposing the two concepts, professional learning is embedded in the daily school routine, allowing teachers to collaborate in supporting one another. Teachers become the experts, decreasing the need to rely on vendors for answers on how to achieve academic success. Professional learning is defined by continuous improvement cycles, focused on data analysis and inquiry. Formats are differentiated to best meet the needs of learners. Ongoing feedback is solicited. Lastly, professional learning opportunities are monitored and evaluated to ensure effectiveness, which is ultimately determined by enhancements to instructional practice. Other research based attributes of effective professional development include being focused on student achievement, content-centered, engaging (requiring active participation), aligned with district and school goals, and supported through cultural and structural conditions such as meeting regularly (Cogshall, 2012).
Instructional Support Provided by Effective Leaders:

Small Group Development

Groups that work productively, efficiently, and harmoniously generally have a skillful leader. Unfortunately, since being part of a group is such an everyday occurrence in professional, personal, and social life, we seldom stop to think about what makes some groups work well and others fail . . . A leader needs to be conscious of the elements of a successful group, select clear procedures for groups decision making, be able to deal with dysfunctional behavior, use conflict to generate helpful information, and determine appropriate leadership style. (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010, p. 308)

Professional learning communities have been a trending topic lately as it relates to staff development. Jacobs and Yendol-Hoppey (2010) assert that professional learning communities (PLCs) adhere to the principles of high-quality professional development. According to Wenger (1998, as cited by Jacobs and Yendol-Hoppey, 2010), PLCs are also referred to as communities of practice. These communities are defined as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or passion about a topic, who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). DuFour and Mattos (2013) contend that “the most powerful strategy for improving both teaching and learning . . . is not by micromanaging instruction but by creating the collaborative culture and collective responsibility of a professional learning community (PLC)” (p. 37). In studying how supervisors were transformed through professional learning communities, Jacobs and Yendol-Hoppey (2010) found that use of dialogic tools promoted critical reflection among PLC members.
Specifically, the use of modeling, probing, and reframing was impactful. Modeling makes reflective thinking explicit to others, consequently strengthening metacognition. Probing is questioning others, forcing them to think and reflect more critically. Reframing encompasses helping others to look at their dilemma or frame of reference from a different perspective. Each of these dialogic tools serves to push thinking to a more critically reflective process.

In preparing to meet with a group, there are questions recommended by Shelton and Bauer (1994) that supervisors should consider. Decisions need to be made such as whether the meeting is necessary, who needs to attend, what is included on the agenda, what is the setting, and how evaluation forms will be distributed. A group development course at the University of Georgia came up with the following categories of questions for use during discussion: questions designed to open up discussion; questions designed to broaden participation; questions designed to limit participation; questions designed to focus discussion; questions designed to help the group move along; questions designed to help the group evaluate itself; questions designed to help the group reach a decision; and questions designed to lend continuity to the discussion (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010).

Wheelan and Kesselring (2005) conducted a study to examine the relationship between group cohesiveness and student achievement. They began their research by gathering data on group development. Four stages were identified regarding group progression (see Table 3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependency and Inclusion</td>
<td>Group members depend on the leader for direction and are often distracted by external priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-dependency and Fighting</td>
<td>Group members disagree as they seek to define norms, values, and goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and Structure</td>
<td>Group members have managed conflict and are cooperating around established goals while simultaneously developing relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity and Effectiveness</td>
<td>Group energy is focused on achieving goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The researchers further identified the two bottom groups as low functioning and the two top groups as high functioning. Through analysis of 2,245 questionnaires the researchers found that students that attend schools where the staff work well in groups generally outperform their peers at schools where the staff do not work well in groups.

Curtis Middle School, located in San Bernardino, California, was designated one of the lowest-performing schools in the state in 2002. By 2005 it was recognized as one of the most improved schools. The key to the school’s success was the implementation
of teacher leaders through group development. The administrators of the school recognized a need for a new approach to staff development and began by assessing teacher’s strengths, attitudes, and willingness to embrace change in identifying on-site experts to lead reform efforts. The teacher leaders became known as content specialists. They maintained their regular schedules; however, once a month they modeled lessons and facilitated instructional collaboration among the colleagues within their group. Groups consisted of 7 to 10 individuals and operated under the established norms of being instructionally focused and all teachers participating.

Curtis Middle School has transformed itself into a true professional learning community, not because we gave ourselves a title or formed additional committees, but because the administration aligned itself with teacher leaders to change the school from within . . . Teachers now see themselves as partners with administrators, students, and one another. (Atkins & Rossi, 2007, para. 22-23)

A field tested professional development program funded by the National Science Foundation (Brodesky, Gross, McTigue, & Palmer, 2007) instigated the use of study groups to foster collaboration in problem solving, reflection, and continuous support. The project consisted of sixteen study groups that were comprised of four to nine members. Administrators in the participant schools selected group facilitators to lead protocols, keep discussions focused, and guide reflection. Each group was responsible for setting goals in addition to clear expectations or norms. The researchers noted that bringing teachers together does not in itself foster a collaborative environment. It takes time to develop cohesion within a group, but over time conversations should become richer as members become more comfortable voicing opinions and seeking assistance.
Instructional Support Provided by Effective Leaders:

Direct Individual Assistance

Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2010) categorize forms of direct assistance as follows: clinical supervision, peer coaching, demonstration teaching, co-teaching, assistance with resources/materials, assistance with student assessment, problem solving, and mentoring. Clinical observation provides a structural protocol for supervisors in conducting observations. It is not intended to be a summative evaluation technique; where judgment is made on performance, influencing employment decisions. Instead it focuses on teacher development to meet instructional goals. Peer coaching, simply stated, is teachers helping teachers. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon define it as teachers helping teachers through clinical supervision. Once teachers are proficient in implementing the clinical supervision process, supervisors can assume a less hands on role. Keedy (1987) recommends that instructional supervisors not attempt to provide direct assistance to all teachers on their own, but instead coordinate and utilize instructional specialists. In demonstration teaching, either the supervisor, or an expert teacher, models a strategy or technique for the teacher in need of assistance. Co-teaching allows the supervisor, or an expert identified by the supervisor, to teach a lesson alongside the teacher needing assistance. Acknowledging the relationship between teaching and learning lends toward the viability of supervisors in supporting teachers with student assessment. With a trend in education reform toward authentic assessment, teachers require assistance in identifying alternative ways to assess students (Clark & Clark, 2000; Coladarci, 2002; Stiggins, 2002). Assisting teachers with resources and materials is essential. Teachers are often unaware or nonproficient in utilizing materials
and resources, ranging from manipulatives to technological innovations. Teachers therefore require assistance to achieve technical mastery (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010). Problem solving and mentoring both require a level of trust, rapport, and openness. Assisting with problem solving involves identifying problems, generating solutions, selecting an appropriate action, and assessing the outcome. In coordinating mentorships, the supervisor should ensure the mentors are prepared and furthermore provide them with ongoing support. In an exploratory study conducted by Phyllis, Lopes, and Nolan Greer (2011), the data indicated that mentorship is important in teacher development. Aspects of the mentorship contributing to the professional growth of the teacher include mentor quality, the mentor-protégé relationship, and mentor training (Phyllis, Lopes, & Nolan Greer, 2011).

**Teacher Perception: Common Core State Standards**

According to research, teacher implementation of policy is influenced by their perception of policy (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Honing, 2006). A new poll by the National Education Association, the nation’s largest teacher union representing nearly three million employees, revealed that more than three-quarters of teachers support adoption of the Common Core standards. Twenty-six percent of the union’s membership supports the standards wholeheartedly, while 50% support them with some reservations (Bidwell, 2013). Cheng (2012) surveyed 95 teachers from the New Haven Unified School District and Freemont Unified School District in California on their perception of the CCSS and found that 50% of the participants believed the CCSS to be a positive step in education reform. Only 10.6% disagreed. Additionally, 47.5% of participants
perceived the work required to transition to teaching the new standards to be worthwhile compared to 10.2% who do not. Teachers favorably described the CCSS as more open-ended and condensed than previous standards. One high school teacher expressed in an interview that the new standards reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed as a result of not having to rush to cover multiple standards. Another participant indicated that having to teach fewer standards made her “feel less [like a failure] and be happier on the job” (Cheng, 2012, p. 43).

Cheng’s study likewise yielded perceived problems regarding the CCSS. Teachers expressed the issue of variance in interpretation of standards due to vagueness. How teachers interpret the standards will influence how they teach the standards. Therefore, all students will not learn the same content, at the same level of mastery which is a primary goal of the reform effort. Another problem indicated in the research is the lack of teacher input in implementing the CCSS. The majority of participants (56.5% versus 9.7%) agree that they would like more decision-making power over the curriculum than what they perceive the CCSS allow. When asked if the CCSS were a welcome change to the status quo, 25.9% disagreed and 33.3% agreed. Teachers appear apprehensive in part due to problems associated with previous standards-based reform.

Pam Williams, the 2011 Georgia Teacher of the Year, shared her thoughts on classroom practices prior to adopting the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. She expressed that there was “tremendous freedom” in teaching critically; however, this was coupled with 'disjointed curriculum and little accountability' (Downey, 2013, para. 12). She contends that once standardized testing on the Georgia Performance Standards took effect, teachers began struggling in an attempt to balance teaching all of the
standards while likewise building in opportunities for inquiry. Williams perceives the Common Core as “a needed bridge between these two extremes: teaching critical thinking and deeper understanding within a frame of coherence across the grade levels” (Downey, 2013, para. 10). She posits the move to the CCSS as a “huge paradigm shift in teaching” (Downey, 2013, para. 12). She believes the key to successful implementation of the new standards is support, time, resources, and professional development that are effective. While many challenges have been presented this year in implementing the CCSS, Williams believes the new standards to be a positive change that will benefit students.

**Teacher Perception: Instructional Support**

Wood and Thompson (1980) assert that many have referred to staff development as the neglected slum of American education. Tetenbaum and Mulkeen (1987) studied a group of teachers and administrators in the state of New York and found that the principal criticisms of professional development are that activities are designed as one-shot deals, lacking integration with the school’s comprehensive plan to achieve established goals. Rowe and Hurd (1966) proclaim that teachers and principals have differing viewpoints regarding difficulties. This indicates that leaders may not provide the instructional support deemed most important by teachers. As a result teacher perception of support is unfavorable. According to Hoy and Woolfolk (1993), in supporting instruction, “Principals . . . must find ways to develop teacher loyalty, trust, motivation, and commitment . . . [And] must exercise influence with their superiors to gain resources for their schools and faculties” (p. 358).
Fuller, Wood, Rapport, and Dornbusch (1982) developed a framework relating teacher performance efficacy (the ability to perform work tasks) to school structure. Performance efficacy is presumed to be enhanced when (a) the roles and tasks of teachers and administrators are highly differentiated, thus creating clear areas of responsibility in which teachers can demonstrate and improve their competence; (b) teachers and administrators are committed to common goals and the means to achieve them; (c) warm, caring relations between and among teachers and administrators encourage the exchange of necessary resources; (d) teachers believe that the methods used to evaluate them are sound; and (e) varied evaluation criteria are applied. (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993, p. 359)

In summary, this model stresses the importance of leaders in defining teacher roles, working toward common goals with teachers, fostering productive relationships, and implementing fair evaluations.

LoVette and Karst (1995) surveyed a group of eighty-eight graduate students enrolled in an administration and supervision program. The participants likewise taught in public and private schools and were asked to complete a report card on satisfaction. Findings from the study indicated the following: teachers give their building administrators high grades as supporter/promoter of innovation and improvement, facilitator of work, and one who creates a positive school climate; teachers give their building administrators low grades as disciplinarian, instructional leader, and one who empowers others and shares leadership. There was no statistical significance when examining perceptions relative to educational preparation, age, or years of experience. However, Berl (2005) affirms that younger and more mature teachers (those over 45
years of age and possessing significant experience) differ in their view of work and leadership.

In their exploratory study of 478 teachers and 135 principals, Phyllis et al. (2011) found that while principals believe they seek teacher input in school decision making, the perception of teachers is the opposite. “Teachers want to feel that their input is valuable in school governance. If they are left out, they feel disenfranchised” (p. 28). When teachers have input on decision making, inclusive of instruction and curriculum changes, the trust between principals and teachers enhances (Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Gimbel, 2003; Zimmerman, 2006). These same authors contend that an open and honest climate contributes to teacher growth, yet the research findings of Phyllis et al. (2011) suggest that such a climate is less valuable among teachers than among principals. Youngs and King (2002), Gimbel (2003), and Zimmerman (2006) suggest that principals take on the dual responsibility of soliciting input from teachers in decision making in addition to fostering open lines of communication in order to enhance teacher growth, thus validating teachers and demonstrating respect for their professional expertise.

**Influences on Implementation of the CCSS: Technology**

As Schofield (1995, cited in Caverly, Peter, & Mandeville, 1997) points out, computers often do not live up to their promise because no one shows teachers how to integrate their new technology into their instruction or, sadly, into their students' learning processes. Thus, when teachers want to go beyond using technology for data input or for motivating youngsters, they face a huge learning hurdle. (para. 2)
For teachers to effectively implement the new CCSS, they must be capable of navigating and using technology. Not only are much needed supplemental resources available on-line, but furthermore, as is the case in this study, the teaching curriculum itself is virtually located. Van Scoter and Boss (2002) makes an astounding argument concerning the impact of technology on instructional practices. He contends a number of educators are not comfortable with innovative technological resources, and question how to integrate the digital tools into classroom practice in developmentally appropriate ways. He furthermore asserts that it is not necessary for teachers to become technological experts; however, they must understand both the benefits and limitations of technology. In Piagetian terms, we must support teachers in accommodating technological knowledge as opposed to simply assimilating another process (Caverly et al., 1997). Technology changes rapidly. Training is therefore an ongoing need that cannot be approached as a short-term fix. It is essential that educators engage in continuous professional learning and or collaborative meetings to support their implementation of technology into the learning environment. Increasing their knowledge in how to apply technology in developmentally appropriate ways will have a direct impact on student achievement.

In a speech presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association, Lesisko, Wright, and O'Hern (2010) shares that Coley (1997) suggested that the effectiveness of technology be determined not solely on use and type, but also on the quality of the instruction. Quality is influenced by the technology leadership available within the school. Technology coordinators, skilled in technology, supervision, and teaching practices, should be employed to directly assist educators and students in utilizing technology.
Lesisko et al. references Moursund (1992) in identifying the responsibilities of a technology coordinator. According to Moursund, the coordinator should, (a) Provide timely help to both educators and students in the use of technology; (b) Assist teachers and curriculum leaders in developing specific building level goals and objectives on how to use technology; (c) Assist educators in developing curriculum activities and lesson plans that coincide with the instructional goals and objectives of the school; (d) Help to coordinate the technology component of each faculty member’s daily lessons; and (e) Provide in-service training for teachers and administrators throughout the school year by sharing new ideas and current issues related to technology and its integration. The position of technology coordinator is not to be taken lightly if integration is to yield substantial results in academic achievement. The more effective and qualified the coordinator, the better the teacher implementation of technology resulting in improvements in student learning.

Caverly et al. (1997) created a model educating teachers on how to integrate technology into the curriculum. Before implementing the model, teachers in the New Braunfels Independent School District in Texas were offered one-day computer program workshops. With the assistance of a grant, the district revamped it technology training approach in collaborating with Southwest Texas State University's education department. Principals identified instructionally proficient teachers to serve in the first generation cohort, attending a 3-week technology institute during the summer. The teachers worked in collaborative groups to complete guided practice activities. As a result, bonds were formed allowing teachers to rely on others who were more of an expert in a particular area. Once the school year began the teachers continued to meet with facilitators twice a
month to complete practice assignments and receive support in integrating technology into their curriculum. Teachers were likewise released from class once a month to develop interdisciplinary units incorporating technology. After engaging in this continuous support structure for a year, the teachers attended a second summer institute where they served as mentors for two second generation teachers. This process repeated the following year with a third generation of teachers. The teachers demonstrated growing technological expertise following Leithwood's (1990) six stages of professional development.

They developed survival skills; they became competent in basic skills; they became more flexible in their teaching as they tolerated ambiguity; they constructed effective applications; they helped colleagues gain expertise; and, finally, they became instructional leaders, participating in educational decisions at all levels of the educational system. (Caverly et al., 1997, p. 59)

Influences on Implementation of the CCSS: Years of Experience

Numerous scholars have examined the role of principals in fostering teachers’ professional growth and the techniques most often used (Berube, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2005; Drago-Severson, 2007; DuFour, 1995; Glickman, 2002). However, the majority of the research focuses on novice teachers. Phyllis, Lopes, and Nolan Greer (2011) surveyed 478 teachers and 135 principals in examining perceptions of the school leader in fostering the professional growth of teachers. One essential finding from this exploratory study suggests that as teachers become more experienced, the principal recognizes their professional growth less. “This could be demoralizing to
veteran teachers, especially those who retool to update their pedagogical and technological skills” (Phyllis et al., 2011, p. 27). The findings of the research further suggest that more tenured teachers communicate less with principals than novice teachers. According to Phyllis et al., this lack of communication causes veteran teachers to feel isolated, particularly when new teachers join the school community.

To minimize feelings of isolation and demoralization among more experienced teachers, leaders should consider soliciting input from this group when making decisions and furthermore engage them in continuous conversations about instructional practices (Youngs & King, 2002; Gimbel, 2003; Zimmerman, 2006). As a result veteran teachers feel validated. Phyllis et al. (2011) asserts, “Principals need to pay heed to veteran teachers and be sure they are acknowledged for their experience. Additionally, principals need to provide appropriate professional-development opportunities for veteran teachers to grow and contribute to their schools” (p. 29). In recognizing and valuing the expertise of veteran teachers, administrators create a collaborative culture more inclusive of a group that according to research is often not embraced.

Place and Vail (2013) conducted a study asking administrators to rate applicants in the paper screening pre-selection process based upon information provided by the researchers. The dependent variable was the evaluation of the candidate. Independent variables included candidate age, candidate years of experience, and type of district of the administrator (rural, urban, or suburban). The study found that all respondents preferred candidates with eight years of professional teaching experience over candidates with only three years of teaching experience. Regardless of the type of district, it appears that school administrators seek to hire teachers with more experience. This finding insinuates
that administrators equate years of experience with quality of teaching or teacher
effectiveness. It is important to note however, that this effect for years of experience is
not consistent with findings from previous studies.

Perhaps the pressure for increased student achievement has influenced school
administrators to place greater emphasis on what they hope might be better
teachers . . . the national random sample used to provide the data provides strong
external validity for these findings. We can say with confidence that this
preference for more experienced candidates exists nationally. (Place & Vail,
2013, pp. 17-18)

**Influences on Implementation of the CCSS: Age**

A preference for younger job candidates has been revealed in industrial literature
and furthermore suggested by educational studies. Young and Allison (1982) conducted
an empirical study and found that younger teacher candidates received a systemically
higher evaluation than more mature candidates in the academic area of physical
education. Regardless of who was completing the evaluation or candidate experience, the
finding was substantiated. To the contrary, researchers Young and Place (1988) found
that supervisors evaluated older and more experienced teachers more highly.

In the 1982 study cited by Young and Allison in the previous section of this
literature review, there was a statistically significant interaction found between candidate
age and type of district of the administrator. Urban administrators preferred younger
candidates, suburban administrators preferred older candidates, and rural administrators
demonstrated no preference.
One possible explanation for the preference for younger candidates over older candidates might be attributable to the perception of the necessity of having the ability to relate to the students, as well as the vitality to keep pace with them, which could be more valued in the urban setting. . . . this study suggests that at least administrators in urban districts need to become more aware of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act. (Place & Vail, 2013, pp. 17-18)

Despite preference for younger or more mature workers, administrators must strive to differentiate how the needs and interests of both are addressed (Berl, 2005).

Summary

With the state of Georgia striving to realize its economic vision, many teachers agree that the CCSS are a positive step in educational reform. A thorough review of the literature reveals that there are numerous approaches in which educational administrators can provide instructional support to teachers in implementing the standards. The format in which that support is provided can vary as staff development, group development, or direct individual assistance. Despite the format, it is essential that leaders not only participate but furthermore guide professional discourse if teacher learning is the desired outcome. Unfortunately, existing research indicates that teachers do not view building administrators as instructional leaders. Attempts at professional development are vilified. To counteract this disposition, administrators must continuously provide opportunities that actively involve participants, integrate the learning with established goals (school, group, and individual), institute a long-range perspective, incorporate research (inclusive of that related to change), adhere to adult learning principles, make the experience
relevant and job-embedded, foster collegiality and collaboration, support participants after the learning, and provide feedback.

In reviewing the literature on factors influencing the implementation of the CCSS, the role of technology cannot be ignored. It is the responsibility of school and district leaders to not just assimilate teachers to digital tools, but to support teachers in accommodating technological knowledge. Rapid changes in technology require continuous training. Designation of a technology coordinator or technological support staff personnel is therefore essential to maximize teacher implementation of the CCSS.

Years of experience and age are additional factors to be considered regarding teacher implementation of the new standards. The literature posits that administrators do not recognize the expertise of more veteran teachers, often communicating with them less than they communicate with novice teachers. Leaders should intentionally involve more veteran teachers in the decision-making processes. This will serve to prevent feelings of isolation among the more experienced group while simultaneously fostering a collaborative culture across the organization. In considering the age of teachers, there is conflicting research regarding whether young or mature teachers are evaluated more favorably. The literature, however, does suggest that urban school systems prefer younger teachers.
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It was proposed that teacher perception of the efficacy of the instructional support in teaching the Common Core State Standards would be influenced by various variables. The dependent variable was teacher perception of the efficacy of the instructional support. The independent variables were staff development, small group development, and individual direct assistance provided by county and school level administrators. Additional independent variables included technology, years of experience, and age. The relationship of variables is outlined in Figure 1.

The research study undertook a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology describes the meaning of lived experiences, or a phenomenon, for several individuals (Creswell, 2007). It is a popular qualitative approach in social and health sciences, particularly in education (Tesch, 1988; van Manen, 1990). Creswell (2007) stresses,

The type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon. It would be important to understand these common experiences in order to develop practices or policies, or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon. (p. 60)
Figure 1. Theory of Relationship among the Variables

**Definition of Variables**

**Staff development** is defined as training provided to *all teachers* that relates to the number and quality of sessions enlarging knowledge, skills, appreciation, and understanding of the CCSS (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010).
Small group development is defined as training provided to select teachers that relates to the number and quality of sessions enlarging knowledge, skills, appreciation, and understanding of the CCSS.

Direct individual assistance is defined as support provided to an individual teacher to enhance implementation of the CCSS. In this study forms of direct assistance include clinical supervision, peer coaching, mentoring, problem solving, demonstration teaching, co-teaching, assistance with resources/materials, and assistance with student assessment (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010).

Technology is defined as the material and immaterial entities created by mental and physical applications in order to achieve value.

Years of experience is defined as the number of twelve month periods one has personally worked in the teaching profession, usually resulting in a gain of knowledge. Age is defined as the length of time during which one has existed measured by years from birth.

Teacher perception is defined as the interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand one’s environment or situation.

Instructional support is defined as the effort to supply resources and assistance necessary to meet educational goals. The purpose of instructional support is to develop teacher effectiveness and increase student achievement.

Common Core State Standards are defined as nationally consistent academic benchmarks that indicate what students should know and be able to do within their
kindergarten through twelfth grade education experience if they are to be college and career ready upon graduation.

**Relationship among the Variables**

The study was interpreted through the lenses of social constructivism, self-efficacy, and post-positivism. The goal of research through the lens of social constructivism is to make meaning of the world and, more specifically, individual experiences. The researcher acknowledges that meanings of experiences are subjective, varied, and multiple. Creswell (2007) ascertains that “Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically” (p. 21). It was proposed that the meaning the participants gave to their experiences in this study would be influenced by the independent variables. In the example of age, Young and Allison (1982) found that urban administrators prefer younger candidates. With a preference for younger teachers, administrators in urban areas likely communicate with and provide the needs for this group more routinely. The literature review therefore suggests that since this study was conducted in an urban setting that younger participants would have a more favorable perception of instructional support.

Social learning theorist Albert Bandura defines self-efficacy as the belief in one’s ability to succeed (Sohail, 2012). The purpose of administrators providing instructional support is to help teachers succeed in increasing academic achievement and meeting the needs of stakeholders. How teachers perceive instructional support, more specifically the staff development, small group development, and direct individual assistance provided by administrators, will impact teacher belief in their personal ability to succeed. And
because self-efficacy plays a significant role in how one approaches tasks (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005), the level of teacher self-efficacy will impact how the new standards are implemented teachers’ classrooms.

Self-efficacy embodies a sense of control regarding environment (Schwarzer & Luszczynska, 2013). A review of the research literature in the previous chapter indicated that some teachers perceived their control regarding implementation of the new CCSS as being limited (Cheng, 2012). The teachers did not believe they were afforded any input. In the context of this study, it was proposed that teacher perception of the efficacy of the instructional support would be influenced by the level of control teachers experienced in the staff development, small group development, direct individual assistance, and technology processes. With regard to years of experience, research suggests that more experienced teachers should be afforded opportunities to act as experts if they are to feel valued in the organization (Youngs & King, 2002; Gimbel, 2003; Zimmerman, 2006; Phyllis et al., 2011). If administrators utilize veterans as partners in the decision-making processes when planning for instructional support, it was proposed that teachers would demonstrate a more favorable perception of the efficacy of the instructional support.

The social cognitive theory posits that self-efficacy, developed from self-perception as well as external experiences, influences event outcomes. In essence, “self-efficacy represents the personal perception of external social factors” (Sohail, 2012). Individuals demonstrating high self-efficacy therefore view challenges as something to be mastered, whereas those with low self-efficacy view challenges as something to be avoided. In this study, technology was likely to be presented as a challenge for some
teachers. It was proposed that the extent to which teachers master or avoid technology will influence their perception of the efficacy of the instructional support.

Creswell (2007) identifies research elements that are characteristic of the post-positivism theory:

- Scientific approach is inclusive of reductionistic and cause and effect orientations
- The researcher believes in the existence of multiple perspectives from human participants as opposed to a single reality
- Rigorous methods of data collection and analysis are practiced

The phenomenon that teachers are experiencing in implementing the new CCSS can be quite complex. Through the lens of post-positivism, the complexity of the phenomenon was reduced into more simple parts in order to understand what teachers were experiencing and how they were experiencing it. In the context of the study, the complexity of how teachers perceived the efficacy of the instructional support was reduced into the simpler components of how teachers perceive staff development, small group development, and individual assistance. The independent variables of technology, age, and years of experience lend toward multiple perspectives, another key characteristic of post-positivism. Lastly, this study utilized rigorous data collection and analysis methods which will be discussed further in the next Chapter IV.

**Summary**

This chapter defines the dependent and independent variables within the study. The dependent variable was teacher perception of the efficacy of the instructional
support. The independent variables included staff development, small group development, direct individual assistance, role of technology, teacher years of experience, and teacher age. The theoretical lenses utilized in examining the relationships of the variables were social constructivism, Bandura’s (Sohail, 2012) self-efficacy, and post-positivism.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a phenomenological approach to give voice to teachers in investigating their experiences. According to Creswell (2007), this approach involves collecting and analyzing stories to understand phenomena. Polkinghorne (1989) recommends studying 5 to 25 participants who have experienced the same phenomenon. The researcher studies the specific context in which participants experience situations. This allows the phenomenological researcher to understand the setting of the participants and provide a structural description of the phenomenon being experienced. Through analysis, the research uncovers themes, shedding light on the similarities among multiple lived experiences. The assumption of ontology plays a significant role within this type of qualitative research, acknowledging multiple realities exist and that the realities are subjective. The fundamental intent of this study was to report on the multiple realities of participants, using quotes from their actual words to present differing perspectives and discover emerging themes.

Phenomenology stems from the philosophical work of German mathematician Edmond Husserl (1859-1938). He asserted phenomenology as a science of consciousness as opposed to the empirical study of nature. Phenomenological study seeks to describe the universal essence of individual experiences with a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In other words, researchers identify an object of lived experience and analyze individual
accounts to deduce a “grasp of the very nature of the thing” (van Manen, 1990, pp.163, 177). According to Creswell (2007), “Phenomenology’s approach is to suspend all judgments about what is real—the 'natural attitude’—until they are founded on a more certain basis. This suspension is called 'epoche' by Husserl” (pp. 58-59).

Evident in the contemporary literature on phenomenology is the distinction between hermeneutical (van Manen, 1990) and transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology orients research solely toward describing the experiences of individuals; whereas hermeneutical phenomenology focuses on both describing and interpreting the “texts” of life (van Manen, 1990, p. 4). Moustakas’ transcendental phenomenology encompasses Husserl’s concept of epoche, also known as bracketing, where researchers suspend judgment and set aside their own experiences (Creswell, 2007). “Everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). This study undertook a hermeneutical phenomenological approach. The researcher both investigated and interpreted the lived experiences of the teachers in receiving instructional support.

In capturing the essence of a phenomenon, personal bracketing is essential (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Research in the realm of social constructivism furthermore requires researchers to position themselves, acknowledging their interpretation of participants’ experiences as being influenced by one’s own personal experiences. The researcher of this study was a fifth-grade teacher in the Atlanta area school district where the participants are employed, and therefore simultaneously experienced the phenomenon alongside the participants at one period in time. During that time, the researcher believed both district and school level administrators could have
been more effective in supporting implementation of the CCSS. The researcher was lacking in resources such as instructional materials aligned to the standards, and heavily relied on a co-teacher, who often purchased materials using personal funds, for support. The staff development provided by the district appeared untimely as the topics broached, in the researcher’s experience, were already navigated at the school level. School level development focusing on the Common Core standards was inconsistently implemented and no one was identified as the expert in addressing teacher concerns; instructional coaches were removed from their positions the previous year and the researcher’s grade level chair did not assume the role of teacher leader regarding instructional practice. As a result of these experiences, the researcher became interested in studying the topic of instructional support in implementing the CCSS in an effort to make meaning of varied teachers’ reality surrounding the phenomenon. In setting aside personal experiences, as much as possible, the researcher employed a fresh perspective in interpreting what and how participants experienced the phenomenon studied.

**Setting and Participants**

This study took place in a metropolitan school district bolstering nearly 99,000 students placed across approximately 135 schools. According to the district’s website, nearly 75% of the students receive free and reduced lunch. This indicates that many of the schools are Title I. The researcher, however, strategically selected participants representing diverse schools within the county. Schools were selected according to the following descriptors: Title I status, ethnicity of student population, English proficiency of student population, disabilities of student population, grade level of student population,
and College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) Score. One participating school is comprised of a predominantly white student population with 12% of the students being limited English proficient; two schools service special education students demonstrating severe emotional and behavioral disorders; and the final school is representative of the majority of the schools in the Atlanta area county under study (Title I with a predominantly African-American student population). The participants represented elementary, middle, and high school settings. See Table 4 for more detailed information about each sample school based on information retrieved from the Georgia Department of Education website and the school district’s website.

**Sampling Procedures**

Schools were selected to participate in the study utilizing convenience sampling. To minimize time, money, and effort in conducting the study (Creswell, 2007), all participants were selected from the school district where the researcher was recently employed as a teacher. This allowed for easy access as a result of proximity. Furthermore, good rapport was already established. Schools were also selected using maximum variation sampling. This type of sampling ensures that findings reflect differences in perspective, which is ideal in qualitative study (Creswell, 2007). Some of the individual teachers were selected to participate in interviews with the researcher using snowball sampling. The researcher identified cases of interest after consulting with the school principal.
Table 4

*Profile of Sample Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Achievement Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Middle School</td>
<td>9% Asian</td>
<td>85% Meet and Exceed Standards on the 2011 Criterion Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22% Black</td>
<td>Competency Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22% Hispanic</td>
<td>CCRPI Score = 86.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45% White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2% Multiracial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10% Limited English Proficient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12% Students with Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32% Eligible for Free and Reduced Meals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Title I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Elementary School</td>
<td>2% Asian</td>
<td>67% Meet and Exceed Standards on the 2011 Criterion Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>89% Black</td>
<td>Competency Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6% Hispanic</td>
<td>CCRPI Score = 60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1% White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2% Multiracial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11% Students with Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4% Limited English Proficient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90% Eligible for Free and Reduced Meals Title I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Achievement Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SWD Middle/High</td>
<td>85% Black</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1% Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14% White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% Students with Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91% Eligible for Free and Reduced Meals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD Elementary</td>
<td>49% Black</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11% Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23% White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3% Multiracial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16% Limited English Proficient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11% Students with Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52% Eligible for Free and Reduced Meals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Title I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Working with Human Subjects**

The researcher upheld the tenets of the Institutional Review Board in conducting the study. The researcher sought permission from the school district to conduct research within the system. Permission was secured from principals to conduct research within their assigned school. The researcher garnered voluntary consent from participants,
ensuring anonymity and confidentiality in all printed documents. Institutions and participants are not identifiable. The research for this study was conducted in a way that ensured no harm came to the human participants involved. The findings from this study will, however, be shared with respective administrators so that effective changes can be made to instructional supervision practices to best support teachers in implementing the Common Core State Standards.

**Instrumentation**

Data collected on the variables were gathered through the Teacher Survey on the Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards (see Appendix B), the Teacher Interview on the Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards (see Appendix C), and the Administrator Interview on the Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards (see Appendix D). Allport (1942) contends that open-ended questionnaires examine the subjective perspective of a person and are considered a personal document in qualitative research. The Teacher Survey on the Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards, Teacher Interview on the Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards, and Administrator Interview on the Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards protocols were developed by both the
researcher and the researcher’s dissertation committee. The survey and interview items were developed through a social constructivist lens—the questions are broad, general, and open-ended, allowing participants to construct meaning of their experiences. Each item on the survey and interview protocols was aligned with a research question (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Research Question and Instrument Item Alignment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Administrator Survey Questions</th>
<th>Administrator Interview Questions</th>
<th>Teacher Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: What is the goal of administrators in preparing teachers to implement the Common Core Standards?</td>
<td>11, 25</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How do teachers perceive staff development provided by district level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: How do teachers perceive small group development provided by district level administrators implementing the Common Core State Standards?</td>
<td>1, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Survey Questions</td>
<td>Administrator Interview Questions</td>
<td>Teacher Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4: How do teachers perceive direct individual assistance provided by district level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?</td>
<td>1, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ5: How do teachers perceive staff development provided by school level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?</td>
<td>15, 16, 17, 18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ6: How do teachers perceive small group development provided by school level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?</td>
<td>15, 19, 20, 21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ7: How do teachers perceive direct individual assistance provided by school level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards?</td>
<td>15, 22, 23, 24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Administrator Survey Questions</th>
<th>Administrator Interview Questions</th>
<th>Teacher Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ8: What role does technology play in the preparation of teachers in implementing the Common Core State Standards?</td>
<td>14, 28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ9: What effect do years of experience have on teacher perception of instructional support in implementing the Common Core State Standards?</td>
<td>12, 13, 26, 27, 29</td>
<td>13, 14</td>
<td>8, 12, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ10: What effect does age have on teacher perception of instructional support in implementing the Common Core State Standards?</td>
<td>12, 13, 26, 27, 30</td>
<td>13, 15</td>
<td>8, 12, 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher secured approval from the metropolitan Atlanta area school district to conduct research. Once potential participating schools were identified, the researcher contacted the school principal to ask if interested in participating in the study. Upon approval, the researcher forwarded teachers the Survey Informed Consent Form (see appendix E) along with the Teacher Survey on the Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of
the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards (see Appendix B). The researcher created the survey in Microsoft Word and uploaded the instrument to a free online source, E Survey Pro. Participant responses were kept anonymous. Participants were allowed to complete the research at their own convenience. A timeframe of 15 work days was identified for teacher participants to complete the open-ended response survey. There were approximately 30 items included on the survey with an expected duration of 30 to 45 minutes.

The researcher interviewed 3 school level administrators and 5 teachers during the study. The participants signed the Interview Informed Consent Form (see Appendix E). The Administrator Interview on the Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards consisted of 15 questions (see Appendix D). The interviews were conducted with administrators individually and lasted approximately 15 minutes. The Teacher Interview on the Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards likewise consisted of 15 questions (see Appendix C). Interview times ranged from approximately 10-20 minutes. All of the interviews were transcribed and the data was coded.

**Description of Data Analysis Methods**

Data coding and analysis followed the phenomenology research procedures of Moustakas (1994). First, words from participants were reduced into significant statements that provide an understanding of how the phenomenon was experienced. This step is called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). The statements were then combined,
or clustered, to formulate meaning units or themes. Next, the themes were displayed in a table. These themes were used to compose both a textual description of what the participants experienced as well as a structural description of how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Finally, an essence of the phenomenon was written using the textual and structural descriptions to summarize the common experiences of the participants and detail the overall meaning of the experiences.

**Verification Procedures**

The verification of this study stems from the prolonged engagement of the researcher in the field. The researcher worked alongside the participants in this study as a teacher of the CCSS during the 2012-2013 school year. As stated by Creswell (2007), the researcher is able to make decisions regarding what is relevant and of interest to the focus of the study. The researcher is familiar with the culture of the district in which the research takes place as a result of teaching in the district for six years. The researcher has furthermore developed relationships and rapport with a number of teachers and administrators in the school district under study. According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006) this facilitates co-construction of meaning between the participants and the researcher.

Triangulation and member checking also provide verification of the research. Multiple sources were collected and analyzed to create meaning of participants’ experiences: teachers completed a survey, teachers were interviewed, and administrators were interviewed. Using these multiple methods facilitated deeper understanding of the phenomenon studied. The findings are richer and more comprehensive as a result of
triangulation. Member checking was executed both during and at the conclusion of interviews. During interviews the researcher restated or summarized information and then questioned interviewees on the accuracy. At the conclusion of interviews, the researcher forwarded transcriptions to interviewees to affirm that the information reflected their experiences. All in all, member checking helped to improve accuracy and validity within the study.

While prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking work to establish credibility within the study, a thick description is used to establish transferability of the findings. The researcher worked to provide a thick description of the phenomenon. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe thick description as a method to achieve external validity. The research findings include a detailed account of participant experiences, analyzed to make explicit the similarities among the shared experiences. Through thick description, others can evaluate the findings and transfer them to alternate settings and populations (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The researcher attempted to provide a rich, detailed description of the participants’ experiences so readers are empowered in transferring the information to alternate settings as a result of “shared characteristics” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 32).

Assumptions and Limitations

Limitations exist that may impact the findings of this study. The use of the questionnaire and interview protocols has numerous limitations. In addition, there are other conditions or influences that will impact the results of the study that are outside of the control of the researcher. Such limitations include:
1. The definition of the phenomenon and variables included in the study.

2. The validity and reliability of the instruments used to measure the variables.

3. The phenomenological approach used as the best method to study the problem.

4. The analysis method and sample size selected

5. Participants may not believe that their responses will remain anonymous and confidential.

6. Data collected and analyzed represent participant’s perceptions and therefore may not be truthful.

7. The findings may not generalize to all schools and school districts as a result of the school populations included in the study.

8. The researcher was previously a fifth grade teacher in the study setting.

**Delimitations**

The researcher has made certain decisions in setting boundaries for the study.

Decisions regarding the sample population, variables, and instruments each lend toward the delimitations of the study which are presented in more detail below.

1. The study is delimited to teacher perception of self-efficacy in receiving instructional support to implement the common core state standards. Teacher self-efficacy in other areas was not examined.

2. Participation in this study is delimited to teachers working within a particular public school district in the state of Georgia.
3. Teacher perception of self-efficacy was measured through open-ended responses with an instrument designed specifically for this study.

4. Only questions approved by the dissertation committee were included in the survey and on the interview instruments.

5. Data collected may have been biased as a result of using snowball sampling. Additionally, teachers with stronger views may have been more likely to respond to the questionnaire and participate in interviews. This likewise may have yielded biased results.

6. Convenience sampling can limit information and credibility.

7. The questionnaire and interview protocols may not have included all the independent variables that influence teacher perception of instructional supervision and other factors influencing implementation of the CCSS.

Summary

This chapter outlines the research framework for the study. It describes the phenomenology research design that was utilized while providing a rationale for the approach. A description of the setting along with how participants were selected was given. The researcher details the ethical and legal considerations that were employed in working with human subjects. Other areas of discussion included instrumentation, data collection procedures, description of data analysis methods and verification procedures. Lastly, the limitations and delimitations of the study were explored.
CHAPTER V
DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected during this study was analyzed using the phenomenology research procedures of Moustakas (1994). The research resulted in a collection of significant statements that were clustered to define themes. The 11 themes were extracted from 28 teacher surveys, 5 teacher interviews, and 3 school-level administrator interviews. Data regarding the effect of years of experience and the effect of age on teacher perception of instructional support were analyzed to address the research questions.

Themes

Theme 1: Weak Integration of District and School Goals

A number of teachers and administrators participating in the research seemed to agree on the goal of the district in preparing teachers to implement the Common Core State Standards. Of the 23 teachers who responded to question 11 on the survey, a little over 20% of them agreed that the goal of the district was to ensure teachers were knowledgeable of the new CCSS. One teacher stated, “Their goal is that teachers are well versed in CCSS and able to implement the standards in the classroom to enhance the student's learning experience” (Teacher 21, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Two other teachers explained the goal as “to inform us of the CCC, and to make
sure that we knew the basic elements” (Teacher 7, personal communication, November 20, 2013) and “to ensure that each teacher has a clear understanding of the standards and how they should be implemented into the classroom” (Teacher 14, personal communication, November 18, 2013). One hundred percent of the principals participating in the research expressed that the goal of the district was to ensure teachers are using the CCSS to instruct. When asked about his understanding of the district goal, Administrator 3 (personal communication, November 11, 2013) specified that,

All the teachers have been thoroughly trained on Common Core, have gone through the DOE webinars, and have a full understanding of what the difference between Common Core is and what the umm GPS standards were for, and that they are implementing those in the classroom.

Participants in the study did not have as clear of an understanding of school level goals as they did district level goals. Approximately 30% of the teachers who responded to question 25 on the survey indicated that school level goals were not applicable to their experiences. Twelve percent of the respondents explicitly stated that the school level goals were not clear. Of those that did communicate an understanding of the school administrators’ goals, 30% identified the goal as increasing academic achievement or showing student growth. One teacher posited, “School level administrators' goals were focused on students' passing tests, with little individual or small group assistance” (Teacher 6, personal communication, November 22, 2013). Other participants communicated the administrator goal was to, “target subgroups and shorten the achievement gap. Bring students up from the level they are currently at. Show growth”
(Teacher 32, personal communication, November 11, 2013) and “move the bubble children forward” (Teacher 19, personal communication, November 18, 2013). In her interview, Teacher 4 (personal communication, November 13, 2013) expressed that her school level administrator’s goal was to “lessen the achievement gap at every level, with different subgroups, and umm to show growth throughout each year as the teacher sees the student in their classroom.” Juxtaposing the district level and school level goals of administrators revealed a lack of integration. While the District emphasized a focus on increasing teacher knowledge, school level administrators focused more-so on student success. In interviewing two of the school administrators it appeared that professional learning of teachers was a goal. Administrator 1 (personal communication, November 5, 2013) defined her goal as

We use professional learning opportunities of course to prepare for teaching Common Core standards and we base that professional learning on the results from our umm standardized testing both ITBS and CRCT tests as well as our benchmark tests that we used at the beginning of the school year…We used Renaissance Learning as a universal screener to help us zero in on specific goals for that the children needed as well as DIBELS. We did DIBELS too to help us zero in on the reading deficiencies of our students.

Administrator 3 (personal communication, November 11, 2013) shared,

In order to prepare our teachers we constantly talk about you know different instructional strategies, how to implement your lesson plans, umm how to do instructional design. We still talk about you know thinking maps and all those
things, umm differentiation in order for us to make sure that the teachers are doing what they’re supposed to do in regards to the CCSS.

While both of these principals indicated impacting teacher knowledge as a school level goal, the teacher participant responses suggest that communication of this goal to staff members was not evident. As a result, teachers did not experience an explicit integration of district and school level goals in receiving instructional support to implement the CCSS.

**Theme 2: Lending a Helping Hand through Staff Development**

The staff development extended by district level administrators was perceived as effective or highly effective by nearly half of the teacher survey participants in responding to question two. During her interview, Teacher 5 (personal communication, November 21, 2013) expressed,

> I think they’ve done a good job of rolling it out and helping us to understand umm. I think it was a bit easier than the last time when they rolled out the GPS. I think there was more confusion with that one than there was with this past one. I think it was better . . . They taught me well.

Other teachers shared similar sentiment in stating the following: “the training to use the web-site and pacing guide with suggested lessons, etc., was very helpful” (Teacher 26, personal communication, November 15, 2013); “The staff development options have integrated the common core standards within our math textbooks and helped us know what portions of the book to access versus leave out according to the common core requirements” (Teacher 32, personal communication, November 11, 2013);
“[Instructional support from administrators] helped me with lesson plans and IEPs [Individualized Education Plan]” (Teacher 15, personal communication, November 18, 2013); “It [district level instructional support] is good and [I’m] looking forward to more” (Teacher 21, personal communication, November 18, 2013); “It’s [district level instructional support] great” (Teacher 28, personal communication, November 14, 2013).

In reflecting on staff development provided at the school level, 50% of teachers responding to question 16 on the survey expressed positive perceptions. One participant purported, “School level staff development provided a good basis for learning how to deconstruct the standards so you at least knew what you were supposed to teach” (Teacher 6, personal communication, November 22, 2013). Another participant exclaimed, "I love the school level instructional support that we receive. Most times it is beneficial. I do like the way that our principal ensures that we are trained so that we can redeliver the information to our students" (Teacher 29, personal communication, November 14, 2013). Teacher 5, who is over 50 years of age with only 11-15 years of experience, reported a number of glowing acknowledgements regarding support from school level administrators.

I’m very comfortable here. Umm I feel that umm they do have good instruction in mind but behavior is our main emphasis but they do care that we have good instruction and they help us provide it . . . My direct supervisor that we call our instructional change coach is wonderful. You know she’s showed us the standards, talked about umm different ways to do it, provided training on differentiating with them, talked about what the standard could look like in a
different classroom or a different umm method. She’s been, yeah she’s wonderful. She’s done a good job . . . I’m comfortable, I feel supported, I think that they provided us with the resources in terms of the website and the people to call and training all of us so yeah I’m comfortable with it. (Teacher 5, personal communication, November 21, 2013)

**Theme 3: Developing Confidence**

Analysis of the data revealed 14 significant statements regarding development of teacher confidence levels. In response to question 12 on the survey, 20% of the teachers expressed feelings of confidence and being more prepared. One participant expressed initial feelings of nervousness,

I felt very confident with teaching the Common Core Standards to my students. I was very nervous in the beginning when all of the talk was about common core, but after the training, I was excited and more than ready for the new school year to start so that I could make an even bigger impact on my students. I left on an information overload, but in a good way! (Teacher 29, personal communication, November 14, 2013)

Another purported overcoming panic, “It helped remove some of the panic and confusion about changing standards again. Also the 'gotcha' atmosphere provided enough fear for us to feel the need of making sure we understood what was expected” (Teacher 26, personal communication, November 15, 2013). Teachers also described the ease the support facilitated in implementing the new CCSS:
I gained a great deal of information and resources to help me with implementing the common core standards. It made the implementation a little easier and took away a lot of the anxiety that everyone was having about the shift to common core...I gained a plethora of knowledge because the training was in small groups and based upon our grade level. I received training that was beneficial to me. It made implementing the Math Common Core Standards very easy to implement and it opened the door for me to add so many more ideas to how I could be effective with teaching my students. (Teacher 29, personal communication, November 14, 2013), and I think it's [school level instructional support is] excellent. It helps to ensure a high level of instruction and professionalism. (Teacher 18, personal communication, November 18, 2013)

**Theme 4: Strong Beginnings, Poor Follow-Up**

“Teacher support [at] the school level was very helpful initially. Somehow it dwindled” (Teacher 6, personal communication, November 22, 2013). This quote came directly from a teacher survey completed during the research. While a number of teachers expressed confidence in being knowledgeable of the standards as a result of instructional support provided at the district and school level, the research suggests there was a clear cry for additional support. In analyzing the open-ended responses to question 2, approximately 25% of the participants believed they could have been better supported. One teacher asserted, “At [SWD Middle/High School] we are always having some type of in-service to keep our info and skill on point but the district rarely provides us with strategies… I feel that they could do a little more to implement the common core, by
explaining the hows, where, why, and who” (Teacher 16, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Other responses throughout the survey likewise emphasized a need for support in implementing instructional strategies to effectively teach the CCSS: “Several professional learning sessions have occurred, with many not relating the needs of how to implement the standards… more modeling of expectations [is] needed” (Teacher 6, personal communication, November 22, 2013); “It [district level staff development] was fine for delivering the basic knowledge about Common Core but lacks in the areas of depth of knowledge and how it should look when delivered in the classroom during instruction” (Teacher 27, personal communication, November 14, 2013); and “Usually school level staff development is helpful. Sometimes, it seems as though we are simply revisiting some of the same issues with no solution.” (Teacher 14, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Teacher 2, a teacher for over 16 years, shared the following in her interview:

I haven't come across any one particular person, that person may be there, who seems to be umm well equipped to answer all the questions about common core standards and really give you good examples of how to implement, you know, daily instruction. I think that's where the need is. (Teacher 2, personal communication, November 5, 2013)

In analyzing the data, teachers also expressed a need for additional support in terms of resources. One teacher stated, “I wish that we did have more support from the district. We barely have enough text books and could really use some science equipment for instruction” (Teacher 22, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Sixty
percent of the teachers interviewed experienced a lack of reading resources. In her
interview, Teacher 5 purported,

Now we do have a lack of resources in terms of the reading material . . . we don’t
always have those books available to us. I’ve had to buy some books in order to
have the material we need . . . We sometimes have to scramble for that, the books
and stuff that we are supposed to provide for the students. (Teacher 5, personal
communication, November 21, 2013)

Teacher 2 posited,

Well a lot of the materials suggested by the State Department require some
materials that we don't have as far as literature books. And at my other school
they would have like one copy of a book needed for each grade level at a
particular time and a lot of people do go to the library, which I do too, to check
out books to make sure that I'm providing as much as possible as far as a variety
of strategies and materials for the students to meet their goals. (Teacher 2,
personal communication, November 5, 2013)

Lastly, Teacher 1 added, “we’d have to order our own books with our own funds”
(personal communication, November 5, 2013)

**Theme 5: Engagement Makes a Difference**

One research based attribute of effective professional learning is that of
engagement, requiring active participation. Some participants in the study expressed
ideas to suggest that district level staff development was lacking in this area. One teacher
exerted, “maybe more of these sessions need to be mandatory because many teachers do
not take the opportunity to attend if there is no stipend attached” (Teacher 25, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Another teacher proclaimed,

They offered the staff development, but I think the development could’ve been more beneficial. They lecture to us, but then expect us to not lecture in our own classes. It would be better for them to make the development sessions more engaging as also a model of how to be in our own classrooms. (Teacher 31, personal communication, November 11, 2013)

While interviewing, Teacher 2 described district level staff development as follows: “It's umm usually some type of PowerPoint delivery without a lot of discussion and answers given” (Teacher 2, personal communication, November 5, 2013).

Nearly 30% of respondents to question 5 identified district level small group development as highly effective or effective. Forty percent of respondents to question 19 identified school level small group development as highly effective or effective. While small group development may not have been perceived as very effective, analysis of participant expressions suggests that it was quite engaging. One teacher exclaimed:

My school level administrators provided us with onsite trainings to help us implement the common core standards. The ELA training was phenomenal…This training I feel was most beneficial because it was offered by grade level. By doing the training in this manner, I was able to only take away what I needed at that time to help me with my classroom instructional needs. I appreciated the fact that I was able to work amongst my peers and my grade level teachers to help
improve the Math instruction at our school. (Teacher 29, personal communication, November 14, 2013)

Another teacher went on to share, “Small groups provide a more comfortable setting to express concerns that you may not want to voice in front of a total group/staff” (Teacher 18, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Both of the previous quotes support the claim that teachers place value in professional learning that fosters active engagement. One teacher emphasized working among peers, while the other highlighted expressing concerns.

Theme 6: Positive Outcomes Aligned to School Level Direct Individual Assistance

Not many participants experienced direct individual assistance when receiving instructional support to implement the CCSS. Approximately 45% of respondents to question 22 indicated that one-to-one assistance at the school level was not applicable, while nearly 60% of respondents stated the same in regards to district level efforts. Those that did receive direct individual assistance at the school level, however, had a positive perception of the support with 39% of the respondents rating the support effective or highly effective. One teacher posited, “When I have direct individual assistance, I am better able to grasp concepts and ask questions that are specifically geared toward my area of teaching” (Teacher 14, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Another participant asserted, “It gave me more autonomy to veer away from the book and see it as the resource it should be” (Teacher 19, personal communication, November 18, 2013). A final participant described the school level individual assistance received as, “Great job” (Teacher 16, personal communication, November 18, 2013).
In their interviews, 40% of the teachers communicated a positive and productive experience at it relates to direct individual experience. Teacher 4 asserted,

I met with my evaluator which was an assistant principal one on one and you know there was a lot of talk about standards and different things involving the Common Core. But umm you know now that we’re in it, it’s not as much about actual standards implementation you know it’s about how am I grouping students, how am I you know tracking data and things like that which I guess is an initiative of the Common Core. (Teacher 4, personal communication, November 13, 2013)

Teacher 5 shared,

Well they [school level administrators] check our lesson plans and advise us on that . . . Well they do look at our lesson plans, make sure that they are aligned, umm help us if we are not understanding it, umm they observe us . . . But the main idea is to make sure that we’re understanding it and we’re doing it well and but she’s always truthful when she observes. She’s always helpful and talks to us about what she likes, what we did well, what she thinks we can work on a little more. (Teacher 5, personal communication, November 21, 2013)

Teacher 5’s principal is Administrator 3 in the study. Here is what Administrator 3 had to say regarding direct individual assistance offered at her school:

We have instructional change coaches in the building. They are there to not only help with behavior but to help with the instructional piece. So any time a teacher has any concerns or questions umm they can go to them and also those people check lesson plans and make sure they are following the Common Core and doing
what they are supposed to be doing. (Administrator 3, personal communication, November 11, 2013)

**Theme 7: Need for Expertise**

Nearly 30 significant statements exist in the research to suggest that teachers were longing for expertise in being supported with implementing the CCSS. A number of teachers appear to question the knowledge of district level administrators in leading them through the change in curriculum. One teacher dictated,

More money is needed in the budget to address the lack of knowledgeable [of] professional development personnel…It [district level instructional support] has made me seek assistance from other districts, like Gwinnett, in order to have access to those with in-depth knowledge about Common Core who are not afraid to demonstrate and model in a real classroom in the urban setting. (Teacher 27, personal communication, November 14, 2013)

Others proclaimed similar sentiment in stating the following: “Other workshops consisted of leaders who gave vague answers to most of the posed questions . . . Leaders of sessions need more training . . . District Level Support makes you think of the phrase "The Blind leading the Blind” (Teacher 6, personal communication, November 22, 2013); “I wouldn't be opposed to more examples. They just kind of send out information with buzz words, but they never really expound on them. It kind of makes me wonder if they even know what they are talking about” (Teacher 31, personal communication, November 11, 2013). In their interview, Teachers 1 and 2 expressed the following: “[I] feel that Dale County is behind in a sense . . . there’s a lot that the teachers, the
administrators don’t know because we haven’t had the support that we needed to roll out for the Common Core” (Teacher 1, personal communication, November 5, 2013);

Because I think sometimes they have people in the positions who are really not that knowledgeable. But, and because of where I am [the district] I think it’s who you know sometimes when you get those positions. And you can’t help people if you don’t know what you’re doing or if you haven’t been trained properly.

(Teacher 2, personal communication, November 5, 2013)

The feeling of being led by inadequately trained leaders applies at the school level as well. One teacher exclaimed,

One thing is observed, there is a great push for improvement in teaching and learning in the classroom. Where I think they are still emerging is in the area of school leadership. I think they need to review other successful counties and model how they hire school leaders. (Teacher 25, personal communication, November 18, 2013)

Other teachers shared, “they [school level administrators] haven’t been trained” (Teacher 20, personal communication, November 18, 2013), and “Similar to what I said about the district, they [school level administrators] demand XXXXXX, but then don’t really thoroughly explain them. I mean, I know what the terms mean, but I do wonder if they do” (Teacher 31, personal communication, November 11, 2013). In the previous quote, the symbol “X” is used by the respondent in place of indicating a specific demand. Teacher 2 expressed the following in her interview:
It goes back again (chuckle) that they [school level administrators] really, they’re not really that familiar with what you’re supposed to be doing so they go to a meeting and they’re still hearing from some of the same people we get information from. It’s not clear. So when they try to support us, in my opinion, it hasn’t been successful because they really don’t have a clear understanding of what’s supposed to be done. (Teacher 2, personal communication, November 5, 2013)

**Theme 8: Collegiality and Collaboration**

Perhaps due to the absence of expertise at the administrative level, teachers naturally tended to collaborate among themselves to provide instructional support in preparing to implement the CCSS. There were examples of teachers supporting other colleagues through training efforts. One participant stated, “Administrators have supported my implementation of the Common Core State Standards in my classroom through allowing me to train other teachers based on my expertise and results with my students” (Teacher 24, personal communication, November 16, 2013). Other teachers experienced collaboration in more informal exchanges as evident through responses such as, “working together in the small groups are helpful in gaining perspective from other teachers as well…I interacted with other teachers for new ideas” (Teacher 15, personal communication, November 18, 2013);

I gained confidence just interacting with peers who share my similar issues. I realize it is not just me who lacks some understanding and immediately get ready to pull up my sleeves for the cause. I am motivated to learn more content and
strategies after leaving these sessions. (Teacher 25, personal communication, November 18, 2013)

In addition to collaborating amongst peers, teachers likewise collaborated with designated teacher leaders, school level administrators, and external agents. In her interview, Teacher 1 expressed,

With our Title I monies we were able to get a consultant to come out and work with our school . . . we’ve had another consultant Lisa Lark [pseudo] and she’s going to come back out to our school again. She came out and worked with our math teachers and working with Common Core. And then she also came out, she did the workshop but she also came back to actually go into the classroom to support our teachers. (Teacher 1, personal communication, November 5, 2013)

The principal at Teacher 1’s school shared the following in her interview, “We have an academic coach, we have a reading mentor, and as well as the assistant principal when there are individual needs. So that’s three places that they can get that individual attention” (Administrator 1, personal communication, November 5, 2013).

**Theme 9: Saturation of Technology**

Technology played a prominent role in supporting teachers’ implementation of the new Common Core curriculum. Nearly 60% of teachers responded that technology played a role in the instructional support they received from both district level and school level administrators. One key use of technology was to facilitate communication among teachers and administrators. Administrator 1 explained,
There are specific common core mailboxes on our email system where the teachers can go in and pose questions and get questions answered in that regard and that way everyone can see the questions so that if you got the same questions someone else has had there's an opportunity for you to look back to see if anybody has had the same question or what have you and find an answer there.

(Personal communication, November 5, 2013)

Another way technology was utilized was for administrative processes. Two participants shared that teachers are able to “sign up for PL's [professional learning] electronically” (Teacher 18, personal communication, November 18, 2013) or “on the website” (Teacher 25, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Technology was furthermore used as a tool by school level administrators. Teacher 3 stated, “I know when they [school level administrators] come and evaluate us they had an iPad that they do it on” (Teacher 3, personal communication, November 12, 2013).

Teachers benefited from the resourcefulness of technology as evidenced by the following quotes: “we did utilize the I-pads, overhead projector, and laptops to delve into the common standards…We did utilize the promethean board to view the PowerPoint and share helpful resources for us all to use” (Teacher 29, personal communication, November 14, 2013); “I have used several websites to help with teaching math and language arts” (Teacher 10, personal communication, November 18, 2013); “a specific Saturday session was offered that focused on utilizing more technology to aid in learning” (Teacher 32, personal communication, November 11, 2013); “I now have the opportunity to test my students on line, give them homework from the textbook on line,
give them research projects that are now within their scope, based on their ability to work at school on computers” (Teacher 25, personal communication, November 18, 2013); “the illuminate live sessions allowed for me to continuously review and understand any frameworks and their goal's” (Teacher 24, personal communication, November 16, 2013); and “The website with the pacing guide and curriculum guide was easy to negotiate because of technology” (Teacher 26, personal communication, November 15, 2013). One survey participant shared, “The common response to the need of professional development is to watch videos on PD360” (Teacher 27, personal communication, November 14, 2013). A number of other participants identified webinars as a form of professional learning.

**Theme 10: Training on the Use of Technology**

The older teachers are more challenged with the technology. So they had to learn the umm technology, how to get to what they needed to teach. You know that was a part of that learning curve is where do I find this? Where do I, what do I do with it? How do I umm find these resources? How do I do this without [a] textbook? (Administrator 1, personal communication, November 5, 2013)

This was Administrator 1’s response when asked if she believes teacher perception of the overall quality and quantity of support they received in implementing the Common Core Standards varies by age. It is no wonder she hired a technology support staff member to assist teachers in implementing the CCSS. According to Teacher 1, a teacher at Administrator 1’s school,
We also do a lot of professional development in technology at least to go onto our website, IDMS, our curriculum center, kind of navigating through that to help us… [The technology support person] provides support with anything else that we would need to do with the Common Core, the Teacher KEYS. (Teacher 1, personal communication, November 5, 2013)

Additional participants expressed technology trainings to include use of TIENET and ESIS. One teacher went on to say, “I am more proficient on the promethean board . . . I am more proficient in how I present content. I use technology more in my classroom” (Teacher 25, personal communication, November 18, 2013). There was clearly value in providing technological support through staff personnel as expressed by the following, “more assistance was needed; computer person was available for short period of time; changed the position to help with other school needs” (Teacher 6, personal communication, November 22, 2013).

**Theme 11: Ongoing Professional Learning**

A number of teachers in this study experienced ongoing professional learning focused on the CCSS. Faculty and grade level meetings were held routinely. Participants shared, “We have weekly staff meetings as well as grade level meetings” (Teacher 19, personal communication, November 18, 2013) and “Monthly meetings address topics and issues which teachers need information and/ clarity” (Teacher 21, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Each of the administrators further supported the idea of ongoing professional learning in stating the following: “well it [small group development] takes place weekly with the needs as needs come up and then there are
specific content areas that we will target that may be a monthly training” (Administrator 1, personal communication, November 5, 2013); “they [the teachers] meet umm every Wednesday as a content area and I think they need to continue to do that and use that time for them to develop Common Core lessons together. So that will be ongoing” (Administrator 2, personal communication, November 12, 2013), and “we had professional learning activities planned every week . . . so one topic may be thinking maps that time or maybe how to come up with different strategies for differentiation” (Administrator 3, personal communication, November 11, 2013). Despite the ongoing learning opportunities offered during the school year, participants expressed a desire for additional training in the summer. One teacher professed, “I just wish that we were offered more trainings each summer” (Teacher 29, personal communication, November 14, 2013), while Teacher 5 asserted in her interview, “it would be nice to have a little bit more training maybe over the summer or different time you know with such a big change like with the Common Core” (personal communication, November 21, 2013).

Effect of Years of Experience

Data analysis was conducted to investigate whether teacher perception of the efficacy of instructional support received in implementing the CCSS varied by teacher years of experience. Of the 28 survey respondents, 18 indicated their years of experience. The following data analysis is reflective of their responses only. In regards to the effectiveness of district level staff development, 100% of participants with over 15 years of experience rated the efforts either neutral or ineffective. In other words, no one in this experience group believed the district was effective in providing development to
all teachers. One teacher asserted, “The professional development was scaled back and
the information given was unclear and premature, at best” (Teacher 19, personal
communication, November 18, 2013). Members of the 1-5 years of experience group had
a more positive perception of district staff development on the whole. Two respondents
in this group rated the efforts highly effective.

Participants with 1-15 years of experience indicated a positive perception toward
district level small group development. Of the six respondents who experienced this type
of instructional support, 83% described it as effective or highly effective. One teacher
proclaimed,

This training I feel was most beneficial because it was offered by grade level. By
doing the training in this manner, I was able to only take away what I needed at
that time to help me with my classroom instructional needs. I appreciated the fact
that I was able to work amongst my peers and my grade level teachers to help
improve the Math instruction at our school. (Teacher 29, personal
communication, November 14, 2013).

Another teacher professed, “The more specific to the teacher the better. Working together
in the small groups are helpful in gaining perspective from other teachers as well”
(Teacher 15, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Participants with more than
15 years of experience had a different perception. Of the five respondents who
experienced district level small group development, 80% rated the effectiveness as
neutral.
All of the respondents who received direct individual assistance in the over 15 years of experience group rated the effectiveness as neutral, whereas 100% of the respondents with less than 6 years of experience rated the support as effective or highly effective. One teacher expressed the following:

The Math Common Core training was very effective with the planning and implementation of the lessons that I was able to give my students. It gave me a new perspective on teaching Math to my then Kindergarten students. It was like giving me a new breath of fresh air to embrace. It took my instruction to another level. (Teacher 29, personal communication, November 14, 2013).

School level staff development was perceived more favorably by teachers with 1-5 years of experience than teachers with more than 6 years of experience. Thirty percent of teachers with more than 6 years of experience rated school level staff development as ineffective. Participants had this to say: “We watch videos and then are expected to implement the strategies in unrealistic settings” (Teacher 27, personal communication, November 14, 2013) and “There needs to be meaningful staff development. This would mean that there is a follow up and continued support that requires that the strategies are being used effectively in the classroom. If there is monitoring then improvement will occur” (Teacher 25, personal communication, November 18, 2013). No one with less than 6 years of experience rated school level staff development as ineffective or highly ineffective.

Nearly 70% of teachers with 5 or less years of experience who participated in school level small group development described it as effective or highly effective. One
teacher stated, “Small groups provide a more comfortable setting to express concerns that you may not want to voice in front of a total group/staff” (Teacher 18, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Another teacher responded, “The head of our math department is a helpful resource with any common core questions” (Teacher 32, personal communication, November 11, 2013). A final teacher replied, “The school level training gave me a clearer picture as to what it was that I would have to do in order to get my students familiarized with common core standards” (Teacher 29, personal communication, November 14, 2013). Only 40% of participants with more than 5 years of experience who engaged in school level small group development believed it to be effective.

In reflecting on the efficacy of school level direct individual assistance, over 80% of teachers with more than 5 years of experience who received this type of support described it as effective or highly effective. One teacher purported, “When I have direct individual assistance, I am better able to grasp concepts and ask questions that are specifically geared toward my area of teaching” (Teacher 14, personal communication, November 18, 2013). In teachers with less than 5 years of experience who received school level individual assistance, 67% described it as effective or highly effective. Forty percent of teachers with more than 5 years of experience noted that school level individual assistance was not applicable compared to 62% of teachers with less than five years of experience.
Effect of Age

In collecting the data, 18 respondents provided their age. Commonalities exist among age groups that will be discussed in this section. All of the teachers in the 20-29 age group perceived district level staff development as effective or highly effective. One participant professed, “The importance of depth of knowledge and open ended questions were explained” (Teacher 32, personal communication, November 11, 2013). There is no obvious commonality among participants in age groups in regards to district level small group development. One hundred percent of the teachers in the 40 and above age group rated district level direct individual assistance as neutral. One participant stated, “District level had little involvement on my implementing the standards” (Teacher 11, personal communication, November 18, 2013).

In considering the efficacy of school level instructional support, 100% of the participants in the 40-49 age group described staff development as effective. One teacher posited, “Everything I learn I take back into the classroom” (Teacher 14, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Another teacher shared, “I use new knowledge to manage the class educationally and behaviorally” (Teacher 16, personal communication, November 18, 2013). Similar to the district level findings, there are no commonalities in perception of school level small group development among participants in regards to age. None of the participants in the 20-29 age group indicated that they experienced school level direct individual assistance. Seventy-five percent of the 30-39 age group and 100% of the 40-49 age group who experienced direct individual assistance rated it as effective or highly effective. One teacher proclaimed,
I gained a great deal of information and resources to help me with implementing the common core standards. It made the implementation a little easier and took away a lot of the anxiety that everyone was having about the shift to common core. (Teacher 29, personal communication, November 14, 2013)

Summary

The research collected in this study was coded and analyzed following the phenomenology research procedures of Moustakas (1994). The research resulted in eleven themes. Many of the themes uncovered clearly align to the research questions. The analysis of data regarding effect of age and effect of years of experience was included to further address the research questions. Analysis of the data significantly contributes to the composite description and essence of the phenomenon presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers perceive the instructional support provided by district and school level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards. The hermeneutical phenomenological approach was employed where the researcher both investigated and interpreted the lived experiences of the teachers. The textural and structural description below explains what and how the participants experienced the phenomenon. This description was used to develop the essence of the phenomenon, which intricately details the underlying structure of the common experiences lived by the participants.

Textural and Structural Description

Teachers in this study have received instructional support from both district and school level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards. Overall, school level support was perceived more favorable than district level support. School level staff development was perceived most effective by participants. The information and resources provided at the school level resulted in teachers confidently instructing the CCSS. Staff development took place either before or after the school-day and was implemented on a routine basis.
Small group development at both the district and school level was engaging, allowing teachers to discuss, plan, and create during the time spent together. Collegiality was prominent among participants. The collaboration was experienced during trainings, grade level meetings, and informal encounters. Approximately half of the participants in the study indicated that they never received direct individual assistance from administrators neither at the district nor school level. Teachers expressed a longing for expertise as they questioned the knowledge of their leaders in supporting implementation of the CCSS. One school, however, did employ a technology expert to support teachers. Participants expressed positive perception regarding the technological training they received and the impact it had not only on their instruction, but their administrative skill as well.

**Essence of the Phenomenon and Significant Findings**

Receiving support during time of change, generally speaking, in any situation, will likely be perceived positively. In the case of this study, teachers value and appreciate the efforts of those who are supporting them as they navigate the unchartered waters of implementing a national set of academic standards. Support, if not thorough, however, results in negative perception. It appears that administrators closest to teachers (at the school level) are most adept in providing effective support to teachers. This is perhaps best explained as a result of teacher-leader proximity in terms of communicating and collaborating. School level administrators can informally assess the needs of staff members and provide applicable training and/or appropriate resources to properly equip educators in teaching the Common Core State Standards. This allows for a significant
impact on teaching and learning while simultaneously fostering positive perception toward instructional support.

Based on the essence of the phenomenon, the significant findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Participants negatively perceived staff development instructional support when follow-up was not provided.

2. School-level instructional support was more effective than district level instructional support in all areas: staff development, group development, and direct individual assistance.

3. The efficacy of school level staff development had the most favorable perception among participants.

4. Nearly half of the participants in this study have never received direct individual assistance support as a format for staff development.

**Conclusions**

Eleven themes emerged in analyzing the experiences of teachers receiving instructional support to implement the CCSS. Many of the themes uncovered align with the research questions of the study. Through data analysis, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Over half of the participants in the study did not regard district-level staff development, district and school level small group development, and district and school level direct individual assistance as effective forms of instructional support. Data analysis revealed that administrators were effective in
explaining to teachers what the Common Core State Standards were. However, administrators lacked expertise in explaining to teachers how to implement the CCSS into their classroom instruction. Teachers expressed a need for additional learning regarding instructional strategies. They also expressed a need for more resources, particularly books. The researcher therefore concludes that because district and school level administrators did not demonstrate expertise in providing follow-up support as to how to implement the CCSS, most teachers did not perceive the efficacy of professional learning efforts to be effective.

2. Dale County lacked the essential characteristic of integrating district and school goals in providing staff development. The data revealed that only about 20% of participants were in consensus regarding the goal of district level administrators in providing professional learning on the CCSS. Even fewer participants were in consensus regarding the goal of school level administrators in providing instructional support on the CCSS. Thirty percent of respondents indicated that school level goals were not applicable to their experiences, while 12% explicitly stated that school level goals were not clear. According to the literature review, poor integration of district and school level goals adversely influences the effectiveness of staff development.

3. School level small group development was perceived more favorably than district level small group development. Teachers expressed a lack of active participation at district level trainings. Enacting a more engaging approach would likely increase the number of teachers who attend professional learning
opportunities at the district level. The researcher therefore concludes that active learning will cultivate a more positive perception toward the efficacy of small group development at both the district and school level.

4. Collaboration and collegiality was evident at each of the schools participating in the study. In reflecting on the research regarding group development, the researcher concludes that participants were operating at the trust and structure stage of group progression. Teachers developed relationships with peers as they worked to manage the conflict resulting from a lack of leader expertise. The researcher concludes that collaborative cultures, fostering either formal or informal exchanges of dialogue, enhance teacher efficacy in implementing the CCSS.

5. Experienced teachers engaged in one-to-one support more-so than novice teachers. The literature on direct individual assistance suggests that problem solving and mentoring require a level of trust and rapport. The literature furthermore suggests that leaders should engage more experienced teachers in continuous conversations about instructional practices to minimize feelings of isolation and demoralization. The researcher concludes because experienced participants in the study worked in collaborative environments, they felt validated and trusted their administrators. This fostered openness in seeking direct individual assistance which was a favorably perceived instructional support among experienced teachers.

6. The researcher concludes that the staff development offered by the district was perceived more favorably among younger teachers than older teachers.
All of the teachers in the 20-29 age group perceived district level staff development as effective or highly effective. In discussing the relationship among the variables, the researcher predicted that younger participants will have a more favorable perception of instructional support.

7. Technology played a prominent role in providing teachers with instructional support to implement the CCSS. The fact that participants expressed a need for more expertise and follow-up in professional learning causes the researcher to conclude that teachers were not continuously supported in determining how to integrate digital tools into practice. The literature asserts that teachers must be supported in accommodating the technological knowledge. Teachers must come to view technology as a convenience that can support or enhance their current instructional practices as opposed to yet another mandate creating more work for them. Administrators can facilitate this process.

8. Participants in the study expressed feelings of confidence. Respondents made reference to overcoming emotions such as nervousness, panic, and confusion. The researcher concludes that teachers favorably perceive instructional support when administrators are equipped to provide thorough answers to questions and concerns that otherwise left unaddressed would foster low self-efficacy.

9. The data revealed that participants questioned the knowledge of administrators both at the district and school level. Participants did not believe that their administrators were sufficiently trained on how to support
them in implementing the CCSS. The researcher therefore concludes that Dale county administrators did not meet all of their teachers’ needs in providing instructional support. Many participants did not regard administrators in the district as instructional leaders.

10. The researcher concludes that both district and school level administrators understand ongoing support to be an effective professional learning practice. A number of participants in the study made reference to meetings focusing on instructional practices that took place routinely. District level administrators offered stipends to teachers to attend professional learning opportunities.

11. Approximately half of the participants have never experienced direct individual assistance as a form of professional learning. The researcher concludes that administrators do not offer one-to-one support as often as they offer staff and small group development. Direct individual assistance requires that time be set aside to address individual needs. Considering time and human resource limitations, this form of support is not likely to be deemed convenient, particularly at the district level where thousands of teachers must be served.

**Implications**

In reflecting on the research questions guiding this study, the implications for educational leaders include the following: (a) Communication of a common goal at all levels is essential; (b) Teachers require follow-up support from administrators, specifically regarding how to transform learning into practice; (c) Active learning is an
effective component of small group development; (d) Collaborative cultures support professional learning in providing expertise; (e) Experienced teachers are likely to seek direct individual assistance from administrators when employed in a collaborative work environment; (f) The needs of all teachers cannot be addressed through staff development alone, so small group development and direct individual assistance should also be utilized; and (g) The saturation of technology necessitates training so teachers are comfortable in accommodating its usage.

Recommendations

This study lends toward further research in the area of leadership development to support change efforts. Who provides leaders with support in navigating the change they are expected to support teachers through? How do leaders communicate their learning needs in being supportive of teachers? The literary work of R. D. Laing entitled Knots (1970) intricately captures the dilemma that, perhaps unbeknownst, many educational administrators may be facing across the nation in working toward successful reform in their respective academic institutions:

There is something I don’t know
that I am supposed to know.
I don’t know what it is I don’t know,
and yet am supposed to know,
And I feel I look stupid
if I seem both not to know it
and not know what is it I don’t know.
Therefore, I pretend I know it.

This is nerve-wracking since I don’t

know what I must pretend to know.

Therefore, I pretend I know everything.

The recommendations of this study are a logical next step for those in leadership who

“don’t know” and who may “pretend to know” as they support teachers in implementing

the new Common Core State Standards.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Based upon the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made to

administrators as they strive to provide effective instructional support:

1. State, district, and school level administrators should incorporate varying
   forms of instructional support inclusive of staff development, small group
   development, and direct individual assistance to ensure the learning modalities
   and needs of all teachers are addressed regardless of age and years of
   experience.

2. District level administrators should integrate their goals with state goals, and
   school level administrators should integrate their goals with district goals.
   Integrated goals should be clearly communicated to teachers.

3. District and school level administrators should build in multiple opportunities
   for small group development with an emphasis on active, collaborative
   learning.
4. District and school level administrators should provide teachers with access to technology support personnel to assist with accommodating the technological resources.

5. School level administrators should foster a collaborative community in working to achieve goals. This requires a significant level of trust among teachers and administrators and must be strategically developed over time.

6. School level administrators should capitalize on providing direct individual assistance by extending it to numerous teachers, regardless of age or years of experience.

7. State, district, and school level administrators should solicit ongoing feedback from teachers to ensure their professional learning needs are being met.

8. District and school level administrators should follow-up with teachers to support implementation of professional learning into the classroom. To transform theory into practice requires continuous development that is job-embedded.

**Recommendations for Policy**

Based on the research, the following recommendations are made regarding state, district, and school policy:

1. State, district, and school level administrators are expected to engage in professional learning to ensure they possess the knowledge, skills, abilities, and dispositions necessary to support teachers with their instructional practices.
2. Administrators responsible for teacher development should have their performance evaluated annually with regard to instructional leadership and receive feedback on their progress.

3. State, district, and school level administrators should employ a systematic approach to evaluating their professional learning program to promote continuous achievement. Information generated should be considered in the annual planning and budgeting process.

4. District and school level administrators are responsible for monitoring the implementation of professional learning into classroom practices.

5. Professional learning should integrate individual units interest and needs with systemic goals and needs. This requires planning in addition to ongoing review of district, department, school, and teacher needs.

6. State, district, and school administrators should provide resources to support professional learning policies and programs.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The following topics are recommended to researchers in an effort to contribute to the literature aligned to this study:

1. Postsecondary education practices in preparing education students to implement the CCSS

2. Examine the efficacy of district level instructional support offered on-site at the school level compared to district level support offered externally
3. Teacher perceptions toward the influence of technology on implementation of CCSS

4. State department practices in preparing teachers to implement the CCSS

5. Preparation of non-certified teaching staff, such as paraprofessionals, in supporting teachers with implementation of the CCSS

6. Impact of years of experience and age on efficacy of CCSS implementation

Summary

Moustakas (1994) suggests that phenomenological researchers “write a brief creative close that speaks to the essence of the study and its inspiration to you in terms of the value of the knowledge and future directions of your professional-personal life” (p. 184). As a former fifth grade teacher of the Common Core State Standards in the school district studied, the research findings were reassuring. While the researcher felt overwhelmed and frustrated while experiencing this phenomenon, it is clear that levels of confidence were attainable as some participants have expressed. Teachers in Dale County experienced ongoing and differentiated instructional support from both district and school level administrators. While not perfect, the support did exist, which is promising. The researcher intends to continue to advocate for teachers, and students, in bringing to light the voices that are often left unheard.

A textual description of what the participants experienced as well as a structural description of how the participants experienced the phenomenon were presented in this chapter. The essence of the phenomenon was provided to summarize the common
realities of the participants and detail the overall meaning of their lived experiences. Significant findings, conclusions, and implications were discussed. Recommendations were offered regarding application of the research to practice and policy. Future research topics were identified. Lastly, the researcher expressed closing remarks in following the phenomenological procedures of Moustakas (1994).
APPENDIX A

Unpublished Qualitative Study Teacher Questionnaire

The purpose of this study is to discover how administrators are supporting teachers in implementing the new Common Core State Standards. The data collected in this study will help school and district level leadership in identifying how they can best support teachers during time of change. The word administrator(s) in this questionnaire refers to both school and district level leaders.

Please help me to understand your unique experience by answering the following questions:

1. How long have you been teaching?

2. What are your academic credentials (degrees, certifications)?

3. Describe, in paragraph format, the support you have received from administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards? (What happened? How did it happen? Where did it happen?)

4. Explain how administrators have supported you in implementing the Common Core State Standards through staff development (whole school).

5. Explain how administrators have supported you in implementing the Common Core State Standards through group development i.e. grade level.

6. Explain how administrators have supported you in implementing the Common Core State Standards through direct assistance (one-to-one).

7. How have school and district leaders supported you best in implementing the new Common Core State Standards?

8. How could school and district leaders improve in their support efforts?

9. How has the support and/or lack of support affected you?
Appendix A (continued)

10. What feelings do you associate with the quality of support you have received?

11. What do you spend most of your time thinking about in regard to this experience?

12. Have you shared all that you think is relevant to the experience of receiving support from school and district leaders in implementing the new Common Core State Standards?
APPENDIX B

Teacher Survey

Teacher Survey on Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards

Questions 1-15 pertain to instructional support provided by DISTRICT LEVEL administrators.

1. Do you feel that DISTRICT LEVEL administrators have supported you in implementing the Common Core State Standards in your classroom? Explain.

2. Instructional support is effective when it improves teaching and learning. How effective was DISTRICT LEVEL staff development (support offered to all teachers) in meeting your needs? Select not applicable (N/A) if the support was not provided.

   ___Highly Ineffective    ___Ineffective    ___Neutral    ___Effective
   ___Highly Effective      ___N/A

   Please explain.

3. How did DISTRICT LEVEL staff development impact your knowledge and skills as it relates to implementing the Common Core standards?

4. Describe how you used the new knowledge and skills resulting from DISTRICT LEVEL staff development to impact your daily instructional strategies?

5. Instructional support is effective when it improves teaching and learning. How effective was DISTRICT LEVEL small group development (support offered to select grade level teachers or subject area teachers) in meeting your needs? Select not applicable (N/A) if the support was not provided.

   ___Highly Ineffective    ___Ineffective    ___Neutral    ___Effective
   ___Highly Effective      ___N/A

   Please explain.
6. How did DISTRICT LEVEL small group development impact your knowledge and skills as it relates to implementing the Common Core standards?

7. Describe how you used the new knowledge and skills resulting from DISTRICT LEVEL small group development to impact your daily instructional strategies?

8. Instructional support is effective when it improves teaching and learning. How effective was DISTRICT LEVEL direct individual assistance (one-to-one support) in meeting your needs? Select not applicable (N/A) if the support was not provided.

   __Highly Ineffective  __Ineffective  __Neutral  __Effective
   __Highly Effective  __N/A

   Please explain.

9. How did DISTRICT LEVEL direct individual assistance impact your knowledge and skills as it relates to implementing the Common Core standards?

10. Describe how you used the new knowledge and skills resulting from DISTRICT LEVEL direct individual assistance to impact your daily instructional strategies?

11. Describe your DISTRICT LEVEL administrators’ goals associated with the instructional support you have received in implementing the Common Core State Standards.

12. Describe the impact that DISTRICT LEVEL instructional support has on your thoughts (related to teaching) and behavior (related to teaching).

13. What feelings do you have about DISTRICT LEVEL instructional support?

14. Did technology play a role in the DISTRICT LEVEL instructional support you received? Explain.

Questions 15-28 pertain to instructional support provided by SCHOOL LEVEL administrators.

15. Do you feel that SCHOOL LEVEL administrators have supported you in implementing the Common Core State Standards in your classroom? Explain.

16. Instructional support is effective when it improves teaching and learning. How effective was SCHOOL LEVEL staff development (support offered to all
teachers) in meeting your needs? Select not applicable (N/A) if the support was not provided.

__Highly Ineffective      __Ineffective          __Neutral      __Effective __Highly Effective  __N/A

Please explain.

17. How did SCHOOL LEVEL staff development impact your knowledge and skills as it relates to implementing the Common Core standards?

18. Describe how you used the new knowledge and skills resulting from SCHOOL LEVEL staff development to impact your daily instructional strategies?

19. Instructional support is effective when it improves teaching and learning. How effective was SCHOOL LEVEL small group development (support offered to select grade level teachers or subject area teachers) in meeting your needs? Select not applicable (N/A) if the support was not provided.

__Highly Ineffective      __Ineffective          __Neutral      __Effective __Highly Effective  __N/A

Please explain.

20. How did SCHOOL LEVEL small group development impact your knowledge and skills as it relates to implementing the Common Core standards?

21. Describe how you used the new knowledge and skills resulting from SCHOOL LEVEL small group development to impact your daily instructional strategies?

22. Instructional support is effective when it improves teaching and learning. How effective was SCHOOL LEVEL direct individual assistance (one-to-one support) in meeting your needs? Select not applicable (N/A) if the support was not provided.

__Highly Ineffective      __Ineffective          __Neutral      __Effective __Highly Effective  __N/A

Please explain.
Appendix B (continued)

23. How did SCHOOL LEVEL direct individual assistance impact your knowledge and skills as it relates to implementing the Common Core standards?

24. Describe how you used the new knowledge and skills resulting from SCHOOL LEVEL direct individual assistance to impact your daily instructional strategies?

25. Describe your SCHOOL LEVEL administrators’ goals associated with the instructional support you have received in implementing the Common Core State Standards.

26. Describe the impact that SCHOOL LEVEL instructional support has on your thoughts (related to teaching) and behavior (related to teaching).

27. What feelings do you have about SCHOOL LEVEL instructional support?

28. Did technology play a role in the SCHOOL LEVEL instructional support you received? Explain.

29. Indicate the range of your years of experience.

_____ 1-5 years  _____ 6-10 years  _____11-15 years  ____15+ years

30. Indicate the range of your age.

_____ 20-29  _____ 30-39  _____ 40-49  _____ 50+
APPENDIX C

Teacher Interviews

Teacher Interview on Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards

GOALS OF ADMINISTRATORS

1. What is your understanding of the district goals regarding teacher implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

2. What is your understanding of your school goals regarding implementation of the CCSS?

3. Have all of your needs in implementing the Common Core State Standards been covered? Explain.


DISTRICT LEVEL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

5. Describe how DISTRICT LEVEL administrators have BEST supported you through staff development (support offered to all teachers) in implementing the CCSS (where and when did the support take place, who provided the support, were materials provided, etc.).

6. Describe how DISTRICT LEVEL administrators have BEST supported you through small group development (support offered to select grade level teachers or subject area teachers) in implementing the CCSS (where and when did the support take place, who provided the support, were materials provided, etc.).

7. Describe how DISTRICT LEVEL administrators have BEST supported you through direct individual assistance (one-to-one support) in implementing the CCSS (where and when did the support take place, who provided the support, were materials provided, etc.).
8. What feelings do you associate with the overall quantity and quality of support you have received from **DISTRICT LEVEL** administrators?

**SCHOOL LEVEL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT**

9. Describe how **SCHOOL LEVEL** administrators have BEST supported you through staff development (support offered to all teachers) in implementing the CCSS (where and when did the support take place, who provided the support, were materials provided, etc.).

10. Describe how **SCHOOL LEVEL** administrators have BEST supported you through small group development (support offered to select grade level teachers or subject area teachers) in implementing the CCSS (where and when did the support take place, who provided the support, were materials provided, etc.).

11. Describe how **SCHOOL LEVEL** administrators have BEST supported you through direct individual assistance (one-to-one support) in implementing the CCSS (where and when did the support take place, who provided the support, were materials provided, etc.).

12. What feelings do you associate with the overall quantity and quality of support you have received from **SCHOOL LEVEL** administrators?

**ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY**

13. Does technology play a role in preparing teachers to implement the Common Core State Standards? Explain.

**EFFECT OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE**

14. Indicate the range of your years of experience.

   _____ 1-5 years   _____ 6-10 years   _____ 11-15 years   _____ 15+ years

**EFFECT OF AGE**

15. Indicate the range of your age.

   _____ 20-29   _____ 30-39   _____ 40-49   _____ 50+
APPENDIX D

Administrator Interview

Administrator Interview on Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards

GOALS OF ADMINISTRATORS

1. What is your understanding of the district goals regarding teacher implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

2. What is your goal as it relates to preparing teachers for implementation of the CCSS?

3. How many of your teachers have been trained on the CCSS?

4. Have all of the needs of your teachers in implementing the Common Core State Standards been covered? Explain.

5. Are you comfortable allowing teachers to make modifications in implementing professional learning? Explain.

DISTRICT LEVEL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

6. Have DISTRICT LEVEL administrators provided staff development (support offered to all teachers) to meet the needs of teachers in implementing the CCSS? Explain.

7. Have DISTRICT LEVEL administrators provided small group development (support offered to select grade level teachers or subject area teachers) to meet the needs of teachers in implementing the CCSS? Explain.

8. Have DISTRICT LEVEL administrators provided direct individual assistance (one-to-one support) to meet the needs of teachers in implementing the CCSS? Explain.
Appendix D (continued)

SCHOOL LEVEL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

9. Have SCHOOL LEVEL administrators provided staff development (support offered to all teachers) to meet the needs of teachers in implementing the CCSS? Explain.

10. Have SCHOOL LEVEL administrators provided small group development (support offered to select grade level teachers or subject area teachers) to meet the needs of teachers in implementing the CCSS? Explain.

11. Have SCHOOL LEVEL administrators provided direct individual assistance (one-to-one support) to meet the needs of teachers in implementing the CCSS? Explain.

ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

12. Does technology play a role in preparing teachers to implement the Common Core State Standards? Explain.

EFFECT OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AND AGE

13. How do you believe teachers perceive the overall quantity and quality of support they have received in implementing the CCSS? Explain.

14. Do you believe the teachers’ perceptions vary depending on their years of experience? Explain.

15. Do you believe the teachers’ perceptions vary depending on their age? Explain.
APPENDIX E

Interview Informed Consent Form

Dear Colleague:

I am a doctoral student at Clark Atlanta University located in Atlanta, Georgia. As a part of my requirements for graduation, I am conducting a research study on “Teacher Perception of the Efficacy of the Instructional Support Received in Implementing the Common Core State Standards.” The purpose of the study is to investigate how teachers perceive the instructional support provided by district and school level administrators in implementing the Common Core State Standards. I am requesting your permission to include you as a participant in this study.

The research will begin on November 2 and end on November 22. The research involves an interview that consists of approximately 15 questions. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Words from participants will be reduced into significant statements. The statements will then be combined, or clustered, to formulate themes. These themes will be used to compose an essence of the phenomenon, summarizing the common experiences of the participants and detailing the overall meaning of the experiences. Please be as honest as possible in completing the survey. The interview will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the opportunity to participate in a research study as well as the opportunity to share your experiences as an educator implementing the Common Core State Standards. Additionally, your responses will help educational administrators identify and subscribe to practices that are most effective in supporting teacher instruction.

Your participation in the research is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. Your identity will be kept confidential and your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way. You will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you decide that you will not participate in this research project. If you decide to participate in this project, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You may additionally choose to skip any question you prefer not to answer.

By signing below, you are providing your informed consent to participate in the study. If you have any questions about this research study or your participation, feel free to e-mail
me at Adrienne.Simmons@students.cau.edu or call me at (404) 569-8175. My Clark Atlanta University dissertation committee chair is Dr. Barbara Hill. She can be contacted at bhill@cau.edu or (404) 880-6126.

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